

**PROOF**

**Hansard**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**60th Parliament**

**Thursday 20 November 2025**



# CONTENTS

---

|                                                                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE                                                                       |    |
| Notices of motion and orders of the day .....                                               | 1  |
| DOCUMENTS                                                                                   |    |
| Documents .....                                                                             | 1  |
| COMMITTEES                                                                                  |    |
| Public Accounts and Estimates Committee .....                                               | 2  |
| Membership .....                                                                            | 2  |
| BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE                                                                       |    |
| Adjournment .....                                                                           | 2  |
| MEMBERS STATEMENTS                                                                          |    |
| Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal .....                                                             | 2  |
| Nepean electorate community engagement .....                                                | 3  |
| Mernda community hospital.....                                                              | 3  |
| Port management.....                                                                        | 3  |
| Greenhills Neighbourhood House .....                                                        | 4  |
| Bill Firman .....                                                                           | 4  |
| Sandringham Little Athletics.....                                                           | 4  |
| Williamstown electorate schools .....                                                       | 4  |
| St Kilda Primary School .....                                                               | 5  |
| Sephardi Association of Victoria .....                                                      | 5  |
| Port Phillip City Council.....                                                              | 5  |
| Glen Eira City Council.....                                                                 | 5  |
| Kehilat Nitzan .....                                                                        | 5  |
| Kalkallo Youth Advisory Council .....                                                       | 5  |
| Women Economic Forum .....                                                                  | 6  |
| Suha Kasim .....                                                                            | 6  |
| Dr Preeti Khillan.....                                                                      | 6  |
| South-West Coast electorate wildlife hospital.....                                          | 7  |
| Senior Sergeant Wayne Spence .....                                                          | 7  |
| Richmond electorate public and active transport .....                                       | 7  |
| Bass Coast electorate projects .....                                                        | 8  |
| Warrandyte electorate .....                                                                 | 8  |
| Public transport.....                                                                       | 8  |
| Gendered violence.....                                                                      | 9  |
| Box Hill electorate business innovation .....                                               | 9  |
| Box Hill Christmas appeal.....                                                              | 9  |
| Shop225 .....                                                                               | 9  |
| La Tortillería .....                                                                        | 10 |
| Chai and chat.....                                                                          | 10 |
| BILLS                                                                                       |    |
| Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 ..... | 10 |
| Second reading.....                                                                         | 10 |
| MEMBERS                                                                                     |    |
| Minister for Transport Infrastructure .....                                                 | 43 |
| Absence .....                                                                               | 43 |
| QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS                                           |    |
| Ambulance services.....                                                                     | 43 |
| Ministers statements: real estate reform .....                                              | 44 |
| Ambulance services.....                                                                     | 45 |
| Ministers statements: economy .....                                                         | 47 |
| Community safety .....                                                                      | 47 |
| Ministers statements: planning policy .....                                                 | 49 |
| Freedom of information .....                                                                | 50 |
| Ministers statements: renewable energy.....                                                 | 50 |
| State Emergency Service .....                                                               | 51 |
| Ministers statements: housing .....                                                         | 53 |
| CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS                                                                      |    |
| Gippsland South electorate .....                                                            | 53 |
| Preston electorate.....                                                                     | 53 |
| Nepean electorate .....                                                                     | 54 |
| Cranbourne electorate .....                                                                 | 54 |
| Caulfield electorate.....                                                                   | 54 |

# CONTENTS

---

|                                                                                              |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Albert Park electorate .....                                                                 | 54 |
| Polwarth electorate .....                                                                    | 54 |
| Pascoe Vale electorate.....                                                                  | 55 |
| Richmond electorate.....                                                                     | 55 |
| Kororoit electorate .....                                                                    | 55 |
| RULINGS FROM THE CHAIR                                                                       |    |
| Constituency questions .....                                                                 | 55 |
| BILLS                                                                                        |    |
| Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 .....  | 56 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 56 |
| Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025 .....                     | 56 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 56 |
| Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025 .....            | 76 |
| Council's amendments.....                                                                    | 76 |
| Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025 .....                     | 77 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 77 |
| Third reading.....                                                                           | 79 |
| Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Stability) Bill 2025.....                            | 80 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 80 |
| Third reading.....                                                                           | 80 |
| Crimes Amendment (Retail, Fast Food, Hospitality, and Transport Worker Harm) Bill 2025 ..... | 81 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 81 |
| Third reading.....                                                                           | 81 |
| Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 .....  | 81 |
| Second reading.....                                                                          | 81 |
| Third reading.....                                                                           | 81 |
| ADJOURNMENT                                                                                  |    |
| Hamilton Community House .....                                                               | 81 |
| Mount Waverley North Primary School .....                                                    | 82 |
| Bulleen electorate roads .....                                                               | 82 |
| Renewable energy .....                                                                       | 83 |
| Sandringham electorate housing .....                                                         | 83 |
| Greening the West .....                                                                      | 84 |
| Protective services officers .....                                                           | 84 |
| West Gate Tunnel .....                                                                       | 85 |
| Timber industry .....                                                                        | 85 |
| Suburban Rail Loop .....                                                                     | 86 |
| Responses .....                                                                              | 86 |

**Thursday 20 November 2025**

**The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:32 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.**

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your advice with regard to petitions. Petitions, as we know, that are to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly say so, and petitioners expect that to be the case. It has come to my attention that in June 2024 a hard copy petition with 300 or so names was handed to the member for Sunbury and it has been in his bottom drawer for some 18 months. I would have thought that this petition directed to the Legislative Assembly, which petitioners have signed in good faith, would be tabled. If the member for Sunbury is uncomfortable tabling that petition – a petition about an elevator at the Sunbury train station – which the petitioners want tabled, I am very happy for him to hand it to me so I can table it on behalf of the Sunbury Residents Association.

**The SPEAKER:** It is not really a point of order, member for Eildon. I think it is a matter for the member for Sunbury and you as the member for Eildon.

**James Newbury:** On a different point of order, Speaker, there are procedures in place in relation to the tabling of petitions in this place. I am concerned that in this instance it appears that those procedures were not followed and that it does warrant –

**The SPEAKER:** I have ruled on this point of order.

**James Newbury:** if I may finish my point of order, Speaker – an investigation to understand whether or not the procedures of the house have been followed.

**The SPEAKER:** These are matters for the house, not for the Speaker.

### ***Business of the house***

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

**The SPEAKER (09:35):** General business, notices of motion 50 to 52 and 68 and order of the day 9, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

### ***Documents***

#### **Documents**

#### **Incorporated list as follows:**

##### **DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:**

*Climate Action Act 2017* – Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2026–30

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria:

State of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks – Report 2025 (two documents)

Strategic Audit of the implementation of Melbourne Strategic Assessment Conservation Outcomes – Report 2024

Victorian State of the Marine and Coastal Environment – Report 2024 (two documents)

*Financial Management Act 1994* – Report from the Minister for Environment that he had received the report 2024–25 of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board

Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation Ltd – Report 2024–25

Integrity Oversight Victoria – The permanent installation of listening devices in prisons and their use by Victoria Police: An Integrity Oversight Victoria inspection report examining warrants authorising Victoria Police to use listening devices in prisons between 2008 and 2024 – Ordered to be published

Local Jobs First – Report 2024–25

*Planning and Environment Act 1987* – Notice of approval of an amendment to the Victoria Planning Provisions – VC297

Victoria State Emergency Service Authority (SES) – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt and an explanation for the delay

*Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* – Assessment of the values of state forests in eastern Victoria under s 26E

Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine – Report 2024–25, together with the Minister’s reported date of receipt

*Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Act 2017:*

Birrarung Council Report 2025 on the implementation of Burndap Birrarung Burndap Umarkoo Yarra Strategic Plan

Burndap Birrarung Burndap Umarkoo Yarra Strategic Plan – Report 2024–25.

### *Committees*

#### **Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**

##### *Membership*

**The SPEAKER** (09:37): I have received the resignation of Bev McArthur from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective 19 November 2025.

##### *Business of the house*

##### **Adjournment**

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 2 December 2025.

**Motion agreed to.**

##### *Members statements*

##### **Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal**

**Ben CARROLL** (Niddrie – Minister for Education, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC) (09:38): I rise today to celebrate the official opening of the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal, a program that has been supporting families experiencing hardship at Christmas for more than 30 years. Over that time Australians have donated more than 14 million gifts, ensuring that people who might otherwise miss out during the holiday season and festive season get something meaningful to really ensure that they know that they are loved and cared for during a very special time of the year.

I recently visited the Kmart store in Airport West to celebrate the beginning of the appeal alongside Kmart and the Salvation Army. For me walking through that store is a feeling a bit like coming home. It was my very first job at 14 and nine months, and those early experiences have been lifelong – the importance of customer service responsibility as well – skills that I know I rely on today as a member of Parliament. There are not many places you can go back to in adulthood that still have such a strong familiarity, but Kmart is one of them for me.

During my visit I was able to catch up with a few people I worked with all those years ago, including my two favourite Kathys. It is always encouraging to see the strong workplace culture that exists at Kmart – the teamwork and connection to community that continues today. The Wishing Tree Appeal is a really important event, not only locally but Australia-wide. I want to thank the team at Kmart Airport West for their continued commitment as well as the Salvation Army and every person who makes a donation. The combined efforts of staff, volunteers and the public ensure the Wishing Tree continues to support families who need it most at Christmas time.

### Nepean electorate community engagement

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (09:39): I just want to address the proposed redevelopment at Arthurs Seat and to emphasise the importance of genuine, transparent community consultation in determining its future. Arthurs Seat, as many in here would know, is one of the Mornington Peninsula's most iconic landmarks. It is a place of natural beauty and deep, personal connection for generations of locals and visitors alike. Any proposal for change at that site must therefore be approached with care, balance and respect. In recent years communities across Nepean and the wider peninsula have repeatedly expressed concern that major decisions are being made without their voices meaningfully shaping the final outcome. Whether on planning, transport, environmental management or coastal infrastructure, we have seen consultation treated as a procedural check box rather than an authentic partnership. Residents contribute thoughtfully, only to discover that the government's preferred position has already been settled. The Arthurs Seat redevelopment deserves better and so do locals. This project has the potential to enhance visitor facilities and support local jobs, but only if it is informed by those who know the region best. Locals want clarity on the scale of the project, environmental impacts, traffic management and long-term stewardship of the site. Above all, they want a process that listens before it decides. I call on the Labor government to commit to genuine, open and ongoing consultation, so that any redevelopment reflects the community's vision for Arthurs Seat, not just a predetermined outcome.

### Mernda community hospital

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:41): I am delighted to speak about the brand new Mernda community hospital, which will be opening this Monday 24 November, delivered by the Allan Labor government. This investment is bringing world-class care closer to home for our northern suburbs, including for constituents in my electorate of Mill Park. This new community public hospital will make an enormous difference. It means parents will not have to travel far for paediatric care, women can access dedicated health services locally and residents can receive treatment, including public dental, pathology services, imaging services and a compounding pharmacy. It will also ease pressure on the Northern Hospital in Epping, meaning it can focus on critical care, complex health issues and surgeries, emergencies and trauma. Importantly, this project is supporting local jobs in health, giving residents more opportunities to work closer to home, reducing commutes and freeing up more time for the family. Services will open progressively under Northern Health's careful transition plan: from 24 November, public dental, paediatrics, allied health, pathology and a compounding pharmacy; in January, dialysis and community mental health; and in March, urgent care and imaging services will conclude the transition. When I have been on the phones or doorknocking residents in my electorate, there has been real excitement, particularly from residents in South Morang, who will now have these fantastic services just up the road. The Mernda community hospital is a major win for local families.

### Port management

**Peter WALSH** (Murray Plains) (09:42): Echuca–Moama is a key tourist destination in Victoria, with over 1.5 million visitors each year; 770,000 of those actually stay overnight. I was very pleased to be part of a previous government that, with our federal colleagues, invested substantial funds in upgrading the Echuca wharf and the facilities there. We have recently had the PS *Melbourne* return to Echuca after 60 years in Mildura, and we have the PS *Australian Star*, a new luxury boat for overnight cruises, coming to Echuca shortly. But there is a risk to all that, as since that major upgrade the port has become very silted up. The wet dock particularly is silted, and I can say that inertia is stopping it happening or, more correctly, red and green tape is stopping that wet dock from being cleaned out. We now have some of the actual port that is not accessible by paddle-steamers because of that silt, and particularly the PS *Melbourne*, which has come back to Echuca, cannot get a guaranteed berth there to be able to take on passengers. That is a major risk, particularly with the busy Christmas–New Year period coming up, because the current stock of paddle-steamers cannot cater to the demand on some

days, and tragically, some people who come to Echuca miss out on a paddle-steamer trip. So we need that silt removed so the PS *Melbourne* can actually get a wharf and, when the PS *Australian Star* arrives, it can also get a wharf at the jetty there, to make sure it is used.

### **Greenhills Neighbourhood House**

**Colin BROOKS** (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:44): I would like to take the opportunity to recognise the remarkable work of Greenhills Neighbourhood House in Greensborough, which serves both my electorate and that of my good friend and neighbouring MP the member for Eltham. Under the dedicated leadership of coordinator Janelle Dunstan, Greenhills has been a pillar of community connection since its founding back in 1984, providing vital services, programs and supports to residents. In 2025 this commitment expanded, with the opening of Wellington St Neighbourhood House, which was supported by terrific volunteers Rose and Cecily, who have been instrumental in establishing this house.

Janelle has been involved with Greenhills for six years and leads a wonderful team of staff, Steph, Chika, Janet and Mez, as well as an extraordinary group of over 30 volunteers, who are truly the heart of both centres. The Greenhills volunteers play an essential role in accepting food deliveries, sorting and serving the community each week through the community pantry food relief service.

[NAMES AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Long-time volunteers such as Gaye, Bronwyn, Larysa, Nellie, Ellie, Veronica, Graham and Chris have generously been giving their time since 2020. A special mention must also go to Nellie Lim, who volunteers two days a week and still finds time to cook for the community lunches.

These are the people who make our community stronger. I thank Janelle, the staff and every volunteer for the incredible work they do for our local community.

### **Bill Firman**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (09:45): It is with somewhat of a heavy heart that I rise to speak on the passing of Brother Bill Firman FSC, who died peacefully over the weekend in Launceston, Tasmania. Brother Bill, or 'Builder Bill', as he was affectionately known, was a much-loved former headmaster of my alma mater St Bede's College from 1975 to 1987, in which he left a lasting legacy on that school and school community. Brother Bill was instrumental in the development of St Bede's and was inducted into the college's honour roll in 2013. I convey my sincere and heartfelt condolences to Brother Bill's family and the Lasallian community but especially the Mentone brothers community. Live Jesus in our hearts forever.

### **Sandringham Little Athletics**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (09:46): On Saturday I participated in the first annual Sandringham Little Athletics community relay race. We were blown away and out of the water by the team from the local Coles, who ran first. But I am very pleased to inform the house that the team Rowswell contingent beat the team Tim Wilson contingent, and it was just a magnificent effort that we were able to do that. I suggest the 21-year-olds who ran from Coles probably needed to be drug-tested at the end, and I am saying that under privilege for a reason. Thank you to the committee for organising, especially Nick Milat. It is a magnificent community organisation. I am thrilled to support the Sandringham Little Athletics community relay run.

### **Williamstown electorate schools**

**Melissa HORNE** (Williamstown – Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure) (09:47): As the school year draws to an end, I want to highlight the continued investment in education across the Williamstown electorate. Advocating for modern, high-quality school infrastructure remains my top priority, ensuring that every local student has the facilities that they deserve. In Altona, Altona Primary School received \$1.2 million to upgrade

fencing and playground areas, giving students safer, more engaging places to learn and to play. In Yarraville, Wembley Primary School celebrated the completion of its \$10 million building upgrade, delivering contemporary classrooms that support students' learning and provide teachers with the resources that they need. In Seaholme the primary school received almost \$300,000 to create a sensory outdoor learning space, giving students of all abilities a welcoming environment to explore nature. Williamstown High saw a \$1.36 million upgrade to its dedicated year 12 and theatre complex and an additional \$2.5 million to enhance the Pasco campus Q-block. In Altona North and Newport, Bayside P-12 College opened its new \$6.7 million STEM building last year, and Bayside has also been allocated nearly \$2 million to repair and improve its 63 accessibility ramps in its three campuses. The Australian Islamic Centre College received \$2.5 million for important facility upgrades – an announcement I was pleased to make alongside the Minister for Education. I wish every student who is finishing school this year the best.

#### **St Kilda Primary School**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:48): It is great that finally somebody recognises the need for St Kilda Primary School to have a new hall – \$12 million under a Liberal–National government. A big shout-out to the member for Prahran, who has been a tireless advocate of this. The member for Brighton and I know that schools need to be able to have a place for sport and community and not have their assemblies out in the rain. Could I also congratulate VCE students on finishing their exams, particularly those in my electorate of Caulfield. I wish them all the best when they receive their results.

#### **Sephardi Association of Victoria**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:49): It has been 60 years since the Sephardi Association first were established. It was a pleasure to join them and speak at their event on the weekend. I want to give a big shout-out to the president Joanne Levy, who has been a tireless president and advocate and has done so much for works and care packs for the community. She is a gem. Good luck for the next 60 years, and thank you to Joanne.

#### **Port Phillip City Council**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:49): Congratulations to the new mayor of Port Phillip Alex Makin, a great advocate for community, for the arts and for off-leash dog parks. I look forward to working with Alex Makin and deputy mayor Bryan Mears.

#### **Glen Eira City Council**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:50): Congratulations to Simone Zmood, who has been re-elected as the mayor for Glen Eira – again, a great community advocate – and also to Li Zhang as the deputy mayor of Glen Eira.

#### **Kehilat Nitzan**

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:50): Congratulations Kehilat Nitzan. It was great to have your Torah on the weekend.

#### **Kalkallo Youth Advisory Council**

**Ros SPENCE** (Kalkallo – Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Carers and Volunteers) (09:50): I rise today to acknowledge and thank the 2025 Kalkallo Youth Advisory Council for their outstanding contribution throughout this year. The youth advisory council plays an important role in empowering young people across the Kalkallo electorate to represent community interests, develop leadership skills and gain a deeper understanding of policymaking processes. Through their projects, members address issues that matter most to them and their peers, creating meaningful change at a local level.

This year their flagship initiative, the 'Becoming independent' information flyer and website, responds to a common concern among young people: the lack of clear, accessible information as they transition

to adulthood. This resource brings together practical tools and guidance designed to help their peers build essential life skills. It focuses on three key areas: understanding workplace rights, managing personal finances and navigating civic responsibilities. By tackling these topics the council has provided a valuable platform that supports independence and confidence for young people in our community.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Aarav, Ammar, Aneeta, Ashlyn, Athena, Chenaab, Divjot, Eshaal, Gabrielle, Gurshaan, Hafsa, Harkirat, Harnoor, Husain, Maryam, Nadya, Nathaniel, Navpreet, Shannon, Sukhman, Vrishab and Uthish for their creativity, dedication and collaborative spirit. The year ended with the presentation of their work to the Minister for Youth in Parliament, and I thank the minister for taking the time to hear from and chat with youth council members who attended. This year also marks a significant milestone of 10 years of the youth council.

### **Women Economic Forum**

**Kim O'KEEFFE** (Shepparton) (09:51): It was exciting for Shepparton to launch the 2025 Australian Women Economic Forum (WEF), putting the Shepparton region on the world stage and a first for regional Victoria. Trailblazing women from around the globe came together and got to hear about our magnificent region, the incredible opportunities on offer from agriculture, manufacturing, industries and businesses both large and small and the incredible lifestyle of living in regional Victoria. They also got to hear from many of our amazing and inspiring local women who shared their empowering stories. Congratulations to Lutfiye Kavci, Maria Brown-Shepherd, Mariola Nebiu, Martina Johnson, Vicki Scott, Jamie Lea, Emmersyn Rea and Jac McCarty – just some of our amazing local women who did us so proud.

Also, our local iconic company SPC ensured our visitors got a real taste of our region, providing an enormous amount of products. The room was filled with women from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures and from all walks of life. There was a real sense of unity, sisterhood and fantastic participation. The energy in the room was incredible. I wish to acknowledge the WEF Australian president Dr Sarifa Alonto-Younes and Dr Hassan Younes for their dedication to empowering women and fostering economic growth, equality and lasting change and also acknowledge the significant and valuable opportunity for including Shepparton and regional Victoria in the four-day program. It was a fantastic day with participants walking away inspired, valued and empowered. When women come together and support each other, amazing things truly can happen.

### **Suha Kasim**

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (09:53): I rise today with a heavy heart to send my prayers and deep condolences to Hasan, a local community leader, and wife Aydin on the sad, unexpected passing of their son Suha Kasim. Suha leaves behind three sons and a loving wife. We are all very devastated and saddened by this tragic passing. The Kasim family are well known for their generosity, compassion and contribution to their local community. We grieve together and stand in support in the days to come.

### **Dr Preeti Khillan**

**Natalie SULEYMAN** (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business and Employment, Minister for Youth) (09:53): On another matter, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful work of Dr Preeti Khillan. This week Dr Khillan eloquently wrote a piece as part of Cervical Cancer Awareness Week between 17 and 23 November on how to build better health education and prevention for older migrant women. Too often these women put their family first and themselves last. I am looking forward to continuing to be the voice of these women, the mothers and grandmothers from diverse backgrounds, to speak up for them and advocate for more support and understanding of early prevention. I want to thank Dr Preeti Khillan for her work and her advocacy in improving the lives of women and in particular multicultural women in the west.

**South-West Coast electorate wildlife hospital**

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (09:54): I am angry. In 2023 the Allan Labor government promised the people of South-West Coast a \$4.7 million wildlife hospital. Two years later there is no timeline, no consultation and no visible progress. Meanwhile they have found \$2 million for a hospital at Kyabram Fauna Park, yet they cannot even tell our region whether our own project is still alive. When I pressed the minister, the response was staggering. They claimed there is no suitable land in South-West Coast. Well, that is simply unbelievable. Our region has abundant public and private land. I know the old racecourse site at Koroit is leased, which the government owns, and that site could easily be considered. If land were required, the government can buy it as they do right across Victoria. To say otherwise is nothing but an excuse. Instead of delivering, Labor has offered 900,000 so-called targeted support packages. This is no substitute for the hospital we were promised. It is hush money taken just as a token gesture to silence dissent while carers like Mosswood Wildlife shelter remain stretched to the limit. This is a slap in the face to our carers and to our community. South-West Coast deserves transparency around the promises that were made. I will continue to hold this government to account, to discover when their commitment will be fulfilled and our wildlife hospital will be opened.

**Senior Sergeant Wayne Spence**

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (09:55): I recognise and thank Senior Sergeant Wayne Spence APM. Policing is a rewarding and challenging job. It is one that often puts you in front of people on their worst days and challenges you in ways you did not think possible, and Wayne did this so well for over 46 years. Joining Victoria Police in 1977, he graduated in 78, and over the decades he supported the communities of Melbourne CBD, Preston, Eltham and Heidelberg before coming to Diamond Creek, where he served for more than 20 years. Wayne is highly regarded, with many noting that even on hard days, if they saw Wayne turn up, they knew they were in good hands. He has devoted his career to frontline policing, serving the Victorian community, and has been a driving force in emergency management. While Wayne may be a bit understated about his job working with the community, helping those who need assistance and dealing with offenders, we know it is so much more. Wayne received the medal for merit for his extraordinary efforts during the Black Saturday bushfires, including coordinating the rescue of people trapped in the fires through the Strathewen area on 7 February 2009. This was despite being in considerable danger himself as he patrolled five protected areas, working into the early hours of Sunday morning. I thank him for his role in advocating for greater education in our schools regarding respect and family violence. Congratulations, Wayne, on an incredible career and your service to our community. We wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement. Know that you will be missed, and I am sure that many locals will be very keen to see you still walking around the streets of Diamo and Eltham, knowing that our community has benefited so deeply from your service.

**Richmond electorate public and active transport**

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (09:57): Imagine your kids walking to school and not having to worry about what happens at every single intersection. Imagine arriving to work on time whether you choose public transport or cycling on a network of protected bike lanes that people of all ages and genders and abilities feel safe to use. Imagine wheelchairs and prams and even nonna's shopping jeep gliding effortlessly off every tram because each stop is fully accessible. Picture Richmond station as a beautifully designed gateway befitting a major sporting and entertainment precinct, with better footpaths and cycling lanes in and around it for visitors and locals and workers. Imagine a Cremorne that you can actually walk around, with wide footpaths and greenery and shade, and a Burnley underpass that does not flood every single time it rains. Envisage a pedestrianised Gertrude Street and a walkable Gleadell Street that is fully landscaped for everyone to use. Imagine protected bike lanes on Johnston Street and a 30-kilometre zone across the whole of Clifton Hill. All of this could now become a reality thanks to the Greens having secured \$150 million over the next 10 years for active transport in the inner city.

**Bass Coast electorate projects**

**Jordan CRUGNALE** (Bass) (09:58): We have incredible advocates across Bass – people who apply for grants, rally support and fundraise because they want the very best for their community. There are projects galore everywhere – completed, underway and in train. Inverloch CFA have a new ultralight ready for the fire season and the Corinella CFA's light tanker is in production and looking good for mid next year. Cranbourne Casey Men's Shed is scoring new machinery and tools. Dedicated wildlife carers, Sleepy Hollow, Little Natives, Bunurong Wildlife Care and Maru are expanding aviaries, building nesting boxes and covering vet bills with rehabilitator grants. Landcare Bass Coast's Three Creeks, Powlett, Anderson Inlet, Bass Valley, Devon Meadows, Phillip Island and Westernport Swamp continue greening landscapes and waterways with grant support. Bass Coast Specialist School's complete hydro pool is on the way, and VicHealth is backing gardening programs here and at Bass Valley Primary. Lang Lang Preschool rebuild gets keys early next year, San Remo will appoint a builder soon and Colac Primary with kinder opens in term 1. Tooradin's skate park skates at Christmas, and Pearcedale's upgrade starts in February. Inverloch Stingrays and Stars have a new pavilion funded. Wonthaggi netball's is underway and the oval is to be resurfaced too. The water-bound Lang Lang boat ramp upgrade is happening now, and the Tooradin contract will be awarded soon, while Corinella gets non-slip decking, Warneet celebrates two new jetties and Newhaven is funded for a rebuild. There is a big song and dance with Ocean Sounds Festival, supported through our festivals fund – *(Time expired)*

**Warrandyte electorate**

**Nicole WERNER** (Warrandyte) (10:00): I am convinced that my electorate is the best in Victoria. From the iconic and beautiful Warrandyte River to suburban Doncaster East, where you will find the best dumplings in Melbourne, to the acreages in Wonga Park and the horse farms in Chirnside Park and everywhere in between, I absolutely love our local area. It is where the city meets the country, and it is my privilege to get to represent our community in the Victorian Parliament.

We have had some great wins this year with grand final victories for our local sports clubs, milestone anniversaries for our local schools and many amazing community initiatives that took place. After years of sustained advocacy as a community, we finally saw funding secured for Five Ways intersection in Warrandyte South. In my life personally, my life was forever changed by becoming a mum to my beautiful boy Bobby in January, who is the light of our lives.

I wanted to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Our community goes all out this time of year, so I will catch you at one of our local carol services our iconic CFA Santa run or a Christmas market. I so look forward to celebrating with everyone. Christmas is absolutely my favourite time of the year. It is the greatest honour of my life to get to represent our community in this Parliament and to get to fight for Victorians every single day that I am here. I so look forward to taking up this fight next year.

**Public transport**

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (10:01): Great news! It is only 10 days until our Metro Tunnel opens, which is fantastic news for the whole of Victoria. It is also 10 days until we kick off free public transport on weekends for everyone, everywhere until 1 February. But that is not all, folks. From 1 January our two major budget cost-of-living measures kick in: free public transport for seniors on weekends as well as kids under the age of 18 being able to travel anywhere, anytime, for free. Whether you are under 18 and you are travelling to school in the morning or you are having a hangout with friends, if you have a kids Myki, you will not pay a cent. And yes, you will still need to tap on and tap off so we know how many people are using our wonderful public transport.

When I am out in Melbourne's west we are talking about this policy time and time again. There are folks who love to stop to chat that tell me about how much money they are going to save. They see the sign on my corflute and their eyes light up, because they know this is real cost-of-living relief that

is going to go straight to helping the family budget. In fact parents are going to save on average \$755 a year. That is so much money, considering most parents have more than one child. That is like a family holiday just from the saving in free public transport. There is so much positivity right across Victoria for free public transport, and it is just another example of how Labor really is on the side of all Victorians.

### **Gendered violence**

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (10:03): All Victorians have a role to play in ending gendered violence, and on 28 November we will come together for a march at Birrarung Marr as part of the 16 days of activism against gendered violence in our communities. Thousands of Victorians, and particularly men and boys, have turned out to this rally to stand against family and sexual violence in our community and the horrific harm that this causes for so many. To see the love, care and compassion for fellow Victorians when we join together for that march is a really important thing.

We know ending gendered violence starts with all men and boys. We do not say about mental health and wellbeing, where 75 per cent of people that we lose are men and boys, that not all people are impacted by suicide. But we hear those things, and I hear time and time again on social media that it is not all men. But all men have a role to play as being upstanders, being caring and compassionate for women and girls in their lives and lowering the incidence of violence in our community. And we know that if we intervene early and call it out, it can lead to better outcomes and lower the risk of violence into the future. We want men and boys to be the best versions of themselves. As Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change, I am so committed to that work and role. So I call on all Victorians – if you can, come along to the march on 28 November as part of the 16 days of activism against gendered violence.

### **Box Hill electorate business innovation**

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill) (10:04): I want to acknowledge the remarkable ways businesses in the Box Hill electorate are embracing innovation and technology to strengthen productivity and futureproof their operations. Recently, I had the pleasure of joining the Asian Business Association of Whitehorse at its productivity and AI forum in Box Hill. Business owners, education providers and community leaders came together to share how technology is already shaping their day-to-day work, from streamlining administration to improving service delivery and unlocking new opportunities for growth. Many are not only adapting to technological change but are actively harnessing the benefits of AI to stay competitive. I have also spoken with many people in the Box Hill electorate who are building AI-native startups from the ground up, demonstrating the depth of talent and ambition within our part of Melbourne. Their work reinforces how critical it is for all Victorians to build skills and literacy in rapidly developing technologies. I am proud to be part of a government committed to supporting businesses, founders and workers as they navigate this transformation. Through our innovation programs, digital capability initiatives and support for startups, we are ensuring that no-one is left behind in Victoria's transition to a more productive, technologically confident future. Box Hill is leading the way, and I look forward to continuing to champion the innovators and entrepreneurs who make our communities stronger.

### **Box Hill Christmas appeal**

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill) (10:06): Can I have a shout-out for our Box Hill Christmas appeal for 2025. We are again putting it on this year. There are a lot of families in our community in need. Please donate by 11 December to our office.

### **Shop225**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (10:06): It is official: the best pizza in Australia and the world is in Pascoe Vale. It was bellissimo to have visited Shop225 with the Minister for Small Business and Employment on 23 October to celebrate the news that they have been recently crowned at the world's 50 Top Pizza awards in Napoli, Italia, as Australia's best and number 1 pizza and placed

28th as the world's best pizza. Auguri to Lorenzo Tron, the passionate founder behind this local, national and now worldwide-favourite pizzeria and for sharing his story, craft and secrets to success on our visit. Grazie to pizzaiolo Giuseppe for also giving us a special one-to-one class on how to make the best pizza in Australia. We rolled up our sleeves, and with the freshest of ingredients and plenty of amore, I made a capricciosa. Shop225 is also setting the standard for inclusive dining, offering vegan, gluten-free and halal options while staying true to authentic Italian tradition with handmade pasta, gnocchi and woodfired pizzas crafted from 72-hour proofed dough. For those who have not visited, as Molly Meldrum would say, please do yourself a favour and drop by 225 Melville Road, Pascoe Vale South for a bite. Tanti auguri to Lorenzo and the entire Shop225 team for putting Pascoe on the global culinary map and proving the best dough rises and pizzas are woodfired here in Pascoe Vale.

### **La Tortillería**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (10:07): Encantado to have welcomed the Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing to visit the world class new La Tortillería factory in North Coburg on 6 November. Congratulations to co-founder Gerardo Lopez and CEO Jessica Roso, who we had the pleasure to meet when touring the new factory at 63–69 Gawan Loop in North Coburg. They are making the best tortillas.

### **Chai and chat**

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (10:08): I cannot wait to see everyone at our final end-of-year chai and chat, 19 December at Trueman Reserve. We will have face painting, we will have colouring in, we will have fruit for the kids and cups of tea for everyone. This is a great way to end the school year. It is the last day of school, and we will be set up next to Barton Primary School. As always, everyone is welcome, no RSVP is necessary. This is a great way for you to meet your neighbours. So come on, everyone. Cranbourne West, we cannot wait to see you.

### **Bills**

#### **Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025**

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Natalie HUTCHINS** (Sydenham – Minister for Government Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women) (10:08): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 and I rise to speak absolutely in support of this bill, which includes measures to increase the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and hold perpetrators of family and sexual violence to account. These amendments send a really strong message that the Allan Labor government hears victims and acts on that advice. It is their experience that has to drive the change, and I have had the absolute pleasure of working with VSAC, which is the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council of Victoria, and have seen their good work in feeding in the lived experience voice.

Our current Family Violence Protection Act 2008 definition makes it clear that family violence goes far beyond physical harm, including a wide range of abusive, coercive and controlling behaviours that undermine personal safety and a person's autonomy, but the misuse of systems designed to support people is becoming increasingly common and needs to be recognised. Systems abuse happens when a perpetrator uses legal, government or institutional processes to threaten, control or punish a victim-survivor. This might include false reports, dragging them through unnecessary court procedures, interfering with Centrelink, making false reports to the ATO or on visa matters or manipulating child protection orders or the Family Court law system. These tactics drain a victim-survivor's money and emotional energy and can keep them living in fear and instability long after the relationship has ended.

Recognising systems abuse in law is absolutely crucial to naming these tactics and stopping perpetrators from turning the very systems designed to protect people into tools of harm.

Beloved family pets are often at the heart of a home, offering comfort, routine and emotional connection, and perpetrators can exploit this bond by withholding food, water, shelter or medication. I even had a situation of having a beautiful German shepherd turn up in my front yard, only to find out, after advertising this lost dog on Facebook, that this was about the third time in a couple of weeks that a woman's ex-partner had let her dog out on the street and removed all of his collars, hoping that he would never be recovered. We are recognising the less direct ways that animals are used to control, dominate and coerce victim-survivors.

Stalking is another way perpetrators create fear and maintain control through persistent following, surveilling and unwanted contact and misuse of technology. Recognising stalking in the Family Violence Protection Act acknowledges the serious and ongoing impact on victim's freedom, privacy and psychological safety. Including these forms of harm in the definition of 'family violence' gives much-needed clarity for people who know something is wrong but have not had the language or the legal framework to validate their experiences. Unfortunately, I have heard from way too many women in our communities that have experienced this.

Family violence intervention orders are vital tools for victims-survivors. They set clear legal boundaries around the perpetrator's behaviour, creating immediate consequences for breaches and giving victim-survivors a stronger sense of protection and agency so that they are not left to manage those behaviours alone. However, I have heard firsthand from victim-survivors about the harrowing and deeply traumatic experience of being misidentified as the perpetrator by police or the courts. Unfortunately, this happens to many Aboriginal women, who experience this at a higher rate than anybody else, and we need to make sure the very systems that are there to protect them do that. I want to thank Djirra and its CEO Antoinette Braybrook for the work that they have done in bringing change in this space. By requiring courts and police to consider specific factors before making an order, we are reducing the risk of harm and misidentification and strengthening workforce capacity to respond to each case individually, considering intersectionality, unique histories and individual vulnerabilities.

Victims have told me how retraumatising, confronting and even exhausting it is to apply for a new intervention order sometimes as often as every 12 months. I have heard the fear in the voices of women whose perpetrators are due to be released from prison with no intervention order in place, leaving them anxious, unprotected and unsure of what happens when that day comes. Introducing a two-year default length for intervention orders and ensuring those perpetrators in prison for family violence offences have an order that goes for the length of their sentence plus 12 months is important for women recovering from trauma and rebuilding their lives.

I have also heard many times from women who have fled to Victoria to escape family violence from other states, only to be told that they cannot be granted an intervention order because the abuse did not occur in this jurisdiction. For someone who has risked everything to seek safety, this is an unacceptable barrier. Ensuring these victims can seek safety and support through the legal system in Victoria is fundamental to addressing family violence. It does not stop at the border.

Many of you will know Conor Pall's story. Conor is the former deputy chair of the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, who turned 18 and aged out of his mother's intervention order against his father. At a time when he should have been focused on school, friends and the usual milestones of adolescence, he was instead forced to apply for his own order as an adult, just to stay safe. Changing the way this intervention order operates so that young people continue to be protected when they turn 18 is a significant step forward in supporting children and young people as victim-survivors, one I am really proud that we are delivering. These reforms are important steps in the government's ongoing work to keep communities safe and hold perpetrators to account.

Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence this government has invested more than \$4 billion to transform how Victoria prevents and responds to family violence and sexual violence, and I am proud that last year's budget continues to deliver on that commitment with ongoing funding for programs such as the adolescent violence in the home program, providing early intervention and trauma-informed support for young people using violence. Many of those young people often have had violence used on them. We are supporting people who use violence to change their behaviours, including 4400 voluntary men's behaviour change programs, perpetrator case management and specialised programs for different cohorts using violence. Through the women's safety package we are expanding the Alexis family violence response model with Victoria Police and the Salvation Army, providing intense support to the highest risk perpetrators and victim-survivors. We are also expanding Respectful Relationships and the modelling respect and equality program in schools, helping foster better behaviours in students, particularly boys and young men.

The amendments in this bill provide vital legal support to victim-survivors during some of the toughest moments of their lives and send a clear message to perpetrators that they will be held to account. They reflect this government's unwavering commitment to the safety that victim-survivors deserve, to ending family violence and sexual violence and to ensuring the safety and dignity of women across Victoria and across Australia.

I want to conclude by shouting out to the amazing workforce across our state that are at the forefront of supporting victim-survivors and protecting their rights and their safety, from Victoria Police through to our staff at the Orange Doors through to our partners in the many, many myriad programs that are run by the not-for-profit sector and of course our workforce at places like Safe Steps, who take those 24/7 calls and place people into safer accommodation and safer spaces. I think that quite often in this workforce they are absolute heroes of our community and are not always recognised, so I want to do a shout-out to them. I commend the bill to the house.

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (10:18): I rise today to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. As a former shadow minister for family violence, this is unfortunately something that I have had to hear about too much. I have spoken on these types of issues many times in this place, and it gets no easier on each occasion.

There are significant issues which we are facing in Victoria which have been occurring at an increasing rate where women do not feel safe. This is on the back of some horrific and very high profile murders and stalking and mistreatment of women, and they do not feel safe on the streets of Melbourne. They are followed into an area where there is nobody around and come to an untimely death – a horrific death, a death which often involves sexual violence.

Unfortunately, there are far too many instances of this. One instance would be bad enough. I think that this feeling is rippling throughout the Victorian community, where I hear so frequently now that women are not comfortable going out for a walk or a run – particularly around the streets of Melbourne, but it happens in regional Victoria as well – because they do not know what will happen to them. They are worried about somebody waiting for them, somebody following them and there not being support available to intervene in time. It is impacting on the lives of every Victorian woman, not just on their psychological and mental health but also their physical health, because they have a fear of going outdoors.

For me, this hits quite hard because this year I have had somebody who has taken an escalating amount of interest in my activities and my location. I can share with the house that it scared the life out of me when I received a phone call from my partner that the person who had been sending me relentless emails was waiting on the side of the road between my home and my child's school at a time when he was going to school – at drop-off time. I have been walking down the street with one of my children and seen this person, and we have had to carefully curate walking on the other side of the road, hiding behind cars and trees so that I am not seen. This is an unfair and unsafe situation.

It is not just me and my position. It is something that every Victorian woman has felt at some point in time: unwelcome contact, unwelcome leers, stepping over that line, being too close, trying to form a relationship and putting pressure on a woman because she does not want to be part of that situation. There are insufficient protections in place for women in those scenarios, and I know that because I am one of those women who has been in that position and not felt protected. While I believe that I am strong enough and smart enough to be able to keep an eye out and avoid those situations, I never want to be in a position where my children are at risk because the laws are not keeping up with what we need to see to protect women and children in this state.

For me, this is something I have lived with, so it shakes me to my core, but I cannot imagine the fear of other women who have walked those footsteps and come to a tragic end. I am sure there will be some reflection and debate on some of the more high-profile cases that have been noteworthy and about which we have spoken directly in this place. We all know what happened in the tragic ending of Jill Meagher's life. She was walking home and was followed home, and in the most inexplicable and unacceptable way her life was ended by somebody who was on the sex offenders register. She was followed home. Then in 2018 there was Eurydice Dixon, about whom I spoke in this place. I was the Shadow Minister for Women at the time. It was a tragic ending – leaving a comedy show, catching a tram home, being followed and then being raped and murdered in a Melbourne parkland.

While I understand that these reforms are necessary, they have been necessary for a very long time. It is unfair for any Victorian woman to feel like she has to go it alone and that she has not got support behind her. While in this place we hear many times that there will be a strengthening of different laws so that this will not happen again, time and time again we hear the same scenarios arising.

We hear that calls are made to 000 and there is not an ability to respond within a timeframe that provides safety and security for that individual. As I mentioned at the top of my contribution, there are women who are changing their behaviours and spending more time isolated at home than doing what we expect them, young women in particular, to be able to do: go out and live their life, spend time with their friends, have a good time and make those memories that form part of the fabric of our personality and how we engage with other people, perhaps even go out and find a loved one – for a short time or maybe a lifelong partner. Women are losing their right in Victoria to do that, because they do not feel safe.

I made an announcement a number of years ago with the member for Brighton which was around stalking laws and particularly in relation to Celeste Manno, who met an untimely demise when she knew somebody was fixated on her, was stalking her. She was murdered in her own home. It is something that should never happen. For the family then to have to grieve their daughter in a way that they feel like it could have been prevented is something that mentally scars them for life. It is something that is unfathomable in many ways, but unfortunately if people think they will get away with it, they will do that. We cannot predict how people will behave, what their motivations are and what their actions will be, and women, because they cannot predict that and they do not feel safe, are staying at home more and more often. This has a serious impact on the mental health of Victorian women. It has a serious impact on the fabric of everything else in our community – of seeing people out and about in a park, which of course provides an extra level of security if you are going for a walk, and that additional vibrancy in our towns and our cities, with people happy to go out for dinner, go out to the pub or go to a concert and have a good time without fear. That is something we should be striving for again in Victoria.

I note that while this legislation implements some of the recommendations that were made by the Victorian Law Reform Commission in regard to their investigation into stalking in non-family violence settings, it does not implement all recommendations. There is still much work to be done. These recommendations were handed down in September 2022. Three years later we are implementing two of the 45 recommendations. There is a lot more work to be done, and I urge the government to bring forward those recommendations as quickly as possible.

We have had recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We have had these recommendations put forward by the Victorian Law Reform Commission. We need to listen and to look at the evidence – of the women who cannot contribute to the structure of this legislation because they are no longer with us today and of women who cannot contribute to this conversation for fear of engaging with the wider community. While I support these recommendations, I urge the government to do more, to do more quickly, and make sure every Victorian woman feels safe living their life outside of the home in the wider community.

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (10:28): In speaking in support of this bill I firstly acknowledge and thank all victim-survivors and those who work and volunteer in this sector. I acknowledge the story just told by the member for Lowan, and I express my sorrow that she has had to experience this.

I refute, though, the narrative presented by the member for Malvern yesterday that this government has not worked hard and created serious and meaningful reform. We, along with the extraordinary victim-survivors, sector members and experts, have done a lot of hard work. Since we were elected we have shone a light on family violence and we have done so much to reform this policy area. I acknowledge and thank the former Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, who spoke yesterday on this bill, the member for Kalkallo; the current Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, who just spoke and who was instrumental in setting up so many of the supports and reforms we have now; and the Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change, the member for Mordialloc, who is doing extraordinary work. As the Minister for Equality I recognise the harm family violence does in the LGBTQIA+ community, much of which includes the violence by family members who wish to hurt and control their loved ones because of who they are.

We know that the LGBTQIA+ community face higher rates of violence, with 65 per cent experiencing violence in their lifetime. Trans and gender-diverse people are disproportionately represented in this figure, particularly trans women, and I do acknowledge that today is trans remembrance day. We know that young LGBTQIA+ people might become homeless for sharing their identities and that finding inclusive supports is a barrier to disclosing experiences of violence. This is especially true in regional and rural areas for people with disabilities, older people and rainbow mob.

This Labor government has worked hard to strengthen protections for victim-survivors of family violence and to take preventative measures – more than any other state or territory. We know the best protection of women and of children is respect, is a community where all Victorians are respected and equal, where we have healthy masculinities and where men who are choosing to use violence make different choices. When it comes to equality and to responding to the challenges of family and gender-based violence, we have absolutely led the way. We are the first jurisdiction to hold a Royal Commission into Family Violence. We were the first to set up the important Orange Door network. We have created a designated section of Victoria Police which trains the force in the best methods of response. We have strengthened Respectful Relationships, leading the nation, and introduced the Ballarat saturation pilot, a pilot program that will measure the effectiveness of saturating the community with anti-violence and respectful campaigns over four years.

This bill is another step in our work to combat family violence, bringing together several important changes, including improvements to family violence intervention orders. Rather than orders lasting only six to 12 months and requiring repeat traumatic court appearances, there will now be a presumption of a two-year minimum term. This reduces the burden on victim-survivors and ensures longer term stability. It also ensures that when a child is listed on a parent's FVIO, when they turn 18 they continue to be protected. The protections do not automatically age out. The change to extend FVIO protection once a child turns 18 is a critical step forward. Young people can face a legal cliff when they reach adulthood, and protections can lapse as they are entering a phase of life full of new vulnerabilities – and they can lapse without the young person even knowing that they have done so.

It is through listening to and understanding lived experience that we make the policy and law changes that reflect what is needed, like this one. I acknowledge Conor Pall, a powerful young advocate with lived experience, who has played an important role in highlighting this problem and pushing for reform. Reflecting on his own experience, Conor said:

I won't stop fighting until we all adequately recognise and act upon children and young people's unique experiences of family violence, as victim-survivors in their own right ...

I thank Conor for his determination to advocate for others, for his compassion for others and for using his experiences to drive change. He was invaluable in his role as deputy chair of the Victorian Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, and he is a young man who has refused to let violence used against him and his family determine who he is or how he lives his life. He has shown courage, leadership and compassion.

Holding lived experience like Conor's at the centre of our decision-making has been integral to the strength of this government's response to the incredibly challenging nature of family and gender-based violence. Listening to lived experience is what has led to the inclusion of extending orders when a perpetrator is imprisoned. A court will be able to extend the FVIO to match the length of a jail sentence, plus an additional 12 months on release.

We know that risk can increase for those who have lived through family violence experiences when a perpetrator has completed their sentence and is released. Perpetrators of family and gender-based violence often become obsessed with control and will take any measure to ensure their control over their loved one. Ironically, what they do not realise is how much their desire for control actually controls them and determines so much of how they behave and the choices they make.

In their choice of asserting control, we know through listening to lived experience that violence takes many forms. We are broadening the definition of 'family violence' to also include stalking, systems abuse and mistreatment of animals. We hear of perpetrators so obsessed with controlling their loved one, so unable to control themselves, that they insert tracking devices in prams, toys, handbags, cars and more. We hear of loved pets being threatened with violence or having violence used on them to ensure compliance. We hear of complete strangers obsessively monitoring someone in a frightening attempt to control. By strengthening stalking laws, the government is sending a clear message: controlling, harassing and terrorising behaviour, even when non-physical, is unacceptable and dangerous. This shift will better align legal protections with the lived experience of many victim-survivors, acknowledging that family violence and gender-based violence is not always about a single violent incident; it is an ongoing pattern of fear, intimidation and control.

We will also be able to better protect people who have fled to Victoria escaping from a family violence perpetrator by bringing in changes which will allow courts to create protective orders when some or all offending has occurred interstate. These changes are important and continue the strengthening of the family violence response in Victoria.

With the extraordinary work that has happened in this state in the last 10 years, we have seen an improved recognition of the many forms of family violence. We see the diminishing of the stigma of being somebody who has experienced family violence, and we see first responders and supports like the Orange Door having a greater understanding of family violence. We see an increase in reporting as a result. We are now seeing reports of family violence in a year total over 100,000.

Prevention is key, stopping this choice to use violence before it even happens. This is why Respectful Relationships is so important and why this government continues to strengthen this program. We must continue to support children to be kind, inclusive and supportive of each other. To have respect for others, our children and young people need to be supported to understand consent, respect, equality and emotional literacy from an early age. By building a culture of respect in schools, we lay down the foundations for a future in which violence is less likely and less tolerated. It is also important that we do all we can to focus on healthy masculinities, giving our boys and young men the best start to their

adult lives. This needs a whole-of-community approach, as does the acceptance that violence has no place in our homes.

I also want to acknowledge the important work of Jesuit Social Services and their Man Box project. The Man Box is exactly that: men trapped in a box of unhealthy social norms, prevented from reaching their full potential. Key findings from the 2024 Man Box report include that many men feel social pressures to conform to rigid norms – 36 to 37 per cent of men aged 18 to 45 said they felt these pressures; and 24 to 25 per cent personally agree with the Man Box rules – that is, being stoic, always in control, never showing vulnerability. Those who most strongly endorse those rules are significantly more likely to hold violence-supportive attitudes, to have perpetrated physical or sexual violence and to suffer poorer mental health. The research reveals that these harmful norms not only hurt others but also limit the potential of these men themselves. Our prevention work includes supporting Jesuit Social Services' modelling respect and equality program, which recruits, trains and supports male and female role models, including teachers, social workers and sports coaches. These role models are supported to promote positive expressions of masculinity and promote respect and equality amongst men and boys.

Aligned with this whole-community approach is the Ballarat saturation pilot led by Respect Victoria. This is an important tool in working towards safer families and relationships. This four-year pilot is the first of its kind in Australia and another example of how our state and our government is leading the nation in this work. This pilot will saturate the community with messaging, education and connection points across schools, workplaces, sports clubs, health services and more, bringing the whole community into the conversation about safety, gender equality and respect. I will take this opportunity to thank Respect Victoria, particularly chair Kate Fitz-Gibbon and project lead and former acting CEO Serina McDuff, for their leadership in researching, designing and launching this pilot.

The reforms we are debating today are another firm step towards ending family violence in this state, building on the work that we have done so passionately, so consistently and so strongly since we were elected, since the former Premier made a promise to the people of Victoria in 2014 that we would have a Royal Commission into Family Violence – a promise he honoured. This government has spent every day since first being elected working to eradicate family and gender-based violence from our state.

**Rachel WESTAWAY** (Pahran) (10:38): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. The opposition will not oppose this legislation. It makes sensible reforms to family violence intervention orders, introduces protection for animals in family violence contexts and updates criminal procedure provisions. These are absolutely worthwhile measures. But I cannot allow this bill to pass without addressing a profound failure – a failure not in what this bill does but in what it fails to do, particularly regarding stalking reforms. This is not merely an omission; it is a continuation of delay that has real, dangerous consequences.

The numbers tell a stark story. Stalking offences in Victoria are absolutely at their highest level in more than a decade. In the year to June 2025 non-family violence stalking increased 9.4 per cent to 1171 cases and family violence stalking increased 6.9 per cent to 1807 cases. Combined, that is nearly 3000 reported stalking offences in a single year, placing enormous pressure on our justice system's capacity to respond. These are not just statistics. They represent thousands of Victorians, predominantly women, living in fear whilst our system struggles with risk assessment, timely intervention and effective protection.

In 2020, 23-year-old Celeste Manno from Mernda was murdered by a man who had stalked her. Despite her multiple reports to authorities, despite her fear, despite her family's advocacy, the system failed to protect her.

Following tireless advocacy by her mother Aggie Di Mauro, the government commissioned the Victorian Law Reform Commission to review stalking. The VLRC conducted comprehensive research and consulted extensively, and in September 2022 they tabled a report with 45 carefully

considered recommendations. These recommendations were designed to strengthen legal frameworks, improve risk identification, modernise police responses and increase victim protections. That was in September 2022; that is more than two years ago. This bill implements two of those 45 recommendations – that is less than 5 per cent: recommendation 26, allowing courts to make interim personal safety intervention orders on their own motion, and recommendation 33, which is partially implemented, to clarify the meaning of ‘course of conduct’ in the stalking offence.

These are positive steps, but they represent a fraction of what independent experts said was absolutely urgently needed. Where are the improved police response protocols, where are the enhanced risk assessment tools, where is the better information sharing between agencies and where are the clearer pathways for victims? Where is the modernised legislative structure that would create three distinct stalking offences based on intentional, reckless and objective fault reforms? They are all absent. The overwhelming majority of reforms that could save lives remain unimplemented more than two years after they were recommended.

This failure on stalking sits within a broader, more fundamental failure. We are not thinking preventatively about family violence. We are reacting to harm after it occurs, pouring resources into managing consequences rather than disrupting the pathways that lead to violence in the first place.

I want to draw the Parliament’s attention to groundbreaking research by a constituent in my area, Professor Leonie Segal, and her colleagues at the University of South Australia. Their work on disrupting pathways into family violence should fundamentally reshape how we approach this crisis. Professor Segal’s research demonstrates that child maltreatment directly impacts brain health, fundamentally changing how brains develop, stress responses and relational patterning. This affects behaviour, emotional regulation, cognition, impulse control, alertness to threats, empathy, sense of self-worth with agency, and shame. The consequences cascade across the lifespan. Child maltreatment is causally associated with mental illness, substance use and troubled intimate relationships, with an increased risk of violence.

The data is really compelling. Research from the iCAN project tracking over 620,000 persons born in South Australia between 1986 and 2017 show that children with any child protection contact have mortality rates 2.3 times higher than those with no contact, that for children with substantiated maltreatment it is 2.8 times higher and that for children in out-of-home care it is 5.1 times higher. People aged 16 to 33 with a history of child maltreatment have death rates from suicide that are 2.8 times higher; from poisoning, alcohol, drugs and mental illness, 4.8 times higher, and from natural causes, twice as high as their peers with no child protection contact.

Perhaps most critically, this trauma transmits across generations. Professor Segal’s research shows that 87 per cent of children entering out-of-home care have mothers who themselves have child protection contact.

The adjusted relative risk shows mothers with substantiated maltreatment are 6.3 times more likely to have children who have experienced substantive maltreatment compared to mothers with no child protection contact. This is absolutely the pathway. Childhood trauma leads to disturbed rational capacity, which leads to troubled intimate relationships, which leads to family violence, which leads to more childhood trauma. The cycle perpetuates.

Emergency department visits tell the same story. Among those with out-of-home care histories, 70 per cent of ED visits for mental health reasons, 70 per cent for poisoning and 62 per cent for alcohol and drug issues were for individuals with prior child protection contact. Children aged six to 16 with out-of-home care histories have 22.9 times the odds of stress responses and PTSD, 20.7 times the odds of conduct disorders and 11.8 times the odds of emotional disorders compared to children with no child protection contact.

Professor Segal’s research also challenges us to move beyond simplistic narratives. Research from the United States shows that exposure to physical abuse increases the odds of suicide attempt by 5.1 times

for females and 6.9 for males. For date violence it is 3.2 for females and eight for males, and for weapon carrying it is 4.2 for females and 3.6 for males. Studies conclude there is a direct path between a history of childhood trauma and intimate partner violence perpetration. Other studies show child abuse and neglect increase the risk of intimate partner violence as victim or perpetrator, and of reciprocal violence.

Both men and women are victims. Both men and women are perpetrators. The evidence shows that we need to focus on healing capacity for successful interpersonal relationships and better support for troubled families, and this means addressing the disturbed rational capacity that flows from childhood maltreatment, regardless of the gender. We need to leverage universal services, early childhood education, childcare centres and maternal and child health. We need to revisit funding models to facilitate intensive, skilful, responsive service delivery.

We also need to address the workforce gender imbalance. The early childhood workforce is less than 5 per cent male; primary school teachers, approximately 28 per cent male; social workers, approximately 13 per cent male; and registered psychologists, 19 per cent male. If we are serious about healing perpetrators, and particularly men's capacities for healthy relationships, we need male role models in therapeutic and education systems that work with vulnerable families.

I will return to this bill. We do not oppose it, but we cannot celebrate modest reforms when comprehensive change has been recommended and delayed for over two years. I call on the government to immediately release a full response to all 45 VLRC stalking recommendations, with a clear implementation timeline. I call for adequate resourcing of Victoria Police, for the courts and for victims services to respond to the stalking crisis. More fundamentally I call on the government to adopt the evidence-based approach outlined by Professor Segal and her colleagues. This means a major shift in budget allocations, from managing consequences to preventing harm. It means therapeutic intervention from infancy. It means training the workforce. It means understanding that both men and women need healing capacity and both men and women can be victims and perpetrators.

The opposition will not oppose this bill, but we will hold the government accountable for its failure to act with the urgency this crisis demands. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ella GEORGE** (Lara) (10:49): I rise today to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. Can I start my contribution by thanking the Premier, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and their teams for their outstanding work on this important piece of legislation. There is no place for violence in this state. I think that is something that all members here can agree on, and this bill highlights our government's ongoing commitment to protecting women and children. These new reforms will keep family violence victim-survivors safe for as long as they need.

Members in this house may know that this is a matter close to my heart, and I often speak about family violence here. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament I spent several years working in family violence reform within Victoria's court system, and now I am so proud to be here as a member of a government that, for the first time in the history of our state, has taken real action on family violence.

This is a government that has implemented every single recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, real commitments that have been supported with real funding to support them. This legislation is a continuation of our steadfast commitment to ending violence against women and children in Victoria and at the same time ensuring that we do everything we can to support those who are experiencing family violence.

This bill will set out key reforms across three main areas – in family violence, stalking and sexual offences. I would like to focus my contribution on the reforms that this bill will make in how we respond to family violence. This bill will make a number of reforms, including broadening the definition of 'family violence' to include stalking, mistreatment of animals and systems abuse. It will require courts and police to consider specific factors to avoid misidentifying victims as perpetrators

before issuing family violence intervention orders or family violence safety notices. It will prevent children from ageing out of family violence intervention orders on their 18th birthday, an important reform and a key recommendation from a Victorian Law Reform Commission 2025 report. Courts will be allowed to issue family violence intervention orders for offences occurring outside of Victoria, a hugely important reform for victim-survivors who live in border towns or for those who have moved away for their safety. This bill will establish a default length of two years for all family violence intervention orders, and it will allow family violence intervention orders for imprisoned perpetrators to last until the end of their sentence plus 12 months post release to keep families safer. It will improve the service of family violence intervention orders to expedite protection and prevent avoidance by imprisoned perpetrators.

These reforms are a long time coming and something that I know many victim-survivors and those working in the family violence sector have long campaigned for. In fact many of the reforms in this bill were suggested by victim-survivors and people with lived experience. This bill would not have been possible without the hard work, advocacy and dedication of victim-survivors and the family violence service sector, and for that I thank them.

These reforms are another piece of legislation that our government has introduced to the Victorian Parliament to ensure that better protections are in place for all Victorians. These reforms make it clear that there is no place for violence in our state. We know that family violence is the number one law and order issue in Victoria. In the year leading up to June 2025 there was a rise in reported cases of family violence, climbing 7.7 per cent to a total of over 100,000 incidents, and the incident rate also saw an uptick, increasing by 5.9 per cent to almost 1500 incidents per 100,000 residents in Victoria. According to the family violence database for 2023–24, a significant 64 per cent of those who committed family violence were identified as repeat offenders, having a history of prior police-reported incidents related to family violence.

This is a major issue in the Lara community and right across the Geelong region. I have many people come to me and come to my office seeking support for family violence. When I speak to people out and about in the community and I mention that I have previously worked in family violence, they often disclose their own experiences of family violence to me. It is these conversations that I and so many people in this place have that really solidify the importance of this work and why when it comes to family violence there is always more that we can be doing. There is always more that we can be doing to protect children and women from violence in their homes, and that is exactly what this bill sets out to do.

Earlier this year I chaired an inquiry by the Legal and Social Issues Committee, along with the member for Eildon, into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria. This inquiry focused on the mechanisms for capturing data on the profiles and volume of perpetrators of family violence in Victoria and also the barriers to achieving a full understanding of this cohort. The final report from our committee, titled *Building the Evidence Base: Inquiry into Capturing Data on People Who Use Family Violence in Victoria*, was the result of a year-long, thorough consultation with various organisations, authorities and sector experts, and our committee concluded that while we have come so far in Victoria, gathering accurate and complete data on family violence, particularly regarding perpetrators, is still challenging. The committee's report highlights the complexities involved in collecting comprehensive data on family violence and its perpetrators in Victoria, noting that such information is dispersed across various organisations. While this bill is not in response to our committee's work or the recommendations we made, there are some clear links. For example, this bill's emphasis on maintaining protective orders beyond a child's 18th birthday aligns with the report's findings that data collection must reflect the ongoing risks associated with family violence, regardless of age.

Another important reform that I would like to touch on in more detail is the requirement that courts and police consider specific factors to avoid misidentifying victims as perpetrators before issuing family violence intervention orders or family violence safety notices. Misidentification of the

predominant aggressor remains a significant issue and is an area in which we can do better. This is when a victim-survivor of family violence is wrongly identified as the main perpetrator by law enforcement or the justice system, and it can occur due to a number of reasons. It can occur when self-defence is misinterpreted, when perpetrators manipulate situations, where systemic biases exist or where there is a lack of understanding about the dynamics of family violence. Imagine what it is like to be the victim of family violence but to find yourself in a situation where you are accused of being the perpetrator. The ABC reported on this last year. They heard from individuals about their experiences. One person said:

He just beat the crap out of me. When the police arrived, they put me in the back of the paddy wagon... and I was screaming, 'I've been abused, I have been for a long time'. They sat inside with him and took his statement. He was so cool, calm and collected on the night... I was hysterical. I spent the night in the cell. They ended up charging me for breaking a window and giving me the AVO. Never got the chance to make a statement ever.

That is horrific. People who are victims of family violence should never be misidentified as the perpetrator. I am really pleased to see reform in this bill that will go a great way I think in fixing that. This is not an uncommon problem. At least 10 per cent of family violence intervention orders or family violence safety notices incorrectly identify the predominant aggressor. That is something that the family violence reform implementation monitor has found in her previous reports, and it has a disproportionate impact on different cohorts of Victorians. It impacts First Nations women, women with a disability, people who are LGBTIQ+ and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I am really pleased that these reforms will ensure that the courts or police must have a better understanding of the context of the relationship, the history of family violence within that relationship and also any characteristics that may increase the risk of misidentification. I think these reforms regarding misidentification are really long overdue, and I am really pleased to see that the state government is taking up this challenge which remains really significant in how we address family violence in our state and do something about it.

Doing something about family violence is something that we are so proud of as members of the state Labor government. Victoria is leading the nation when it comes to preventing violence against women and girls. We had our nation-leading Royal Commission into Family Violence, where we accepted, implemented and funded every single one of the 227 recommendations, changing our systems, changing how we support people experiencing family violence and changing how we talk about family violence in our community to prevent and respond to violence. When it comes to our response to family violence, I could not be prouder to be a member of the state Labor government. I commend this bill to the house.

**Cindy McLEISH** (Eildon) (10:59): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 that is before us. I will note that the legislation covers three areas specifically: intervention orders, stalking and some court and criminal elements. I want to begin by acknowledging all of the victims of violence, family violence and stalking, the journeys that they have had and the trauma that they have experienced, and also the workers in the field, because it can be a fairly tough job.

I am going to begin by talking about the area of the family violence intervention orders and a couple of positive changes. There is a default length now of two years, which means people do not need to keep coming back and seeking an extension. It can give clarity of mind for that period. It can reduce stress, even though I know that there are too many breaches of intervention orders. But for many once that intervention order is in place, the perpetrator actually stops and takes a step back and thinks, 'Gosh, maybe I have crossed the line here' – not every case of course. These changes align with other states, such as New South Wales, Western Australia and the ACT.

One important change that others talked about earlier is that when a child turns 18 they do not age out of an order. If there is an order in place for the family for eight months and four months into that the

child turns 18, they do not now age out of that, and I think that makes a lot of sense. People have referred to Conor Pall. I have met with Conor, and I understand the trauma that he has experienced.

Another change is a default 12 months post release in relation to somebody who has been incarcerated. They have the term of the sentence, and that intervention order then goes for another 12 months beyond that. We hear very often that when somebody is released after having been incarcerated tensions are very high, and that can cause risk. We saw down in Bayside there was a murder of somebody post release. Perhaps an intervention order could have kept them apart at that time. There are also alternatives for how intervention orders are served, including leaving them at the correctional centre.

The bill looks at addressing areas of misidentification through different checkpoints and cultural awareness. Too often we find that the police turn up and it is the male that has scratches and things like that, alleging that the female is the perpetrator, when the female has been defending herself. This misidentification needs to be addressed, and also if the offending happens outside of Victoria.

I am going to talk about stalking now. We know stalking is an insidious form of abuse: persistent, terrifying and overwhelmingly directed at women. Yet the devastating impact it has had on victims often remains overlooked. It is misunderstood and grossly underpoliced. For too long it has been minimised as something less than violence. Victims are still asked what they could have done to avoid being stalked, instead of perpetrators being held to account. We know the culture of victim blaming is certainly outdated, dangerous and has no place in the modern justice system. Alarming – and I know that government members have not referred to the increases year on year in stalking offences – in the last decade to June 2025 they reached their highest level. Stalking in the non-family violence context has increased 9.4 per cent to 1171 cases, while family violence stalking has risen by 6.9 per cent, to 1807 cases. These numbers represent thousands of Victorians, mostly women, living in fear, where the justice system has failed to keep up.

I want to quote from the Victorian Law Reform Commission, who stated:

While family violence stalking and non-family violence stalking can look similar the contexts are different and call for different responses.

As I have referred to the report into stalking by the Victorian Law Reform Commission, I cannot help but notice the delays – I think unacceptable delays – by the Victorian government in bringing this forward. In November 2020, five years ago, 23-year-old Mernda woman Celeste Manno was murdered by a man who had stalked her for months. That behaviour had been reported. Her mother Aggie Di Mauro tirelessly advocated to get changes here. The government and the Attorney-General at the time gave the terms of reference to the Victorian Law Reform Commission on 17 February 2021. That is well over 4½ years ago. The focus there was on the personal safety intervention order system, what prevents the law from effectively responding to stalking, harassment and similar conduct and how to improve the law and the justice system. This was in the context of non-family violence in relation to Celeste Manno. The report was tabled in Parliament in September 2022, three years ago. The government have not had the courtesy to respond to that. There have been multiple requests made in the other place, and the member for Malvern, when he was the Shadow Attorney-General, asked the government when they were going to respond to the 45 recommendations.

They did not. They said they do not need to respond; they are doing work in the background. Well, the bill before us addresses two of those 45 recommendations: 26 and 33. Recommendation 26 was about amending the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010, which is being done here. Recommendation 33 was to amend the stalking offence part of the Crimes Act 1958 to improve its clarity and practical application, and there were some changes around the course of conduct here. We have many, many recommendations that have gone unaddressed. A number of those relate to the Magistrates' Court and changes and things that could happen there.

It is extraordinary that we heard at Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings this year that the CEO of Court Services Victoria Louise Anderson said Victoria's courts are now 'identifying what activities may need to stop' because of Labor's budget cuts. They have been ordered to find over \$106 million in savings over the next four years, starting with \$26.1 million in 2025–26 – that is now. There are so many recommendations about work to be done in the Magistrates' Court. The government have not responded to that report back to the Law Reform Commission. They said, 'We're just plugging along at doing this.' This is not good enough and it is not fast enough. Work needs to be done quicker, and certainly we do not need budget cuts in the area. We saw budget cuts of some \$28 million or so in the area of prevention of family violence, and the government members are talking it up as though they are doing everything – they could be doing more. I look at the statistics around stalking that we have and the offender and victim sex dynamics in incidents in the year ending 31 March 2024. For stalking offences, 60 per cent were male offenders on a female victim, but we also had 24 per cent male offender on male victim. There is so much to be done here, and the government are not working quick enough in this space. We have too many people that are being left by the wayside.

I also want to refer to some of the other recommendations that have been made. There are recommendations about cyberstalking. Things have changed rapidly in this space, and quite frankly we did the Royal Commission into Family Violence 10 years ago. It is a decade. Things have changed. Things have moved on. The surveillance and monitoring of women, particularly sometimes through their children and sometimes through articles that they have, through their cars or through a teddy bear with a device in it – there are so many things that have moved on that need to be addressed. We heard about the issues of cyberstalking in the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report into stalking. We have not heard about it. They referred to education programs – this is three years ago – and I heard one of the former ministers talk today about some of the things that are going to be done. These should have been worked on. They should have been implemented. It is so frustrating to know and to see that the offences around family violence and stalking are going up continually. More needs to be done. We cannot be complacent. We have to all work together to make a difference here, because we need to.

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (11:09): It is indeed an important opportunity to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I too want to place on the record my acknowledgement of victim-survivors and those that we have lost to the impacts of family violence, gendered violence in our community and sexual violence more broadly. It is a horrific toll on our community that touches hundreds of thousands of Victorians and has intergenerational significance and trauma for those that are impacted, and we place on the record our acknowledgement of them today.

These reforms are critical, and I just want to take the shadow minister up on a couple of points on the narration around the prevention of family violence recommendations and how it has been 10 years. That is correct. That was a reform led by this government, with 227 recommendations implemented. I am not sure if the shadow minister is aware, but there have been three rolling action plans since. We do not rest on the laurels of 227 recommendations.

There are three rolling action plans, of which 106 recommendations were launched at the Melbourne Museum with the minister and I only a few weeks ago. If you read 106 of those recommendations, the discussion from the shadow minister does not stack up. When you read the rapid review from Micaela Cronin, and you see that Victoria is well and truly outpacing every other jurisdiction –

**Cindy McLeish** interjected.

**Tim RICHARDSON**: The shadow minister says we can do more. Those opposite called this a lawyers picnic. When Daniel Andrews was Premier, and when as opposition leader he announced this, we were chastised for suggesting a royal commission into the prevention of family violence was needed. We were told there was not more that needed to be done, so spare me the partisan rhetoric in this portfolio area. There is always more to be done, and it is not just law reform out of this area.

We have over 60,000 men as perpetrators of family violence – as people who use violence right now. That is on Victoria Police’s records and register. It is a far greater number, because we know the toll of family and sexual violence is so much deeper in our community. That is why law reforms like this are so critical. But we must front up to the fact that the majority of people that we lose to family violence and gendered violence in our community, their perpetrators and the people that have used violence against them and the femicides that have occurred and the killing and taking of life of kids, many of those perpetrators were not known to Victoria Police. This troubles me as Parliamentary Secretary for Men’s Behaviour Change, because when we think about orders, when we think about eyes and ears 24/7, we want to do everything we can to support Victoria Police. But what really gives me the chills and what really scares me is those that are unknown. Two per cent of those that cause harm in using violence contribute to some 40 per cent of the toll and impact that it has had in our community. So we have to go after those that are high-harm risk, and some of these reforms that really go towards that I want to talk about.

Those that are not known to us, those that have not had an interaction that then take the life, generally of a female former partner or intimate partner, I always sit there as the Parliamentary Secretary for Men’s Behaviour Change and go, ‘When will we ever find those people?’ What is the treatment and solution to the majority of people that take life and kill an intimate or former partner through family violence or gendered violence or femicide? How do we find and respond to that? That is the societal discussion that we need in our community around how we raise boys and men in our community. What are the things and conditions in our society that see gendered violence in our communities? How do we respond to that in the future, from when we are raising our boys with the gendered stereotypes that we see around traditional forms of what it means to be a boy or girl or non-binary in our community, all the way through to the attitudes of what it means to be a man.

I give a big shout-out to Respect Victoria as an institution led by Helen Bolton and chair Kate Fitz-Gibbon, and the work that is being done by the Jesuit Social Services under the leadership of Julie Edwards and the magnificent Matt Tyler, who has led their men’s project. This gives us the evidentiary basis of what it means to respond to gendered violence and those that are unknown that we see downstream – the things that boys are exposed to and what it means to be a man, the damaging stereotypes that impact on their mental health and wellbeing and their aspirations in life, that then cascade into damaging attitudes towards women and girls. In every bit of the work that we do this needs to be multifaceted and this needs to be ever present.

Never can there be a greater example of horrific trauma than what was inflicted on the communities of the member for Wendouree and the member for Eureka. The support and leadership that has been shown by both of them in conjunction with the member for Ripon, and to see what is happening with Respect Ballarat and the huge community response and leadership that has been shown there, is that glimmer of hope. It is that moment in time. When as a society people say, ‘Enough is enough’ and it comes from a place of despair, those are the building blocks for the saturation model that gives us the hope and the aspiration to change things for the future. We place on record our absolute condolences to the families that have been impacted by people taken due to family violence.

Now, there are a couple of other really important points on this bill that I want to give a shout-out to. This Parliament would probably know some incredible children’s advocates and young people who have advocated for family violence intervention orders and the support of children.

Conor Pall is a name that would be known to many people. What an incredible Australian, who has led the discussion around children in their own right being supported in family violence. Remember, of the 550,000 people that have accessed Orange Door services, some 200,000 have been kids. We know the intergenerational trauma that happens when a young person is impacted by family violence and what that means for them in the future, and Conor has been a fierce advocate. The *Unsafe & Unseen* report that was launched at RMIT the other week spells out what government needs to do, and I am really passionate about the work that we do in supporting children when they come forward and detail their lived experience and how we can support and care for them. A big shout-out

to Conor and so many victim-survivor children who have made this happen today and stopped kids ageing out when their parents' family intervention orders pass on their 18th birthday so that they are not retraumatised, they are not brought before the court system again and they are not at risk of having to front up to a perpetrator who has impacted on them.

There is another big thing in this report that I am really glad to see. In about 16 per cent of family violence intervention orders or the moments that Victoria Police arrive we see misidentification. This is disproportionate for our First Nations communities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. For the best efforts and all the training done at the police academy, we still see the misidentification of victim-survivors. Remember, 95 per cent of violence in our community is perpetrated by men and boys, but the misidentification of 16 per cent is a disproportionately huge number when we think of the scale of the family violence offences that we have in Victoria. So the work that is done here, requiring courts and police to consider certain factors before making a family violence intervention order to avoid misidentification of a victim and the huge impact that will have on them if they are misidentified as a perpetrator of family violence, is critical. The introduction of a default two-year length for family violence intervention orders, ensuring protection lasts longer, is a big hallmark of the family safety package that was that was launched in 2024 – a \$100 million package that has led significant reforms in this space.

I also want to place on the record two magnificent ministers I have had the chance to work with. The member for Eltham is one of the most amazing people I have ever had the chance to work with. She mentored and supported me in this role as Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change when I was really intimidated by what that role might mean. She is an absolute superstar and a credit to our Parliament and to our nation in the work that she has done. And the magnificent member for Sydenham and current Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has done a power of work. It was Minister Hutchins, the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, that established Respect Victoria. When you think of legacy in places – and we are just for a moment passing through this place – Minister Hutchins has a huge amount to be so proud of, because there are women and kids today that will be safer because of the work of Minister Hutchins and there will be boys and men in the future who have been part of the primary prevention response through Respect Victoria, which would not have been possible without her leadership. Those two ministers have done so much in that space. I have been a boundary commentator and boundary writer for that work over the last couple of years, and they have done an incredible amount of work. Finally, the Attorney-General, Sonia Kirkenny, is one of the best people in the nation, and her work as Attorney-General in this space deserves all the credit in the world. Thank you for this bill and the work that you have done.

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (11:19): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. The Greens will support this bill. It contains important and long-awaited reforms that will improve protections and court processes for victim-survivors of family violence, stalking and sexual offending. From the outset I want to acknowledge the victim-survivors and advocates whose courage and persistence have shaped this bill, and I recognise that most of the people we are talking about today are women and children. Legal sector stakeholders have been clear that unlike other recent justice bills, there was meaningful consultation that has clearly shaped this bill, and overall it is a good result with some long-overdue reforms.

The bill makes several key changes to the Family Violence Protection Act 2008. It introduces a presumption of a minimum length for family violence intervention orders. Too many victim-survivors have had to come back to court again and again to renew orders against the same perpetrator. Critically, the bill requires decision-makers to consider specific factors before issuing a family violence safety notice or making an intervention order to reduce the misidentification of the predominant aggressor, and it expands the definition of 'family violence' to capture stalking behaviours, systems abuse and mistreatment of animals and makes explicit that courts can make conditions about animals and stalking.

We welcome these moves. They reflect what victim-survivors have been saying for years: the abuse does not stop at the front door, pets are used as weapons of control and systems abuse and stalking are core tools of coercive control. It is a positive reform. The justice system is closer to seeing the whole picture of violence, not just single incidents but patterns of control, stalking, threats, animal abuse and systems abuse that can together be lethal.

It is important to be honest here about where these reforms will operate. The changes in this bill are aimed at the court stage. They guide magistrates and courts once a matter is before them. They do not on their own fix what happens at the policing stage – who is believed and who is listed as the respondent on an order in the first place. We still see Aboriginal women, migrant and refugee women, women with a disability and queer victim-survivors misidentified as the aggressor when in fact they are the person most at risk. Without deep cultural and practice reform within Victoria Police, such as changes to policy, risk assessment tools, supervision, accountability and training, misidentification will keep happening before these things ever reach a courtroom.

Victoria Legal Aid has welcomed this bill, saying that many of the changes will have a meaningful impact on people experiencing family violence. They are right to highlight the benefits of early detection of misidentification, but they have also pointed out that we still need clearer pathways to actually rectify misidentification when it occurs and better system-wide data collection so that we can see where the problems are and whether the reforms are working. The Greens agree that this bill is a strong step, but further reform work, especially around policing, data and practical mechanisms to correct errors, must be firmly on the agenda.

This bill will also ensure that a young person listed as a protected person on a parent's orders remains protected when they turn 18, as recommended by the Victorian Law Reform Commission. That is a sensible and long overdue change. Family violence does not stop on someone's 18th birthday and neither should their legal protection.

The bill provides that a respondent to a family violence intervention order must be at least 12 years old, aligning with the proposed minimum age of criminal responsibility. The Greens have been clear: we believe the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be at least 14, and we are deeply concerned about the criminalisation of children, particularly Aboriginal children, in the family violence and youth justice systems. Nonetheless this is a modest improvement on the current position, and we will continue to argue for a genuinely rights-based approach to children in conflict with the law.

Outside the family violence jurisdiction, the bill amends the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010 to allow courts to make interim PSIOs in bail and criminal proceedings, providing early protection in stalking and harassment matters. It amends the Crimes Act 1958 to clarify the stalking offence, implementing recommendations from the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report on stalking. Stalking is often a precursor to serious violence. It is also a form of violence in itself, and the law has too often struggled to keep pace with technology-facilitated abuse. These clarifications should help police and prosecutors take stalking more seriously and intervene earlier.

The bill also re-enacts provisions allowing juries to return specific alternative verdicts for penetrative sexual offences, preventing trials collapsing entirely where a jury is satisfied that an offence occurred but not of one narrow element of a particular charge.

There are also important procedural changes. The bill extends certain witness protections in stalking cases, clarifies the role of intermediaries who assist vulnerable witnesses and amends the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958 in relation to confidential communications by trying to ensure counselling records and other sensitive material are not mined unnecessarily in court.

Changes to the Jury Directions Act 2015 will make directions on consent available in non-fatal strangulation and intimate image trials. Non-fatal strangulation and image-based abuse are red flag

indicators of high-risk coercive control. Juries need clear, modern guidance on how consent works in those contexts.

All of these changes move our legal framework in the right direction towards earlier intervention, clearer recognition of coercive control and more trauma-informed treatment of witnesses. But I want to emphasise what the law cannot do on its own. A presumption of longer intervention orders will fail if victim-survivors still cannot get legal advice to apply for one in the first place. Stronger stalking offences will fail if police do not have time, training or direction to investigate properly. Better jury directions will fail if victim-survivors cannot face the ordeal of a trial because there is no safe housing, no income support, no counselling and no child care.

The Greens support this bill, but at the same time we call on the government to match these legislative reforms with increased investment in specialist family violence courts and community legal services, including Aboriginal legal and family violence services and multicultural- and disability-specific services; in safe and affordable housing, so women and children are not forced to choose between violence and homelessness; in primary prevention and men's behaviour change programs that are evidence based and accountable; and in data collection and public reporting of misidentification, systems abuse and outcomes for children and young people. This bill is a necessary step, but it is not a complete response. The Greens will support it and keep fighting inside and outside this Parliament for a justice system that truly centres victim-survivors' safety, dignity and autonomy.

**Martha HAYLETT** (Ripon) (11:27): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. Family violence remains one of the most pervasive and devastating harms in our community. It occurs across all communities and all types of relationships, and all too often. In 2023 alone, Victoria Police responded to family violence incidents at a rate of one every 6 minutes, with nearly three-quarters of victims being women and girls. Addressing family and gendered violence is central to community safety, and every Victorian deserves to live free from harm and fear.

Our Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2016 marked a turning point. We heard from victim-survivors and advocates. We witnessed their anguish and learned how violence had upended their lives and sense of safety. We were also humbled by their stories of recovery, healing and advocacy for change. The Victorian government acted decisively and implemented 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, delivering statewide improvements across police, courts, health, housing, education and specialist support services, and while that progress has been significant, the work is far from over.

Ending family and sexual violence is very complex. Victim-survivors still face barriers, perpetrators continue to exploit gaps and the justice system must evolve to ensure accountability, effective intervention and lasting behaviour change. Gender drivers are woven into the fabric of our society, and while individuals will always be accountable for the violence that they choose to use, we recognise that violence becomes even harder to interrupt when people are carrying trauma, facing mental health challenges or dealing with substance misuse or gambling. We have continued to face new challenges over time since the royal commission, and we must adapt and change.

This bill before us today is strengthening the definition of 'family violence' and reflects the realities of these different challenges that we are now facing. It expressly includes stalking, including behaviours designed to locate, intimidate and create fear for victim-survivors; system abuse, improving those services for family violence intervention orders so the protection can start sooner; and abuse of animals, recognising the deep emotional bond between people and their pets or livestock. Perpetrators often threaten, harm or withhold care from animals to control or punish victim-survivors. Courts can now impose these family violence intervention order conditions relating to animals, and these changes embed a contemporary understanding of coercive control into legislation.

We have also with this bill have been able to modernise, change and make some reforms around family violence intervention orders to make them more effective and fair.

A two-year default length for final orders provides victims with stability and reduces repeat court appearances. Importantly too, this bill responds to concerns raised by victim-survivors. When a child is listed as an affected family member and turns 18, they will now continue to be protected for the full duration of that order. This change ensures a stronger long-term protection and prevents distress by removing the need for a young person to reapply for an order the moment they become an adult.

As has been mentioned today in this place, women and children make up the majority of family violence victims in Victoria, and while family violence can affect anyone, it is women and children who are disproportionately harmed. For children exposed to family violence, it can lead to trauma, developmental challenges and long-term mental health impacts. This reform is going to also talk to some of the protections for children who experience family violence. A minimum age of 12 is now required for someone to be a respondent, aligning with the minimum age of criminal responsibility; children listed on a parent's order, as I have said, will remain protected after turning 18; and courts can now issue those intervention orders even if alleged violence has occurred outside of Victoria.

I want to just speak briefly about stalking and non-family violence and address this, and I would like to reference and talk a little bit about some research that has recently come out. We know that stalking is a longstanding offence in Victoria, but the Victorian Law Reform Commission *Stalking* report did confirm that while the offence was broadly appropriate, there was some clarity needed. Recently Jesuit Social Services have released the Adolescent Man Box survey. It was conducted in March and April this year, and they heard from over 1400 young people aged between 14 and 18 – boys, girls and non-binary teens. They wanted to actually assess and ask mainly teenage boys how they are expected to act and how those expectations shape their attitudes, their behaviours and their experiences, and it does paint a complex picture. We see some teenagers, and particularly boys, that have the pressure to be tough, to be strong. While there was some good news in the report and most young people were rejecting these outdated expectations, the survey did show that there was a significant minority of boys who continue to hold those rigid beliefs about what it means to be a man. Those beliefs have real consequences, and the findings were stark: 44 per cent of boys agreed they must always appear confident and 43 per cent agreed they should seem strong no matter what. Amongst girls support for those ideas was far lower, at just 15 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. But also there was a small but troubling amount of boys who reported endorsing violence-supporting attitudes, retaliating when being rejected or engaging in harmful behaviours such as bullying, physical violence or sexual harassment. Importantly, many of those boys who use abusive behaviour have also recently experienced abuse themselves. As the report puts it, those young men who personally endorse these beliefs are more likely to support attitudes that condone violence against women and sexual harassment and retaliating when rejected.

This goes to the issue of stalking. One of the central findings was the need to support boys to better understand and cope with rejection. One of the most consistent themes in masculinity research, including this study, is that profound fear of rejection shapes the behaviour of many teenage boys. From a young age boys are taught explicitly that they need to appear confident and hide their vulnerability, and nearly half the boys surveyed said that they feel pressure to feel strong even if they are struggling. So when rejection happens, as it does for every young person, it does not just hurt, it feels like a threat to their identity. That is where that dangerous crossover begins.

That fear of rejection becomes vulnerability – it becomes a personal failure – and instead of talking, processing and seeking support, some boys retreat, shut down and turn their distress to anger. They then can turn to more cohesive behaviours, and these behaviours are certainly early warning signs. Stalking becomes an attempt to regain control. It is not about love, it is about identity. Rejection feels like a crisis, and control becomes about coping.

In the adolescent context, though, I just need to make a point. Even with this research that has been released, it is important to remember that adolescents using violence are not the same as adults. Teenagers are still developing cognitively and emotionally. Their impulse control and emotional regulation and understanding of consequences are still forming, and unlike adults, adolescent boys are at much higher risk of currently being victims of family violence themselves. Many are experiencing and using aggression at the same time.

What is the antidote to that? In the report it talks about emotional literacy and healthy masculinities. When boys are given space to talk about rejection, express emotions openly, experience vulnerability without shame and understand boundaries and consent, the likelihood of them engaging in stalking or coercive behaviour drops dramatically. Supporting boys to cope with their emotions around rejection is one of the most proactive things we can do, and it reduces that harm now and reduces the risk of violence in adulthood. That is why that *Adolescent Man Box* finding really matters and why prevention must start early, and it is why each of those challenges highlighted in the report is a call to action.

Positive change is already happening, but we know there is more to do. We must build environments that do not just prevent harm but open the doors to better, healthier lives for all – and our boys. Victoria has made enormous progress in ending family violence and gendered violence, but it requires constant vigilance and adaption, and these reforms today are another step forward, making our laws clearer, our justice system fairer and then, therefore, our community safer.

Victoria must remain a state where all people, especially women and children, can live free of fear and harm. These reforms give Victorian survivors the protection they deserve, and we need to ensure perpetrators are held to account. I want to thank the minister, Minister Hutchins, for all the work that she has done in this space – her constant work – and I commend the bill to the house.

**Jade BENHAM** (Mildura) (11:37): I will not lie; I tried to avoid speaking on this today, but it is one of those things. I talk about normalising these conversations often, so it is only right that I do. And guess what – story time. I would first of all like to start by thanking the member for Eildon, who I know was not the lead on this, but the work that she puts into this particular subject, allowing me to be involved as well, is so appreciated. There is a real – I do not want to say passion, but there is a real dedication. She is doing this for the right reasons, and she is driven to want to improve the lives of particularly women and families and children as well. So I thank her for her work in this space.

One of the key points, I suppose, is the default length for a family violence intervention order of two years. That is something where I think common sense has finally prevailed, and that is what it should have been for a long time. But it is also clarifying – and this is really important. I do obviously have a lot of conversations with the likes of Conor Pall, a Mildura boy – he is not a child anymore; he is a grown, handsome man and a fierce advocate – and have had the conversation about the children that are listed on a parent's family violence intervention order who turn 18 and then have to get their own. The trauma of just going through that for kids ageing out at 18 – I have got an 18-year-old, and in no way is he an adult. Yes, he can buy a beer, but no, you would not want to put him through that. So those are some very positive changes.

When I see bills like this come up I am filled with gratitude, because during the particular time in my life there was just no language to describe any of this. So when you see clause 19, for example, 'Meaning of *family violence*', something as simple as that gives language to this – I must be tired and emotional. I do not know why I am getting emotional already, but it is that kind of stuff. This is stroke-of-a-pen stuff that costs nobody anything but pays dividends, and it will pay dividends in saving lives.

The member for Eildon does involve me in a lot of the work that she does in this space, and I am really grateful for that. She asked me a few weeks ago if I knew anybody or had involvement with stalking in particular. I said, 'I don't know if I'd call it stalking,' because there was no definition at that time. But then, going through this I am like: absolutely it was. I think you cannot give a definition in legislation to a feeling, and there is no way to get around that. But survivors of stalking, which is what

I will now call it – it was stalking – know that feeling of going to the letterbox, for example, and this is just one example, and finding an envelope with no postmark, no stamp, with whatever it might be. It might be a receipt, so there might be a legitimate reason for there to be an envelope. But knowing that there is an intervention order in place and that someone has come to your letterbox – you cannot define that in legislation. But that feeling that the blood has rushed out of your body and your stomach has dropped – you cannot describe it.

Thankfully, legislation and what we do in this place can give language to that. That is really important, because there is just no way to describe that feeling of having the world spinning around you and the fear. Whether you think it might be justified or not, it is justified. I cannot express enough that feeling of fear. You try to maybe justify to yourself that it is okay, that you cannot justify feeling like that. You can. If that happens, please report it. I cannot express enough: do not try and rationalise it. There is no rationalising it. We have the language now in bills like this. I know the feeling. The legislation is there. Do not rationalise it, report it.

I am going to keep this short because, honestly, I am exhausted now that I have got this off my chest. Like I said, I tried to avoid speaking about this today because I knew this would happen. But it is really important, and I need to get that message out. Do not rationalise it, ever. As minimal as you might think it is, there is no rationalising any of this, including anything like stalking. Do not rationalise it, report it.

**John MULLAHY** (Glen Waverley) (11:43): I rise today to proudly speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. Firstly, I just want to commend the member for Mildura for her powerful contribution and sharing her experience that she has been through. The bills that we bring to this place are so important for the community here in Victoria, and we can see why.

This bill continues the Allan Labor government's unwavering commitment to ending violence against women and children here in Victoria, and it is not just another justice bill. It is a deeply considered survivor-informed package of reforms that strengthens our response to family violence, stalking and sexual offending across the entire justice system. It expands protections, it closes loopholes, it modernises processes and it ensures that our legal frameworks reflect contemporary understanding of coercion, control, risk and trauma.

It reflects one very simple truth: Victoria will always stand with victim-survivors not just in sentiment but in action. This bill is another step in a long journey towards building a state where every woman, every child and every member of our community can live free from fear and harm.

The statistics speak to the urgency of this bill. In the 12 months to June 2025 recorded family violence incidents rose 7.7 per cent to 106,427 incidents, with a rate of 1499.6 per every 100,000 Victorians. There are a lot of people that experience this and that are affected by this. We also know that 64.4 per cent of perpetrators are repeat offenders. Family violence remains the number one law and order issue in our state. It is the leading cause of police call-outs. It is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. It is the leading cause of injury, fear and trauma in too many Victorian homes. Behind every statistic is a story: a child who cannot sleep because dad might come back, a mother who must choose between safety and financial survival or a family forced to rebuild their lives after years of coercion and fear.

Our government has implemented all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and we have invested more than any government in Australian history – opening the Orange Door network, establishing Respect Victoria, expanding specialist family violence courts and delivering landmark reforms such as affirmative consent – yet we know the job is not done. This bill continues that work. One of the strengths of this bill is that it has been shaped by those who understand these issues best: victim-survivors themselves, frontline practitioners, legal experts, police, courts, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and multicultural service providers. The minister's

office made clear that these reforms were suggested directly by victim-survivors and people with lived experiences and developed after extensive consultation across the sector, and that included the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Djirra, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, the Aboriginal Justice Caucus and sexual assault support providers. This is how we legislate properly, by listening first.

The bill expands the definition of 'family violence' to include stalking, recognising its prevalence in family violence dynamics; systems abuse, where perpetrators weaponise institutions like courts, child protection or immigration agencies to intimidate and control victim-survivors; and mistreatment of animals, acknowledging that pets and livestock are often targeted to cause fear and emotional harm. These changes reflect contemporary understandings of coercive control and psychological harm, and they send a clear message that violence is not only physical; coercion, manipulation and intimidation are also violence.

Misidentification, where the true victim is incorrectly identified as the aggressor, is one of the most serious systematic failures in the current framework. It disproportionately affects Aboriginal women, migrant and refugee women, women with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community. For these groups, cultural misunderstanding, trauma responses and defensive actions can be misinterpreted as aggression. This bill requires police and courts to actively consider the risk of misidentification when issuing a family violence intervention order (FVIO) or a family violence safety notice, including the relationship context, defensive or protective behaviour and whether the person comes from a cohort known to be at elevated risk of misidentification. These changes are essential to preventing victim-survivors being further harmed by the very systems meant to protect them.

Victim-survivors told us again and again that FVIOs are too short and too frequently require them to return to court, interrupting work and caring responsibilities and forcing repeated contact with perpetrators. The bill makes major improvements: a default two-year FVIO, replacing the current practice of mostly 12-month orders – for offenders in custody for family violence crimes, FVIOs will last the length of their sentence plus 12 months, covering the dangerous period after release – and strengthened service provisions, especially for prisoners who deliberately evade services.

These reforms reduce trauma, increase accountability and keep victims safer for longer. This bill finally stops young people from ageing out of protection simply because they turn 18. If a child is protected under their parent's FVIO, they will remain protected for the full duration of the order. The bill also sets a minimum age of 12 to be subject to an FVIO, ensures courts consider a young person's ability to understand and comply with an order and aligns protections with the raised age of criminal responsibility. These reforms prevent unfair criminalisation and deliver protections suited to children's developmental needs.

The bill modernises and strengthens service requirements, including changing the threshold for substituted service from 'not possible' to 'not practicable', allowing courts to order substituted service on their own motion and deeming service for respondents in prison where documents are left with the prison governor. Too often perpetrators purposely avoid service to delay accountability, and these changes close that loophole.

I had a personal experience with regard to family violence with a friend of mine back in 2007. Her partner bashed her, beat her up, and she went to the police. I went with her to the courts to get an intervention order in December 2007. They separated for a couple of months, but then they got back together. He strangled her to death four months later. That was 18 years ago. The guy got 18 years, so he is probably due for release very soon. But we will never get to see her again. She was my partner's best friend. That is why these bills are so important – for us to try and stamp out family violence, stamp out stalking and ensure that we are there to protect our community. We just heard from the member for Mildura about her personal experience. We have all probably got experiences in this place of personal relationships, people that we have all heard this from. I will leave it at that. I commend the bill to the house.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (11:53): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. This is a bill that amends the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, the Crimes Act 1958, the Criminal Procedure Act 2009, the Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1958, the Jury Directions Act 2015 and the Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010. At its core this legislation seeks to reform processes and family violence intervention orders, update stalking offences and adjust criminal procedures and evidence settings.

No-one in this chamber would oppose measures that strengthen protections for victims of family violence, and we have already heard some pretty intense stories from members who have had experiences that really do resonate with the importance of why we are standing here today. We know the statistics are harrowing, with 94,170 family violence incidences in Victoria last year alone. That is one every 6 minutes, with three-quarters of victims being women and girls. While reforms to the family violence intervention order processes, legal representation and conditions are clearly needed, it is our responsibility on this side of the chamber to rigorously examine the legislation to ensure it avoids unintended consequences and delivers laws that work not only for those that seek protection but for the broader community as well.

What is a little bit troubling is the government's failure, once again, to deliver on its promise when it comes to stalking reforms. Stalking offences are at their highest levels in more than a decade. Non-family violence stalking offences rose by 9.4 per cent in the year to June 2025, while family violence-related stalking offences increased by 6.9 per cent. That means that thousands of Victorians, predominantly women, are living in fear while the justice system struggles to keep pace.

We cannot forget the tragic case of Celeste Manno, murdered in 2020 by a man who had stalked her despite her repeated reports to authorities. Her mother Aggie has fought tirelessly for change, leading to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review of stalking. That review produced 45 recommendations – comprehensive evidence-based reforms to strengthen the legal framework, improve risk identification, modernise police responses and increase victim protections. Yet, more than two years later, this government has failed to provide a formal response. Implementation remains minimal as this bill only implements two of the 45 reforms. Those recommendations were two years ago. There was a lot of time before that, some years, that the work was being done as well. So it is several years this government has been unable to act to implement the 45 recommendations. We are here today with only two being implemented: recommendation 26, which allows courts to make interim personal safety intervention orders on their own motion, and recommendation 33 clarifying the stalking offence under section 21A of the Crimes Act 1958. Even then, recommendation 33 has only been partially implemented. So that leaves the overwhelming majority of reforms, such as the improved police response, enhanced risk assessment tools, better information sharing and clearer pathways for victims, entirely unaddressed. This is after an inquiry, with those recommendations being investigated and carefully put forward. So the government's delay is not just bureaucratic negligence, it is a betrayal of victims who continue to live in fear.

I cannot help but think about the young victim in my hometown of Warrnambool, who had a man who was threatening to kill her arrested, but he was released on bail. He then boasted to the police that he would do a burnout in the court car park. This brazen disregard for the law is not just a local headline; it is a stark reminder of the systemic failure in how stalking- and threat-related offences are managed. Cases like these in Warrnambool show us that tinkering at the edges is not enough. Without comprehensive reform, better risk assessment tools, stronger police responses and clearer pathways for victims, we will continue to see offenders emboldened, like the gentleman I have already quoted that boasted about doing burnouts. Victims are then left more vulnerable and communities questioning whether the justice system is actually truly on their side, and you can understand that vulnerability and fear.

Honestly, it is hard to know whether this Allan Labor government truly does care about victims of domestic violence. Time and again we hear promises and we see glossy advertising campaigns, but when it comes to that lived reality, women and children fleeing violence, the support really is not there.

Right now victims of family violence are waiting 2½ years on public housing lists. They are a priority on that list, and yet it is still 2½ years before they can actually get any help or support. Many of those women come into my office, and it is just terrifying to listen to their stories and the fear that they are experiencing. So in those 2½ years women and children are left unsupported. They have got the courage up to leave, thinking that they will be supported. They have seen the ads on telly, and they hear that this is a government that will support them – and then the opposite is what happens, and they are forced to fend for themselves in the most precarious circumstances. It is almost impossible to listen to the fear and the story of fear in their voices when they come to talk to me. Many of them sleep in their cars, often with four children, to try and keep the children and themselves safe, as the government congratulates itself on its so-called reforms.

The government has spent millions advertising that it has helped women escape domestic violence, but the truth is really stark: escaping violence is not just about leaving a dangerous home; it is about having somewhere to go. Somewhere safe, a bed to sleep in, a house to live in, access to legal assistance – these are the practical supports victims need, and these are the various supports the government has failed to deliver.

Advertising campaigns do not protect women and children – housing does; legal assistance does; real, practical support does. Until this government stops patting itself on the back and starts delivering the basics, victims of domestic violence will continue to be left behind, the community will continue to pay the price for its neglect – and every day that passes without comprehensive reform is another day the system fails to protect those who are most at risk of and subjected to family violence, to stalking, to homelessness.

The Premier announced a commitment to these reforms back in May 2024, yet here we are in November 2025 debating a bill that tinkers around the edges whilst leaving the heart of the problem untouched. While we will not oppose the family violence amendments in this bill, nor the stalking reforms it contains, I cannot stand here without calling out the government for its failure to act decisively. I cannot stand here without calling out the fact that only two of the 45 recommendations are being enacted today.

Victoria deserves more than half-measures. Victorians deserve a government that responds to independent reviews with urgency, especially reviews when people are getting attacked, being victims of stalking and feeling like that at any moment they could fear for their life. There is an urgency to that, and we should be listening to victims and to their families. That delivers comprehensive reform, not weak legislation that leaves glaring gaps in the protection.

This bill is a missed opportunity, and until the government takes stalking reforms seriously and implements all of the recommendations, until it implements the full suite of recommendations, it will continue to fail the very people that we stand here as committed legislators wanting to see change for. We need to put the supports around these people who are being stalked and terrified so that they can live in peace and have the support that they should have, and as a society I cannot believe that anyone would not want to see that in place.

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (12:02): I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025, a bill that strengthens our laws, modernises our justice system and, above all, protects women and children from harm. In beginning, I just want to acknowledge the powerful contributions that have been made by so many members from across the chamber so far on this debate: the lead ministers that spoke to commence the debate; the member for Mordialloc, the Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change – for his absolutely outstanding work in championing reform in this space, we thank him; the member for Bellarine, with her powerful outline of the toxic attitudes of many young boys and young men and the need to combat those in order to address this issue over future years; the member for Mildura for her absolutely powerful, conscientious and real-world lived experience as a victim-survivor herself – that contribution has very much left an impression undoubtedly on all of us and beyond in this chamber;

and of course my very good friend and colleague here the member for Glen Waverley, who shared the very deeply felt and tragic experience of his best friend, who we lost, sadly, to the hand of men's violence, and his courage, his family's courage and support in relation to that very sad case. There are a lot of lessons to be learned and a lot of relevance in relation to this bill, particularly with respect to stalking.

This is a bill about safety. It is a bill about accountability. But it is also a bill that is about respect – respect for the stories that victim-survivors have carried for years, respect for their courage in coming forward and respect for frontline workers who deal with the aftermath of violence every single day. As the member for Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West, but also as a local dad myself, I remain deeply committed to doing all I can to stamp out and prevent family violence and gender-based violence, because everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and their communities. As part of this, I think it is also timely to acknowledge the work of Respect Victoria, who yesterday launched their 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign here in Parliament.

This bill is an important step to making sure our justice system continues to respond to violence with clarity, strength but also compassion. Family violence happens across all our communities, in all kinds of relationships and all too often. The numbers alone demand us to keep taking further action. Family violence is the number one law and order issue in Victoria.

In 2023 Victoria Police responded to 94,170 family violence incidents. In the 12 months to June 2025 the number of recorded incidents increased by a further 7.7 per cent to over 106,400 incidents. The rate also increased by 5.9 per cent to 1500 incidents per 100,000 Victorians. The family violence database of 2023–24 recorded that 64.4 per cent of family violence perpetrators were repeat offenders with a previous police record of a family violence incident. In essence, Victoria Police responds to one family violence incident every 6 minutes, with nearly three-quarters of victims being women and girls. Across Merri-bek, in my community, family violence continues to remain an ongoing scourge. In 2024 Victoria Police recorded 1789 family violence related incidents. In 2025 this again rose to 1889 incidents, a 5.6 per cent increase. Affected family members and victims continue to overwhelmingly be women in my community – 1429 women.

But the numbers of course do not tell the full story. We have heard firsthand stories through members' contributions here today. The real-world journey of a victim-survivor begins long before a call to 000 and continues long after a statement is taken or an order is made. Too often that journey involves retelling of their experience repeatedly, confronting the person who hurt them, facing a court process that can retraumatise them or falling through the gaps in the system that was never designed to manage the complexity of coercive, psychological and ongoing harm. This bill recognises those gaps, and that is why the bill has been shaped by extensive consultation with victim-survivors; frontline practitioners; Victoria Police; courts; legal services, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Djirra; community legal centres; and countless advocates across family violence, sexual assault and stalking sectors. The reforms in this bill are practical, targeted and reflect those real-world experiences.

Firstly, the bill broadens the definition of 'family violence' so that it accurately reflects modern forms of abuse. It explicitly includes stalking, a common precursor to lethal violence; systems abuse, where perpetrators weaponise institutions to inflict harm; and mistreatment of animals, a tactic that is far more common and more devastating than most people realise. By recognising these behaviours in law, we empower the courts, police and services to intervene earlier and more effectively.

Secondly, the bill reduces misidentification, especially for vulnerable groups. Misidentification, believe it or not, is one of the most harmful failures in our system. When the wrong person is named as the perpetrator the consequences can be catastrophic: loss of housing, child protection involvement and exposure to further violence. The bill requires courts and police to properly consider the risk of misidentification, particularly in minority and disadvantaged community cohorts. These reforms ensure that the true perpetrator, not the victim, is held accountable.

Thirdly, victims have told the government they are tired of having to return for family violence intervention order renewals because orders were too short; in practice, most of these orders last 12 months or less, even when the risk persists. This bill introduces a default two-year family violence intervention order, a simple but powerful change that gives victim-survivors longer protection, greater stability and less exposure to retraumatising through the court process. For perpetrators in custody the orders will now apply for a length of their sentence plus 12 months, covering the high-risk period after their release.

Fourth, we are ending the practice of children ageing out of protection at 18 years. Under current practice, some children listed on their parent's order lose protection the day they turn 18, even when the risk remains. This bill fixes that. Young people will now remain protected for the full duration of the order without needing to return to court to relive their trauma. This is sensible, this is fair, and it reflects the Victorian Law Reform Commission's clear advice.

Fifth, the bill introduces a minimum age of 12 for family violence intervention order respondents, to require courts to consider a young person or vulnerable person's ability to understand and comply with the order, and to avoid further unfair criminalisation.

Sixth, we are streamlining the family violence intervention orders and stopping perpetrators dodging accountability as well.

Seventh, we are introducing reforms to address stalking and personal safety. Stalking has been a longstanding offence in Victoria, but this bill further clarifies the meaning of 'course of conduct'. It updates the definition of 'recklessness', recognises harm of stalking to animals and modernises the structure of the offence for police and courts. This ensures the law reflects the lived experience of stalking victims, particularly women. I particularly acknowledge the tragic case of Celeste Manno, whose life was tragically taken at the hands of a male stalker, and the ongoing advocacy of the work by her mum Aggie Di Mauro and the ongoing impacts and trauma as a result to her dad Tony and the entire Manno family.

Eighth, we are allowing the courts to issue interim personal safety intervention orders. If police or the court encounter evidence of stalking or violence during bail or a criminal matter, the court can now issue an interim personal safety intervention order automatically. There is no need for a separate application, and this protects victims faster with less burden.

Ninth, the bill extends a provision already used in family violence and sexual offences by providing stronger protections for witnesses. Tenth, the bill makes several important changes to sexual trials, including processes that improve the trial process and simplify things, particularly to avoid retraumatising victims.

This of course builds on our work as a state in leading the country when it comes to preventing family violence and gender-based violence. We launched the landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence and have implemented all 227 royal commission recommendations, opened the 36 Orange Door sites and established Respect Victoria, along with a number of other investments to combat issues in this space.

Locally we are doing a lot of work in this space as well. We have opened the Harvest Square housing project in Brunswick West in partnership with Women's Housing Ltd, which specifically is there to support women and children fleeing family violence situations, and it is doing incredible work already. I have met with several of the women directly being housed in that site.

I want to acknowledge the work of Phil Cleary as well. On 4 May we commemorated Vicki Cleary Day at Coburg City Oval, hosted by the hardworking brother and staunch gender equality and community service advocate Phil Cleary. The annual event pays tribute to the late Vicki Cleary, who tragically was murdered in 1987 at the hands of male violence in Coburg. A former partner stalked and took her life as she was leaving her workplace, a local kinder on Cameron Street. With the life of

one woman still being taken at the hands of men through violence every three to four days across the country, Vicki Cleary Day also highlights the need for ongoing reform more broadly to change men's attitudes. Phil does incredible work through local schools, sporting clubs and community groups across Victoria, promoting the need to respect women, because we know violence starts with attitudes, particularly amongst young boys. I continue to advocate and support Phil's work and the significant opportunity for government to continue to partner with him, which the minister is very much aware of, and I draw her attention to it. As a dad myself of two local young daughters, I want them to grow up in a world that is more respectful towards women, not just for them but for every other young girl in our community. I thank Phil for his ongoing work and the work of the Coburg Football Club in this space and also the member for Eltham and the member for Mordialloc, who have attended his events in the past.

I will leave my contribution there, time permitting. But again, this is all about safety, respect and protection of women and children across our communities.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (12:12): I am pleased to rise today to contribute on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025. From the outset, we do not oppose this bill. Again, these contributions, as we have heard today, can get quite emotional, and rightly so. We have heard from various members today: my good friend the member for Glen Waverley with his contribution and my very good friend the member for Mildura. The member for Mildura is a good friend of mine, and to hear what they have to go through is heartbreaking. I am not the big, tough tradie everyone thinks I am.

*Members interjecting.*

**Wayne FARNHAM:** Yes, I am middle aged, and spreading too. When we talk about family violence, I know the government is trying to do the right thing here, I really do. The statistics are pretty horrific in the state of Victoria, they really are. The government is trying to get on board with this, and as MPs we all are. We all see it come through our office. We hear the cases. I was just telling the member for Mordialloc about a case I have had in my office where this guy I can tell was ready to explode. He is trying to do all the right things, and he is getting frustrated. I just said to him, 'If you feel like yelling at someone, come in and talk to me. Yell at me. I can be your punching bag. I'm okay.'

There are a lot of factors that contribute to family violence and the safety of women as well, and they are the factors we need to look at and the factors we need to fix.

The housing waiting list for women trying to escape family violence is far too long. If anyone in this chamber has ever actually had to put an intervention order on someone – the ramifications for breaking intervention orders are not good enough. I can tell you a personal experience of mine when I had to put an intervention order on someone. That intervention order got broken four times. There were no ramifications for it. I am big, tough guy; I can handle myself. I was not that fussed about it. But for a woman it is different. You heard the member for Mildura. Listen to her story – that is a real story. This is where we as legislators on both sides of this chamber really need to smarten up.

I am not going to go into too many statistics; they have all been read out. I will probably talk about the practical implications of the bill. In my electorate we are actually above the state average. We are at 1952 people per 100,000, which is above the state average, so we need to do more. There were 45 recommendations; we are bringing in two. This report was done three years ago, and I have said this in the chamber before: why do we wait? If there is a report that has been done and the recommendations have been done, why does it take three years? I just do not understand it, I really do not.

Again I will reference the member for Mordialloc, because he is the Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change – and behaviours do have to change; they really do. I think as men in this chamber we should not walk past that behaviour when we see it. I cannot think of the exact phrase at the moment, but if you see something as a man, intervene. Do not accept that behaviour. Talk to the

person, or if you can physically handle it, physically intervene. Do not accept it. There was the case in McDonald's not that long ago where two men grabbed a guy and said, 'We don't talk to women like that.' That was a good example of how to intervene, how to educate people, and that is what we need to do.

Talking about men – and this is a bit of a failure, I think, of the government – we need to invest more in men's mental health, to educate them to respect women, to cut the violence. Men's mental health is so important, because unfortunately we guys at times are not the sharpest tools in the shed. We do not handle our emotions very well and we do not communicate very well, and this can lead to this family violence space. I am sure everyone in this chamber knows a man like that. My father was like that; he could not communicate. I have got better as I have got older. When I was younger I was not much of a communicator.

These are the things that we need to look at. If we are so serious about reducing domestic violence, family violence, assaults, sexual assaults, everything across the board, everything we talk about here, this is the direction we need to take. And we need to do more on both sides. The government is here. The government are the legislators. If we put forward a reasoned amendment, the government should look at it and say, 'That's a good idea.' If we want to get rid of it, we have to work together; it is that simple. I will leave it there.

**John LISTER** (Werribee) (12:19): I would like to thank the member for Narracan for his heartfelt contribution and reflections on this bill and particularly for sharing his experience in this field. I think something that this Parliament can be proud of and something I have found as a new member of Parliament particularly is the support that we have across the chamber when it comes to being able to share experiences and where we are coming from in representing our communities in a safe way. I really appreciate that.

Community safety is our priority on this side, because every Victorian deserves to feel safe in this state that we love and call home. There are far too many victims in our community, and too often women and children are the victims of crimes perpetrated by a family member or loved one. It is still pretty horrific to think that in the majority of cases, particularly in the Wyndham area, you are more likely to be assaulted by someone that you know than someone that finds you in a random way.

In 2023 Victoria Police responded to 94,170 family violence incidents, one every 6 minutes, with nearly three-quarters of victims being women and girls.

I am proud to be part of a government that has implemented all the recommendations of that landmark Royal Commission into Family Violence, delivering these statewide reforms. Our government remains committed to ending family and sexual violence in Victoria, but there is more work to be done. We need to hold offenders to account and ensure victim-survivors have the support they need to stay safe.

We have worked closely with victim-survivors in developing this legislation, listened to their stories of fear and desperation and worked with experts in this field to build on our family violence reforms that we have seen for many years now to provide greater protection to women and children across communities like mine – because it is a fact that communities like mine in Wyndham have seen the overwhelming bulk of that scourge of family violence. It is a significant portion of those high-harm offences that we have seen in the year to June 2025. There was a slight decrease in the number of family violence incidents in that last year, but it is still far higher than we have ever seen and still forms a huge proportion of the workload that our local police at Werribee deal with. Services in Wyndham have been backed by the government, including our women's health hub, our dedicated family violence unit working out of the Werribee police complex and recently with our new Magistrates Court at the Wyndham court complex having that dedicated family violence list, and in the future we will have a family violence court as we roll out the services from that facility.

This particular amendment is about addressing some of those concerns that we have seen over the years as we have been rolling out these reforms. We know that family violence intervention orders and family violence safety notices play a central role in the justice framework for addressing family violence. This bill amends the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 to introduce a new default length for a final FVIO of two years to ensure longer protection for victim-survivors and reduce their need to go back to the court. The new default length will provide greater certainty for those victim-survivors.

With this bill we are also strengthening and modernising the definition of family violence to recognise stalking, which I know many people in this chamber have already spoken about at length; that particular abuse of different systems around victim-survivors; and also the mistreatment of animals. For many victim-survivors, stalking is a very real threat used by perpetrators to intimidate, harass and frighten. We are amending the Family Violence Protection Act with this bill to expressly include stalking in the definition of family violence and make it clear that courts can include conditions in those FVIOs prohibiting a respondent from locating or attempting to locate an affected family member.

We spoke briefly about systems abuse. It is a tactic that is prevalent in all of family violence, and I have seen it myself in schools in the way that perpetrators use the school system to be able to exert that control and how teachers and year-level staff are often trying to navigate quite a tricky situation regarding who can access that child and the information about that child that we are responsible for. This bill expressly captures that systems abuse to make sure that we have those contemporary understandings in this legislation.

Something that is particularly close to me, too, because a lot of the research around this came out of the vet school at Werribee with the University of Melbourne, is this link between animals and family violence. Animals are used to perpetrate family violence, whether it is through targeting pets, or animals that victim-survivors rely on for their livelihoods, things like withholding an animal's food, water or medication or threatening to harm that animal. The link between abuse of animals and family violence is well established. In that research done with Melbourne University Volant and others found that 52.9 per cent of Victorian women who experienced family violence had a pet hurt or killed by their partner – half of victim-survivors. This bill broadens that definition of 'family violence' to recognise this reality.

We know that family violence can and does occur against anyone. Women and children are amongst those who are particularly affected. Something that is particularly close to my wheelhouse is the effect on children, because quite often they are caught in between in this. It is something that I have seen particularly working as a year level coordinator. Quite often you would be having really difficult conversations between staff about how to talk to the different parents about the child, because that child would often be used as a pawn in these situations, and you would have to try and negotiate and work your way through that. Having that guidance is really important. But something that is particularly apparent is this idea that if someone turns 18 they are not automatically an adult, they are still part of growing up in our community. We recognised this a few years ago with reforms to the way we have out-of-home care, supporting young people who are in that system to have that opportunity to stay with care for longer than just when they are 18. It only makes sense that our FVIOs also reflect this reality.

I have seen firsthand how children who are exposed to family violence can face trauma, developmental delays and poor mental health as well. From speaking to Werribee police at length these last few months, quite often a lot of the young offenders that we have been speaking about so often in this place had their first contact with police in a family violence context. So it is particularly important that we have these reforms where a child who is listed as an affected family member on an FVIO and turns 18 remains protected for the duration of that FVIO. It is particularly important in years 11 and 12 that we give them that certainty as they are navigating those last few years and working out what their next steps are in life. Quite often with that family background it means that they do not have that support all the time. We can, through our system and the work that we do in our system, make sure that we

have that little bit of certainty for them. So often I have worked with children who have gotten to that stage of years 11 and 12 and feel like the systems have fallen away from them as they transition into adult life, further study, finding work and becoming an adult member of society. They are stressful enough, those years.

This reform, while it seems small and just something very legal, is really important to give that certainty to those young people so they can feel like they can thrive in those last few years of school and make sure that whatever happens after school they have still got that protection from that FVIO. The reality is, the moment that that kid turns 18, their family situation does not just magically get fixed. Quite often they will be living at home with younger siblings as well, and there are still those same issues around family violence. We have seen steps, like I said, taken by this government in other areas of young people's lives. I think it is particularly important, from my experience as a teacher, that we do have these kinds of reforms to make sure that we acknowledge that turning 18 is not just about magically becoming an adult when you get your birthday card and a cake; it is still part of a journey that you are on, and the system should be supporting you as you navigate that.

This bill strengthens protections as well by raising the minimum age of a respondent to an FVIO to 12 years, aligning with the changes made here to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and making sure that is raised from 10 to 12 years following the work that we have done with the Youth Justice Act 2024. I look forward to hearing the other contributions from people in this house. I think it is a particularly important issue and a sensitive issue, and I commend the bill to the house.

**John PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) (12:29): I rise to speak on this Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025, which deals with stalking and family violence-related notices. I want to acknowledge at the outset the speakers who preceded me and congratulate them on their heart-wrenching stories and courage in sharing what are very personal experiences with this house and ultimately with the Victorian people.

I recall a meeting a couple of years ago. In fact in this term I would argue that one of the hardest meetings I have ever had to conduct was with Aggie Di Mauro, Celeste Manno's mum. It was hard to watch Aggie relate the full arc and span of her grief, because at a human level you can only empathise with how hard it was. But do you know what the hardest thing was? The fact that I had no words. No words could comfort Aggie, given the gross failure of the system to protect Celeste. What do you say? The bells were sounding, the alarms were ringing and yet Aggie lost Celeste in circumstances that should never have materialised.

That of course was the basis for the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report. It looked into stalking – because so much more needs to be done; I think we all agree on that. The Law Reform Commission did release its report in 2022, more than three years ago. Here we are today dealing with a couple of measures, two of the 45 recommendations made in that report. I think, channelling what I said earlier about how you give comfort to someone like Aggie and her family and that not enough was done in 2020 to protect Celeste, it might well be asked today: is this Parliament doing all that it can do to address the shortcomings of our family violence system, particularly but not only in relation to stalking?

I am afraid that the conclusion could fairly be drawn that the Parliament should be doing more today. We should be passing a bill through this house that acquits all 45 of those recommendations. There is so much more we need to do on expediting applications for family violence intervention orders, personal safety intervention orders and other forms of injunctive remedies that particularly women and children seek in circumstances of urgency. There is more we need to do to resource our courts, particularly the Magistrates' Court, the busiest court in our state, so that it can transact on behalf of women and children in particular, who need urgent judicial relief in the form of family violence intervention orders and the like, which the Law Reform Commission's report dealt with at length. There are recommendations in the VLRC report about awareness campaigns, education campaigns

and resourcing Victoria Police. And yet here we are today passing a bill – a bill we will not oppose but support – but it does not go nearly far enough to address what are urgent circumstances.

I do recall that when this government came to office in 2014 it repeatedly made statements – which I never disagreed with at the time – that family violence was the number one law and order issue in Victoria. The government was correct when it said in 2014 that family violence was Victoria's number one law and order issue. What saddens me is that today, some 11 years later, the same government still says this, after the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which had all the resources that this Parliament could appropriately deliver. It was a serious effort, with over half a billion dollars in a very well intentioned and important exercise. There were 227 recommendations, virtually all of which have passed through this Parliament with bipartisan support, and countless other measures have, in addition to the recommendations of the royal commission, been implemented through this Parliament and through the work of various agencies and stakeholders.

After all of that effort, after all of the resourcing and after all of the bipartisan passages through this Parliament, it pains me that this same government says and continues to say – for it cannot be denied – that family violence remains Victoria's number one law and order issue. How is that? We see today, whenever the Crime Statistics Agency – it is just one set of measures, it is not everything about the scourge of family violence, but there are important pieces of data in the Crime Statistics Agency's material. Nearly 95,000 family violence incidents – that is not getting better. And the problem is that we stand here and we have stood here as an opposition for 11 years, offering in just about every case I can recall – there might be one or two exceptions, if that – offering our bipartisan support. And what does this government have to show to the Victorian people in the face of a continuing scourge of family violence? The truth is, and it cannot be denied, the data is getting worse. The data, when I use that term, is really about, for women and children in particular, things being as bad as they were 11 years ago, if not worse. So Victorians can rightly ask: what is not being done?

I started at the outset pointing out, as other speakers have pointed out, that there are 43 recommendations in the VLRC report which are unaddressed in this bill. You would have heard many of my colleagues and me say repeatedly that because of the financial mismanagement of this government, you can rightly ask: is it because there is no capacity to invest in the programs, the awareness campaigns, the resourcing for our courts and tribunals, and the resourcing for Victoria Police? Is that the failure? Because ultimately we continue to pass bills through this Parliament, and they pass with our support in just about every instance I can recall when it comes to the scourge of family violence. Why aren't we seeing an improvement in results?

My message to the government is that whilst we do not oppose this bill – and you have heard many speakers say that – what will it take for the government to focus and reprioritise its operations and its attention so that we are dealing with these urgent matters? We have passed bills this week, and in recent weeks we were passing bills dealing with knife crime, aggravated burglaries – all urgent matters. Well, family violence, as the government itself continues to say, is our number one law and order issue. Yet today, Aggie Di Mauro and other victims and the families of victims can say, 'Well, you're passing this bill today, but you should have done more. Government, you can, must and should have done more.' After 11 years, is the data and is the lived experience of family violence better today, with all of the bipartisan support that has been offered and all of the resources that have so far gone into family violence? Sadly, judging by all of the independently assessed and published data, things are going south. It is getting worse. We must do better. The government must do more. The government can do more. It owes it to the women and children and everybody in this great state.

**Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD** (Broadmeadows) (12:39): Everybody should feel safe and be safe, especially in their own home, and sadly, this is not the case. The Victorian Labor government has led the way on family violence reforms and has implemented all 227 recommendations of the royal commission. There are a lot of things happening in this space, including this legislation before the house today. But we know there is still so much work to do. Family violence is the number one issue for police in communities, and I know the police at Broadmeadows and Merri-bek do a great

job, particularly the family violence unit there, seeing victims and helping families in some of their worst times.

In 2023 Victoria Police responded to 94,170 family violence incidents – one every 6 minutes – with nearly three-quarters of the victims being women and girls, and the number of incidents reported to VicPol has increased 8 per cent in the last 12 months, which is a huge jump. Very concerning, sexual violence has increased 17 per cent in the last two years, and there has also been a massive increase in strangulation, which I just find abhorrent. It really frightens me, what women and girls are facing now. It is my biggest fear as a mother that my daughters will end up in situations or relationships where they are not respected and where they are at risk of harm from abuse, at risk of harm from violence and, quite frankly, at risk of death. We see that non-fatal strangulation can leave people with permanent disabilities, and it is really frightening. But I am also worried for the men and boys who are using this. I feel quite concerned that they will not have the opportunity to have respectful, reciprocal relationships that are quite joyful. Hopefully, many of us know what a good, healthy relationship is and how wonderful that can be.

Thinking that our children or the next generation will not have those opportunities because of the increase in family violence and disrespect between the genders really worries me. It worries a lot of people I know – mothers I know in particular, and fathers of course. We know that this increase in incidents is only those that are reported, and we know, unfortunately, that family violence and sexual violence is still very under-reported. In my electorate many incidents are not reported.

One of the examples that is quite common in my electorate is visa abuse. A lot of women arrive here on spouse visas. They do not have family and friends, they are in a foreign country, often they have limited English and they do not have knowledge of the laws here or the support systems that are available and have difficulty navigating how to best access help if they do find out it is available. So they are very vulnerable to those who choose to use coercion and violence. Of course it is not everyone, but those who abuse their position as a trusted and loving spouse – sadly, it is predominantly men – use misinformation and fear and threaten their wives, the mothers, with having the children removed if they complain to authorities. I know that is a big barrier to women seeking help and speaking up. Not only is this feeling for people on visas, but it persists in the community. I hear many stories of women in particular who are afraid to seek help. They are concerned about stigma in their community and very concerned about breaking up their family. They just want the violence to stop. I am very pleased that we have got programs to help with that, and I know we have increased funding to that.

I want to thank the member for Mordialloc for the really incredible work he is doing in helping men be better men, better partners and better husbands but also to have better lives because of that. We know that mental health can be at risk for a lot of men. We know suicide rates are really high, and it shows a picture of deep unhappiness. We know men want to be better too, and I really thank him and all of the men that stand up for this work and all those who are involved in the 16 days that started yesterday as well. I also want to thank the minister of course for her incredible leadership and her work, the advisers, who do such great work, and all of the department and everyone else who puts in so much time and effort to make sure that people are safe in the community and in their home. I thank previous ministers as well. I am really proud of the work this Labor government has put into reducing violence against women, violence in the community and family violence. We know that it is not just women who are victims, but predominantly, sadly, it is. I am pleased that we are investing in programs that help people who want to stop using violence, and I am pleased with the really important work that they are doing.

Just in the last few days I have had a number of male community leaders ask what they can do to help address family violence in their communities and make life better for women, children and men. There are so many incredible organisations in my electorate, too, that are doing really important work in this space. Northern Community Legal Centre has the Safe Landing project. They are doing a lot of work on visa abuse, and the wonderful Take the Next Step program. They do so much work in this space, and there are some incredible people there who will be really happy to see this legislation, particularly

the reforms around the extension of the intervention orders to a default of two years. I think that gives a lot more time for people who want to get help to get help and for family law issues to be resolved if they are the case. But also it is quite traumatising to go through all the processes, and to have to do that more often is a burden both on the person and on the system.

Good People Act Now is run at Banksia Gardens by the incredible Georgia Ransome, and that empowers young people to challenge gender stereotypes, foster respectful relationships and advocate for gender equality. Safe Steps do really important work in my community, and Muslimahs, who I have met with a couple of times, offer culturally appropriate support to women and housing for those fleeing domestic violence. There are also a lot of community leaders who work really hard to make sure people know that there are services available.

I also want to give a big shout-out to Sam in my office. We get a lot of cases through the door – really traumatic cases who need help – and we help them navigate to those services. But particularly Sam, who sits on the front desk, hears their stories and does everything he can to make sure they feel safe and have hope and get the help they need. I thank him for his empathy and the incredible work he does for so many victim-survivors. He is truly remarkable.

I also thank all the electorate officers across the state in all of our offices, who I think deal with this issue more than we would like them to, and of course all of the frontline services in Victoria – Orange Door, and there are some multicultural services. There are so many services that help these people each and every day, and we know it has an impact on them. We thank them for the incredible work they do.

This bill has been developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including victim-survivors and their advocates and legal and government stakeholders whose input has been invaluable in helping to ensure the bill is workable, fair and effective. I want to thank them and everybody who has helped get these laws changed. The stalking offence: it will make a big difference to include that; I know people feel very unsafe when they are being stalked, and increasing the conditions on what is included there is really important. Protecting kids when they become 18, to be included in the intervention orders, is also really important. There is a lot going on when you turn 18, and to just have that extra protection for a bit longer I think is really important.

Again, I just want to thank everybody who works so hard in this sector. I have got so much else to say, but I am certainly not an expert. But there are so many experts, and I thank them for everything they have done to make people feel safer at home, safer in their communities and safer in Victoria. Thank you.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (12:49): I rise to talk on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025 in front of us. Thank you to all the members that have stood up and spoken on this from their own personal stories. I think you can see how family violence affects nearly everybody in our community, unfortunately. Acting Speaker O’Keeffe, I know that you as a regional MP and also I, unfortunately, see it all too often. The member for Gippsland East Tim Bull – I think he has the number one amount of family violence issues in Victoria, followed by me in the Latrobe Valley, and I think you come in at number four, Acting Speaker. So it is something that we do deal with in our offices. If not every couple of days, it is at least every week that we have someone coming through our doors.

As the member who was just up on her feet said, we need to take time to take stock of the wonderful work that our electorate officers do in our electorates and in our offices, because they are dealing with some harrowing stories and trying to get these people help and point them in the right direction. I do thank all officers right around the state, because it is something we wish did not happen but unfortunately does.

Last year in Latrobe we had 3891 cases of family violence, which, when you break that down, is an incredible, sickening statistic that we need to deal with. Unfortunately, I am not sure at this stage that it is going down.

We need to make sure when we bring legislation amendments into the chamber that we do have the ability to make them stronger, especially when we have recommendations, as we heard about from the member for Hawthorn. I think he said 45 recommendations came through, and we are only dealing with a couple of them here. Even though we are dealing with them and we are doing our best to make sure that we are doing the right thing, to be able to sit down with someone that has been through family violence, no matter what age they are – and it normally involves, unfortunately, a male perpetrator, but it does not only lie there. There are female family members that also commit family violence, but predominantly, as we hear, it is the male side of the situation which causes the grief. There are many, many reasons and excuses that they will come up with, but an excuse is just what it is. It is not good enough. We need to be stronger and put protections in place for families right around this great state.

We have had amendments come through which could possibly be harder and tougher. It is very hard to sit down with someone and, once they tell their story, actually look at them and say, ‘Well, there’s not a lot that we can do in this space because the laws don’t allow us to stop your partner, one, abusing you but then abusing the system so they don’t get caught up with it.’ Anything that we can do we need to make sure that we do. We do not oppose this amendment coming through, and neither should we, because this is the stuff that we need to do to keep our families safe.

Abuse comes in many formats, unfortunately. It is not just that physical abuse that we do see and hear about, and probably when you talk about family violence that is the number one thing that you go to. But there is also verbal abuse – that is a form of abuse – and emotional abuse and putting family members in situations where they are threatened and worried not only that physical abuse will happen to them but that they are not going to be given money to be able to go and do what they want to do – economic abuse. There is sexual abuse also, and the list can go on. At the end of the day we need to be more proactive in trying to help our constituents out.

As I said and as you well know, Acting Speaker, in regional Victoria the problems seem to be a lot greater than they are in inner-city Melbourne. It does go on everywhere. One of the conversations that I had back when the Hazelwood mine shut in Gippsland was about the uptake or spike in family violence, which they told me was very noticeable in that timeframe when it was shut down, and the Latrobe Valley Authority was put in place by the government to help work through a lot of situations there.

I fear – and I hope that it is only my own personal fear – that the upcoming closures of our power stations, after we have only just gone through the closing of a sawmill in Yarram, will put stresses not only on the people that work there but the families in general. And we need to make sure that we have all the safeguards that we can have, so that a change in society, whether it is a venue that has made people feel safe because of their jobs being locked in – we need to make sure that we are looking at the entire impact of that. One of those things, unfortunately, could be family violence.

The other one that we do see – and I know we do talk about it – with family violence is the amount of mums with their children that are fleeing family violence and the amount of people that are sleeping rough in their cars because they have nowhere else to go. And when they finally do come to our office and engage, to see where they can go and what they can do, that is normally not the first time, unfortunately, that they have been abused in that family home situation, where they are meant to be feeling loved and safe. Unfortunately, when they get to us they have probably been involved in that family violence for a very long time. So we need to make sure that our access to be able to house these mums with their kids – and it is predominantly the mums leaving with their children. Why is it the case – and I know that they need to be protected – that the family have to leave the family home and it is not the perpetrator that needs to be moved on out of there? We need to make sure that we have got those places and actions and triggers that we can pull to make sure that they are feeling safe and

that we can support them. A lot of the time when we do sit down and talk about their options – as we say, we are not experts – we are just pointing them in the way of help for them. We need to make sure that on our end we are making it harder for the perpetrators of family violence to actually navigate their way through the court system or through the police system – that we are closing those gaps so they have not got anywhere to turn themselves. We need to be looking after our families.

As I said before, those 3891 people that experienced some form of family violence down in our area in the Latrobe Valley, and more heading towards East Gippsland – we need to make sure that we are doing everything that we can to drive those numbers down. It is not easy. With these amendments coming through to make it tougher – even though I feel that they could go further; we could make it harder – we need to be seen to be doing what we can. I do wish this a speedy passage.

**Steve McGHIE** (Melton) (12:58): I rise today to contribute to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025, and I think I have got 30 seconds to go. I just want to give a shout-out to Kym Valentine, who was here last week with FARE Australia, raising with us that family violence increases around delivery of alcohol to homes. She is trying to get legislation introduced to stop alcohol being delivered to homes and stop the increase of family violence and aggression. We know that it is tragic, and we know at different times of the year there is an increase in family violence, in particular around Christmas periods and things like that – grand final weekend. Again, a lot of that stems from alcohol intake. So full credit to Kym. I thank her for coming in last week, and we certainly support her in her efforts to try and get things changed around delivery of alcohol to families to reduce family violence.

We all know that family violence is prevalent within all of our communities. And all members have suggested here today that our electorate officers have been dealing with that – people coming in through the doors – and we know the great work that they do, how hard it is and how stressful it is, and the great support services that are out there that do great jobs. I extend my thanks to all of those workers that are supporting people that are going through family violence. It has already been –

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Kim O’Keeffe)**: I am interrupting business as we will now break for lunch.

**Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.**

**Business interrupted under standing orders.**

#### *Members*

#### **Minister for Transport Infrastructure**

#### *Absence*

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:02): I wish to advise that for the purposes of question time today I will answer questions for the portfolios of transport infrastructure and public and active transport.

**The SPEAKER**: Before I call for questions I would like to acknowledge in the gallery a delegation from the Republic of Türkiye, including members of the Grand National Assembly Serhat Eren and Ebru Günay.

#### ***Questions without notice and ministers statements***

#### **Ambulance services**

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (14:03): My question is to the Minister for Health. On Sunday 91-year-old Lois Casbault had a fall at home. Her daughter found her on the floor bleeding and in pain and called an ambulance. Lois’s daughter asked the paramedics to take her to hospital, but they said they could not, because they were the only paramedics available in the area. The paramedics then helped Lois into her daughter’s car. Her daughter had no choice but to rush her mother to hospital. On

arrival Lois was assessed and found to have a bleed on the brain and a broken pelvis. Minister, why is our health system so broken that there are not enough ambulances to transport severely injured Victorians such as Lois to hospital?

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:04): I thank the member for his question. At the outset can I say this has clearly been a very distressing incident for Mrs Casboul and her family. I know that she will be receiving first-class care at Warragul hospital, and I wish her all the best with her recovery. As is my practice, I will not be providing commentary on individual cases in this place. However, I am advised that Mrs Casboul was attended to by our highly skilled paramedics, who in this case also sought information and advice from the virtual emergency department, including from emergency doctors and emergency nurses, and that they together determined a plan for Mrs Casboul's care. Again, I wish Mrs Casboul a speedy recovery.

**Wayne FARNHAM** (Narracan) (14:05): Why won't the minister take responsibility for the appalling failings in our system and guarantee that there is an immediate investigation undertaken?

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:05): I am also aware that both the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department and Ambulance Victoria have provided a response in relation to Mrs Casboul's care. I want to point out that Ambulance Victoria have confirmed that there were no ambulance resourcing challenges at the time of Mrs Casboul's injury.

**Wayne Farnham**: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I am asking the minister to have an investigation. I am sure if this was the minister's mother she would investigate.

**The SPEAKER**: Member for Narracan, I ask you to raise points of order in the correct format.

**Ben Carroll**: On the point of order on relevance, Speaker, the minister was being relevant. Standing order 58(2): 'a minister will have discretion to determine the content of any answer'.

**James Newbury**: Further to the point of order, Speaker, what we have seen already and all week is ministers refusing to answer questions.

**The SPEAKER**: What is your point of order?

**James Newbury**: Further to the point of order, Speaker, the question directly went to why the government will not allow an investigation, why they have ruled out an investigation and the –

*Members interjecting.*

**James Newbury**: Mate, what do you do every time you're on 3AW? Bag your boss.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! The member for Brighton will leave the chamber for an hour. The member for Pakenham is warned.

**Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.**

**The SPEAKER**: On the point of order from the member for Narracan and the further point of order from the Deputy Premier, the minister was being relevant to the question that was asked. The minister has concluded her answer.

#### **Ministers statements: real estate reform**

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (14:07): The Allan Labor government is bringing down the hammer on underquoting. Underquoting is an unethical practice. It is a dishonest practice. That is why we will be mandating the disclosure of reserve pricing of a property at least seven days ahead of the auction or the date of sale. Since 2017 Victoria has had the strongest laws against underquoting in all of Australia. Our underquoting taskforce has monitored thousands of sales campaigns, it has attended hundreds of auctions, it has

issued fines amassing more than \$2.3 million and it has collected evidence that has been used to pursue agents in the courts caught repeatedly underquoting. Our underquoting laws have been so successful that just last week New South Wales adopted every element of Victoria's underquoting laws. Now we are taking an even bigger step by ensuring that the reserve price is disclosed ahead of auction.

Too often young first home buyers fall victim to underquoting. Deliberate underquoting by real estate agents draws homebuyers into property campaigns when all along they could not afford that property in the first place. I know that ethical real estate agents hate underquoting too. That is why a third of the complaints to the underquoting taskforce come from other real estate agents.

From next week penalties for underquoting will increase, but when this was in a bill before the Parliament earlier this year those opposite voted no. This morning the latest Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to say if she supported stamping out underquoting, and she declined.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Berwick is warned. The Leader of the House is warned.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to correct parliamentary titles, there has been a pattern of behaviour by the government over the last few question times.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! State your point of order succinctly.

**Brad Rowswell:** My point of order is simply that government members, and all members in fact, are responsible for addressing other members in this place with respect by using their correct parliamentary title. The government has been using on many occasions during this week an adjective prior to the Leader of the Opposition's parliamentary title, which is completely unnecessary. There is a pattern of this behaviour.

**The SPEAKER:** I remind members to use the correct titles for members of Parliament.

**Nick STAIKOS:** Those opposite are only interested in fighting each other. They will never fight for those trying to enter the property market. Changing the ringmaster does not change the fact that it is still the same old Liberal Party circus.

### Ambulance services

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:10): My question is to the Premier. Labor is spending \$21 million a day on interest. Just one day of interest is enough to employ more than 200 additional paramedics for a year. Why should Victorians like Mrs Lois Casboults suffer because this government cannot manage money?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:11): In answering the question from the member for Kew, the Leader of the Opposition, I refer to the Minister for Health's earlier answer and also acknowledge Mrs Casboults, who has clearly had a really awful accident in the home and has received excellent quality care from the paramedics, the doctors and the healthcare workers who have treated her. I thank those healthcare professionals for their care for Mrs Casboults and others in the member for Narracan's local community. I say that in the context of answering the Leader of the Opposition's question because she raised doubt about the quality of care that Mrs Casboults was receiving, and I will not accept that in terms of the quality of care that our health workers deliver in this state.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question.

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

**Jacinta ALLAN:** The Leader of the Opposition raised a matter about resourcing of our ambulance services and paramedics. We are proud of the fact that we have doubled the paramedic workforce in this state, which means there are more paramedics who are able to treat patients like Mrs Casboults and others not only in metropolitan areas but in many parts of regional Victoria as well. I also note the

Minister for Health's answer went to how the paramedics worked with the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department, another outstanding example of how we are not only delivering expanded health care, we are looking at new ways of delivering that care as well. I also note that there are more ambulance stations that are opening up. We have 41 new or upgraded ambulance stations –

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance, the Premier is talking about a broad range of issues, none which help Lois in this circumstance and none which go to the substance of the question in relation to the government's management of money.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Mordialloc is warned.

**Ben Carroll:** There is no point of order, Speaker. The question went directly to paramedics and ambulance services. The Premier has spoken about Mrs Casboul, the care she got and the virtual emergency department, as well as paramedics. She could not have been more fulsome in her answer.

**The SPEAKER:** I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier was being relevant.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** We will continue to support our hardworking paramedics, and I acknowledge the work that the minister and Ambulance Victoria are doing also to continue to look at new ways to reform the interface between ambulances and our hospital services. As I was saying too, we have 41 new and upgraded ambulance stations across the state – just some examples –

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier is not debating the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** We have some examples. New ambulance stations in Manor Lakes, for example – supporting that growing community – in Epping, in Craigieburn and in Karingal are just some examples. This is what you have when you are focused on delivering quality healthcare services. We should be proud of the fact here in Victoria that we do have a world-class healthcare system, and it is only Labor governments that invest in and back that system and back our healthcare workers.

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Euroa withdrew from chamber.**

**Jess WILSON** (Kew – Leader of the Opposition) (14:15): Last year more than 800 students graduated with a paramedicine degree, but they are competing for just 300 jobs. Why has the Premier chosen to run up an interest bill rather than employ the paramedics Victorians desperately need?

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:15): I am very pleased to have the opportunity provided by the Leader of the Opposition to demonstrate to the house the difference our investment in ambulance services is making. Victoria has more qualified ambulance officers than any other state or territory in the nation, and you can only achieve this by making investments in your healthcare system. I said yesterday that we are investing \$11.1 billion additional funding in our health system – \$11.1 billion that would be cut from our healthcare system to fund the Leader of the Opposition's black hole. We will always invest in frontline services, not cut like the Liberals.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Speaker, again the Premier is not being relevant to the question. She has not addressed the substance of the supplementary question that the Leader of the Opposition asked.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has concluded her answer.

**Ministers statements: economy**

**Danny PEARSON** (Essendon – Minister for Economic Growth and Jobs, Minister for Finance) (14:16): I rise to update the house on the Allan Labor government's plan to grow the economy and build Victoria for the future. Our population continues to grow, a key element underpinning our economic success. It makes no sense to argue against growth, block planning reforms and march against housing, because as our state continues to grow we see more jobs, higher wages and more opportunities for Victorians. Victoria is forecast to reach 98 per cent of its share of the housing core target of 1.2 million homes built. We are leading the nation. On top of this, Victoria continues to build more homes year on year than the other east coast states. The Grattan Institute said just last month that Melbourne has 'some of the most affordable housing in the country now' and 'that is in large part a success of building more homes'. Shock, horror, who would have thought?

Of course the Allan Labor government is moving forward with Australia's largest housing project, the Suburban Rail Loop, which will see more homes built in the places people want to live, transforming our state and the economy. The Allan Labor government is also transforming surplus government land into new residential communities, and we are doing that in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate of Kew, delivering around 500 homes, including at least 10 per cent affordable, close to jobs, transport, schools and green spaces. The level of dwelling investment activity has improved significantly in 2024–25, increasing by 4.5 per cent to reach its highest level in six years, and it is forecast to add to economic growth in 2025–26 with a large pipeline of residential work to be done. Building more homes means more jobs, more opportunities and stronger communities. The Leader of the Opposition says housing affordability is a key priority. Well, she should back our plans and denounce the recalcitrance of the member for Brighton. When the opposition undermines housing through nimbyism, they undermine our economy.

**Community safety**

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (14:19): My question is to the Premier. Victoria Police's latest annual report shows over two-thirds of Victorians do not feel safe on public transport at night. Which stations will the government be cutting PSOs from?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Laverton, this is your last warning.

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:19): I thank the Shadow Minister for Public Transport for his question. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the work that we are doing to keep the community safe.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, I am noting, Speaker, and you will have too, the framing of the Premier's answer always is in the context of 'This gives me an opportunity to'. The standing orders do not allow for opportunities to be given; the standing orders provide for ministers and the Premier to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**Brad Rowswell:** My point of order is relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier has only been on her feet for less than 20 seconds. I will give the Premier an opportunity to answer the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** I am delighted to have the opportunity to answer the question and share with the house the work that we are doing backing the work of the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police to keep our community safe, whether it is the work that we are doing to introduce adult time for violent crime, bringing consequences for the behaviour that is causing concern for our community –

**Sam Groth:** On a point of order, Speaker, the standing orders require the Premier to be direct when answering the question, and the question did not ask anything about what she is speaking about. It spoke directly to public transport, train stations and PSOs.

**Mary-Anne Thomas:** Speaker, on the point of order, the Premier has now been on her feet for less than 40 seconds. She has already gone directly to the question. I ask that you rule the point of order out of order. She is talking about safety on public transport.

**The SPEAKER:** A very short time has elapsed since the Premier was on her feet. The Premier will come back to the question.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** Whether it is the work we are doing around listening to victims of crime and having stronger consequences or the work we are doing through establishing the violence reduction unit to prevent crime and also, importantly, use data – and it is on this point of using data and police intelligence that we are backing the chief commissioner’s work –

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. It was clear: how many PSOs will they cut?

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

**Jacinta ALLAN:** It is on backing the work of the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police as he overhauls the organisation to get more police and PSOs out on the streets but also to do it in the places and at times when the data and the intelligence guide Victoria Police that they are needed the most.

**Sam Groth:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Victorians who do not feel safe at train stations deserve to know which stations they are going to be cut from. I ask you to bring the Premier back to the question.

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

**Jacinta ALLAN:** The new chief commissioner understands that PSOs are a critically important crime-fighting resource, and how that resource is best deployed is determined, let us be clear, by the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, who we back and who has looked at intelligence and data.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Warrandyte, this is your last warning.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** It is that police data that has provided the information that shows that the busiest times for crime on our transport network are in the morning and in late afternoons, especially around 3 o’clock in the afternoon. But as we know, because of the previous policy settings, PSOs can only be deployed from 6 pm. This is about understanding that responding to crime should not be a static response. It should be responding to crime where you can use your resources at the times and places where they are needed. And that is why not only will the PSOs be in place at times when the police data tells Victoria Police when crime is occurring, they will also be no longer static and stuck at stations. They will be able to ride the trains. They will be on every line riding the trains, responding to and preventing crime. We will continue to back the chief commissioner and his work to get more police and PSOs out on the streets preventing and responding to crime.

**Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:24):** There were 2000 more criminal incidents on public transport in the last year, an increase of 18 per cent. Over 200 PSOs could be employed for a year with just one day of this government’s interest bill. Why is the Premier putting the safety of Victorians at risk because this government cannot manage money?

**Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:25):** I absolutely reject that incorrect claim from the member for Nepean. We have here in Victoria more police on the beat than any other jurisdiction in the nation. What we are doing is supporting and backing 100 per cent the work of the chief commissioner in overhauling Victoria Police to have the resources where they are needed the most –

supporting the Victorian community in responding to crime. We know that a visible police and PSO presence is so important in preventing crime as well, and that is why we will continue to back the response from Victoria Police, putting police where the crime is: on trains, around train stations and in shopping centres. That is what backing Victoria Police looks like.

**Sam Groth:** On a point of order, Speaker, there were more than 15,000 incidents –

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order, member for Nepean. The Premier has concluded her answer.

**Ministers statements: planning policy**

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:26): The Allan Labor government will modernise Victoria’s planning system to speed up approvals, cut delays and unlock the homes Victorians desperately need. Our planning reforms are all about more homes built faster in the places people want to live. But just last week those opposite lined up to block them; they voted against more homes. The millennial member for Kew had the chance to help her own generation into the market. What did she do? Turned her back on them.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, ministers statements are an opportunity for the government to countenance their own policy positions, not to attack the opposition. I would ask you to ask her to desist doing so.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney will come back to her ministers statement without attacking the opposition.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** If the latest Leader of the Opposition were serious about housing, she would be supporting these reforms.

**The SPEAKER:** Attorney-General, I asked you to cease attacking the opposition.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** Last week the Business Council of Australia, who happened to be an employer of the Leader of the Opposition, was very clear that outdated, complex planning laws –

**Danny O’Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Attorney-General is defying your ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney did not mention the Leader of the Opposition in her last contribution.

**Cindy McLeish:** On a point of order, Speaker, the Attorney knows full well that when she has the call she must give way. She continued to keep speaking twice.

**The SPEAKER:** The Attorney will come back to her ministers statement without attacking the opposition.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** I was just saying the Business Council of Australia – who someone used to be employed by – was clear that outdated, complex planning rules hold back investment and productivity. Our reforms fix that, delivering more than \$900 million of economic value every year and getting more homes off the ground faster. While the Liberals cut and the Liberals block, the Allan Labor government builds.

**Bridget Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, I think the minister is reading her speech.

**The SPEAKER:** Is the minister reading her speech?

**Sonya KILKENNY:** I am referring to notes.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister is referring to notes.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will not tolerate frivolous points of order. The Attorney, without assistance.

**Sonya KILKENNY:** There has been a lot of talk about choices recently. Here is the choice: a plan that helps more Victorians find their home or a plan for net zero homes. This is not a line-in-the-sand moment; this is nimbyism with a millennial makeover. Here is the contrast. In New South Wales the Liberal Party voted with the Labor government to pass planning reforms, because they know the way to make homes more affordable is to build more of them. Where are the Liberals here? They are silent.

### Freedom of information

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (14:30): I have a question for the Attorney-General. In 2023 the government asked the Integrity and Oversight Committee to inquire into Victoria's 43-year-old Freedom of Information Act. The IOC reported in September last year that there were problems with delays, complexity, fees and a culture of redaction and refusal and unanimously recommended a new right-to-information act, emphasising proactive release of information, fewer exemptions and no application fees. In March this year the government responded, without committing to implementing any of the recommendations, that it was taking the time to consider the report in detail. So the question is: has the government decided to take any action in response to the report?

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:31): I thank the member for the question. Can I also put on the record my acknowledgement of and gratitude to the member in his role as chair of the Integrity and Oversight Committee. I acknowledge the work of the IOC over more than, I think it was, about 15 months to conduct a review into Victoria's freedom-of-information laws. I acknowledge that a very considered and detailed report was tabled in this place last year, and the government responded to that report earlier this year. From memory, the report proposed some fairly fundamental and significant changes to FOI laws here in Victoria, and there were at least 100 recommendations in that report. Again, I want to acknowledge the really significant work that was undertaken by the committee and the detailed and considered recommendations and findings in that report. I can say to the member that the government is certainly now considering those findings and those 101 recommendations and will consider those in detail, given the fundamental and significant reforms and changes that they propose to our FOI laws. We will have more to say when they are ready.

**Tim READ** (Brunswick) (14:32): We have had now half a dozen inquiries into the operation of the FOI act this century. The Ombudsman inquired into the act in 2006 and 2011, the Auditor-General held inquiries in 2012 and 2015, the Victorian information commissioner held one in 2021 and now we have had the IOC's inquiry in 2023–24. Hopefully we do not need a seventh inquiry. I guess the supplementary question then is: does the government at least agree that reform is needed?

**Sonya KILKENNY** (Carrum – Attorney-General, Minister for Planning) (14:33): Again, I refer back to my answer to the substantive question, and that is that we acknowledge the report. The government responded earlier this year and will now take the time to consider in detail all of those findings, all of those 101 recommendations, and that work is underway. I also acknowledge that there have been some significant changes to FOI laws here in Victoria, including in 2017, when we established the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, also of course recognising that it was Victoria under John Cain that introduced first in the nation FOI laws, recognising the importance of freedom of information. It is important for transparency and accountability and ensuring that Victorians are informed and can have informed debate on decisions that impact them.

### Ministers statements: renewable energy

**Lily D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:34): I rise to update the house on how the Allan Labor government's planning reforms are accelerating renewable energy investment, creating jobs and slashing power prices. Victoria's Big Build is building the infrastructure that Victoria needs, from

roads and rails to schools, hospitals and energy, and we are doing it faster than ever thanks to the development facilitation program. We are putting renewables on the fast track, building more projects, creating more jobs and relieving cost-of-living pressures for Victorian families. Since April last year, just in these months alone, the program has unlocked more than \$8 billion worth of investment across 22 energy projects. These projects are why Victoria consistently has the lowest power prices in the country.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The member for Bulleen can leave the chamber for half an hour. Do not reflect on the Chair, member for Bulleen.

**Member for Bulleen withdrew from chamber.**

**Lily D'AMBROSIO:** They are not interested at all in the cost of living. He is auditioning over there. These projects are why Victoria consistently has the lowest power prices in the country, putting more money back in the pockets of hardworking Victorian families and creating 3000 jobs as we do it. We cannot take these achievements for granted. We know that some do not share the ambition that we have to build more renewables – the cheapest new-build electricity that there is worldwide. That is what will help keep downward pressure on electricity bills. That is what will do it, because these are the facts: if you do not support net zero and you do not support the new energy infrastructure or you block it or you delay it or you go slow, you lose the jobs, you lose the new supply and you get higher energy bills, like we saw when they were last in government. Fourteen wind projects were abandoned, \$4 billion of investment evaporated overnight and we saw Victorians suffer a massive electricity price spike of 34.1 per cent and disconnections doubled. That is what we had, but not under this government.

#### State Emergency Service

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:36): My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Laverton, this is your last warning.

**Danny O'BRIEN:** The SES annual report was tabled today. Why did Labor cut the SES budget by \$10 million last year?

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.**

**Vicki WARD** (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (14:37): I thank the Leader of the National Party for asking me a question about the SES – about the SES's budget, just to be clear. But also to be clear, I completely refute the question and the premise of his question, because we have been very clear in this place that there are no cuts to our emergency services. Let us be really clear that when it comes to SES funding, when it comes to funding our emergency services – an incredible workforce, people who are always there when we need them the most –

**Danny O'Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. The annual report quite clearly states a \$10 million cut, and I am happy to provide it to the house.

**The SPEAKER:** The minister is responding to the question.

**Danny O'Brien:** Can I provide it to the house?

**The SPEAKER:** It has already been tabled, Leader of the Nationals.

**Vicki WARD:** As I was making very clear, there is unprecedented investment that this government has made since coming in.

**Cindy McLeish:** On a similar point of order, Speaker, the minister is required to be factual. Information has been provided to the house which contradicts exactly what the minister is saying. There was a cut. *Rulings from the Chair* says that if evidence has been available then it needs to be taken into account. The minister needs to be called out for not telling the truth.

**The SPEAKER:** There is an expectation that all members on their feet at all times will be factual in this place.

**Vicki WARD:** It is a fact that we have doubled funding in emergency services since coming to government, that we have invested nearly \$2 billion in this budget in our emergency services, that we have invested \$30 million in a rolling replacement fleet for the SES, that we have invested over \$14 million in a new SES unit for Footscray, that we have doubled the volunteer emergency services equipment program grants, that we have included for the first time the SES in the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund and that we are continuing to invest in our emergency services.

Let us also be clear that what the annual report refers to – this year’s annual report – is the completion of last year’s major infrastructure projects. This was an investment of \$125 million that I know the member for Cranbourne’s community was very glad to see and that I know the member for South-West Coast –

*Members interjecting.*

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

**Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.**

**Vicki WARD:** The member for South-West Coast was extremely happy to see the completion of her SES unit at Port Fairy. We have a government that has continued to invest in our emergency services, unlike those opposite, who have a \$7 billion cut on the table which would completely slash funding to the SES, which would take them out of the ESVF, which would –

**Danny O’Brien:** On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance, the minister is talking about an imagined fantasy of cuts. These are the cuts actually in the annual report today.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. The minister is being relevant.

**Vicki WARD:** They will slash funding to the SES. They will take them out. They will not double the funding to VESEP, as we have done –

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is using her answer to attack the opposition.

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

**Vicki WARD:** We have not cut funding to our emergency services, including SES.

**Danny O’Brien (Gippsland South) (14:42):** In July this year the minister signed off on a brief allocating funding to the CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria, which saw both agencies’ budgets also cut. Why are Victorians paying an extra \$3 billion under Labor’s new emergency services tax if our emergency services’ budgets are being cut?

**Vicki WARD (Eltham – Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery, Minister for Equality) (14:42):** When there are \$7 billion of cuts on the table from those opposite, I will not be lectured about cuts to emergency services, which this government is not doing.

**Ministers statements: housing**

**Jacinta ALLAN** (Bendigo East – Premier) (14:43): Just like the Metro Tunnel, the West Gate Tunnel and the North East Link, the Suburban Rail Loop will also change how Victorians move around this great city and state. By next year there will be 4000 Victorians working on the Suburban Rail Loop and tunnel-boring machines will be in the ground and driving towards that completion in 2035. But of course we know that the Suburban Rail Loop is not just a big and important transport project, it is a big and important housing project as well, with 70,000 more homes in exactly the right locations – affordable, livable homes in the places where people want to live.

There are other suburbs in our community that people want to live in – it could be in Brighton or it could be in Kew – and we need to focus on building more homes everywhere, because over the last 30 years Victoria has grown by 65 per cent but not evenly. Our outer suburbs, places like Melton, have grown by 433 per cent, but in Boroondara the growth was the lowest in Victoria at 24 per cent. We have seen a recent report from KPMG that shows that in Boroondara, in places like Kew, the population of working-age people – you might call these people millennials – shrunk by 6000 people from 2019 to 2023. Why? Because they have been locked out of the places that they want to live – the good, connected suburbs. It is one thing –

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** The Premier will be heard without assistance.

**Jacinta ALLAN:** As we are working on the legislation to overhaul our planning system, which the member for Kew opposes, to get more people in homes, they are marching up and down the main street of Brighton, like the member for Brighton. Only Labor will back millennials to get into their homes.

*Constituency questions*

**Gippsland South electorate**

**Danny O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:46): (1418) My question is to the Minister for Police, and I ask: when will the vacancy at the Toora police station be filled? Toora is one of a number of single-officer stations in my electorate, and it has become a pattern of behaviour under this government that those single-officer stations are regularly vacant. Toora is a very small community but a very vital one. It is between Foster and Yarram, and of course the Toora officer supports the Foster police particularly. But we have had a growing amount of crime in the area: a 3.5 per cent increase in the South Gippsland shire in the last figures and a 127 per cent increase in the recorded offence rate in Foster in those same figures. So in that neck of the woods there is activity. The community would like to see visible policing. They want to feel that there is someone there. We have had problems in the past. The Loch station I believe has now been filled, but it has been without officers for a period of time over the last few years. So I seek the minister's advice on when Toora will be filled.

**Preston electorate**

**Nathan LAMBERT** (Preston) (14:47): (1419) My question is for the Minister for Finance, and my question is: what are the opportunities to improve community housing providers' compliance with the prescribed performance standards? I ask this question specifically in the context of an issue I have raised previously in the house, which is that sometimes vulnerable community members in Preston and Reservoir are housed in the same building or the same block as violent and aggressive community members. Of course I recognise and we recognise that everyone deserves a safe home, no matter what challenges they face, and everyone deserves access to the services and supports that they need. But nonetheless it is a particular challenge when a vulnerable community member might also be a violent and aggressive community member. Any information the minister can provide on how the prescribed performance standards address that challenge and how our compliance efforts can address that challenge under the Housing Act 1993 would be greatly appreciated.

### Nepean electorate

**Sam GROTH** (Nepean) (14:48): (1420) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Residents across the Nepean electorate have become increasingly frustrated by the deteriorating state of our major arterial roads and the government's poor management of the maintenance works. The recent closure of the entire inbound access to the peninsula along Peninsula Link caused massive disruption across the entire peninsula, with traffic gridlocked and reports of accidents on the detour route. I have also had a number of local businesses report their trade is down dramatically, with people avoiding making the trip due to the closures. Previous works sensibly reduced the road to one lane; they did not shut it down entirely. At the same time, potholes and degraded services along Point Nepean Road, Browns Road and Boneo Road continue to worsen, posing safety risks to motorists and local businesses. Will the minister explain why Peninsula Link was fully closed and outline when proper and timely road maintenance will finally be delivered across Nepean?

### Cranbourne electorate

**Pauline RICHARDS** (Cranbourne) (14:49): (1421) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the question I ask is: how many people have returned their containers to be recycled? I very much look forward to the response and hearing what an environmentally concerned and a sensitive community I represent.

### Caulfield electorate

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:49): (1422) My question is to the Minister for Carers and Volunteers. When will the government urgently restore core funding to neighbourhood houses by 25 per cent so they can continue to keep the doors open, particularly in my area of Caulfield? We know the peak body Neighbourhood House Victoria represents close to 400 community-based houses across Victoria, and its campaign to keep the door open requires \$11.7 million per year to support 200 houses, particularly in my area, Caulfield South, with the great stewardship of Tracey Burt – they do a fantastic job – and Philippa Caris of Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre. They have both been established for a long time. They support people that have just got citizenship to be able to get a lot of support. They are great organisations. Their doors need to remain open, and the government needs to fund them.

### Albert Park electorate

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (14:50): (1423) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what road safety upgrades are being delivered to improve pedestrian safety around Fishermans Bend? I would like to begin by thanking the minister for already approving the construction of new upgrades for the roads near Port Melbourne Secondary College and Narrarrang Primary School, who I have worked very hard with to ensure road safety. It means a great deal to local residents to have their children able to go to school safely and see firsthand what this government is delivering. Albert Park is grateful for these recent developments in road safety, especially the Port Melbourne Secondary College school council, who have advocated tirelessly for the increased safety of students. These recent upgrades are most welcome within our local community, because as Fishermans Bend continues to grow, these improvements to pedestrian safety will play a critical role in ensuring the safety of students and residents. Minister, the local community is excited for these further investments, and I look forward to sharing an update with the community. Thanks to Albert Park College student Harry Henry for assisting with drafting this question.

### Polwarth electorate

**Richard RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (14:51): (1424) My question this afternoon is for the Minister for Environment, and the question I have for the minister is: when will the government be taking action on the recommendations in the 2023 CDM Smith report on the Anglesea estuary? The Anglesea River and estuary is a vital part of the economic fabric of the Anglesea and Surf Coast community. It provides among the largest outdoor nature-based recreation businesses and services for school-based

camps and other things – Go Ride A Wave and all sorts of activities. It is also a wonderful place for recreation, paddleboats, fishing and swimming. But it is at huge risk because of the recent changes brought about over time with the closure of the Anglesea coalmine and other man-made changes to the river system. This river is in crisis at the moment. It is now devoid of fish, filling rapidly with mosquitoes and devaluing the quality of life and economic value of the Anglesea community.

#### **Pascoe Vale electorate**

**Anthony CIANFLONE** (Pascoe Vale) (14:52): (1425) My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. How will the views of my local community be considered and incorporated into future central Coburg, Brunswick and Sydney Road centre activity plans? Further to my previous contributions, I continue to draw the minister's attention to local feedback on how we can successfully revitalise central Coburg. As part of this I continue to also reassure residents that (1) activity centre plans are draft plans – that is why we are consulting and listening now, (2) community feedback is being considered, (3) these are long-term plans over coming decades, (4) we continue to invest in local infrastructure and services – and that is also why we are consulting on the future use of the former Kangan Batman TAFE site in North Coburg as a future jobs, skills and community hub – and (5) there are no changes or proposed changes to existing heritage overlays or any other local or state planning protection relating to heritage. The Glencairn heritage overlay and other heritage overlays through the community will remain protected and in place. As the local member, now as a lifetime local raising my own family in the community, I remain absolutely committed to ensuring that local views and voices remain heard and elevated through the activity centre process as we work to make our community an even better and more welcoming place to live, learn, work and raise a family.

#### **Richmond electorate**

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (14:53): (1426) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. The medically supervised injecting room has safely managed over 11,000 overdoses and provided wraparound support for thousands. But across the state addiction, homelessness and poor mental health are on the rise, and while the MSIR plays a role, it is not the whole solution. My constituents are concerned with the rising levels of homelessness and people struggling with addiction and poor health. North Richmond Community Health has two outreach workers who provide drug and alcohol support for people struggling outside the centre. This is a health- and compassion-led response that works. I have seen their incredible work in action, but there are only two of them and the community is crying out for more. Minister, are there any plans to fund additional outreach workers at North Richmond Community Health?

#### **Kororoit electorate**

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (14:54): (1427) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. How is the government supporting and strengthening community pharmacies, like the one in Caroline Springs, to ensure that residents continue to benefit from convenient, high-quality local health care? Community pharmacies, as we all know, play a vital role in communities, giving residents easy access to medicines, to vaccinations, to health checks and to trusted advice close to home. For local families, for seniors, for young people and for shift workers, having a reliable pharmacy in the heart of our community means quicker, shorter travel times and better everyday health support. I hope the Minister for Health can answer my question.

#### ***Rulings from the Chair***

##### **Constituency questions**

**The SPEAKER** (14:55): I have reviewed the constituency questions from yesterday. Standing order 55A states that constituency questions must be related to constituency matters. I have generally allowed constituency questions where the member has demonstrated a substantial link between the information they seek and people in their electorate, provided that link is not trivial or contrived. Yesterday the member for Thomastown asked a broad policy question and did not demonstrate how

it was specifically relevant to her electorate or her constituents, and I therefore rule the member's question out of order.

### *Bills*

#### **Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025**

##### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed.**

**Colin BROOKS** (Bundoora – Minister for Industry and Advanced Manufacturing, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:56): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

#### **Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

#### **Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.**

#### **Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025**

##### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**David SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:57): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. As we have heard, and the government has finally realised, Victoria is in the middle of a crime crisis. It has taken the government a long time to finally get to this realisation, but at least we have a government that is now seeing the problems that have really been created over a decade – over a decade of bad planning, not enough resourcing and swapping and changing between bail laws and between our jail systems, particularly more recently in 2023 when we saw a number of facilities being closed, and we now need some of those centres to reopen. So we have seen a government that have flipped and flopped, that have not recognised the problem and, especially more recently, because of a lack of a focus, a vision or a plan we have seen a youth crime crisis that is unprecedented, in which we are seeing more violent attacks than we have ever seen before, and a lot of dangerous weapons being used, including knives, and those attacks on the streets which have unfortunately led to the deaths of far too many individuals. We have seen reports of close to 50 individuals that have lost their lives over the last five years due to knife crimes – many of those under the age of 25. So this is shocking, it is horrific, it needs to stop, and I think that you would get agreement from both sides of the chamber that we do need to do something about it.

I also want to put on the record first up that Victoria Police only recently looked at data in their annual report. In their annual report as of Thursday 30 October data suggested, firstly, 756 crimes against the person, which is 14.5 per cent higher than was targeted. That is 750 per 100,000 people. We have seen 5140 crimes against the person, which is 25 per cent higher than first targeted. The public perception of safety when walking home alone at night was 19.5 per cent below target. The proportion of crimes against the person resolved within 30 days was 22.2 per cent below target, and for property and deception it was 26 per cent below target.

What does that say? People do not feel safe at night, they do not feel safe on the streets and they do not feel safe actually in their homes, and overall, when they are reporting offences, they are not being solved. Why aren't they being solved? The recent crime stats show that nearly 50 per cent of crimes that are reported remain unsolved. Why – because we do not have enough police resources. The nub of the problem is we do not have enough police resources. We are close to 2000 police or thereabouts short on the streets. If you have got 2000 police short, then when you report a crime, unfortunately, the police have to prioritise what they are doing. When you go to a police station, it may or may not be open. We know that already there is some restructure happening in terms of stations and what

resourcing there will be with that, because the government has not provided funding for that. There are resourcing issues that have been in place for six months, even to mow lawns and do basic maintenance at stations, because the government has run out of money.

Finally, more recently the government has announced a slashing of protective service officers on more than half of all train stations in the evening because the government does not have the resources. We have a retail crime crisis, so the government has decided, 'Let's flick some of those PSOs off train stations and put them into retail shopping centres.' Ultimately, like we have just seen in this report, 20 per cent of people do not feel safe walking home at night. Well, how is that going to go if you are catching public transport and you turn up at a train station and you do not have a PSO there? It was one of the most successful programs in over a decade, and this government is planning to cut that and jeopardise safety.

We on this side of the house believe that you should be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. You should not be robbing Peter to pay Paul. You should not be taking PSOs off train stations and putting them into retail shopping strips. You should be able to do both. That is why we on this side of the house have said we will keep PSOs on our train network and we will create a 200-PSO strike team that will go out to retail areas with high crime reported. They will be out there proactively to ensure workers and shoppers can be safe. That is the difference: we will invest and the Labor government will cut when it comes to law and order in this state.

So what specifically in this bill do we have issues with? What is good, what could be improved and what will we be proposing to amend? I will get to some amendments shortly. But I do want to start by saying that a lot of this bill came together because the Premier on 17 December 2024 put out a press release – the Premier loves putting out press releases – saying 'Strong action to fight hate and help Victoria heal'. This was after the firebombing of Adass synagogue, which we know was highlighted as a terrorist activity linked to terrorist organisations, and there have been arrests. It has completely caused so much angst and pain within my electorate of Caulfield and among many of the Jewish community. I just put it on record, with a government that proclaims to have such strong bail laws, that an individual that has been connected to this is out on bail. You have a situation where a community has been targeted and a place of worship has been firebombed and you actually have the accused individual out on bail. What a disgrace. We are talking about strengthening these hate laws today. We are talking about places of worship and making them safe as part of this bill today. The whole bill was on the premise of making Victorians safe. Yet an individual that was part of the firebombing of a religious place of worship that started this is actually back on the streets.

How can anyone feel safe when the perpetrator is back on the streets, causing angst to the very community that they targeted? I just wanted to highlight that because it just does not make sense. None of this adds up. This is a government that is all spin and no substance, and it should be ashamed of itself for allowing a broken justice system to act in that particular way.

Nevertheless part of the bill today suggests that some of these laws will be to ensure that we unmask the gutless individuals, extremists, that turn up to protests and want to create violence and intimidation. We saw it a few weeks ago when they were hurling rocks at our fine men and women that keep us safe, Victoria Police. Well, that was the promise in this press release. What have we got in terms of the detail? What we have got are weak, watered-down laws when it comes to these mask bans. They are not a ban, they are a 'Pretty please, take your mask off' request. That is all they are. The Police Association Victoria themselves call it a 'Pretty please, will you remove your mask?' Well, that is not a way to tackle community safety and to tackle the very extremists that try to incite hate and violence in this state. That is not a way to deal with that, and we will seek to circulate some amendments shortly.

Just quickly, in terms of dealing with some of the other parts of this legislation, protests, again, are all promise, no delivery, and we will seek to raise some amendments on that. The other part of this bill talks about the Control of Weapons Act 1990, and here is a missed opportunity, because we tried to introduce a private members bill this week. The bill that we tried to introduce this week was titled

‘Jack’s law’, and we had Brett Beasley here, the father of Jack, who was brutally murdered on the Gold Coast in 2019 – a knife crime. He has made it his life’s journey to go out there and ensure that these types of crimes do not happen again. What happened only this week was the government voted against it. This bill could have been an opportunity for Jack’s law to be incorporated in it. I know other members of the government will turn up and say, ‘But we’ve got all these changes when it comes to knife control and weapons control powers.’ Well, the government does not have that at all.

In fact, due to our pressure, finally the Premier decided to meet with Brett Beasley yesterday. I remind the house that in June last year Brett Beasley was down here. He met with the Minister for Police, had a great, great meeting – all promises, no delivery, all headlines, no delivery – and waited for a phone call back. He got nothing, crickets, zero from the police minister. He came back this time, and then the Premier said, in the 10-minute meeting, ‘Well, what can we do you for?’ And Brett Beasley gave the Premier a piece of paper that pretty much showed the difference between Jack’s law and Victoria’s so-called search laws.

There are so many holes in the Victorian legislation when it comes to searching for weapons. Firstly, when it comes to knife crime, it is not called ‘search’, but it is called ‘stop and scan’. Why is there a difference with our search? Because they are hardly done, and when they are done, they are done because there is a belief that somebody is carrying a weapon. When they are done in Queensland and other places where they have Jack’s law, they are done like a random breath test. They are over in 45 to 60 seconds. People are stopped, there is a small wand and it is done, and literally people are on their way. It is not with a massive wand like this government is proposing, not having to get proper paperwork filled in; it is like a random breath test, and that is why they are getting knives off the streets. They have taken over a thousand knives in a year off individuals due to Jack’s law in Queensland. What have we had in Victoria? We have not had the 15,000 that has been claimed, because they are all parts of other seizures of weapons. The actual Omni operations, of which there have been 39, I remind the government, have retrieved 129 weapons off the streets – 129 knives. A thousand in Queensland, 129 in Victoria.

I do not want to see one member of the government standing up and saying our knife search powers are working. They are not. They are not working.

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Do not deceive this house, member for Point Cook, because 15,000 is not an Omni operation. This government is so deceitful, and the member for Point Cook has no clue when it comes to what police actually do.

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Hear my words, member for Point Cook: when police do an operation to seize weapons, they go out there with an Omni operation and they do it. When you go to BCF and Anaconda and you say, ‘We’re banning machetes,’ and they hand them in 5000 at a time, that is very different. When you have a \$13 million machete bin operation, that is very, very different. I can tell you who is handing in the machetes: it is not the crooks, member for Point Cook.

**Mathew Hilakari** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Get a life, member for Point Cook. Try and work it out. You have got no idea. You have got one of the highest crime rates in your electorate, and you have let the community down because you do not understand it. You do not have a clue. You have failed your constituents, member for Point Cook.

**Michaela Settle:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker: through the Chair.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Alison Marchant):** Thank you. I bring the member for Caulfield back to the bill – and please, through the Chair.

**David SOUTHWICK:** I want to remind this government of their failure to take knives off the streets since their first meeting with Brett Beasley back in June last year. On 6 September 15-year-old Dau Akueng and 12-year-old Chol Achiek were both fatally stabbed at Cobblebank after being ambushed by a group armed with machetes and large knives. Seven offenders aged between 15 and 19 have been charged with their murders, exposing the shocking scale of youth violence. On 27 September 18-year-old Kaiden Morgan, who also should be alive, had his life ended on a residential street in Morwell after a machete attack that should not have happened, because again we do not have the kinds of powers in place. In early 2025 in Altona Meadows Saurabh Anand almost lost his hand in a horrific machete attack at Central Square shopping centre – a violent assault carried out by teenagers that shows how easily these weapons are being brought into everyday public places. Northland shopping centre was locked down on 25 May 2025 after a violent brawl involving teenagers armed with a machete, sending shoppers running for safety and showing why frontline officers need the authority to wand and scan in retail hotspots. At Werribee Plaza in August 2025 a 14-year-old boy was attacked by six offenders armed with machetes – a terrifying example of youth violence in what one would describe as one of Melbourne’s busiest precincts. A hospitality worker walking to her early morning shift in the Melbourne CBD was stabbed in the chest by a stranger on 7 October – an unprovoked attack that highlights how unsafe our streets have become for people simply travelling to work. On 19 October three teenagers were set upon outside Luna Park by a group armed with machetes, turning a family entertainment precinct into a crime scene and proving how urgently we need a power to intercept knives before they are used.

These are just some examples where, if you can go in and do proactive stop-and-scan powers like under Jack’s law, not the Mickey Mouse stuff that this government is trying to propose, you will get dangerous knives off the streets. We do not need to spend \$13 million on machete bins and have farmers and tradespeople – law-abiding citizens – handing in their machetes. We need to stop the crooks from carrying these machetes and these weapons in the first place. Jack’s law works. The Premier acknowledged that there are huge gaps in the laws we currently have today, compared to Jack’s law, which is in every other state. I say to the Premier: this is more than a missed opportunity; this is something that is leaving the community exposed.

Every day this government fails to introduce Jack’s law into Victoria is another day that threatens the safety of young people and old people – all of us. Every death and injury that we see will be acknowledged by us and brought to this government’s attention until they finally do something about them. We plead with the government to adopt Jack’s law. The government looked to Queensland for their adult time laws. There is no reason why they cannot do the same here. So we plead with the government: do not give us Mickey Mouse laws like you are proposing here. Give us the real deal of what every other state in Australia has adopted. Even the UK are doing this now. I think Victorians expect to be safe and a government that is fair dinkum when it comes to getting knives off our streets. That is what I would say on this matter.

In terms of the amendments, under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated. The amendments that I wish to bring to the bill are the crux of why this bill was brought into play in the first place. As I said, Labor promised strong action to fight hate and help Victorians heal.

**James Newbury** interjected.

**David SOUTHWICK:** Well, member for Brighton, how did that go? Not very well, because as we have seen, there have been more protests and more hate and still there are very, very weak laws when it comes to unmasking gutless cowards.

Their first amendment, on clause 80, reflects the private members bill previously proposed by the coalition. We had a crack at trying to bring in masking powers. In the last Parliament that was rejected. Again, what have we got here? A Mickey Mouse version – something that is light on detail and will do nothing to unmask gutless cowards. The concern is that we have so-called lawful excuses for

refusing to remove a mask covering: for religious grounds, medical grounds and cultural grounds. They are so broad that they are a catch-all to undermine the effectiveness of the law. Also they are not allowing Victoria Police to direct a person to remove a mask unless there is an indication that the person might be committing a crime. You have got to wait for somebody to commit a crime before you can do it.

A senior KC pointed out to me that these laws are the equivalent of somebody going into a bank wearing a balaclava over their head with their hand in a paper bag and their finger pointed or something else and then somebody saying, 'Take your mask off.' On the one hand it is saying, 'Because it looks like they're intending to commit a crime.' On the other hand, they are pulling out a piece of paper and saying, 'But I have an exemption to wear the mask on cultural grounds or religious grounds or for medical reasons.' So what is it? Is it intent on one hand? Is it an exemption on the other? Pick your choice here. What they are doing is they are giving so many exemptions about why somebody should be wearing a mask that of course people are going to break the system and have a joke with the government, like they have all the way along. People are going to turn up in the city and they are going to wear their balaclava and their ski goggles, and when they are approached, they are going to say, 'We're not committing a crime. We're just on our way to the ski slopes in the middle of summer. We think that we can get in early, buy our lift tickets and go skiing in the middle of summer. That's why I've got my balaclava on, and that's why I've got my goggles on my face.' What an absolute circus. What a joke. It will not be enforced.

Firstly, we have already heard them described as 'pretty please' laws by the head of the Police Association Victoria. Police association secretary Wayne Gatt said that these laws were unlikely to work in practice and that:

... it amounts to ... members having to ask protesters nicely whether they have a lawful reason for wearing a face covering, it should be renamed 'the pretty please' bill ...

Government members may jump up and moan and everything. This government is pretty big on getting up and supporting their unions when they speak.

This is a union member saying that this law is not tough enough. It is that should be named the 'Pretty please bill'. Do not pick and choose your unions, government. Back your workers; back the police. This government say they back the police. Well, the police are saying that your bill is weak. Why is this government proceeding when it knows that this is a weak bill? This is a hopeless bill. Again, as Mr Gatt said, imagine going up to a hundred people wearing black balaclavas and asking them one by one whether they have a lawful excuse to wear them: 'Have you got your excuse? Do you have a cold? Do you have cultural reasons? Do you have religious reasons for wearing a balaclava?' It is just an absolute joke. That needs to be taken out, and that is what we are doing with the first part of our proposed amendments.

Even Zionist Federation of Australia president Jeremy Leibler, who was on the working party for having these laws drafted in the first place, said:

We're deeply disappointed by the Victorian Government's announcement about the proposed mask ban.

He went on to say:

After the Adass Synagogue terrorist attack, the Premier committed to banning the use of masks at protests because they were being used to conceal the identities of those engaging in violence and vilification.

Under this new proposal, police will only be able to direct someone to remove a mask if they suspect that person is about to commit a criminal offence, and even then, there are exemptions for cultural, medical or religious reasons.

We don't understand why a protester should be allowed to wear a mask if police believe they're about to break the law.

This is a much narrower proposal than what was promised, and unfortunately, we think it's unlikely to achieve the purpose this legislation was meant to serve.

There you go. One of the members of their very own working group to ensure we have stronger laws to protect people at protests said that this law is flawed.

Another amendment that we are proposing is to amend clause 82 to include public displays of images of key individuals linked to terrorist organisations and the use of symbols that closely resemble those of banned organisations that are not readily distinguishable by the average person. The main reason for this is that, again, we do not want to see a situation where we have colours and symbols that are not exactly the same as something that is banned but that are very close to it, so the average person could not distinguish between that particular symbol and one that is banned. We do not want to have the likes of Osama bin Laden photos, for instance, being held up by people trying to promote al-Qaeda as a terrorist organisation. We need to ensure the intent here, and that is why we think there needs to be more flexibility with the intent of that particular clause.

The final amendments are to amend clauses 84 and 85 to replace all mentions of ‘meeting of persons assembled for religious worship’ with the consistent term ‘religious assembly’. These amendments seek to better capture other significant religious activities that might not constitute religious worship. I hope the government will get on board at least with this one. This, again, was recommended by the JCCV, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, who have been very supportive, working with both sides to get better, stronger anti-vilification powers to ensure people are protected and to ensure that we tackle hate, and here is an opportunity to do that. What it says is in a place of worship you should not have those protections if you are just going there to pray. These places of worship are used quite often for textual learning, to have concerts and for cultural events, and if people are turning up for those reasons then the protections should be in place for them as well. I know that the JCCV has met with the government to look at trying to make those changes consistently. I hope those changes will be made so that people can be protected whenever they turn up to their places of worship, not just for prayer but for all other reasons as well, because when hateful individuals turn up to these places of worship and target a particular community that are in there, we know exactly what the intent is and we want to make sure that people are protected in that particular instance. They the changes that we are proposing.

Some of the other changes are pretty straightforward, which we do support. I think the confiscation of seized goods is important. The amendment to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to change the seizure and disposal of drugs brings us in line with other states, so that is pretty fair and reasonable. Part 7, the amendment of the Firearms Act 1996, which deals with 3D printing of weapons, again, is absolutely fair and reasonable; we have no issues with that. The amendment of the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 to electronic reporting and dealing with that we have no issues with either. A number of the changes absolutely have come from police command, so that is all fine and dandy.

But I will finish where I started by saying that the government comes out publicly and says that they are going to keep communities safe and they are going to ensure they have strong action to fight hate in Victoria, but they give us weak weasel words and soft bans – I would not even call them that – on face masks and weak laws. On one hand they say, ‘We’ve got the toughest knife laws in the country,’ but they are among the weakest when you have got other places like Queensland that are leading the way. Families out there that have lost their loved ones, like Jack Beasley’s, are saying, ‘You should do what’s worked well everywhere else.’ And this government are too – I would not even say proud, but because it is not the government’s own idea, they say, ‘We’re not going to adopt it.’ Well, I do not think that is any reason at all. I think that it is just unacceptable for a government to turn around and say, ‘We know better. We know best, and we are going to ensure we are doing the same.’ We know that doing the same only ensures that Victorians are left unsafe. We have a crime crisis because of the Allan Labor government.

**Paul HAMER** (Box Hill) (15:27): I too rise to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. There is quite a lot in this bill to go through. I was a bit surprised that the lead speaker of the opposition took almost 20 minutes to get into the actual

substance of the bill and must have prepared his bill speech based on the legislation that they tried to introduce earlier this week.

I do want to at the outset just thank the Minister for Police and the Attorney-General for bringing this bill into the Parliament this week. I also want to thank Victoria Police, particularly in relation to what has been happening over the last couple of years. There is a lot in this bill that relates to powers at protests. We saw the Chief Commissioner of Police recently talk about just how many additional hours of police resources have been devoted to keeping the peace and to monitoring the protests that we have been seeing on a weekly basis. Often we have been seeing other protests that have just sprung up almost randomly and without a lot of warning. Particularly in relation to the matter as it relates to religious assembly, I think we can all recall the event in the lead speaker's own electorate in November 2023 when there was a hastily organised protest that was outside a synagogue. A number of members who had been there attending a service had to be hastily moved out of the synagogue just after they had started the service on Friday night. Some of these protests are more organised and planned, and then others are, as I said, organised in quite an ad hoc manner – all of which have required significant police resourcing. I want to put on record my thanks to Victoria Police for making that effort every single day of the year.

I just want to quickly touch on the amendments raised by the member for Caulfield. In relation to the first one, under the opposition's proposal they would rule out any exemptions for mask wearing other than for religious reasons. I think to also remove a genuine medical reason would be a really dangerous move. This does not mean that it is just somebody wearing a face mask claiming that they have a cold or whatever it is, even though those people should have an entitlement to come and protest generally as well. If you think back a few years, whether you call it a protest or a march, there were people in support of things like the NDIS. There would be people who have real, major health concerns, and their ability to interact and be part of the community can only occur if they are wearing a face mask. Maybe they need to have an oxygen tank and an oxygen mask with them.

**David Southwick** interjected.

**Paul HAMER:** The member for Caulfield says they should not be at the protest if they are not that well. No, I think we have a fundamental law in this country about the freedom of participation and association in a protest. To me this is what the crux of the debate is. It is the vilification that we are concerned about in the protest, not somebody who wants to participate in a protest about something that is actually very meaningful for them. We see next week there will be a day of action for the 16 days of respect, and there will be many people from many different walks of life who come to that event. Maybe you call it a rally or maybe you call it a protest, but it does not mean that every single person who claims to have a medical problem or just claims to have a cold is allowed to then go and vilify or assault police or other people on the street. We are not saying that. It is about the freedom of assembly which is a right in our democracy and a right that we do hold very, very dear to our hearts. I would have thought that most members in a party that calls itself the Liberal Party would also hold those values dear.

I do want to move on to the issue of the banning of the terrorist organisation symbols. I think this is an important change of the legislation. We did see that in some of the protests this year, where people were flying flags of listed terrorist organisations. I was having a look at the process and the procedure that the Australian government goes through to list the terrorist organisations. There are currently 31 organisations that are listed as terrorist organisations, and they are all described as 'ideologically motivated violent extremist organisations', and that is what they are. I do not see that there is any place on our street for the flying of symbols and flags that represent these despicable organisations. It has gone through that government process, and the listing of an organisation only comes about from the recommendation of the AFP. Even beyond that, once an organisation is actually listed, there is a review process by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, which would be a multiparty committee. So there are a number of checks and balances to make sure that there is actually broad agreement across political lines about whether these organisations are terrorist organisations.

If you look at the organisations that are listed amongst those 31 organisations, there would be very few people in this house and very few people in the community who would disagree with any of those listings. Those listings come from lots of different positions in terms of their politics, but it gets back to their description, which is ‘ideologically motivated violent extremist’ organisations. If you were to summarise all of those organisations, that is what they represent. As I said before, in the same way that we have banned Nazi insignia and Nazi symbols and Nazi flags, I see that it is perfectly appropriate that we should be banning the use and the flying of flags representing these terrorist organisations.

The final point that I do want to raise is also in relation to the protecting of religious assemblies. I think this is another really important element of the bill. As I mentioned earlier in my contribution, there was a really terrible incident in the member for Caulfield’s electorate back in November 2023. There was a protest which was occurring outside a synagogue at the time that people were meeting for Friday evening prayers. The protesters had come to Caulfield to cause trouble, and they had been incited to come in relation to an incident that even the police said was not racially motivated. It is really important that we maintain the right to freedom of religious assembly. I commend the bill to the house.

**Danny O’BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (15:37): I am happy to rise to say a few words on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. The opposition welcomes this legislation because it does deliver on some of the things that we have been campaigning for, and I particularly want to pay credit to my colleague here on the right, the member for Caulfield, who has been campaigning on this for a long time as the shadow minister for police, particularly with relation to protests and to face coverings. Whilst this is somewhat of an omnibus bill covering a wide range of police matters, that is one of the key issues with respect to face masks.

I guess what this debate is about is, when it comes to protests, we need to allow protests in a flourishing democracy. That is a right, a privilege, if you like, to some degree, and it is freedom of expression, and I certainly will always defend that. But that is not absolute. It is a bit like how freedom of expression does not mean you can say anything about anyone. It is not an absolute right, and we actually need to get the balance right on this.

I think there are some issues in here that obviously in the course of legislation do require some specificity. But as a principle, there are things that are straightforward when it comes to people wearing masks at a protest. If you are turning up to a protest with a balaclava on or with a mask over your face, you are clearly going there looking for trouble or expecting trouble. Whilst that is not easy to address in strict legal terms in legislation, there is a concern that the provisions in this legislation are far too broad and do make this unworkable, because the government is trying to have it both ways a little in saying, ‘Well, we’re banning masks at protests, but we’re not really banning masks.’ We saw the commentary – and I think the member for Caulfield actually addressed it – from the Police Association Victoria secretary Wayne Gatt, who is a very sensible man in my experience. He just tells it like it is, and he has told it like it is on this. He said:

... it amounts to our members having to ask protesters nicely whether they have a lawful reason for wearing a face covering, it should be renamed ‘the pretty please’ bill ...

He went on to say:

Imagine going up to 100 people wearing black balaclavas and asking them one by one whether they have a lawful excuse for wearing them. We don’t think it will make a significant difference to the protest environment our members work in.

That is a summation of the point I was making, that it becomes farcical that there is this requirement in this bill for police to do that.

The second part of it is the police’s belief that the person in question is about to commit a crime. You have got 5000 people at a protest and again, 100 of them wearing balaclavas or masks, and they are all standing there looking for a fight with the police, and the police are meant to wait until they look like they are about to throw a rock at them. That, I think, is quite ridiculous. I appreciate, and again I

acknowledge, that legislating this and putting those circumstances into law is not straightforward, but I do not think the government has got this part of it right.

The member for Caulfield has also addressed the issues when it comes to public displays of symbols associated with terrorist organisations, and the potential for that to be circumvented in this legislation. His third issue, which will also be an amendment when this gets to the other place, is to just give some clarity on the religious assembly question. The bill uses a couple of different terms: 'religious worship', 'religious worship meeting'. We think 'religious assembly' would just be much more straightforward. In that case, if you are there for mass at a Catholic church, if you are attending an event at a synagogue or if you are going for music lessons at a Christian or any other church, it should just be covered. It should be straightforward. If it is a religious assembly of some sort, that would make a lot more sense.

There are other aspects of this legislation. It is an omnibus bill covering a range of matters. But it is interesting that we have got this flurry of justice legislation amendments this week and more to come, and had more last week as well. We have clearly got a government that is panicked by the crime crisis we have got in Victoria and is now belatedly lashing out and trying to plug the political holes, not necessarily address the problem. We saw that last week with the announcement of a Clayton's version of 'adult crime, adult time', which was 'adult time for violent crime'. We are seeing it with an almost hushed announcement of more wands for police announced on the weekend: 'Announce it and call it anything, just don't call it Jack's law because we're not going that far.' That is really what the government did.

Again, with the Premier's performance in question time, where she was saying that in terms of taking PSOs off certain train stations she was doing what the Chief Commissioner of Police wanted – I reckon I would be pretty confident in saying the chief commissioner would like some additional PSOs, and indeed he would like some additional police officers to actually do the work he wants to do. He is now having to shuffle the cards on the table, if you like, to try and cover the gaps that have occurred, all of which have occurred under this government.

Some of the answers we received last week about juvenile crime in this place, that this is a new type of crime – well, if it is a new type of crime, it has flourished and developed under this government, which has been in for 11 years. It has been soft on crime, with the weakening of bail laws and the signal-sending to criminals, particularly young criminals, that you can get away with anything and face no consequences. Now we are seeing a massive response from the government politically, because they know this was getting away from them and that Victorians are not feeling safe.

Literally today I have been talking to locals in my electorate, and police. We have got the Toora police station. It is a single-officer station that is still unmanned and has been for some time. I have had the single-officer station at Loch, which has been unmanned on and off for at least the last six or seven years – currently filled, and that is good for the Loch community. It is good for other communities too, because Toora goes in and helps Foster, Loch goes in and helps Korumburra and those stations go and help Mirboo North and Leongatha. They are all areas that need to be addressed.

I know the community of Loch Sport, which does have a single-officer station, is very concerned – they had a vacancy as well for some time – because they are quite an isolated community. It is half an hour or 45 minutes from the main town, with one road in, one road out, and there is a level of crime there that they are concerned about. These vacancies that I have mentioned are just a couple of the 1100 currently across the state.

I remember asking the former chief commissioner Shane Patton about this in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. He answered that the police force was actually using the vacancies – the money that they get for those vacancies that are not filled – to pay their WorkCover bill. That just highlights how stretched the police force is. We have seen that in recent times. The member for Caulfield has been veracious in highlighting the issues, that police cannot even get their lawns mowed. They have

got memos out there saying that unless 50 per cent of the light bulbs in the station are out, then they cannot actually replace a light bulb. These sorts of issues are the dividend of bad financial management, of a government that has lost control of the finances and is spending \$21 million a day on interest. All of that interest could be directed towards supporting more PSOs, towards supporting police and getting those vacancies filled.

Certainly in my electorate it is a concern. I know in Sale as well, a much bigger town where we have got a 24-hour station, crime is an issue and retail crime is a massive issue. Indeed the Wellington shire saw a 135 per cent increase in retail thefts in the past 12 months – that is just massive. That is a result of a couple of things. It is a result of the lack of visible police presence and effective policing on the ground, and it is a result of people over a long period of time now getting away with whatever they want with virtually no consequences. That is what this government has failed on. This legislation goes some way towards addressing it, and I hope that we will be able to pass the amendments the member for Caulfield has spoken of.

**Nina TAYLOR** (Albert Park) (15:47): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025, introducing a broad range of reforms which are aimed at addressing dangerous extreme radical conduct, improving community safety, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of police powers and providing a range of broader improvements to the criminal justice system. It is a very comprehensive bill, so I will not seek to acquit all matters, but I will go to some of the matters within the bill. The fact that I speak to some matters is not to suggest that they are more or less important than other matters included in the bill.

Firstly, I want to go to the issue of 3D printing of firearms. I know I have seen in schools very good usage of 3D printing. I want to make that qualification that around the globe this has been a fantastic innovation and people can do all sorts of fantastic designs. But of course, as with any technology and tool, there is unfortunately the potential for people to exploit and otherwise abuse that technology, hence the imperative to keep ahead of such behaviours. We know, as technology has advanced, digital blueprints are more readily being used to manufacture firearms with 3D printers. This has been widely reported in our media. To address the serious harm that may come from this, new offences will make it illegal to possess or distribute digital blueprints that can be used to manufacture firearm parts. Certainly when it comes to firearms laws, the government will always consult widely, particularly also with regulations in this state. In the event that changes to our laws are suggested by the community, by Victoria Police or by stakeholders, we will consider them carefully.

On a further note to this, when we think of the Australian context, we know Australia has some of the most robust firearm controls in the world. The sale, transfer and use of firearms in Victoria is strictly regulated. In December 2024 Victoria signed a federation funding agreement with the Commonwealth in which they committed to funding 50 per cent of costs for our state to integrate with the national firearms register. You can see that our state takes the issue of firearms control very seriously in terms of investment but also in implementing appropriate controls to keep ahead of those who are seeking to exploit what should otherwise be useful tools that can be used for good. But when they are used for very dangerous purposes, obviously we have to clamp down on those activities.

Further, I want to now toggle – because as I say, it is a very comprehensive bill with many different aspects – to the issue of dangerous attachment devices. The new offence introduced by the bill relating to dangerous attachment or lock-on behaviour at protests will target people who use a thing or substance to lock on or secure themselves at a public protest, where it is likely to cause injury to another person or is a serious risk to public safety. I will emphasise – and I think it is a point that has been reiterated in the chamber – obviously our state honours and respects the right to protest. But as with any aspect of human behaviour, there has to be an element of reasonableness, and so with radical or extreme behaviour and particularly behaviour that is likely to cause injury to another person or a serious risk to public safety, it is fair and reasonable that we would be seeking to curb any such behaviour. With the new search and seizure powers in the bill Victoria Police will be able to enforce this new offence and proactively prevent dangerous lock-on behaviour before it occurs – and I have

no doubt that such behaviour could also put the person themselves at risk, particularly if they are doing something as extreme as gluing themselves to a particular item or otherwise. I can only imagine the human creativity in this regard. I am not making light of the activity, but suggesting that it is reasonable to have boundaries of behaviour when we are looking at keeping our community safe, particularly where there are collections of people who are protesting on a particular matter.

A further very serious matter: we are looking at the issue of terrorist organisation symbols. Terrorist organisation symbols represent racist, violent and hateful ideologies, and their public display can cause profound distress, fear and harm to members of targeted groups in Victoria. They have absolutely no place in this state. The new offence and new powers for Victoria Police in relation to these symbols will complement existing Commonwealth laws – and I know that my learned colleague the member for Box Hill has spoken to this matter in some detail, but I wish to reiterate the point. It is a very important point. The elements of the new offence will be simpler to prove than the Commonwealth offence for displaying a terrorist organisation symbol and will be modelled on existing laws, including our prohibition of the public display of Nazi symbols. I am just going to go a further step there, because we are talking about very nuanced but important reforms.

What are we talking about when we say a terrorist organisation symbol? Under the bill, a symbol is a symbol of a terrorist organisation if it is a symbol that the organisation uses or members of the organisation use to identify the organisation. It is possible that multiple symbols of an organisation may be captured if they meet those requirements – so it is not static, and new symbols used by the organisation or its members will be picked up once they become known to law enforcement. You can see where the delicate and nuanced drafting is required, because of course organisations can be cunning, if I can use that adjective, to try and get around, for want of a better word, definitions et cetera. So this is where careful drafting is absolutely paramount. ‘Members of an organisation’ is not defined. It will depend on the specific facts and surrounding context, and it will ultimately be up to a court to decide what constitutes a symbol. That is appropriate, understanding the complexities of the scenarios with which police are faced and that they have to address in what can be heightened emotional scenarios.

I know I have attended in the past many a protest, and generally you attend a protest because you feel passionately about an issue. But I will emphasise that in any such protest I have always attended in a peaceful manner and certainly would not want to be associating with others who are doing anything other than protesting in a peaceful manner, because ultimately – and this is not to lecture but just from a point of view of thinking about the purpose behind a protest – I would think, and it is something that I was taught, that you always want to take the community with you.

You have a certain amount of social licence, so behaving in a reasonable manner has surely got to be a fair parameter when you are looking at the way we as Victorians conduct ourselves. This then reinforces that commitment of our state to peaceful protest into the future and that right to be able to protest.

I do want to speak to protecting religious assembly. We have seen some really disturbing behaviours, really dangerous behaviours and really disrespectful behaviours when it comes to disrupting people from practising their faith, and this has no place in Victoria. In a multicultural, multifaith society the right of individuals and communities to safely and peacefully gather to practise their faith free from intimidation and harassment must be protected. The bill replaces the existing offence of disturbing religious worship in section 21 of the Summary Offences Act 1966 with two separate modernised offences prohibiting conduct that disturbs a religious assembly and the assault of persons arriving at, attending or leaving a meeting of persons assembled for religious worship. Just one further note in the minute that I have: what qualifies as a religious worship meeting? The meeting being attended would have to be an event in some way connected to the religion. I think that is a pragmatic association and that is appropriate, because what we are targeting is people who come and try to threaten, disturb or intimidate people who are just trying to gather and pray in peace. These new offences also complement our new anti-vilification offences, which will target anyone that is going after someone because they

are entering a particular place of worship where that suggests they belong to a certain religion. In Victoria, if you try to target someone because of their religious beliefs, you will risk jail time as well. So we can see that there are some really significant reforms being implemented here, fundamentally to protect community safety in our state and peaceful protest.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (15:57): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. I think every Victorian saw police commander Wayne Cheeseman, at the end of a very long day, after hundreds of weeks of him and his fellow officers coming into the city to manage what has been the most outrageous and disgusting behaviour our city has probably ever seen, tipping a box of big rocks out onto the floor and effectively saying enough is enough, it is not good enough, what we are seeing is a disgrace and the laws are not strong enough. That is effectively what he said, and I think every Victorian heard that message, because we know that what we have seen for over a hundred weeks has been the most disgusting and despicable behaviour by some absolutely feral individuals who are knowingly and outrageously breaking the law. Victorians, Victoria Police and the good people of this state have had an absolute gutful.

This is not a new thing. It is not like we suddenly said, 'We've reached the tipping point now.' No, I think that Victorians saw the Adass synagogue burning only just across the road from my community and said, 'How could this happen in our great state? How could that crime have occurred in our great state?' I remember that morning being with the member for Caulfield, and we were absolutely shocked at the news of that crime coming in. I think it would be fair to say we were not surprised when we learned of international actors being involved in that incident, that horrific crime. We were not surprised to hear of the links to international actors and the confirmation of terrorism – not surprised at all.

We were also not surprised only a week ago to hear that the alleged offender was let out on bail. That is the truth of this state: you can burn down a synagogue in this state and you get bail – what an absolute disgrace. I try very, very hard not to reflect on particular decisions that are made, but on this one we had a synagogue burnt down and bail given – what an absolute disgrace. I remember reading the reasoning of the decision and the reflection that it was a lineball decision – a lineball decision of course that went in the alleged offender's favour, because of course it always does in Victoria. To think now you can have an alleged offence of burning down a synagogue and walk out the door because of our weak bail laws and because of our catch-and-release bail system is an absolute disgrace. It is no wonder why police commander Wayne Cheeseman, after coming out to the city with his colleagues every single week to try and stop the behaviour that is occurring on our streets, has had enough.

I think most people in Victoria, when the Premier in December last year put out a promise, an ironclad promise, to do something about this behaviour after the synagogue incident, hoped that she would live up to her promise. At the core of her promise was:

banning the use of face masks at protests, which are being used to conceal identities ...

No equivocation there, no weasel words there – no left-wing sellout weasel words in that promise. But then we see in this bill a complete sellout, a total broken promise, one that the Police Association Victoria secretary has said is unlikely to work, which of course matters a great deal, doesn't it, when we consider proposed laws. Further, it amounts to our members having to ask protesters nicely whether they have a lawful reason for wearing a mask covering. It should be renamed the 'pretty please' bill. The Premier has sold out and has in my view not told the truth in saying that the advice the government have received is that this would somehow breach constitutional issues and therefore they cannot live up to their promise. Will the government release that advice? No, because it is not true. Has the government released that advice? No, it is not true. It is a total con.

The Premier promised, in her own words, banning the use of face masks at protests. The only people who win out of this bill are ferals who are breaking the law – they are the only winners. Somehow we as a state have got to the point where we say, 'We don't want to offend the ferals. They've got rights too' – well, bugger their rights. I think all Victorians are saying, 'Their rights? Seriously, their rights?'

What about everyone else's rights?' When it comes to this law, when it comes to law and order in this state, I think everyone is jack of it. They are jack of this rationale coming from the government that somehow we have to care about what idiots, ferals and law-breakers think over what good Victorians do and what hardworking Victorians do every single day of the week.

On the face masks, the Premier is going to get her win. She is going to sell a supposed broken promise on the basis of it being somehow a breach of constitutional law – not true. The truth is there for everyone to see. The law-breakers will win on this one, and that says everything about the Premier.

I would also like to mention the religious worship protections – or so-called protections – that were also committed to and how those measures have been watered down, which is an issue that the member for Caulfield and I have both looked at very closely and that, through his amendments, we are seeking to strengthen. There is a heck of a lot by way of important religious assembly that occurs that is not covered by the protections in this bill, and we have raised that emphatically with the government. In good faith I am saying to the government: there is a pathway forward where you can extend protections beyond simply religious worship to religious assembly and not cover political events. I understand that there is a concern around political events, and I accept that. But I believe that the current measures do not cover what good people would think is deserving of protection, that certain types of assembly are not fairly protected and that many events that I am sure many members in this place would go to, they would be very shocked to learn, are not covered by this bill. I would encourage all members of this place to go to the government with detail of the types of events they have gone to and ask whether this measure covers them, because it does not. I would say to the government: we should work together in amending this bill in the other place, as the member for Caulfield has attempted to do, to make sure that on this particular element we can capture more fairly what should be the case.

This bill is a broken promise, like everything the government do on law and order, like everything they do to supposedly fix crime. This is about press releases. The only difference on this one is this one breaches the Premier's own press release – what a con! The only winners from this bill are law-breakers, ferals and idiots. How could you be proud of yourself? Of course we will support the minimal measures in this bill, but we would say to the government: how can you look at yourselves in the mirror when you have broken your promises, especially to the Jewish community at their most difficult time, and be proud of who you are?

**Iwan WALTERS** (Greenvale) (16:07): I also rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. It is a fairly expansive bill in terms of the measures that it seeks to introduce across a range of different areas of our society. The member for Brighton talked about some of those in the context of protest laws, and I will dwell on those in my contribution as well. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I will characterise those measures rather differently than the member for Brighton.

I do, however, note that the statement of compatibility that accompanied this bill was of some very considerable length – I think about 50 pages – and from reading that statement of compatibility with the charter of human rights, I think it emphasises the complexity of striking the right balance in the context of protest laws in a democratic society. In acknowledging the depth of that statement, I think it is reflective of the amount of careful and deliberative work that has been undertaken by the Attorney-General and the Minister for Police – by the justice ministers as a collective – with stakeholders really across our society, from Trades Hall to churches to faith organisations and many others, to ensure that we do strike the right balance. To the extent that I agree with the member for Brighton, the right to protest is not an unfettered right to shut down the city, to intimidate, to incite fear and hatred or to perpetrate actions that hurt and harm, but it is a really important right in a democratic society. So it is interesting for someone who I think is a self-described classical liberal to be assailing laws that seek to strike that balance.

I think it is important that we recognise the building in which we are sitting as the Parliament of Victoria is where stonemasons in 1856 left the work they were doing here – and at your alma mater,

Acting Speaker Lambert, the University of Melbourne – to go and protest for the right to have an 8-hour day, to have a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, to not be exploited and to be able to organise in concert with other stonemasons. If we diminish the right of protest too far, we risk not only curtailing that kind of freedom of expression and freedom of association that is central to the labour movement, as it has been in Victoria at the very least since 1856, but undermining broader democratic freedoms. So it is really important that we strike the right balance, that we do target the thugs – I am not going to use the words necessarily that the member for Brighton did, but those who seek to perpetrate harm, those who seek to incite fear, those who seek to intimidate those of a religious persuasion or any other Victorian for that matter.

That right to protest should not extend to undertaking certain actions, and I think this bill does a good job of seeking to strike the right balance. As I said, the statement of compatibility highlights the very significant challenge that comes when reconciling competing rights. I think that reconciliation, as it were, is integral to so many of the debates that we engage in in this place. It is central particularly to the disagreements that exist across the house just how you strike that balance. But I think it is particularly salient in the context of a bill such as this that seeks to preserve the right to protest and recognises its centrality in a free society and a tolerant liberal democracy but also, in doing so, seeks to protect people in that liberal democracy from harm, from violence, from intimidation and from fear and to enable those who are charged with upholding the right – as indeed Victoria Police are – to go about their job in safety and without some of the appalling actions that we have seen from those who were not simply engaged in that right of peaceful protest but were actively harming others, whether it is police officers or indeed passers-by, as we saw in Southbank last year.

With that preamble out of the way, I want to emphasise how supportive I am of this bill as part of a broader suite of packages that seek to strengthen consequences for those who do the wrong thing in our society. I do so speaking as the member for Greenvale and reflecting a lot of feedback that I have received on this and many other issues in recent times. I am grateful for that community engagement on these really important matters, which I have sought to reflect in my advocacy to the Premier, to the Minister for Police, to the Attorney-General and to all of that justice ministry team, because my community understands the need for measures that keep the community safe, but they also – particularly those who have come from countries where they do not have the right to assemble freely, do not have the right to articulate a political or a faith perspective in the public square – recognise that there is a real risk of harm, of that being curtailed excessively. So that balance must be struck, and my constituents have told me that as well.

I want to touch upon some of the measures in this bill, which I think has four really important objectives. The first is to stamp out the things I talked about before, that dangerous and hateful conduct at public protests. It increases community safety by expanding and improving upon the existing powers that police have to stop and search people for weapons and also makes some commonsense but perhaps quite tricky, in the context of federation, changes to enable the effective and efficient policing of communities, particularly in our border areas. Fourthly, there is a broader suite, as I suggested earlier, of justice system reforms and technical amendments.

The importance of protecting religious assembly I think has been really well captured by my colleagues the member for Box Hill and the member for Albert Park, so I am not proposing to dwell on those. Suffice to say that, again, ensuring that Victorians of faith can go about that practice without being assailed by neo-Nazis, by thugs and by those who seek to cause and inflict harm upon them is absolutely imperative. I think this bill not just seeks to do that but, if it is passed, as I hope it will be, will effect a positive change in that respect.

One of the dimensions that I want to dwell upon, which I am not sure has been canvassed too widely in the debate, is the capacity of Victoria Police to regulate firearms. The Firearms Act 1996 already provides a robust scheme to regulate the acquisition, possession and manufacture of firearms, but this bill amends that Firearms Act to prohibit the possession or the distribution of a document that can be used to instruct a machine to manufacture a firearm, in effect to prevent people from circulating

documents or blueprints that would enable the 3D printing of a gun, in blunt terms. I think this is an interesting example of legislation seeking to catch up to where technology has already reached. I think we probably associate the sale and distribution of firearms which obviously have a legitimate purpose in the context of sporting shooting and those who have primary production properties and are seeking to keep livestock safe and for all those other reasons we are well aware of with it being done through a very strictly regulated trade through gun shops, licensed dealers and so forth. Obviously police through the Firearms Act and other powers have the capacity to interdict the illegal distribution of firearms.

I think one of the really positive reforms in the last generation in Australia was the response to Port Arthur and the way in which it is harder to obtain firearms by illicit means. But having now the capacity for printers to effectively construct a firearm in someone's home potentially changes the calculus in that market. It creates a significant challenge, potentially, if those blueprints are circulating freely for people to simply print a gun. Self-evidently, I do not think that is a position we want to be in as a society, where people are able to print their own firearms at home. There is a very clear attendant risk to community safety that comes with that. It had not occurred to me before reading this bill that that prohibition was not already in place, but as I said, I think it is because it takes time for legislation to catch up with where technology is. So I certainly welcome that measure.

One of the other I think commonsense and very welcome measures in the bill is to enable cross-border policing. I was talking about this bill with a resident of Robinvale earlier in the week, who was reflecting on their experience of living in that border community, where to get to Mildura by far the most direct route is via Euston and Gol Gol on the northern side of the Murray. Enabling police to have the full powers they would have as Victoria Police officers rather than as some New South Wales auxiliary will improve the capacity for law enforcement to be undertaken in communities such as that and for emergency responses more broadly. Similar phenomena would be at play in places like Wodonga, where it does not really make sense for somebody needing medical attention to backtrack to Wangaratta hospital when there is the co-funded cross-border health facility in Albury just across the river. This bill seeks to make some really commonsense adjustments to our frameworks in that regard.

I commend the bill to the house. Again, I really want to thank the team of ministers and advisers, who have undertaken really substantive consultation and engaged in deep thought about both the intended and potentially the unintended consequences of legislation such as this in the context of our protest laws and what they mean for our democracy.

**Roma BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (16:17): I rise today to speak on the omnibus Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025 before the house. This bill purports to strengthen police powers, modernise our justice system and protect the community from serious and organised crime. When we look closely at the detail, though, what we see is a bill riddled with loopholes, inconsistencies and concessions that undermine its effectiveness. It is a bill that overpromises and underdelivers, and it is a bill that leaves Victorians exposed.

Let us begin with the protest provisions. After the Adass synagogue terrorist attack the Premier stood before Victorians and promised decisive action. She promised to ban masks at protests because they were being used to conceal the identities of those engaging in violence and vilification. That was the commitment. But what has Labor delivered here – a watered-down clause that allows protesters to refuse to remove a face covering on cultural or medical grounds. These exemptions are so broad that they create a catch-all defence and they render the law toothless. To make matters worse, police can only direct someone to remove a mask if they suspect the person is about to commit a crime. In the fast-moving, volatile environment of a protest, this threshold is simply unworkable. It ties the hands

of Victoria Police and leaves them without the practical tools they need and have been begging for to keep the public safe. Zionist Federation of Australia president Jeremy Leibler has said:

We don't understand why a protestor should be allowed to wear a mask if police believe they're about to break the law.

He is right. This proposal is narrower than what was promised and will not achieve its purpose. Clause 80 must be amended to reduce lawful excuses to religious grounds only and to give police the operational capacity that they need.

This is not theoretical concern. We have seen protests escalate quickly. We have seen violence erupt. We have seen communities targeted with vilification. And in those moments police need clear powers, not convoluted thresholds and broad exemptions. Labor's drafting leaves them constrained, and it leaves Victorians still vulnerable like they were yesterday. After this bill goes through, it will be no different.

The same weakness infects clause 82. The bill prohibits the overt display of terrorist symbols but ignores the use of images of key individuals linked to terrorist organisations, and these images function symbolically in the same way as emblems. They are used to glorify, to recruit, to incite. Yet Labor's drafting leaves them untouched. Worse still, the bill fails to capture symbols that closely resemble those of banned organisations. A slight alteration of colour or shape should not be a loophole for extremists to exploit. By failing to address this, Labor has left open an avenue for circumvention. That is simply not good enough. Victorians deserve laws that are robust, comprehensive and fit for purpose.

Clause 84 is another example of sloppy drafting. This bill uses 'religious worship', 'religious worship meeting' and 'religious assembly' interchangeably. This inconsistency risks narrowing protections for legitimate religious practices, such as study preparation or communal observance. Labor's failure to adopt consistent terminology undermines certainty for faith communities. The coalition proposes replacing all mentions with a single term, 'religious assembly', to ensure clarity and proper protection.

Some may ask: why does this legislation matter to the people of South-West Coast? Why should families in Warrnambool, Portland, Port Fairy and our smaller towns care about the detail of clauses about protests in Melbourne, extremist symbols and religious assemblies? The answer is because community safety is not a metropolitan issue alone. It has become a regional issue. I have had reps in my office many times discussing banned symbols and concerned about what they are seeing being displayed in our electorate. Our electorate has seen its share of protest activity, whether it be environmental demonstrations along the coast or rallies in Warrnambool. These are legitimate expressions of democracy, which I support, but when masks are used to conceal identities, when anonymity is exploited or used to intimidate or to commit unlawful acts, it is our local police that are already stretched thin who must respond. They need clear powers to act decisively, not legislation that ties their hands.

Our electorate is also home to diverse faith communities. Faith is an important part of community life. These groups deserve the certainty that their assemblies, whether for worship, study or communal observance, are protected under the law. Labor's sloppy drafting risks narrowing these protections. This matters to South-West Coast, where faith groups are not just places of worship but also hubs of community support, charity and resilience. South-West Coast is a proud and resilient electorate, and we are a community that values safety, values connection and values clarity in the law. But we can see, even here, the consequences of Labor's destruction of communities: rising crime rates that are no longer confined to the city in Melbourne but are reaching South-West Coast. There was a time very recently when our towns were places of trust – doors left unlocked, neighbours watching out for one another and families feeling safe. But crime has crept into our streets, and the security that once defined South-West Coast has been eroded. We cannot and should not stand by while violence takes root. We must stand together to protect our community and to reclaim the safety that is our right.

That is why the Liberal–National coalition *Safer Community Plan* matters. One aspect of that plan is Jack’s law. Let me explain Jack’s law. It would give the police and the PSOs the power to use non-invasive handheld electronic metal detectors to identify knives and weapons in public places before tragedy strikes. In Victoria, Police cannot do this without a warrant. This is a law that is about prevention – about stopping violence before it happens. Knives are being used for crime far too often, and we must give the police the tools to act decisively. Other states and the UK already do this, so why would we deny our Victorian police the ability to prevent stabbings?

The coalition this week introduced Jack’s law into the Victorian Parliament, yet the Labor government shut down debate. They refused to even allow discussion on a policy designed to protect families, children and local communities. By silencing debate, the government has denied Victorians the chance to stand with police and support a safer, stronger South-West Coast. Our police are calling for more tools to assist them to keep us safe. Why would anyone deny that?

This bill, presented as a serious response to organised crime, violent offending and extremists, is simply not correct. It consolidates changes across criminal procedures, police, weapons, firearms, drugs and poisons, surveillance, sex offenders registration and governance of Victoria Police. It is meant to be comprehensive; it is meant to be strong. Yet in critical areas it is weak, inconsistent and unfit for purpose. It leaves police constrained, communities exposed and faith groups uncertain. It is a bill that looks tough on paper but crumbles under scrutiny.

Consider the protest provisions again. Labor promised strong action. They promised to ban masks. They promised to give police the tools they need. But what they have delivered is a clause so narrow, so riddled with exemptions, that it is not going to achieve its purpose. That is a betrayal of trust. Consider the provisions of the extremist symbols. Labor promised to confront extremist imagery. They promised to protect communities from glorification of terrorism. But what they have delivered is a clause that has a dangerous loophole.

Victorians deserve better. They deserve laws that protect them from violence and vilification, not legislation that creates defences for those who seek to exploit our freedoms, who seek to be violent, who seek to destroy our communities. This bill, as drafted, fails that test. It must be amended, and if Labor will not do the work, the coalition will. We will propose three amendments, and I support my colleagues who have put those amendments forward. We want to see our police force given the right laws, the right tools and the right to protect our community from violence, from vilification and from extremism. It is a fair and reasonable expectation that every Victorian has been asking this Premier for for several years now, and every day is a day we slip further and further into more and more crime, more and more civil unrest and a society that no-one in Victoria even recognises anymore. Our safety in our homes is under risk because of this Premier ignoring Victorians.

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (16:27): I have to say, I step outside this place and I damn well recognise the Victoria and the Melbourne that I see, and I have to say on the weekend the 50,000-odd people that got to the West Gate Tunnel and walked or ran through that brand new second crossing in and around Melbourne city recognised Victoria and Melbourne and were absolutely loving exactly what they saw. The contributions from those opposite are again the doomsday, end-of-days, end-of-world, anti-Victoria and anti-Melbourne kind of nonsense we are used to and quite frankly expect from those on the other side. It is just sad.

But I am in a great mood this afternoon, because I love rising to speak about the justice legislation that we put here in this place. In the last couple of weeks we have been announcing some really, really big initiatives when it comes to justice, cracking down on crime and, most importantly, preventing it from happening in the first place, which is really key to making our communities a whole lot safer, something this side of the house will take advice on from Victoria Police and the Chief Commissioner of Police, the experts here in this state on what we need to do to crack down on crime and prevent it from happening in the first place.

This is a critically important piece of legislation because it is going to go ahead and deliver on our government's commitment to ensuring that public protests are safe for everyone, safe from hate and safe from extremism. I think I pretty much speak on behalf of my community in Melbourne's west: we quite often have had a gutful of these kinds of protests and these kinds of thugs and people turning up – neo-Nazis turning up to these kinds of protests, carrying on in our city. I have to say, this is going to be really important when I tell people in my community we are cracking down on that. We are giving the police the powers they need to ensure that, yes, people have a right to protest but they can do it safely and responsibly.

**James Newbury** interjected.

**Sarah CONNOLLY:** You can remind me of whatever you want, member for Brighton. I am right on the side of my community.

What my community will be pleased to hear is that in the last 12 months – and the member for Brighton will like this one – Victoria Police have made 77,000 arrests. That is an extraordinary number of arrests out there on the beat, let alone all of the other activities that police in our local community do on a daily basis.

As I said earlier in the week, 'tis the season to be jolly and wish our emergency services workers, our transport workers and, most importantly, the police workers here across our great state of Victoria, that will be working tirelessly over the Christmas and New Year season, a very Merry Christmas. I hope they have a very happy new year and people are well behaved on our streets, because it is a thankless, tireless job to be a police officer. It is an honourable job, and the people of Victoria thank you very much for the work that you do in keeping us safe.

Our government has always been committed to working closely with Victoria Police. Our record investment – and those on the other side absolutely hate this when we mention it, because it is a huge amount of money – of \$4.5 billion is making sure that Victoria Police are equipped with the resources and the power that they need every single day to keep us safe. We have more than 3600 more police officers on the beat compared to when we were first elected 11 years ago. I tell folks – and I even told my mother, actually, on the drive into here this week – that Victoria does indeed have the largest police force in the country. She did not know that. She said that is something that I should be spruiking a whole lot more on social media, that folks in my community would really like to hear that.

This is of course in addition to the fact that we have been hard at work this year getting dangerous knives off our streets and participating in our nation-leading machete ban. This was huge in my community. More than 12,000 knives and machetes have been surrendered in just the last fortnight alone. I think that is a success story, that people are handing them in and surrendering them and they have been taken off our streets. Now, those on the other side of the chamber carried on that it would not work. Well, the statistics and the facts, the data, do not lie: it is working. In the last two months, police have taken – this stat is huge – more than 11,000 dangerous weapons off our streets. I think that is really important, because it means they are out of our neighbourhoods and out of our communities. It is all about making our communities safer.

But we know there is more to do, and that is why we are again working closely with Victoria Police to work out the best way to tackle a lot of the high-profile youth crime that we have seen absolutely tear up our local communities. That is why we have announced adult time for violent crimes committed by serious youth offenders, ensuring that the consequences for these kinds of serious criminal behaviour reflect the standard, quite frankly, that our community expects and that they can make a difference. It is why we have committed to legislating life imprisonment for those terrible, terrible people – I mean, I talk to people on our streets and I call them child abusers – who recruit children; they recruit young children into committing heinous acts. Doing this, as I said, is utterly reprehensible. If you are luring kids into a life of crime, quite frankly, I think you deserve to go to jail, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We will work with police on implementing these changes;

there is a lot of work ahead of us to do. Today what we are working with them on in this bill before us, before the house this afternoon, makes good on our commitment to tweaking our law so that protests can be free from harmful extremism.

Let us be clear from the get-go – and I think the people of Victoria, particularly here in Melbourne, do understand this and do support this – that people have the right to protest. They have the right to protest safely and free from fear, harassment and intimidation, and that applies to everyone, including those people we disagree with. But there are of course ways to disagree better, and I think there are ways to disagree respectfully. And some of these protests over the past couple of years have really I think flown against the spirit of our democratic traditions. Many, many times – being married into a union family – I have been there protesting in the streets of Melbourne, of Sydney, of Brisbane, across our great nation, and it has been wonderful to be able to do so. But what we are seeing is a change in some of the behaviour of some of the people that turn up to these protests.

Quite disturbingly – and this is what really does my head in, because my kids absolutely love coming into the city and doing a bit of a shop, having a bit of yum cha; they have got their favourite yum cha place, which we are thinking about visiting on Sunday – what we are seeing are these brazen neo-Nazis taking to our streets here to spread fear, hate and intimidation at rallies. We even had a shocking rally in Sunshine West of neo-Nazis. They do live in my local community too. The fact that they come here into the city to attend protests and to incite hatred and violence is completely inappropriate. You do not have the right to target people who freely practise their faith. I think what we can do is we can get the balance right. That is what this bill is all about, and that is what we are trying to do here in this place.

Over the last couple of months our government has worked closely with Victoria Police, and we have worked really closely with faith groups, to ensure that we get these powers right. We want to work efficiently with our anti-vilification laws that have now come into effect. The result will be that people can continue to exercise their democratic rights and assemble peacefully and protest. This is a great bill, and I commend it to the house.

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI** (Richmond) (16:36): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. The Greens will not support this bill. There are some sensible changes like updates to the sex offenders register and confiscating and preventing the production of untraceable 3D-printed firearms. Those reforms make sense, but the anti-democratic elements of this bill tip the balance too far towards authoritarian and undemocratic futures.

This bill gives the police the power to remove face coverings at protests. While it has been wound back from earlier proposals, because it was such an egregious abuse of human rights, it is clearly still discriminatory and will do nothing to keep our communities safe. There are many reasons why someone may want to cover their face or wear a mask: religious reasons, health reasons. In recent years we have seen the censorship in the workplace of people for holding, discussing and acting on legitimate political beliefs, so it is not surprising that many peaceful protesters fear retaliation from an employer or online harassment and may not wish to be identified when expressing their political views. They may want to protect their face and their eyes in particular from the dangerous and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons by police – and with good reason. In 2024 IBAC, the anti-corruption commission, found that Victoria Police used OC spray in a way that escalated incidents, that increased safety risks and that was not proportionate to the situation. We have all seen the horrifying footage of police spraying this dangerous chemical into the faces of protesters who are literally just standing there, causing absolutely no harm and not presenting a threat. It is well documented that police use OC spray well beyond its lawful purpose and as a coercive tool against protesters. This bill gives those same police the power to de-mask protesters if they suspect they are trying to protect themselves from the weapons they are about to deploy. It just does not make sense.

There is a legitimate reason defence, but forcing people to go to court to argue that defence is just too great a burden. The government's own statement of compatibility acknowledges that restrictions on

masking at protests can have a chilling effect on freedom of assembly but concludes that this is reasonable and proportionate to meet the stated aim of the bill to address hatred and violence. The Greens reject that assertion. Giving police broad on-the-spot powers to demand unmasking and then exclude a person from protesting is the wrong way to balance those interests. Victoria Police already have a wide range of powers to address violence or vilification that may arise during public gatherings, including additional powers in designated areas. Ramping up police powers like this is disproportionate, it is unnecessary and it will not protect our community.

The Human Rights Law Centre has described these anti-protest elements as misguided and warned that in fact they will make communities less safe. They state that Victoria Police already have extensive powers to respond to violence and property damage and that these new powers will likely fall heaviest on people masking for health, safety, religious or political reasons.

The bill also introduces a new lock-on offence aimed at people using devices like chains and glue, with penalties of up to one year imprisonment or a \$24,000 fine. Let us be honest about who these laws are aimed at. They are aimed at climate activists, at forest defenders, at peace activists and at social justice movements using nonviolent direct action to draw attention to crises that governments would rather ignore. But the Franklin River was saved by protesters locking on. Old-growth forests were saved because forest defenders locked on. The first Australian woman to speak in Parliament had to literally chain herself to the railings of the public gallery to stop guards from dragging her away. I have locked on as part of a coordinated, peaceful community campaign to stop the disastrous east-west toll road from tearing through our community, and we stopped that too.

Locking on can be disruptive, yes, and it is inconvenient – that is kind of the point – but it is powerful and it works. In fact in 1969 Zelda D’Aprano chained herself to the doors of the Commonwealth building after the equal pay case failed, demanding justice for women. That was locking on. Jacinta Allan and many other Labor MPs are more than happy to pose for photos in front of Zelda’s statue up the road at Trades Hall and then come back in here and try to criminalise the exact tactics that she used to win change.

The Defend Dissent Coalition has warned that criminalising locking on will be a disaster for democracy. The combination of new offences, broader seizure and forfeiture powers and an increasingly militarised policing of protest is a dangerous mix. In fact a coalition of 23 civil society organisations, including community legal centres, faith-based organisations and human rights and democracy organisations, have published an open letter urging that this bill be sent to a committee for an inquiry and proper consultation and emphasising that the ability of Victorians to freely assemble and participate in rallies and protests is a crucial democratic right that strengthens our community. The Jewish Council of Australia are also deeply concerned about the expanded powers in this bill. They warn that these provisions risk being used against people who are peacefully protesting, in particular in solidarity with Palestine.

In recent years hundreds of thousands of people have marched for Palestine, for climate justice, for First Nations justice and for public housing – clear, peaceful, determined protest. When we stand up to power, when we refuse to look away from injustice, we may make those in power feel uncomfortable. But those creating discomfort are not the problem; they are the conscience of our democracy. And now here in Victoria, this Labor government wants to hit people with massive fines and to arrest people, not for violence, not for corruption, but for giving a shit about our planet, about our homes, about our communities and about our future.

**Brad Rowswell:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on her feet, in my view, has just used unparliamentary language. I am personally offended by that and much else of what the member has said. I would ask you to ask the member to withdraw that offensive comment.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert):** I remind the member for Richmond not to use unparliamentary language.

**Gabrielle DE VIETRI:** For the member's comfort, I withdraw that word. I want to take a moment now for everyone who marshals, who observes, who organises, who plans, who shows up, who locks on, who pickets and who protests for a better future. Thank you. The right to protest is how we won change before and how we will win it again. But you know what – if the government truly wanted to protect our community, if this was a legitimate response to the actual dangerous rise of extremism, of neo-Nazis, the government would look at the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into the rise of the far right that the Greens secured in 2021: recommendations for early intervention, for tightening firearm laws and for deradicalisation programs carefully balanced with our rights under the Victorian charter of human rights. Instead what we have here are both major parties lining up to expand police powers while acknowledging in the fine print that there will be discriminatory impacts and a chilling effect on our democracy.

The Greens stand for a different principle. The right to protest is not a gift from government; it is not something we ask permission for. It is a right that we won, it is a right that we use and it is a right that we will defend. We are here to defend the space in which communities can stand together against violence, against injustice, against ecological destruction and against genocide.

Before I sum up, I want to tell you a little story about this place. The upper house here at the Victorian Parliament has neoclassical sculptures of women draped in robes meant to represent the values of the colony. There is plenty that holds a cornucopia of fruit and justice holding scales, and originally there was freedom represented by a cut chain. But during renovations, an overzealous tradie saw the broken chain and thought, 'That's not right,' and he helpfully welded it together. Someone noticed the change a while later, and to address this discrepancy with the symbolism that now presented itself, rather than breaking the chain again, Parliament decided to change the meaning and change what it represented. It was not representing freedom anymore but unity and connection with tradition. I cannot help but see the irony here.

This government is literally cracking down on the use of chains while symbolically welding ours back together. Unity is forced upon us at the expense of hard-won freedoms. Social cohesion is rebranded to such an extent that it now justifies expanding police powers and the quiet erosion of democratic rights. For all the reasons above, for the risks to human rights and to protect our democratic right to protest, the Greens will not support this bill.

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (16:47): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.**

### **Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025**

#### *Council's amendments*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert)** (16:47): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025 with amendments.

**Ordered that amendments be taken into consideration immediately.**

**Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:**

1. Clause 8, lines 21 to 22, omit "before the complainant enters into the agreement, the complainant acknowledges" and insert "before entering into the agreement, each party to the agreement acknowledges".
2. Clause 10, line 15, after "agreement" insert "and acknowledgment".

3. Clause 10, line 19, omit all words and expressions on that line and insert “of –
  - (a) the signed agreement; and
  - (b) the acknowledgement referred to in section 8(1)(e).”.
4. Clause 16, line 26, omit “complainant” and insert “parties to the agreement”.
5. Clause 25, lines 28 to 31, omit “a complainant acknowledges that the following preconditions of a workplace non-disclosure agreement have been met” and insert “each party to a workplace non-disclosure agreement acknowledges that the following preconditions have been met”.

**Nick STAIKOS** (Bentleigh – Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Local Government) (16:48): I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

Firstly, I want to thank all members of both houses of the Parliament for the way in which they have approached this debate, the respectful way in which they have approached the debate on the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025. This bill is about giving victims of sexual harassment a voice, and the other place has made some amendments. They are amendments that alter the requirement from the complainant being required to sign a form acknowledging the preconditions have been met to all parties to the agreement acknowledging it. The complainant would also receive a copy of the signed agreement. This was a suggestion from the Working Women’s Centre Victoria, and it has been accepted to ensure a greater layer of accountability on employers to ensure preconditions are met. Again, I acknowledge the constructive, compassionate and sensitive way in which members have approached this debate and indeed the constructive way in which amendments were put in the other place. I commend the amendments to the house.

**James NEWBURY** (Brighton) (16:49): I rise to speak on the Restricting Non-disclosure Agreements (Sexual Harassment at Work) Bill 2025 amendments made by the Legislative Council. I just very briefly wish to acknowledge the amendments before the chamber, which expand the bill from originally seeking the approval of the complainant to more broadly now, through amendment, the parties involved in the matter. Those amendments were moved by Animal Justice in the other place. We supported those amendments, and in this place we will do the same. I also want to acknowledge the shadow minister Richard Welch in the other place, who has done an incredible amount of work as a new shadow and has worked very collaboratively on the bill. The coalition will not be opposing that amendment today.

**Motion agreed to.**

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Nathan Lambert):** A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house’s decision.

### **Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (16:50): I rise to give my contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2025. It has been a big week in Parliament where we have been talking about bringing bills into this house that we are going to be voting on to make our community members safer. I think everybody in this chamber will constantly have people either walking through their door to talk to them, sending emails or calling up and telling them how at the moment they are feeling unsafe on the streets of Victoria, whether it be in their own homes or whether it be going down the street to do some shopping. In my community in the Latrobe Valley the older generation are changing the way they are going out to eat, because they are afraid to be still out after dark. Instead of going out to their local RSL or their bowling club to get something to eat and being there from 6 till 7 o’clock, they are changing so that they are there a lot earlier and by the time they

have finished their meal they can still drive home, because they feel unsafe. That is not good enough. I think one of the things that we should be doing here as MPs and politicians is making sure that every Victorian knows that we have their back and that we will do everything in our power, whatever it is, to make them feel safe in their own homes and when they are at work. We have debated bills this week about shop owners and their employees, the people that actually work in shopping centres and so forth, who feel they are being let down by weak bail laws, by weak sentencing and also by police not having the powers that they need to keep us safe.

I think I speak for everybody, or most in our community – there are some members in here that would disagree. The government is coming into the chamber talking about a crime wave that is coming into our state and a new set of rules for the way people are carrying out crime. But as I stand here now, a carjacking has always been a carjacking. If someone is kicking in your front door to do an aggravated burglary, that has not changed. Maybe the demographic of the people that are doing it has changed, but I think the reason that we are noticing it more is that it is becoming more and more common, because, as the government has said and as the coalition has said, often there are no consequences for people walking the streets of our community. If they are doing the wrong thing, wanting to steal your property, wanting to intimidate people in their own homes, wanting to walk into shopping centres or down shopping strips on the streets and intimidate people and steal items from shops, there are some consequences, but there are not a lot of consequences. Mostly they get a slap on the wrist and they are back out under our system that we do have at the moment. I know we are bringing in laws and that these laws and these bills and these changes will make our system stronger, but I do not think they go far enough.

People are worried that the police need more powers. We only need to look at Jack's law, which we tried to bring in this week. It is having the police say, 'We're not going to search you; we're going to get our little machine out and we're going to wand you.' It is not a stop and search; you just stop and wand. What is the issue with that? If you are not carrying an edge-blade knife, you should not have an issue. And you should not be carrying one – 100 per cent you should not be walking down the street, walking into our shopping centres and carrying a concealed weapon on your body. If you are doing that, there is only one reason you are. It is because you are looking for trouble and you are going to cause grief.

It does not matter whether it is our young children, our teenagers or our elderly parents; we need to make sure we are protecting them. For too long now we have actually cowered and tried to make sure that the silent majority have really not had a voice, and with that vocal minority that want to carry weapons, that want to wear masks on their faces to cause grief, it has come to the stage that enough is enough. We should be making changes to laws in this chamber that stop that. It is bad luck; if they want to do that, they must suffer consequences.

As I have spoken about many a time in this place, people have actually had loved ones that have lost their lives. I have had a couple in the Latrobe Valley. I constantly talk about it, because I have promised their parents that I will not let their child have been killed in vain. And it is not someone that has been walking along the street that has had an incident and has been stabbed and has been unlucky that they have died; it is people that have been stabbed multiple times.

There are people that are crying they do not want to be wanded, that they want to wear masks when they break into your house. Well, no. Enough is enough. If you want to protest, well, you can go and protest. Do not wear a mask. That should be the bottom line of the rule. Do not wear it. You know the rules. Do not turn up with a mask, because if you are doing that, you are doing it for your own benefit so you cannot be recognised. It always surprises me when I see it in the media: the people that are causing the most grief at protests have all got masks on. They have got them on for one reason. They are carrying stones, they are carrying rocks; these are weapons as well.

As I said the other day, if we actually had these wands and walked down the main street and down the CBD of Melbourne and wanded the first 300 people that we saw, you would be shocked at the amount

of people that would be carrying a concealed weapon. Half of them would not be carrying it to injure someone; half of them would be carrying it to protect themselves, because they have lost faith in this Allan Labor government bringing in the strong laws that we need to keep us safe.

I have got young kids in my family and I have got elderly parents, and my commitment to them – as is the commitment of every member in this chamber to every person in Victoria – is that we should be keeping them safe. If you have got an issue and you want to carry a weapon, here are the rules: you are going to be found out. We do not want these people on our streets. We do not want these people of a night-time coming up to our front doors and kicking them in and going in and terrorising people.

The genie is out of the bottle, and somehow we have got to put it back in. The only way we can do it is by giving our police stronger laws, and we need to make sure that when these people are arrested and they go to court they are facing consequences from our judicial system. You just do not get a free tick and walk out. The government are saying that they are increasing the laws from five years to 10 years to 25 years to life imprisonment. But we are not increasing the minimum laws. There is the issue: we need stronger sentencing from the people in our court system because our minimum laws are the ones that are causing the issue. We need to make sure that they have got no wriggle room at all to be walking into a court knowing that they are going to be coming out.

As we are politicians in this place, yes, we may be bringing in laws. They are not tough enough. We need to once and for all stand up for our community, draw a line in that sand and say, ‘Enough is enough. We here in Parliament as a government will make laws that will protect you, that will keep your children safe. They will no longer be stabbed to death on the streets in regional Victoria and in Melbourne.’ We need to make sure that that is absolutely crystal clear to every person in Victoria. As I said, if you want to carry weapons so you can cause conflict and cause grief on the streets of Victoria, you are no longer welcome here. Let us get tougher, and let us fix this once and for all.

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

**Assembly divided on motion:**

*Ayes (76):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Wayne Farnham, Eden Foster, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Nicole Werner, Rachel Westaway, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

*Noes (3):* Gabrielle de Vietri, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Stability) Bill 2025**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motion of Ben Carroll:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**And Nicole Werner's amendment:**

That all the words after 'That' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government has consulted more widely with all affected stakeholders, including stakeholders who have lived experience as children in care.'

**The SPEAKER:** The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Warrandyte has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. She has proposed to omit all of the words after 'That' and replace them with the words that appear on the notice paper. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Those supporting the reasoned amendment by the member for Warrandyte should vote no.

**Assembly divided on question:**

*Ayes (52):* Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Eden Foster, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, John Lister, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Belinda Wilson

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

**Question agreed to.**

**The SPEAKER:** The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

**Question agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Crimes Amendment (Retail, Fast Food, Hospitality, and Transport Worker Harm) Bill 2025**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Bill 2025**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

*Adjournment*

**The SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**Hamilton Community House**

**Emma KEALY** (Lowan) (17:11): (1439) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing and Building, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide additional funding to allow a full upgrade of the kitchen at Hamilton Community House at 19 Sedgewick Street in Hamilton. Deb King and the team at Hamilton Community House are providing incredible supports for the local community, as they have for many, many years. The range of their supports is really incredible, and it has escalated so much over recent times under the cost-of-living crisis. Deb is certainly seeing more people coming in who are needing support such as participating in one of the many programs that they offer at Hamilton Community House, including sewing classes; they have had chair yoga there. They have a men's shed onsite. They do incredible quilt work as well, which I saw on full display at the Hamilton Sheepvention.

But they also are providing a food pantry. They are providing an enormous array of services to provide food and meals to families in need. It cannot be understated how important they are, which is why Deb has been fighting so hard to have further funding provided for their kitchen upgrade. They have had assessments at the community house kitchen which indicate that it does not meet the requirements to

maintain its class 2 food registration. I will paint a picture for you. The cupboards are reminiscent of a 1970s-era U-shaped kitchen with that lovely timber laminate on the outside and chipboard underneath. The edges are all chipped away now. The chipboard is exposed. To just complete the look, there are green plastic round handles. This is certainly a sight to behold, and it is a tiny kitchen for the types of meals and support that that kitchen produces.

The funding is limited to only allow for half of the bottom cupboards to be replaced. That means that we will still have the old cupboards up the top, and we will still have some of the old cupboards down the bottom. It certainly does not bring that kitchen up to the food safety standards that they need. We are not talking about big bucks. What I understand is the current works to complete half the bottom cupboards is \$6800. To do the entire kitchen is \$11,800. I urge the minister to engage with Hamilton Community House, to recognise the good work that they do and to tip in any additional funds to ensure that that kitchen is up to scratch and the Hamilton Community House, like so many of our community and neighbourhood houses, can continue to provide the amazing services that they provide for people in our region.

### **Mount Waverley North Primary School**

**Matt FREGON** (Ashwood) (17:14): (1440) My adjournment item this evening is for the Deputy Premier in his capacity as the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update to the house and my community on the progress of planning school upgrades at Mount Waverley North Primary School in my district of Ashwood. Mount Waverley North Primary is a fantastic and growing school in Ashwood – it is in Mount Waverley, but in Ashwood district – and it has been excellently led over many years by principal Natalie Grieve, assistant principals Anthony Malelis and Tara King and their wonderful staff. I also want to give a special shout-out to president Jackie Barry and the whole school council for their ongoing commitment and service to our community.

The school received an upgrade to the main buildings about 12 years ago, which I believe was started by the former member for Mount Waverley the Honourable Maxine Morand, and I think it was finished under Michael Gidley when he was member, and very important upgrades they were. But one thing that they did not cover was a new gym.

The school has grown over the last seven years from about 200 to, I think, over 550 students next year, and over that time the Andrews and Allan governments have invested in much-loved covered netball courts and a new synthetic oval. But what the school community tell me they really need is a competition-grade gym, not only for the important sport and community uses but also this would create a place where the whole school can have their assemblies indoors, which we know is important. Earlier in the year the Premier visited the school and met with the team and kids and witnessed firsthand the wonderful awesomeness of this school. And we also got to show the Premier upgrades the school has carried out on their B building, thanks to the Allan Labor government's planned maintenance program that helps schools stay on top of regular maintenance. So I thank the minister for providing funding in the budget and look forward to receiving his updates so I can share the progress with the fantastic Mount Waverley North Primary School community.

### **Bulleen electorate roads**

**Matthew GUY** (Bulleen) (17:16): (1441) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it has to do with the speed limit along Porter Street, from the Newmans Road shops to Fitzsimons Lane roundabout, in Templestowe. I raised a roads matter last sitting week in relation to around a kilometre away, a block up, in Templestowe. This one is, as I said, around the Porter Street area. Now, there have been some significant roadworks along the Fitzsimons Lane roundabout intersection from Porter Street–Williamsons Road up towards the Templestowe shops, but going from Templestowe intersection up to Warrandyte along Porter Street, where it gets to Newmans Road, is currently 70 kilometres an hour. That section of the road has not been upgraded. It is near St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church on Church Road. As it goes off, you have Templestowe Park

Primary School, some smaller residential streets with low-density residential blocks up Tuscany Rise and other streets which come off Niland Rise, which come off this part of Porter Street.

A number of residents who live close to this area and walk their children along the footpaths – the unmade footpaths along this part of Porter Street – are concerned about some of the cars coming from Warrandyte down toward the Fitzsimons Lane roundabout, which was upgraded by the state government as part of the broader North East Link works. The cars there do exceed the speed limit. I live near that area. I know it firsthand, and some of the concerns raised by residents are quite valid. There are a number of instances where, as the road kinks and the bus pulls into an unmade side of the road to collect people – that is the 905 from the Pines to the city – cars have swerved, and because they are exceeding the speed limit and there are no speed dampening measures, it has been particularly dangerous for kids coming to school or people coming to avail themselves of the three bus stops that exist between Newmans Road and Fitzsimons Lane roundabout. So tonight I ask the minister for roads – and it is a jointly managed road between VicRoads and the Manningham City Council – to intervene, to put in place some speed-dampening measures and to review the speed limit on this section from 70 kilometres an hour to 60 kilometres an hour, which would fit the first part of the road from the Fitzsimons Lane roundabout to Templestowe park, which is 60 kilometres an hour and then gathers up to 70 kilometres an hour as it goes around the corner. I ask the minister to please intervene in this matter.

#### **Renewable energy**

**Gary MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (17:18): (1442) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Climate Action and concerns renewable energy. The action that I seek is that the minister provide an update on how the Allan Labor government is achieving net zero by 2045, to benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South. The reality of climate change means action needs to be taken now. Just months ago, federally, Australians made it very clear that they do not back outdated, dangerous and expensive plans.

In Victoria, thankfully, we have set in law world-leading targets to cut the state's greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero not by 2050 but by 2045. We are investing in new renewable energy generation and battery storage, meaning Victoria consistently has the lowest wholesale energy prices in the country. Victoria is miles ahead, while others continue debating, arguing and listing the thoughts of conspiracy theorists, shock jocks and flat earth propagators. While all that is going on, we are getting on with the transition to net zero, which clearly others are not, and they are really getting poked in the chamber too – it is good to hear. We are fast-tracking clean and cheap energy projects to help us get more renewables built quickly, and the SEC is back to supply 100 per cent publicly owned renewable energy. Most Australians are already on board, while those opposite are jumping ship. Their plan is to leave Australia floating aimlessly – a plan to nowhere. This government has a plan, and we are getting on with it. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

#### **Sandringham electorate housing**

**Brad ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (17:20): (1443) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Housing and Building, and the action that I seek is that the minister re-evaluate the complaints procedure at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to ensure the safety of community first. My office continues to receive a disturbing number of complaints regarding social housing in our community. I have been confronted with stories of neighbours who are living in fear, too scared to open their own front door and leave their house after dark lest they be confronted with a machete-wielding public housing tenant, as happened recently to a member of my community. I received video footage from a scared resident in a unit complex of a resident attempting to attack her friend in the middle of the street in broad daylight with a baseball bat. This is what it has come to. Residents in my community are having to endure police sirens at their door, the screams of violent outbursts echoing into their homes and even death threats. It is simply not acceptable.

I have also heard from landlords who, with the greatest of intentions, hand their property over to the public housing system to house someone in need. These are empathetic Victorians, good Victorians, who are willing to provide for the greater good of others. Yet they get their properties trashed and destroyed, as is the case for one Mentone property owner who had their property turned into a drug lab. This was even after the tenant spent time in jail and the property was supposed to be vacated. Why then, I ask, are decent Victorians being punished by this government's inaction, and why, when they contact the department of housing, does it take quite literally months to organise the removal of the resident or the resolution of the circumstance? The current circumstance is, quite frankly, a disaster. Every single Victorian deserves to be safe in their own home. The Allan Labor Government must take action to ensure these innocent people are safe and can leave their homes without fear.

### Greening the West

**Luba GRIGOROVITCH** (Kororoit) (17:22): (1444) The action I seek is for the Minister for Environment to provide an update on current and upcoming work under Greening the West that specifically supports communities in Melbourne's west, including tree-planting, shade infrastructure and park improvements, and how the voices of young people can continue to be incorporated into future environmental planning. Earlier this week I had the absolute pleasure of attending the Australian International Academy in Caroline Springs, better known as AIA, which is in my electorate of Kororoit. I met with students to talk about governance, community planning and the issues that matter to them. During our discussion the students shared thoughtful ideas about how we can build more livable and sustainable communities. A strong and consistent theme for the students was their absolute desire to see more green space in the community – more trees, more shade, more parks and of course more playgrounds. They spoke passionately about wanting greener streets and healthier outdoor environments not just for themselves but of course for future generations. Their views reflect what I am hearing across the western suburbs. That is why I am proud of the Victorian government's Greening the West initiative, which includes doubling tree canopy cover in the west by 2050 and ensuring that all residents have access to quality green space within 500 metres of their homes. Our young people, especially from AIA Caroline Springs, have made it clear they want a greener, healthier future. I hope that the minister can help ensure that their voices, including those of the students at AIA, continue to shape our environmental planning.

### Protective services officers

**Martin CAMERON** (Morwell) (17:24): (1445) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Police, and the action I seek is an assurance that Labor's plans to redeploy protective services officers to major retail precincts will not involve PSOs stationed at Traralgon. PSOs have been one of the state's most effective community safety initiatives for more than a decade, since their rollout under the former coalition government. PSOs have provided a trusted and visible presence at train stations. But unfortunately, while all these Melbourne train stations have a dedicated PSO presence, just four stations in the whole of regional Victoria are staffed by PSOs. I support the additional security in busy shopping centres, but any shift of PSOs without proper resourcing, particularly from Traralgon and other regional centres, risks undermining the safety of our already troubled rail network.

The government must explain how its deployment of PSOs will operate and provide a clear guarantee that PSO coverage at Traralgon will not be reduced. My electorate, including Traralgon, has the highest rate of criminal incidents in the state outside of metropolitan Melbourne. We cannot afford to lose our PSOs through deployment just because Labor cannot manage money and chooses to prioritise the city over the regions.

Retail crime in my electorate increased at an unacceptable 65 per cent in the year to June 2025. Under a coalition government 200 additional PSOs will form strike force teams to patrol high-risk shopping centres, including Morwell, Traralgon and Moe, to protect retail workers and shoppers. Backed by Jack's law, they will have the authority and technology to remove knives and machetes from criminals

before they are used to commit violent crime. Our plan is fully budgeted and, unlike Labor's disastrous thought bubble, will not see a single PSO removed from our public transport system.

I have been pleading with Labor to deploy more PSOs across regional Victoria for nearly three years, and for three years these pleas have fallen on deaf ears. It is absolutely criminal that these pleas are being ignored. It is worse again and almost unthinkable that we face cuts to already chronically under-resourced PSO numbers in the regions in Victoria because of the government's incompetence. Minister, will you assure residents in the Latrobe Valley that no PSOs will be taken from Traralgon under Labor's redeployment?

### West Gate Tunnel

**Sarah CONNOLLY** (Laverton) (17:26): (1446) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is that the minister update me on the works being done to prepare and get ready for the opening of the West Gate Tunnel, which is going to happen – I am taking a guess here – I think in 10 days. Not 10 days, sorry, that is the Metro Tunnel. The West Gate Tunnel is happening. It is happening in early December, next month, and I am really keen to hear about what we are doing to prepare for that opening. There are still a couple of things to be done, but it is well and truly on the way.

It was absolutely amazing on the weekend to see, I think it was, about 50,000 people – I would like to say 50,000 westies but there might have been some interlopers in there as well – down at the Yarraville Gardens for the West Gate Tunnel discovery day and so many of these people and families getting the chance to see their tunnel for the first time. I have to say, I know they truly appreciated the hard work, the years, the sweat and the tears that have gone into this absolutely incredible game changer of a project. It has been such a long road to get this tunnel up and running – as a westie, it has been a long road – but it is here. We have had challenges, yes, along the way. But as I tell folks each and every single day, this is a project, this is a tunnel, this is a second crossing that has been built for folks in the western suburbs. It is our West Gate Tunnel.

It is going to take trucks off our inner western roads, and that is going to shave up to 20 minutes off our morning commutes. It is also going to make it a whole lot easier to get around parts of our city, such as the new Wurundjeri Way extension. I can already see the traffic reduction because that is now open, which means folks can bypass the CBD to travel to the south-east, would you believe it. That is right: no more crawling through Spencer Street or King Street to get from one side of the city to the other. I was there just a few weeks ago, and I can tell you it looks absolutely incredible. For truckies and businesses, the tunnel is the other alternative route across the Yarra and a quicker connection to CityLink and Docklands or to get around the city.

There are so many benefits for our community, and very soon now we will finally have the chance to use it. I cannot wait, and that is why I welcome a brief update from the minister on the works that are being done to finally prepare this brand new piece of infrastructure to be open to the public once and for all in December.

### Timber industry

**Tim BULL** (Gippsland East) (17:29): (1447) My adjournment is for the Minister for Environment, and the action that I am seeking is for the minister to significantly increase the levels of work for the external plant panel contractors the government engages for fire mitigation work. When contracts were granted to former timber industry harvest and haulage contractors when that sector was closed, concerns were raised that they may take work off the external plant panel. When I raised this, the minister's response on 6 June last year attempted to allay those concerns. His letter says:

[QUOTE AWAITING VERIFICATION]

Similar volumes of forest and fire management work as previous years will be made available to the panel.

He also said that funding to the harvest and haulage contractors was new funding, indicating it would not impact on the external plant panel. This did not eventuate, and we saw a major reduction in work going to that panel. I raised it again in December, and the minister responded in January this year, saying that the reduction in work was a temporary variation and that the volume of work will increase for the balance of the financial year and align with previous volumes of work. Well, guess what – it never eventuated again, with in some cases little and in some cases no work being allocated to these contractors.

Then last week at an information session for external plant contractors, a slide was shown as part of a PowerPoint display, and it said, referring to the former harvest and haulage contractors, that their assets are now considered internal assets and must be considered before external plant are engaged. This was followed by the verbal comment from a staff member, ‘Why would we employ you when we can get the work done by them?’

So I ask the minister to please restore the same levels of work to the external plant panel, and in answering this question he might also consider providing me with a budget of works that they have received each year over the past five years so we can make some comparison; I think you will find it has reduced significantly. It is common knowledge that our bush currently needs – desperately needs – higher levels of management, with fuel everywhere and fire season coming on. I ask the minister to please reconsider his stance and grant them more work.

### Suburban Rail Loop

**Tim RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (17:32): (1448) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, and the action I seek is for the minister to detail for my community in the Mordialloc district the progress of works and anticipated construction timeframes and how this will benefit Mordialloc constituents.

This project has been to two elections. It has been a project that has significant community interest. Recent polling and surveying on this shows that the majority of Victorians see how important this project is, and this Labor government backs the important housing and public transport-creating projects that will transform our communities. This stands in stark contrast to what we have seen from, say, the member for Kew, the Leader of the Opposition, who suggests that this project will be shelved, or the visionary policy of the member for Bulleen, who on panels recently has said that this project would be supported if it got to a certain pro. So we have got a bipartisan position from the two-time former Leader of the Opposition, and then a shelving and cutting of thousands of jobs and the risk to 70,000 more homes for Victorians who need them most. We want those gen Zs and millennials priced in to the housing market, not priced out, living in the communities that they have grown up and been raised in – in the city of Kingston, in the city of Greater Dandenong – so that they have got an opportunity to be where they have grown up into the future.

The Suburban Rail Loop is a great transport connection to jobs, to education precincts – to where people want to go. This kind of visionary project will transform our communities for the future. For the Mordialloc district on the Frankston train line, you get to go up to the Cheltenham interconnection at Southland, at Sir William Fry Reserve, and you are on your way, and the travel time savings are absolutely outstanding. This is a project that will benefit constituents in my community and make sure that we can be close to the families that we love and cherish, not be told, like we have heard recently in commentary, that you have to go 60 kilometres out and work your guts out for 20 years to simply have an opportunity to live in the community that you have grown up in. That is not this Labor government’s approach. We want people to be supported and priced in to housing, and I am looking forward to hearing from the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop.

### Responses

**Mary-Anne THOMAS** (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (17:34): The member for Lowan raised a matter for the attention of the Minister

for Housing and Building. The member for Ashwood raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action he is seeking is an update on important planning and works at Mount Waverley North Primary School. The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Climate Action, and the action he is seeking is an update on the Allan Labor government's commitment to achieving net zero by 2045.

The member for Sandringham raised a matter for the attention of the minister for housing regarding concerns he has about tenants in public housing stock in his community. The member for Kororoit raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action she is seeking is greater investment in trees and canopy in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Minister for Police regarding PSOs. The member for Laverton raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure regarding an update on the opening of the West Gate Tunnel, a very exciting Allan Labor government project.

The member for Gippsland East raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, and the action he seeks is that more work be made available to the external plant panel. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop in the other place, and he is seeking further detail on the progress of works on the SRL and the benefits that it will provide to his community of Mordialloc.

**The SPEAKER:** As always, can I say thank you to the clerks and all our parliamentary staff for their support this sitting week. The house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 5:36 pm.**