

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

Premier	The Hon. DM Andrews MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop and Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery	The Hon. JM Allan MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J Symes MLC
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Agriculture	The Hon. GA Tierney MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Trade	The Hon. TH Pallas MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. EA Blandthorn MP
Minister for Child Protection and Family Services and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers	The Hon. CW Brooks MP
Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention and Minister for Racing	The Hon. AR Carbines MP
Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery and Minister for Business Precincts	The Hon. BA Carroll MP
Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action and Minister for Solar Homes	The Hon. L D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. S Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. MM Horne MP
Minister for Education and Minister for Women	The Hon. NM Hutchins MP
Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support and Minister for Fishing and Boating	The Hon. S Kilkenny MP
Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. SL Leane MLC
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Housing	The Hon. DJ Pearson MP
Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business and Minister for Resources	The Hon. JL Pulford MLC
Minister for Water, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Equality	The Hon. H Shing MLC
Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth	The Hon. RL Spence MP
Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep	The Hon. I Stitt MLC
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. M Thomas MP
Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Treaty and First Peoples	The Hon. G Williams MP
Cabinet Secretary	Mr SJ McGhie MP

Legislative Council committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Mr Finn, Mr Gepp, Dr Kieu, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

Participating members: Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Davis, Ms Lovell, Mr Meddick, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Vaghela and Ms Watt.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Dr Cumming, Mr Grimley, Mr Hayes, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Dr Ratnam, Ms Terpstra and Ms Watt.

Participating members: Ms Burnett-Wake, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Dr Kieu, Mrs McArthur, Mr Quilty and Mr Rich-Phillips.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Ms Burnett-Wake, Mr Erdogan, Dr Kieu, Ms Maxwell, Mr Ondarchie, Ms Patten and Ms Taylor.

Participating members: Dr Bach, Ms Bath, Ms Crozier, Dr Cumming, Mr Gepp, Mr Grimley, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty, Dr Ratnam, Mr Tarlamis, Ms Terpstra, Ms Vaghela and Ms Watt.

Privileges Committee

Mr Atkinson, Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Grimley, Mr Leane, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

Procedure Committee

The President, the Deputy President, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Mr Grimley, Dr Kieu, Ms Patten, Ms Pulford and Ms Symes.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Symes and Ms Tierney.

Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula and Mr R Smith.

Electoral Matters Committee

Council: Mr Erdogan, Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

House Committee

Council: The President (*ex officio*), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Assembly: The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell, Ms Staley and Ms Suleyman.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Council: Mr Grimley.

Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr Maas, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Assembly: Mr J Bull, Mr Eren, Ms Kealy, Mr Sheed, Ms Ward and Mr Wells.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Assembly: Ms Connolly, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr Newbury, Mr D O'Brien, Ms Richards and Mr Richardson.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Council: Mr Gepp, Ms Patten, Ms Terpstra and Ms Watt.

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

President

The Hon. N ELASMAR (from 18 June 2020)

The Hon. SL LEANE (to 18 June 2020)

Deputy President

The Hon. WA LOVELL

Acting Presidents

Mr Bourman, Mr Gepp, Mr Melhem and Ms Patten

Leader of the Government

The Hon. J SYMES

Deputy Leader of the Government

The Hon. GA TIERNEY

Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. DM DAVIS

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Ms G CROZIER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	McIntosh, Mr Thomas Andrew ⁹	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bach, Dr Matthew ¹	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Maxwell, Ms Tania Maree	Northern Victoria	DHJP
Barton, Mr Rodney Brian	Eastern Metropolitan	TMP	Meddick, Mr Andy	Western Victoria	AJP
Bath, Ms Melina Gaye	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFFP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny ¹⁰	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Burnett-Wake, Ms Cathrine ²	Eastern Victoria	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John ¹¹	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Cumming, Dr Catherine Rebecca	Western Metropolitan	Ind	Patten, Ms Fiona Heather	Northern Metropolitan	FPRP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip ³	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Quilty, Mr Timothy	Northern Victoria	LDP
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ratnam, Dr Samantha Shantini	Northern Metropolitan	Greens
Erdogan, Mr Enver ⁴	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas Christopher ⁵	Western Metropolitan	DLP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux ⁶	Eastern Victoria	ALP	Somyurek, Mr Adem ¹²	South Eastern Metropolitan	Ind
Gepp, Mr Mark	Northern Victoria	ALP	Stitt, Ms Ingrid	Western Metropolitan	ALP
Grimley, Mr Stuart James	Western Victoria	DHJP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Hayes, Mr Clifford	Southern Metropolitan	SAP	Tarlamis, Mr Lee ¹³	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne ⁷	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Taylor, Ms Nina	Southern Metropolitan	ALP
Kieu, Dr Tien Dung	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Terpstra, Ms Sonja	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Limbrick, Mr David ⁸	South Eastern Metropolitan	LDP	Vaghela, Ms Kaushaliya Virjibhai ¹⁴	Western Metropolitan	Ind
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Watt, Ms Sheena ¹⁵	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
McArthur, Mrs Beverley	Western Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling ¹⁶	Eastern Metropolitan	LP

¹ Appointed 5 March 2020

² Appointed 2 December 2021

³ Resigned 17 June 2019

⁴ Appointed 15 August 2019

⁵ LP until 24 May 2022

Ind 24 May–2 June 2022

⁶ Died 2 July 2022

⁷ Resigned 23 March 2020

⁸ Resigned 11 April 2022

Appointed 23 June 2022

⁹ Appointed 18 August 2022

¹⁰ Resigned 26 September 2020

¹¹ Resigned 1 December 2021

¹² ALP until 15 June 2020

¹³ Appointed 23 April 2020

¹⁴ ALP until 7 March 2022

¹⁵ Appointed 13 October 2020

¹⁶ Resigned 28 February 2020

Party abbreviations

AJP—Animal Justice Party; ALP—Labor Party; DHJP—Derryn Hinch's Justice Party;

DLP—Democratic Labour Party; FPRP—Fiona Patten's Reason Party; Greens—Australian Greens;

Ind—Independent; LDP—Liberal Democratic Party; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals;

SAP—Sustainable Australia Party; SFFP—Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party; TMP—Transport Matters Party

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS	
Acknowledgement of country	2029
Jody Milburn	2029
PETITIONS	
Wallan quarry.....	2029
BILLS	
Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Amendment (X Classified Film) Bill 2022.....	2030
Introduction and first reading	2030
PAPERS	
Child sexual abuse.....	2030
Community petition	2030
Papers.....	2030
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices	2030
Adjournment	2031
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Regional development	2031
Penrose community garden, Tarneit	2031
National Reconciliation Week	2031
Day for Daniel.....	2031
Thai Australian Chamber.....	2032
National Reconciliation Week	2032
Stan White	2032
Severe weather event.....	2033
Budget 2022–23.....	2033
Queen Elizabeth II platinum jubilee	2033
Evidence Based Policy Research Project.....	2034
Aboriginal community funding.....	2034
Gippsland Sports Academy awards.....	2034
Wild horse control	2034
Africa Day	2035
Burmese Welfare Association of Victoria	2035
Monash University medical research	2035
Bannockburn Football and Netball Club.....	2035
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion	2036
BILLS	
State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022	2036
Second reading.....	2036
Committee.....	2036
Third reading.....	2040
Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022.....	2040
Second reading.....	2040
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Duck hunting.....	2050
Road tolls.....	2050
Ministers statements: Australian Local Government Women’s Association.....	2051
East Werribee employment precinct.....	2051
Country Fire Authority expenditure	2052
Ministers statements: Northcote festival funding.....	2053
Small business support.....	2053
Health justice partnerships.....	2055
Ministers statements: WorldSkills competition.....	2055
Gas supply and prices.....	2056
Youth justice system	2056
Ministers statements: Children’s Week.....	2057
Written responses	2057
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Northern Metropolitan Region.....	2058
Northern Victoria Region	2058
Northern Victoria Region	2058

Northern Metropolitan Region	2058
Western Metropolitan Region	2059
Western Metropolitan Region	2059
Northern Victoria Region	2059
Southern Metropolitan Region	2059
Eastern Metropolitan Region	2060
Eastern Metropolitan Region	2060
Western Metropolitan Region	2060
Southern Metropolitan Region	2060
BILLS	
Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022	2061
Second reading	2061
Committee	2084
Third reading	2092
Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022	2092
Second reading	2092
Committee	2100
Third reading	2104
Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022	2104
Introduction and first reading	2104
Statement of compatibility	2104
Second reading	2106
Child Employment Amendment Bill 2022	2108
Introduction and first reading	2108
Statement of compatibility	2109
Second reading	2113
Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022	2116
Introduction and first reading	2116
Statement of compatibility	2116
Second reading	2123
ADJOURNMENT	
Family violence services	2129
Attwood hoon driving	2129
Wallan quarry	2130
Connecting Victoria	2130
Murray Basin rail project	2131
Maternal and child health services	2132
Foster carers	2132
Parkdale Primary School	2133
Greater Shepparton Secondary College	2133
Responses	2134

Thursday, 9 June 2022

The PRESIDENT (Hon. N Elasmarr) took the chair at 10.06 am and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The PRESIDENT (10:06): On behalf of the Victorian state Parliament I acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of this land which has served as a significant meeting place of the First People of Victoria. I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders of the Aboriginal nations in Victoria past, present and emerging and welcome any elders and members of the Aboriginal communities who may visit or participate in the events or proceedings of the Parliament.

JODY MILBURN

The PRESIDENT (10:07): Members, as some of you will no doubt be aware, today is my executive assistant Ms Jody Milburn's last day working with me. Jody joined me in mid-2020—it was a tough year, a tough time—and since that time has been a trusted and valued member of the team. Her intellect, experience and good humour have been appreciated by all who have had the pleasure of working with her. She will be sorely missed. I wish her and her family every success in all future endeavours. On behalf of everyone, thank you, Jody.

Members applauded.

Petitions

Following petition presented to house:

WALLAN QUARRY

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council *the proposed quarry in Beveridge North West Precinct Structure Plan (PSP). The proposed quarry will bring noise, dust, congestion, and vibrations to one of Melbourne's fastest growing communities.*

The local Beveridge and Wallan communities are strongly opposed to the inclusion of the quarry in the Beveridge North West PSP. The community foresees the generational social, economic, and environmental impact that the proposed quarry will have.

The initial consultation on Beveridge North West PSP failed to include the proposed quarry within the future urban structure. The planning panel report from 2020 noted that whilst 'some submitters argued that planning policy suggests the PSP should provide for extraction of the stone resource prior to urban development' that this view was 'strongly resisted by the VPA, Council and most landholders in the PSP area'. Despite this strong opposition the panel's recommendation to include the quarry in the PSP has since been accepted without question, or without further consultation.

The Petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council calls on the Victorian Government to reject the permit for the proposed quarry and, failing preventative action from the Government, acts to introduce legislation to prevent the development of quarries within the Urban Growth Boundary in Mitchell Shire.

By Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (1320 signatures).

Laid on table.

Bills**CLASSIFICATION (PUBLICATIONS, FILMS AND COMPUTER GAMES)
(ENFORCEMENT) AMENDMENT (X CLASSIFIED FILM) BILL 2022***Introduction and first reading*

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (10:09): I move to introduce a bill for an act to amend the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) (Enforcement) Act 1995 to legalise X classified films and modernise classification laws and for other purposes, and I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Ms PATTEN: I move:

That the second reading be made an order of the day for the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

Papers**CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE***Community petition*

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (10:10): I move, by leave:

That there be laid before this house a copy of the community petition on services and support for survivors and communities impacted by systemic child sexual abuse.

Ms Taylor: On a point of order, President, we are not denying leave, but it is conditional on one element. This obviously is an important issue, and that is why we are not denying leave. However, our standing orders have a manner and form of how petitions must be tabled, and members should respect those processes. The Procedure Committee needs to look at this to ensure our standing orders are fit for purpose and respected by all members of Parliament.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Office—Annual Plan, 2022–23.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 39.

Business of the house**NOTICES**

Notice of motion given.

Ms Maxwell: President, if I may be so brief as to say, on behalf of the entire chamber, my condolences to you and your family.

Further notices given.

Notices of intention to make a statement given.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (10:16): I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 21 June 2022.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (10:17): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on how regional Victoria will finally get its fair share of infrastructure funding under an elected Matthew Guy Liberal government. The 25 per cent regional infrastructure guarantee implemented in the first term of a Liberal government will deliver at least a quarter of all new government capital investment to regional communities. In stark contrast, successive Labor governments have adopted a city-centric approach to infrastructure funding, denying regional Victorians their fair share of state government funding. Regional Victoria has continuously missed out under Daniel Andrews and Labor, with less than 13 per cent of capital spending in the 2022–23 state budget estimated to be directly allocated to regional Victoria and just 11.4 per cent allocated in the 2021–22 state budget for major state asset investment, being projects of \$100 million or more. This year the Andrews Labor government will invest only 13 per cent of its infrastructure spend in regional Victoria while it squanders billions on mismanaged projects in the city and ignores major projects in northern Victoria, including the Shepparton bypass, the Mildura hospital and the Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment. Only a Guy Liberal government will ensure regional Victoria gets its fair share of infrastructure funding to help all Victorians recover, rebuild and thrive.

PENROSE COMMUNITY GARDEN, TARNEIT

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan—Minister for Workplace Safety, Minister for Early Childhood) (10:18): As a longstanding resident of the Western Metropolitan Region, I am really proud that the Andrews Labor government has made a commitment to creating more green open space in the west. Last month I was pleased to represent Minister Leane and officially open the Penrose community garden in Tarneit along with representatives of the Wyndham City Council, members from the Pasifika community and Labor candidate for Tarneit Dylan Wight. This wonderful new community garden was made possible through a \$170 000 contribution from the Andrews Labor government as part of our Tarneit suburban revitalisation program, in addition to \$11 000 provided by Wyndham City Council. This space will provide a new gathering place for the Tarneit community to enjoy.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

Ms STITT: I was also recently privileged to join the Boon Wurrung traditional owners and many local volunteers at the reconciliation day tree planting event in Werribee. My colleagues Tim Pallas, the member for Werribee, and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio MP, also attended this special event, which was organised to mark National Reconciliation Week. Throughout the day 1500 trees were planted along the Werribee River by members of the local community. This project was supported by the government in terms of the More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West initiative, an excellent initiative which will see 210 000 new trees planted in the west of Melbourne by the end of this year, reducing pollution.

DAY FOR DANIEL

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (10:20): Day for Daniel is an initiative of the Daniel Morcombe Foundation with the primary goal of raising child safety awareness through fun yet serious messaging. Schools, businesses and communities can participate in activities aimed at making the world a safer place for children. To Denise and Bruce, thank you on behalf of the entire Australian population. As

a result of your personal pain you have saved thousands of children from further harm through tireless advocacy and education. Last year alone 478 children across Australia had the courage to disclose harm on Day for Daniel. Whilst we clearly hope for no abuse of children, we know that disclosure means a path forward for survivors. This year's Day for Daniel will be held on Friday, 28 October, with the theme 'brave conversations'. All parents, caregivers and educators are encouraged to initiate personal safety discussions with their kids. Schools and early learning centres are being asked to teach children about school safety, while businesses and the community are being asked to work together to raise child safety awareness. Wearing red, hosting a red-themed morning tea, inviting a police officer to speak at your school or raising money for the Daniel Morcombe Foundation are all simple yet effective ways to participate. Daniel's day is not a memorial day; rather, it is an educational and awareness day for all our children.

THAI AUSTRALIAN CHAMBER

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (10:21): Sawatdee Kah. It was my pleasure last Sunday evening to join my friend and colleague the Honourable Bruce Atkinson to attend the launch of the Thai Australian Chamber. I congratulate president Tessa Sullivan and her board for their vision and their determination to strengthen the ties between Victoria and Thailand. The Thai community is very strong here in Victoria. They are in business, they are in finance, they are in IT, they are in property, they are in academia, they are all over Victorian business and of course they are also in small business. There are Thai restaurants everywhere, and there are not too many streets in Melbourne that you would drive up without seeing a Thai massage place either. So they are everywhere. I want to pay tribute to them for the generosity and determination they have to help Victorians in many aspects of life. At this time I would also like to pay tribute to Dr Simon Wallace, who was the previous Honorary Consul General for Thailand to Victoria and did an enormous amount of work in building the relationship between Victorian business, Victorian communities and the Thai community. Simon is now retired in Thailand, and I wish him well.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) (10:22): President, before I start my members statement I want to put on record my love and friendship and respect for you. I hope you are okay.

We have just concluded a range of activities for National Reconciliation Week which are very squarely directed toward acknowledging the pain in our history, acknowledging the work that is yet to be done and acknowledging the progress toward treaty and toward the implementation of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. The start of National Reconciliation Week was something coinciding with the Apology and the statement from the heart, and the end of reconciliation week marks the anniversary of the historic Mabo decision. Eddie Mabo passed away a number of months before a decision that would recognise fundamental changes to the way in which the law understood and respected traditional owner connection with land and with country. That work in his name and in the name of so many others goes on today. In Victoria we are so proud to engage with but more importantly to listen to traditional owners. It has been an ongoing conversation, including throughout eastern Victoria, including with Gunnai/Kurnai communities and with the Gunaikurnai Land & Waters Aboriginal Corporation. I thank everybody who is part of these conversations. I look forward to ongoing discussions and to working with the federal minister, Linda Burney, on achieving a whole-of-country solution to these issues.

STAN WHITE

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:24): This past year has been a difficult year. We have lost another icon from the taxi industry, our dear friend Stan White, who passed last Sunday. Stan has always been a passionate advocate for the taxi industry, along with his wife, Isobel. They started *Taxi Talk* magazine 70 years ago. Today their legacy is carried on by their daughter Toni Peters. I would like to extend my condolences to his daughters, Toni and Donna; his grandchildren; and the wider family. Stan will be dearly missed. Stan and his late wife, Isobel, always fought for a fair industry.

They believed in hard work and a living wage. I feel a responsibility to them and all the taxi families to continue their fight. Rest in peace, my friend, Stan White.

SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

Ms BURNETT-WAKE (Eastern Victoria) (10:25): Today marks one year since the horrific storm that devastated the Yarra Ranges on 9 June 2021. The sheer strength of this storm is difficult to put into words. The storm passed overnight, but it left a trail of damage that continues to be felt by my constituents in our communities in the Dandenongs. These people woke in the darkness to find their neighbours had fled, their homes were flattened, houses were lost, cars were crushed and fallen mountain ash trees left many trapped in their homes for days on end. Selfless SES crews worked their busiest nights on record, aided by the local CFA and emergency crews from other parts of Melbourne. But this storm did not break the Yarra Ranges; it pulled the community together. I remember vividly the acts of the community that began the minute people woke on 9 June. Neighbours banded together to bring warmth, share food and open their homes to those who had lost everything. Local businesses forgot all about profit and instead fed members of the community for weeks on end. There was even a man who moved his washing machine out onto his front lawn and connected it up so those left homeless or without power could wash their clothes. While buildings collapsed and many suffered, the heart and compassion of the community held strong. Yarra Ranges council and many community groups have organised an itinerary of storm anniversary events, and I was fortunate to attend one of these last Sunday. I commend the community on its ongoing strength as it continues to recover and rebuild, one year on.

BUDGET 2022–23

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (10:27): I also pass on my condolences to you and your family, President.

I would like to mention some of the budget highlights in the Southern Metro Region. We have Elsternwick Primary School, and they are getting \$469 100 to upgrade the toilets. They also have upgrades to their green zone, and it is really beautiful because it helps kids identify their feelings. Different colours represent different moods that they are in, and this is helping them to grow and mature at an early age and to become self-aware. It is beautiful to see. They are also getting upgrades to their oval, and I will say that that in the seat of Brighton. Who knew there are actually things in the budget for the seat of Brighton? There are many more; I just cannot include them all here.

I would also like to mention Hampton Pier, \$3.3 million to upgrade the pier, and I want to do a shout-out to locals. You might have heard the campaign ‘Pier Pressure’.

Ms Shing: Ah, I see what you did.

Ms TAYLOR: Too good! A pier is not just a pier; it is a whole community. There is so much that springs from that beautiful space, and I just want to say I am so happy that Minister Horne and Parks Victoria are all part of a wonderful solution for that beautiful part of Victoria.

I also want to do a little shout-out for a recent announcement by Minister Neville with regard to the Dingley recycled water scheme. It is absolutely fabulous. It is \$24.83 million, and it feeds Bayside. That is why I was also mentioning that, because it helps the golf courses and open spaces get watered in a sustainable way.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (10:28): I pay tribute to Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of Her Majesty’s platinum jubilee. The Queen’s service to this nation as Queen of Australia and of the Commonwealth is without parallel. Having acceded to the throne in the age of Churchill, Menzies and Eisenhower, Her Majesty’s service has spanned 16 Australian Prime Ministers. The Queen has more experience at the centre of world events than anyone else alive today.

The jubilee celebrations of the last week highlighted what a unifying figure the Queen is in a way that a political head of state never can be. The constitutional monarchy has served Australia well since Federation, and Her Majesty has been an exemplar of faith, duty and service to its ideals.

EVIDENCE BASED POLICY RESEARCH PROJECT

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS: On another matter, the Evidence Based Policy Research Project has highlighted what a poor job Australian parliaments and governments are doing in developing legislation. Two independent and philosophically opposed think tanks have each assessed 20 case studies from the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland parliaments against criteria for sound policy decision-making processes. The consensus from the two think tanks was that only six case studies were acceptable, sound or excellent; 10 were mediocre; and four were unacceptable. Of the four Victorian examples, two were rated as mediocre and two as unacceptable. To improve its legislative policy process the New South Wales Legislative Council now requires bills to be accompanied by a statement of public interest outlining the need, objectives, options considered, analysis, policy pathway and consultation in respect of each bill. Victoria scored the lowest of the four jurisdictions considered, and we now need to improve our policy and legislative processes.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY FUNDING

Mr GEPP (Northern Victoria) (10:30): President, my brother, love and condolences from my family to yours during this very difficult time.

One of the great highlights of this year's state budget was the \$400 million in funding to support Aboriginal Victorians across a range of programs from health to education and family services: \$151.4 million for treaty; \$35.7 million to promote, protect and celebrate Victoria's invaluable Aboriginal cultural heritage; \$13.5 million to support registered Aboriginal parties; and continued funding and support for the plethora of Indigenous grants this government has initiated and made available since 2014. This is great news for Northern Victoria Region. We have so many mobs in my electorate, and I was honoured and very humbled recently to have been in touch with many of these tireless Aboriginal groups and organisations to inform them of some of the pretty significant funding announcements which were made during the budget and which I will share next sitting week. With the election of the Albanese commonwealth government, the appointment of Linda Burney as Minister for Indigenous Australians and an unwavering commitment to the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and truth telling, our shared story as a state and a nation is only going to get so much better and so much stronger.

GIPPSLAND SPORTS ACADEMY AWARDS

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) (10:31): I had the wonderful opportunity last Friday night to visit and sit in with the Gippsland Sports Academy awards to celebrate all things sport and the people who make it possible. Judi Buhagiar won the Phil Shelley Award for her massive contribution to netball. The David Drane Award, which was for consistent improvement in a young sportsperson, went to Alexandra Luders in tennis. The Darrell White Award went to Mackenna Whiteside for her achievements in team sport, in netball. The Rising Star Award went to Chelsea Beechey in clay target shooting. She comes from Bairnsdale, and she is a fantastic shooter with an outstanding track record. Her star will go high.

WILD HORSE CONTROL

Ms BATH: I also rise to throw my support behind The Nationals and the Liberals plan to stop Labor's extermination of Victoria's iconic brumbies. Unlike Labor, The Nationals and the Liberals will rule out aerial and ground shooting of brumbies. Minister D'Ambrosio spoke in the media about 'destroying' Victoria's environment. Well, her successive policies around 'lock up and leave' in country Victoria, failing with the Safer Together policy, not having proper preparatory burns and having out-of-control bushfires ripping through and plundering our Victorian environment are things that she is in failing on, and she needs to address them.

AFRICA DAY

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (10:33): I just wish to comment on the fact that I recently attended the Africa Day celebrations, and I want to put on record my admiration for what is one of our most vibrant multicultural communities. Obviously the continent of Africa has many nations, and the people therefore that come to make Melbourne their home or Victoria their home are coming from quite a range of different cultures. What they are contributing to the advancement of Victoria is to be admired and congratulated.

BURMESE WELFARE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Mr ATKINSON: I also note that the Burmese Welfare Association of Victoria recently conducted an event which brought together the varied peoples of Burma-Myanmar. It was wonderful to see all of those different communities from that country joining together to recognise the value that they can put on supporting their people—not just here in Victoria but also with, if you like, putting their arms around people who are connected to those who are suffering in Myanmar at the moment under the current regime.

MONASH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr ATKINSON: I will also just comment that I recently attended the Monash University Alfred hospital research centre, and can I indicate what wonderful work they are doing. Minister Pulford often talks about our work in medical science. That is one of the institutes that is just doing some extraordinary work in brain cancer, in cardiac and in diabetes. Given the work that I saw there, I would invite other members to actually familiarise themselves with the work that they are doing at that centre.

BANNOCKBURN FOOTBALL AND NETBALL CLUB

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education)

Incorporated pursuant to order of Council of 7 September 2021:

Last week I had great pleasure in joining the member for Geelong, Christine Couzens, in making an important announcement in Bannockburn that will make such a difference for the community and especially for junior and senior netballers at the Bannockburn Football and Netball Club.

Bannockburn and its region continues to grow strongly, and as with so many regional towns, sport is at the heart of this community.

The Andrews Labor government understands this, and it will be great to see the impact of a \$1.1 million contribution towards a significant upgrade that includes a new pavilion, female-friendly player and umpire change rooms, accessible toilets, social spaces, first-aid facilities and an office.

This funding is part of sport infrastructure investment in the Victorian budget 2022–23.

Netball is booming at the Bannockburn Tigers but it's fantastic news, too, that Bannockburn will field for the first time at least one AFLW team next year.

Providing quality facilities will give huge encouragement for participation.

Junior and senior netballers have struggled with an ageing facility, so this new project is a real step forward—gender equity has been a long time coming to Victoria Park.

This government's support of local sport, including sport for girls and women, has totalled more than \$1.2 billion statewide since 2014.

Golden Plains Shire Council and the Bannockburn Football and Netball Club have worked hard to bring this project to fruition, and I acknowledge the work of club president Scott Penning and secretary Kath Bourke.

I look forward to visiting Victoria Park to see these much-deserved developments.

Business of the house**NOTICES OF MOTION**

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (10:35): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, 683 to 746, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Bills**STATE TAXATION AND TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022**

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms SYMES:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (10:37)

Mr DAVIS: I will just ask the minister some contextual questions. Clearly this state taxation bill comes in the context of the state budget and the challenges that the state faces with respect to the budget position. I ask: does the government propose any new taxes or increased taxes beyond what is in this bill?

Ms TIERNEY: The bill before the house today is very clear in terms of what it is attempting to do. I understand the question that the member has put, but we are dealing with the bill that is before the house today and to err otherwise is to just wander into speculation, and I am not prepared to do that.

Mr DAVIS: If interest rates rise—they certainly have risen significantly since the bill was introduced and there may well be further rises, as markets seem to expect—will the government take any further taxation measures beyond what is in this bill?

Ms TIERNEY: Again, and I will continue to provide this answer to the questions that I suspect you will continue to put to me this morning as hypotheticals, I am here to deal with the bill that is before the house. In terms of other matters, the government will deal with them as it sees fit when they arise.

Mr DAVIS: It is clear that line of questioning will not be productive, but I will just place on record our concern that the government may bring forward further taxes. We know the Premier promised there would be no new taxes in 2014, as did the Treasurer, and there have been more than 40 new taxes since this government came to power. But with respect to the exact provisions in the bill, with the committee's leave I might just ask a couple of questions and then make a statement on what we intend to do with clause 34.

With respect to the windfall gains tax changes that are in this bill, I ask: in effect what is going on here is the state government got the original windfall gains tax bill wrong and it has now had to come back and modify the legislation, recognising that an unintended effect would be that universities undertaking various projects would be clobbered by the state government's tax, which—giving them some generous latitude—we presume they did not intend to do. Why is it that the government did not

consult with universities in the first instance, allowing confusion and concern to build, and has now had to come back to fix its errors?

Ms TIERNEY: Firstly, I reject a number of things that the member raised prior to asking his question. We will not be using this opportunity in committee to continue to have the opposition use this as a party-political free advertising space. We reject what the member has put in relation to allegations of taxation, and I can easily refute what he has said. In respect to the windfall gains tax—

Mr Davis interjected.

Ms TIERNEY: Excuse me, I am speaking. In respect to the windfall gains tax, there have been a lot of discussions between the Treasurer and the universities, and we are very pleased to be able to now bring this forward. It does mean that there is clarity around the purpose and use of the windfall gains tax, and of course it upholds the principle of the continuation of the use of and investment in educational facilities and other educational activities.

Mr DAVIS: If the minister wants to refute points that I have made, she is welcome to do so, but I note she did not do so. She said she would refute them or could refute them but chose not to actually do so. Beyond that, on the windfall gains tax, we are not opposing that provision; we think it is a correction of an error and a mistake by the government. My question is why the government did not consult in the first instance.

Ms TIERNEY: The Treasurer consulted with a whole range of organisations and sectors in respect to that. We have been able to have substantive and detailed discussions with the vice-chancellors in particular, and we are pleased to bring this clarification before the house today.

Can I say that, in terms of dealing with what you continue to assert, the Andrews Labor government has cut or abolished taxes and fees 57 times since coming to government. This includes increasing the payroll tax threshold twice since coming to government so that fewer small to medium-sized businesses pay payroll tax, and last July we cut the regional payroll tax rate to 1.2125 per cent, just one-quarter of the metropolitan rate and the lowest in the nation. It is interventions like these that have seen the regional unemployment rate fall to 3.2 per cent, the lowest in the nation and less than half of what it was when those opposite—your government—were in power last and were voted out. We supported businesses through the worst of the pandemic with payroll tax cuts that have saved Victorian businesses about \$1.7 billion up to 2021–22 and will save about \$4 billion over the forward estimates. I could go on, but I think that is enough to provide for those that might be listening that you are providing the chamber with information that is not correct.

Mr DAVIS: I would make the simple point that since 2013–14 taxes have gone up 80 per cent—state tax take is up 80 per cent. The economy has grown by nothing like that size or that increase. The tax take per head is up and the debt has gone up too.

But my purpose here today is fundamentally in this committee to focus on clause 34, and I might ask the minister about this clause, referenced in the purposes section, given that it has purview across all objections that are lodged for whatever matter across the operation of state taxation in this way. The government is removing latitude for the State Revenue Office to allow objections out of time. We understand there has to be a time period. We understand also that harsh or unusual circumstances can occur and allowing the State Revenue Office the latitude to allow an objection out of time does not seem to us to be unreasonable. I am thankful to the minister's office for providing details about the numbers of objections—about 55 over the last five years, so it is actually a very modest number of people that we are talking about. These are where objections have been provided, in effect, by grace of the SRO—not known for its generosity and human kindness. But leaving that aside, that is the circumstance, and the fact is that removing that latitude for the SRO to do so, to allow an out-of-time objection and then obviously for that to be assessed on its merits, seems to us to be unreasonable, and it does seem harsh for taxpayers. When they apply, the SRO would—prior to this clause being passed—previously have had the capacity to provide an out-of-time objection. Now, I know that the

minister will say that the Treasurer will retain that capacity, but that means an escalation, it means a political involvement and it means that a more seamless mechanism is unable to operate. So I just put on record that I think it is harsh. We do think that that latitude should be there, and consequently we will oppose that particular clause. There is not a lot of revenue involved here, but it does matter where harsh circumstances apply to individuals.

Ms TIERNEY: I will begin by refuting some of the comments that the member made prior to actually asking the question. Those opposite talk about their list of 42 new or increased taxes. The fact is that they do count the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax, which they not only voted for but supported vocally, so I think they are being quite hypocritical. They also include the mental health levy which they now apparently support, but that seems to change on a day-to-day basis. The list also counts the absentee landowner surcharge for foreign purchasers six times. Obviously that is not a tax on Victorians; that is a tax on foreign purchasers. A little bit of clarity and a bit of transparency on those points I think should be on the record.

In respect to clause 34, which the opposition has signalled they will be opposing, the fact is that most stakeholders right across the state, no matter where they come from or who they represent, have applauded the Treasurer in respect of this budget and indeed the wider government. The amendment before us today is really an amendment when you have not got much else to say, because it is a matter of just streamlining procedures. It is about not hurting Victorians because, as I understand it, in terms of the category that is potentially affected, in the last financial year there were only seven Victorians in the whole state that were picked up by it.

Mr Davis interjected.

Ms TIERNEY: And I know that you have said it was a small number, but let us get the actual quantum on the record. For the sake of clarity again, currently a taxpayer must lodge an objection within 60 days after the date of service of a notice of assessment or a payroll tax decision. The commissioner may, however, permit the late lodgement of an objection after 60 days. There is currently no time limit on the commissioner's discretion to extend the ordinary 60-day period for lodgement of an objection. The SRO commissioner requested that the government legislate a maximum five-year time limit on the commissioner's discretion to permit late lodgement of an out-of-time objection. Such a limit will support the policy imperative of finality and certainty in the resolution of tax disputes for the benefit of both the state and the taxpayer. Delays of longer than five years make it difficult for the SRO to fully consider the facts of the grounds of the objection, key staff members may have moved on, relevant files may have been destroyed. Taxpayers must retain records pertaining to their tax matters for only five years under the Taxation Administration Act 1997.

The same record-keeping requirements apply to the State Revenue Office, and under government retention and destruction protocols the SRO may destroy documents related to revenue management and assessment and determination of liabilities five years after they are received. A five-year limit—and that is a five-year limit after the 60 days—will ensure consistency with the broader tax administration framework, including a five-year period of retrospectivity for assessments, a five-year limit on the withdrawal of assessments and issuing of reassessments, a five-year limit on application for refund and a five-year record-keeping obligation. Objections to tax assessments issued more than five years previously are rare; as I have just stated, there were seven such instances in 2021–22. If a historical tax matter is brought to light beyond the five-year limit and justice in a particular case is required, the state still retains the ability to compensate the affected taxpayer via an *ex gratia* relief payment on a case-by-case basis, Mr Davis.

Mr DAVIS: I understand the minister's point, but nonetheless it is a more cumbersome system, and the current system would work better, in our view. It is a very small number of taxpayers, we concede that, and we thank the minister for the list of numbers over the last five years, but still it is a question of fairness and we think the current arrangements are fairer.

Ms TIERNEY: We will just agree to disagree on that one, Mr Davis.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clauses 3 to 7 agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 13—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clause 14 agreed to.

Clause 15—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clauses 17 to 30—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clauses 31 to 33 agreed to.

Clause 34 (10:56)

Mr DAVIS: I have made my point. We think this new change is unnecessarily harsh and means that in certain circumstances a very small number of individual taxpayers may be disadvantaged, so we will oppose it.

Committee divided on clause:

Ayes, 20

Barton, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Erdogan, Mr
Gepp, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Hayes, Mr
Kieu, Dr

Leane, Mr
Maxwell, Ms
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms
Ratnam, Dr

Shing, Ms
Stitt, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Watt, Ms

Noes, 9

Atkinson, Mr
Bach, Dr
Burnett-Wake, Ms

Crozier, Ms
Davis, Mr
Finn, Mr

Lovell, Ms
Quilty, Mr
Rich-Phillips, Mr

Clause agreed to.

Clause 35 agreed to.

Clause 36—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clause 37 agreed to.

Reported to house without amendment.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (11:03): I move:

That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (11:04): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The PRESIDENT: Pursuant to standing order 14.27, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council have agreed to the bill without amendment.

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022*Second reading*

Debate resumed on motion of Ms SYMES:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (11:04): I rise to speak to the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, an important part of any government every year. We have seen the government out-spruiking the budget and talking about what they know is a massive issue, and that is the health crisis that is consuming Victorians—a health crisis that is putting the lives of Victorians at risk. The Victorian budget papers say ‘Putting patients first’. Well, I have to say that there are a number of issues that are occurring around the state with the 000 crisis, with the ambulance ramping that is at record levels, with the response times that are just failing Victorian patients. There is the inability to get your elective surgery. We have got 90 000 on the elective surgery waitlist and at least 151 000 on the dental waitlist. We do not even know how many are on the hidden waitlist. These are really concerning issues. In the budget papers the departmental objectives say:

... be safe, high quality and provide a positive experience.

Well, I cannot say that that is what is occurring across Victoria in Victoria’s hospitals, in our health services, that are trying to do their best. It is not for the lack of dedication and care and support that those clinicians are providing to Victorians at their most vulnerable times. They are doing their best, but they have been let down by this government because of years of mismanagement and underinvestment.

We hear the government say that they are putting in record amounts of funding, but it is here in the budget papers that they have actually cut the funding. It goes from \$27 billion last year down to \$25 billion. It is in black and white. That clearly is not the same amount of money put in to assist with this healthcare crisis at a time that we need it most. Today we have got reports of maternal child health nurses being in short demand, and everyone is coming out blaming COVID. Yes, COVID is contributing to these issues, but it is not the sole reason. It is years of mismanagement and underinvestment.

In this budget, incredibly, there is a cut to the preventative health area. The very good work of the McGrath Foundation, which provides support through, mostly, a woman’s journey when they have got breast cancer, has not been funded in this budget. There are millions and millions of dollars that have not been put into the preventative health space. Prevention is so critical to assist Victorians to not end up in the acute health system, yet this government in their wisdom have cut that. I think it is just extraordinary. This is why the government are saying, with their spin and bluster, that they know that it is a problem, yet they are not putting the money when it should be.

We have got, as I said, a waitlist. Nearly 90 000 Victorians at last count are on that elective surgery waitlist. It would be more. We have got issues that are rising, and the government is attempting to

address these issues, but they have not done the consultation and they have not done the work. Again it is just another indication of the chaotic approach that the government has taken.

I mentioned dental health care. Dental health care is absolutely critical as well, because poor dental health can actually lead to some very serious general health issues. For instance, if you get an ongoing abscess or a very bad infection of the teeth, that can lead to serious conditions like SBE, subacute bacterial endocarditis, a condition of the heart. That is how serious issues can be with dental health. But we know there are also psychosocial implications to poor dental health too, and this is again a really critical part of our health system that has been overlooked.

Incredibly in these budget papers there is a cut and paste of the figures, and it was admitted in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that there was a mistake in these budget papers around these numbers and around the figures and what the government was actually telling Victorians was accurate. What I question is: if that is a mistake that we picked up in those numbers in the dental health component of the budget, what other mistakes have been made? Well, we know that there has been an extraordinary blowout in debt, as we have gone through the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and we know that the debt is rising and that we have got blowouts in major infrastructure projects that could have and should have been put into health. It could have been put into the areas that need it most rather than having cuts in preventative health, cuts in the dental health area and, importantly, as I said, the \$2 billion cut from \$27 billion down to \$25 billion. Mr Davis in his contribution spoke about this government being the highest taxing and biggest debt government in Victoria's history. That is going to flow on.

But we have seen the inaction that is now causing what I describe every single day as Victoria's growing health crisis, and I am so concerned that the government has not sought to really address this or is trying to catch up now, trying to put in measures. We have seen, for instance, an announcement on the Melton hospital. Well, they are to be confirmed, the figures there. That was announced years ago, and it is still a paddock out in Melton. Not anything has been done. This government might be trying to spin their way out of their crisis that they have put us all in, but there is a lot of evidence to suggest that they just have not done the work, and I think Victorians are awake to exactly what is going on. They know that Daniel Andrews has failed them. Daniel Andrews has been in power for eight years. God forbid, we do not need him for another four years. We just do not need him for another four years. Victoria does not need him to fix this crisis. He got us into it; he sure as hell is not the man to get us out of it.

In returning to this important area that we are debating today, the budget, prior to the last election there were 10 new community hospitals promised, and construction was to be started. One, I think, has got construction underway, in Cranbourne. The others have been plagued with problems. Again I grant that these projects do take time to plan, there is no question about that; I am not disputing any of that. But these hospitals—the government calls them hospitals; I would say they are more community health hubs, actually. They are not overnight stays. It is a bit of a furphy for the government to say that they are hospitals in the true sense of the word, because they actually do not provide overnight stays. They are providing services around that community health area, which is very, very important, but they are years away. They are not going to solve the problems that we are seeing now, and again it is more spin about what the government has done rather than what is actually being delivered.

I want to raise the issue about the ambulance response times and ambulance transfer times. Yes, we know that our paramedics have had a lot to deal with in terms of PPE and obviously donning and doffing. I truly appreciate that that takes time, and the cleaning at the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020 was certainly a major issue. But these response times and transfer times are getting worse. We are not in that same scenario that we were in back in 2020, but because there is clogging right through the system, they cannot move them into the emergency departments. The emergency departments, as we have heard from other members, are being held up as well. You hear often from the police that they are transporting young people or people of any age with mental health issues, and because there is no-one to look after them they have got to take care of them and stay with them while they are

waiting to be seen. The system is under huge stress, and then of course there are not enough beds, bed closures and not enough staff.

The government promised us in 2020 when the pandemic first hit that they would lock us down to prepare the health system and to flatten the curve. Well, we are beyond flattening the curve. We have got the virus, we have got a high degree of immunisation in Victoria and Australia and I think everyone should be congratulated for those efforts. But we went into lockdown after lockdown. That has put so much pressure on the system because people could not get the care that they need and deserve. I see the Cancer Council out there talking about the numbers, just the hundreds of Victorians who had their bowel cancer screenings missed. They will develop cancer and potentially, and sadly, die. We have had so many failures because of the mismanagement. At the start I grant that everybody wanted governments at all levels to get it right.

But the government pursued issues that I think history will show to have had huge ramifications for many, many people for decades to come. Sadly, too many have died. We have had 21 Victorians that we know of who have died because of not being able to get through to 000 or to get an ambulance. The government say they are putting more money in now, but these issues were identified years ago. 000 was identified in 2016, and I have questioned the minister. I know she is not here today because she is not well, but I have questioned the minister time and time again about this, and the investment that they have put in just this year is too little too late. This is why we are in this mess. These decisions are made by this government, who think that they can bluff Victorians with big numbers. Well, what they are doing is not giving what Victorians actually deserve, and that is a greater degree of hope, transparency and honesty, because many of these issues could have been avoided if we had had transparency and honesty. Given the cover-ups and the failures and all those issues that have arisen out of what has gone on over the last few years, as I said, history will not be kind to this government.

I just want to raise the other issue around the government saying that there are billions of dollars that they have put in. In actual fact a quarter of that, \$3.5 billion of the \$12 billion, was actually spent putting in vaccinations, RATs and PPE. It is there. So the government again might try and spin about the money they are putting in, but some of that money has already been spent. I say again I think that is fine, but I do think we need a degree of honesty around this too to understand exactly what is going on.

There is more that needs to be done. Investment is one thing, but there is reform that can be done. I do not think this government has the answers to get us out of this health crisis. It is just going from bad to worse every single day. Too many Victorians are waiting in pain. They are suffering. Too many Victorians have, sadly, died. There will be more—I know there are more; they just have not been included in the latest figures—and of course the coroner will have their work to do. There are massive ramifications right along our health system.

I want to place on record in my final minute my thanks again to all of those—the clinicians and everyone behind the scenes in hospitals and health services, throughout our ambulance system, the police force and the ADF—who have been working to support and try and care to the best of their capacity for the tens of thousands of Victorians who have needed that care and treatment. I want to place on record my thanks to those clinicians, surgeons, nurses and doctors who speak to me and tell me of what they are so worried about, what is happening, and they are saying how dire and dangerous the situation is. They too are being brave in speaking out about the true nature of what is going on, and I want to place on record my thanks to those people who have just done a magnificent job. Their dedication, the innovation that they have also provided at some very trying times, should be applauded. I say that again and I will continue to say that. Again I say this is an important debate. This is about Victoria's state of where we are at in terms of our fiscal position, and I think every Victorian should be concerned about another four years of a Labor government.

Ms WATT (Northern Metropolitan) (11:19): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. The 2022–23 state budget supports Victoria’s recovery and puts patients first. It is a budget that includes some great wins for my local community in the Northern Metropolitan Region. The Merri Creek Primary School community has been advocating for a long time for extra funding to upgrade their school. That is why I was proud to be able to announce \$5.35 million for new and upgraded facilities to ensure that Merri Creek Primary School continues to provide high-quality learning outcomes for years to come. The funding will go towards a brand new senior building and rooftop learning space as well as transforming and upgrading existing teaching and learning spaces. I recently visited Merri Creek Primary School, alongside the Minister for Education, James Merlino, and the member for Northcote, Kat Theophanous, and I can assure you that all the students are bursting with excitement at the news. I would like to make a special note of the tireless advocacy of school principal Kerri Gibson and the work of the school council, headed by Stu Whiley and his predecessors. Without their tireless campaigning this upgrade would not have been possible.

The Andrews Labor government knows that a good education can break down barriers and give Victorians the tools to thrive. Education has always been a priority of this government, and this budget builds on that with a \$1.8 billion investment to build 13 new schools and upgrade 65 existing ones. Since we took office eight years ago every single special school in Victoria has received funding for a major upgrade, because students with disabilities deserve the same opportunities as every other student in Victoria.

The Andrews Labor government has a commitment towards an accessible public transport network for all. We are improving accessibility, safety and comfort across the public transport network to ensure every Victorian can get to where they need to go, particularly Victorians with a disability. We are delivering six new level-access tram stops across La Trobe Street in the city to improve tram network accessibility. The La Trobe Street corridor will become a key interchange with the Metro Tunnel when it opens a year ahead of schedule in 2025, and we will ensure that we have accessible infrastructure in place for its commencement. It is all part of the \$157.8 million investment in the Victorian budget 2022–23 to improve public transport accessibility. Only the Andrews Labor government will deliver the public transport network Victoria needs.

We know that the winter cold can bite, and power bills often go up this time of year. It is something that the Andrews Labor government recognises, and it is why we have included in this budget a \$250 million investment in the new power saving bonus, driving down the cost of living right across the state. From 1 July 2022 the new \$250 payment will be open to all Victorian households who use the Victorian Energy Compare website to compare their energy deals and seek out better prices. User data shows that seven out of 10 users can save money by switching energy offers, with typical annual savings on energy bills of \$330 in the first year of switching alone. Combined with the power saving bonus, this means that Victorian households could save up to \$580 a year.

The new \$250 power saving bonus, to run until 30 June 2023, follows on from the success of the \$50 power saving bonus announced by the Labor government as part of the Victorian budget in 2018–19. It builds on the \$250 bonus for concession recipients delivered in the state budget 2020–21, which remains open to eligible concession card holders only until 30 June this year. This has provided more than \$110 million to more than 850 000 Victorian households in total. If you claimed a previous version of the power saving bonus, then you will be pleased to know that you are still eligible for this new one-off payment when the new program opens in July. I know that the power saving bonus will have a real and meaningful impact on families all across the Northern Metropolitan Region.

The power saving bonus is just one of a number of initiatives in this budget that will drive down energy prices as well as reduce emissions. The state budget will also make switching to solar more affordable than ever with a boost to the Solar Homes program, making \$42.2 million available for 64 000 Victorians to take up solar panel rebates and zero interest loans while continuing the current rebate value of \$1400. There is also further funding for 1700 new solar battery rebates of \$2950, securing more solar savings for families. The budget will drive down household energy costs, with \$9 million

for critical energy affordability support services and one-on-one assistance for Victorians who need it most as well as \$1.2 million dedicated to driving down gas bills for businesses and households.

On top of this the state budget provides a boost to jobs in new clean industries, with a \$300 million package investing in renewable energy, a safe and smooth transition to net-zero emissions for all Victorians, securing the grid and new parks and programs to safeguard our precious biodiversity. The government will keep working to futureproof Victoria against natural disasters, including providing communities with access to energy through \$10 million for microgrids in high-priority locations and \$9.4 million to help recovery from storms, floods and fires. To give Victorians the skills for the renewable jobs they want, there is \$8 million to support training for electrical workers, some \$9.5 million will create local jobs through priority public works upgrades in our green spaces and \$6.3 million will grow regional jobs through forest restoration.

The Andrews Labor government has always been a strong supporter of local jobs. Since November 2014 our economy has generated 560 000 new jobs, including more than 80 000 jobs in regional Victoria. When the pandemic hit our shores we responded with record investment to protect Victorian lives and livelihoods. We had a plan to create 400 000 jobs by 2025, with a target to deliver half of them by 2022. Today Victoria has already far exceeded our goal. With employment rising by 280 000 since September 2020, we are well on track to reach our target of 400 000 new jobs by 2025. We are backing local businesses and keeping Victorians in work, with more than \$13 billion in COVID-19-related support provided to businesses since March 2020. Since 2014 our infrastructure agenda has supported or will support more than 191 000 jobs. This includes 14 000 jobs supported by new infrastructure projects announced in this budget.

Those that know me know that I have a passion for youth employment, and I am pleased that the budget includes \$12 million in funding to continue and expand the apprenticeship support officers program, providing access to dedicated supports to help apprentices finish their training.

Further, I am quite excited to see Australia's first sick pay guarantee. Victorians who work in casual or other insecure jobs will no longer be forced to choose between a day's pay and looking after their health thanks to this guarantee by the Andrews Labor government. The scheme is the first of its kind anywhere in Australia and provides security to vulnerable workers who are sick or who need to care for loved ones. The guarantee provides casual and contract workers in certain occupations with up to five days of sick or carers pay each year at the national minimum wage. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the strong advocacy of workers and unions in bringing about this guarantee, and can I make special mention of union members Carmelo and Ruby, who I met at the launch of this guarantee. They told me how this guarantee will change their lives. They and their fellow workers will no longer have to cancel essential aspects of their lives, such as medical appointments or caring for their loved ones. It will also protect workers, as sick staff will no longer be forced to turn up to work sick and spread their illnesses all over their fellow workers.

This is a budget that puts patients first. The state budget invests \$2.9 billion in health infrastructure, including building a new hospital and upgrading existing ones. The pandemic has tested our health system like never before, which is why this budget will ease the pressure on our hospitals and our critical healthcare workers. This budget delivers record levels of surgery capacity across the state, increasing surgeries by over 40 000 in the next year. As part of this plan we will establish rapid access hubs and draw on the capacity of private hospitals to deliver public surgeries. We are also recruiting up to 2000 expat and international healthcare workers through the global workforce recruitment drive.

We are also reaffirming our commitment to rebuilding Victoria's mental health system from the ground up. We are listening to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, which told us that Victorians need better access to mental health support. So far we have invested over \$4 billion into our mental health system to completely reform the sector. This budget will undertake a \$1.3 billion investment to take the next steps in the process, including \$218 million for 82 new beds in Victoria's mental health system and other priority initiatives.

This is a budget that delivers more staff for our hospitals and invests in our health system. It is a budget that funds schools and TAFEs. It is a budget that continues the Andrews Labor government's investment in infrastructure and public transport. It is a budget that delivers for all Victorians, and I commend it to the chamber.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (11:30): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise in this place to speak on the budget that has just been delivered by the Treasurer. I have to say alarm bells started ringing a while back when the Treasurer at a press conference announced that this recovery of our economy would be a government-led recovery. I thought to myself, 'Dear God, we're in trouble now'. How right I was, because what we have seen is unrestrained spending. There has been no restraint by this government in spending taxpayers money. It has gone absolutely berserk. As a result of that we now have a massive debt that will continue to grow and leave Victoria in a place that we just do not want to be in.

I have always been of the view that a fair measure of whether we have been successful or not is whether we leave a place in better condition than we found it. This government will not do that. It is absolutely shameful what they have done to the state's finances. They are financial incompetents. It is as simple as that. They are financial incompetents, and they are leaving this massive debt. Yes, certainly some of us who are here now are going to be paying it, but it will be predominantly paid by our children and our grandchildren—and won't they be grateful to us for that! When we are long gone, our children and grandchildren will still be paying this massive debt that the Andrews government has run up on the Victorian taxpayer. It is absolutely outrageous, to tell you the truth. I think it is perhaps an indictment of our society that we are a little bit too greedy. We will take the benefits now, and whoever comes after us can foot the bill. That is not my way of doing things. That is just not good enough.

Of course one of the major problems has been the blowouts in major projects—blowouts of \$28 000 million, a staggering sum—yet the government does not seem to care about that. A classic example of that is the West Gate Tunnel, the white elephant in my electorate that is becoming more of a white elephant every day. The elephant is growing. As the hole grows and the money is poured into it, the elephant continues to grow. The problem is that whilst we are some \$4 billion—\$4000 million—over the spending limit at this point in time, and it is getting worse, what we are seeing is a project that will in no way solve the problems faced by people in the western suburbs who want to get into the city. It is not going to do anything for them. In fact it will do for the western suburbs what the Eastern Freeway and Hoddle Street do for the eastern suburbs. It is a nonsense. It is insane.

One day there will be an investigation and we will find out exactly the deal that Daniel Andrews did with Transurban to get this thing up and running. As I have often said before—and I was chairman of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee that examined this at length—it is my view that when all the facts are laid on the table as to what transpired with the conception of the West Gate Tunnel at least some people will go to jail.

I think this is a crooked deal. It is a dodgy deal. It is a deal that does nothing for the people of the western suburbs except leave us with a whopping great debt. Look, I do not blame Transurban. They can see a mug coming a mile off, and they did. They took that mug for a ride, and unfortunately we are the mugs who have to foot the bill. As I said, it is already \$4 billion over budget. God alone knows how much it will be by the time it is finished, and God knows when it will finish. We were supposed to be travelling on the thing now, but it has blown out to maybe next year, maybe the year after, maybe after that—who knows? Perhaps it will become a tourist attraction. 'Come see the most stuffed-up major project in the history of Australia'. That could be quite an attraction down the track.

But what the people of the western suburbs need is a solution to their traffic problems. This is not it; this tunnel is not it. Clearly the east-west link would provide that solution. The people of the west have been taken for granted for far, far too long, and I speak on their behalf today when I say we have had a gutful of this. We have had enough—we have had more than enough—and we are not going to put up with it anymore. What we have seen is both sides of this house treating the west with total contempt.

We have seen the Liberals do it. We have seen the Labor Party do it. And the people of the west are not going to put up with that anymore. I stand here offering them an alternative. I believe that they will grasp that alternative in November, and they will indeed vote for the DLP in very large numbers. I am particularly looking forward to that, and I can assure them that I will fight and continue to fight for their best interests—always their best interests.

This tunnel has led to the issue of the toxic soil. And you, Acting President Melhem, living near the Ravenhall tip, would be aware that not only is asbestos being dumped there but toxic soil is also being dumped there, and that is a direct threat to the health and wellbeing of people in Caroline Springs, Deer Park and surrounds. Government does not care about that, though. ‘It’s only the western suburbs. Why would you worry about the western suburbs?’, says Daniel Andrews, ‘They’re going to vote for us anyway’. Well, will they? We are going to find out in November, because, as I said, I think the people of the west are going to send a very, very clear message to both the government and to the opposition that we are not going to be treated like this anymore.

Where I live, near Bulla, we have now a huge toxic soil dump that was built, interestingly enough, during the lockdown. So you could not do anything else, but you could build a toxic waste dump near homes, near schools and near a major road that has many thousands of people travelling on it every day—many more now, with many trucks taking the poisonous crap to the toxic soil dump. Every day, every hour, night and day, it is happening, and it is just despicable. I spoke in this house last night about the Ombudsman’s report into the EPA’s attitude towards residents in Sunbury and in Bulla, and I will have a lot more to say about that as time moves on. But the fact of the matter is that the people of Sunbury and Bulla have been treated like—well, I was going to say dirt, but quite literally they have been treated like dirt by a government that shows nothing but contempt. I have to say the local member there, the member for Sunbury, Josh Bull—I have been around this place for a fair while—is a nice enough fella but as useless as an ashtray on a motorbike.

He is just pathetic. He will not go into battle for his constituents. He will not stand up for those who need him to stand up for them. He sat back and he allowed this monstrosity to be built in the centre of his electorate. He did not raise an objection, he did not fight hard—he did not do any of the things that the people of Sunbury and Bulla were demanding of him. He will pay the price in November because I know the people of Sunbury will not put up with that. They will not put up with that. They have long memories, and they will remember come November what Josh Bull did not do when they needed him to. He is the invisible man. He pops up for a photo opportunity from time to time, but apart from that you just do not see him and you certainly do not hear from him, and that is, to my way of thinking, a total abrogation of responsibility that he has shown as a local member of Parliament. He has left his constituents for dead. He has just walked away and left them, and that, to my way of thinking, is disgraceful. It is a total contempt for the people of his electorate, and no doubt there will be consequences.

I do not want to speak excessively on this today, but I do want to touch on what is happening in our education system. The government will tell us that they are spending billions and billions of dollars on education. Yes, they are spending a lot of money, they are spending a lot of money on everything; if they can find something to spend money on, they will spend it, there are no worries about that. They do not care what is happening, they do not care what the outcome is—as long as they are spending money and they can tell people they are spending money, that is all that matters to this government. But we have a situation where the education system in this state is producing kids who cannot read, cannot write and cannot count, but they can tell you how you can change your gender. It is just bizarre. This programming—and I do call it programming—of our kids by the government is what I would describe as child abuse. It is child abuse, and it is bloody horrendous what is going on with our kids right now. Is it any wonder that kids have major mental health problems when their gender is questioned when they go to school? Little boys are asked if perhaps they might be little girls after all. Little girls have suggested to them that in fact they might be little boys. And then, when all that is sorted out, they are told that they are all about to die because of climate change.

We have got the sort of brainwashing that totalitarian governments all over the world would be proud of, and it is happening right here in Victoria. It is teaching kids what to think, not how to. My view is that if we do not have a future with independent thought, if we do not have a future with people who can think for themselves, we have not got much of a future at all—and that is a very, very, very horrifying prospect to many of us. It is something that distresses me enormously. When I see kids terrified, when I see kids thinking that their lives are about to be extinguished—and they get that from the classroom—I think that is appalling, because we all know that is not going to happen.

I have a message for Victorian children today, wherever they may be, and I want them to listen carefully. I want to make this very, very clear to them: there is no climate emergency. It is a nonsense, an absolute nonsense. The planet is perfectly safe, and we are not all about to die. The climate change lobby and the left have been spinning these yarns for decades. For decades they have been telling us what is about to happen, and then when the time expires they come up with something new: ‘Oh, look over there, there’s something else to see’. They make these things up. It is as simple as that. As for most of those islands, I might tell you, that were going to disappear by now, there is actually more of the islands now than there was 20 or 30 years ago, and that is a simple fact of the matter.

Mr Meddick interjected.

Mr FINN: And Mr Meddick, the animals’ friend up here, perhaps—

Mr Meddick: On a point of order, Acting President, as much as I enjoy Mr Finn’s orations from time to time—they are quite amusing in many situations—what we are talking about here is a budgetary bill. I would have thought that, even though he might object to some of the things that are in the bill and the expenditures of the government, he might restrict himself to those particular things. What we are witnessing today is basically what he might use as an election promotion video, espousing some of his own personal philosophies. I would ask you to call him back to the bill and addressing the bill.

Mr FINN: On the point of order, Acting President, the fact of the matter is that I am talking about the education system. I am talking about what is being taught in Victorian schools. And believe it or not, the money that pays teachers and keeps the system going is in the budget. Mr Meddick might not be aware of that, but that is the fact of the matter, and that is exactly what I am talking about. I am speaking about the budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem): Thank you, Mr Finn. I understand when we are talking about the appropriation bill and the budget it is a very broad subject and it could entail various subject matters, so it is very broad. If Mr Finn were able to get back into the budget, that would be great, but I just want to make the point to members that it is very broad and members are entitled to go into other areas.

Mr FINN: I thank you for that, Acting President. It is interesting to note that the left love freedom of speech until such time as somebody disagrees with them, and then they are up and about and trying to shut everybody down. Well, let me tell you, I will not be shut down on this, because this is far too important. This is far too important. Our children and their future are far too important to be shut down by those who would like to do just that. Let me tell you that the DLP is totally committed to telling the truth on climate change, and that is what I will continue to do in this house until November and beyond. I will continue to tell the truth about climate change. I will continue to tell the truth about what this—

Dr Kieu: On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn will have a lot of chances until November to talk about climate change, but certainly it is inappropriate to propagate misinformation and an unscientific—with no data to support—point of view of his in this budget debate. He will have a chance to do so if he wishes to.

Mr FINN: On the point of order, Acting President, Dr Kieu has the right to express his view, as indeed do I. Has this Parliament got to the point where if somebody says something you disagree with,

you try and shut them down altogether? I have had enough of that this year, to tell you the truth. If Dr Kieu wants to speak on the budget, good luck to him. I welcome that; he has a right to do that. But can I suggest, Acting President, that it is my right at this moment in time to speak on the budget, and that is exactly what I am doing.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem): Thank you, Mr Finn. You can resume your contribution, but I think maybe less on climate change and back to the budget.

Mr FINN: It is interesting because you cannot speak about the budget without referring to climate change because so much of the budget is committed to fighting this climate change. The fact that we have an energy emergency, an energy crisis, coming our way is a result of the fact that governments are doing silly things to fight climate change, supposedly. The fact is that here in Australia we could stop all emissions, 100 per cent of emissions, today—we could do it today—and it would have no impact on anything or anyone except Australians and our workers and those who would suffer as a result of those policies. So you cannot say that is a separate issue to the budget, because huge amounts of money—taxpayers money—is going into this climate change scam, and that to my way of thinking is disgraceful. It is disgraceful, and I will call it out.

And can I just respond to Dr Kieu about those who have been making all sorts of claims for a very long time about what is coming next. Al Gore was talking about 30 years ago about how all the ice was going to melt at the poles, but of course we now know that there is more ice than ever. Remember Tim Flannery, old Sandbags Flannery himself? He was on the taxpayers teat for quite some time and did very nicely on the caper. And we owe then Prime Minister Tony Abbott a great debt of gratitude for getting him off the public teat, but no doubt with Albo in the Lodge he will be back sucking away for all he is worth very, very soon.

But we heard from Sandbags Flannery, who told us that the rain that fell from the skies would never fill our reservoirs again. So all the Labor governments went out and they built desalination plants. Talk about white elephants, if you do not mind. We have got a desal plant down there at Wonthaggi, and, guess what, they built it on a floodplain. Only a Labor government would build a desal plant on a floodplain. This was done because we were told that we would not have enough rain to keep going. In Queensland, in New South Wales, in Victoria and in South Australia there have been massive floods since. They do not call him Sandbags Flannery for nothing, because wherever he goes, wherever he makes predictions, floods will follow. This is just the sort of nonsense that we have come to expect from the climate change lobby. Let us have a look at what they say and let us have a look at what actually happens, and you will find they are two very, very different things.

As a result of governments accepting this nonsense the Victorian taxpayer is far, far worse off. Instead of spending money on hospitals, instead of funding 4000 ICU beds—remember that; remember how the government was going to fund 4000 ICU beds—no, do not worry about that. We do not worry about sick people in Victoria—unless of course we use them as an excuse to lock people in their homes. That is fine. That is not a problem. But we do not worry about them otherwise. Instead of spending money to help sick people, instead of spending money to pay nurses and hire more doctors, we are pouring it into the black hole that is the climate change industry. People will wake up eventually that they have been had. They have been had for a very long time now. There are a number of people around the world who are so much richer, usually at the expense of taxpayers, as a result of their involvement in the climate change industry. There are a lot of people around; they can see where there is money to be made and they jump onto it quick smart. And I suppose you cannot blame them for that, except when we are paying for it.

I am a proud Victorian, but it distresses me enormously when I see the path that the Andrews government is leading Victoria down and when I see a government that, for a start, has no respect for the basic rights of its citizens—and we have seen that over the last couple of years—but more to the point it distresses me when I see that it has no respect for our children and our grandchildren. As I said before, this debt that they are building is a massive debt. It is a debt the likes of which we have never

seen in Victoria before. It is interesting to know: Victoria has a debt which is more than New South Wales and Queensland combined. Would anybody have thought that possible? But it is, and I see Dr Kieu over there chuckling away. He has obviously got some sort of leave pass from paying taxes in this state, because any taxpayer who looks at the financial situation in Victoria would not be laughing. Let me assure you: they would not be laughing. It is not amusing in any way, shape or form.

What we have to do in this state is have a realignment of thoughts. What we have to do is to find proper ways to expend money, and more importantly what we have to do is to spend less money. It is typical of socialist governments around the world: we do it because we can, not because we should but because we can. That is what the Andrews government has done, and that is what the Andrew government continues to do. It is not their money, it is the taxpayers money. The men and women in the suburbs, in country towns right across Victoria, on farms right across Victoria—it is their money. It is not some socialist government in Spring Street's right to spend the money, because it is not their money, simple as that. I fear it every day. When we have governments making announcements and I hear press conferences being called, my blood runs cold. I think, 'Oh, dear God, what are they going to spend today? How much are they going to spend? What will they waste today?'. Because I tell you what: there are a number of things that this government is very, very good at. Telling lies is one—exceptionally good liars they are—and the other thing is spending other people's money, usually on things that do not work. I mentioned the West Gate Tunnel. Their judgement on a whole range of things is so far up a wattle that it is not funny. It is not funny at all. That is something that they will be held accountable for in November.

I am aware that there is great disenchantment in the electorate with both major parties; in fact all three major parties—I will throw the Greens in there as well. We can anticipate that a good number of people will be looking for an alternative, and I am here today to provide that alternative. I invite them to support the sort of commonsense policies that the DLP has always provided and will continue to provide for Victorians.

A member interjected.

Mr FINN: I am not in the business of bagging people, as you know, Minister. I am not in the business of bagging people, but I just make the point that the people of Victoria are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They have got a government that does not care about them, that is trashing the place, that is destroying Victoria from one end to the other, and they have got an opposition that perhaps might not be ready for government. That is the simple fact of the matter: they are not ready for government. We have a very, very difficult situation that we face and a very, very difficult decision that Victorians have to make. Because at this election in November, Victoria's future is on the line. If the Andrews government gets back and it continues along the path that it has taken to this point, there will be no Victoria in 2026. There will be nothing left.

Members interjecting.

Mr FINN: There will be. Members of the government can carry on like pork chops. They are very good at it. That is another thing that I should have added to the list of things they are good at: carrying on like pork chops. They do that very well. But seriously, this state needs an overhaul. It needs a serious overhaul, and it needs it now.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

The PRESIDENT: Members, we have in the gallery from the Queensland Parliament's Community Support and Services Committee the chair, Ms Corrine McMillan; other MPs, Mr Stephen Bennett, Mr Michael Berkman, Ms Cynthia Lui and Dr Mark Robinson; and Ms Lynda Pretty. Welcome to the Victorian Parliament.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

DUCK HUNTING

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:00): My question is for the Minister for Agriculture in the other place. This weekend marks the end of Victoria's 12-week-long recreational duck-shooting season. The opening weekend saw a litany of law-breaking, including 23 native birds shot and buried and the killing and maiming of protected species. Just like opening weekend, closing weekend is also where we see the worst behaviour from shooters as they take their final kill for the season. The majority of incidents of non-compliance are actually reported by volunteers and rescuers, not captured by the authorities responsible, but it is simply not possible for us to monitor all areas where duck shooting takes place considering there are thousands of water bodies across Victoria. Can the minister advise which wetlands were monitored by compliance officers this season?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:01): I thank Mr Meddick for his question. I will refer that matter—quite specifically, the locations of that surveillance—to the Minister for Agriculture and, as per the standing orders, she will respond in writing.

Mr MEDDICK (Western Victoria) (12:01): Thank you, Minister, for doing that. My supplementary is: as mentioned, we have great concern about shooter behaviour over the closing days, especially given it is a long weekend. Can the minister advise what compliance efforts will be put in place to monitor shooter activity over this period?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:01): Again, Mr Meddick, I will refer your supplementary to the Minister for Agriculture for her response.

ROAD TOLLS

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:02): My question is for the minister representing the Treasurer. Only this week the New South Wales government announced a new toll rebate scheme that will help alleviate the rising cost of living. After spending more than \$375 on tolls in a year, drivers will receive a 40 per cent cash rebate on further charges. This will be paid into their bank accounts. Drivers will be limited to a maximum of \$750 in rebates per annum. Treasurer, will the Andrews government alleviate the cost of living by following the lead of New South Wales and provide some toll relief to Victorian drivers?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:02): I thank Mr Barton for his question. Obviously this is information that he has in respect to changes that have been made in New South Wales. I will refer that matter and the question to the Treasurer for his response.

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:03): Thank you, Minister. On our toll roads utes are considered light commercial vehicles and charged through the roof. A Range Rover, which is heavier and larger, pays a car rate. An 11-seat people mover pays a car rate. Yet a ute is hit with a commercial rate, which is almost double. We know that utes are popular vehicles among families, tradies and people who tow. Would the government consider advocating with Transurban for the tens of thousands of families who drive utes to bring us in line with the New South Wales tolling system?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:03): I thank Mr Barton for supplementary question, which will also be referred to the Treasurer for his response.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (12:03): Today I would like to take the opportunity to speak about the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) Mentoring for Success program, which is proudly supported with funding from the Andrews Labor government. It is important to have more women on councils, but it is also important to support women once they get there. This program pairs newly elected councillors with experienced mentors from across the state. It helps develop skills and networks for those who participate in this program, helping them to better deliver for their communities. It also trains experienced women councillors and former councillors to become mentors, a skill they can use beyond this program. Mentoring for Success is the largest formal mentoring program for elected councillors in Australia, with 52 women participating in this program following the 2020 council elections.

In December last year the success of this program was recognised at the National Awards for Local Government, with ALGWA Victoria taking out the Women in Local Government Award for increasing female participation and female leadership roles in local government. And it was richly deserved. I want to congratulate everyone at ALGWA for winning this award. I congratulate them on their recent conference. I think a few people here might have given presentations, and I am sure they were very appreciated. I just want to congratulate ALGWA again on their great work. I have met some female councillors in small rural councils, larger councils and metropolitan councils that have said this program has helped them immensely, so we should all be proud of this work.

EAST WERRIBEE EMPLOYMENT PRECINCT

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:05): My question is for the Minister for Local Government. Minister, with respect to the City of Wyndham East Werribee employment precinct, we understand from Tuesday's question time that you were briefed on this matter. Has Local Government Victoria examined the proposals put forward by Wyndham on the employment precinct?

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (12:06): Mr Davis, after you asked me that question on Tuesday I followed up. I pride myself that I have met every council, and Wyndham is no different to any council. I pride myself. But looking at what I was briefed on, this particular project—my understanding, and I am happy to be corrected—was not part of that briefing. I am happy to be corrected, but I am not too sure if that was part of the briefing, so I followed it up. As you would appreciate, there are 79 different councils. If my memory about every presentation given to me is not great, I am sure you will seize on that because this will be very important to you. But I can say it is not Local Government Victoria's role, that department's role, to assess—

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr LEANE: Mr Davis acts like he was never the Leader of the Government in this house, that he has no understanding whatsoever of the mechanics of government and the responsibilities—

Mr Davis: On a point of order, President, has Local Government Victoria examined this proposal or not?

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

Mr LEANE: I tell you what, give him another 30 years and he might be okay at this. He might actually get there. Once again, Mr Davis knows clearly the mechanics of the way a government works, and he knows clearly who has responsibility for the type of activity that he is asking me whether this department has done. It is clearly not their responsibility under the machinery of government. I know, Mr Davis, it takes time for you to come to awareness of certain things, like, 'Wow, Mr Finn has really,

really, really extreme opinions on abortion. When did that happen?'. Only 24 years ago. I know it takes time, but even you have had the experience firsthand of being the Leader of the Government. Maybe you forgot, but I think that you have not. I think that you have not and you are just playing politics in a completely weird direction.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:09): It is not quite clear whether he got himself briefed, and it is not quite clear whether Local Government Victoria looked at it. But let me ask a closely related question that follows from his response: will he advocate within government, as local government minister, to protect the East Werribee employment precinct from being carved up for housing?

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (12:10): I regularly pass on aspirations of a number of councils, all councils I meet, and I as the Minister for Local Government also say to them, even if they are things outside my portfolio, that I am happy to listen and be briefed, because I may have a conversation with a colleague about their aspirations. I think that is a fair way to go about it. Mr Davis wants me, when I meet a council, to go, 'You can't tell me about that. You can't tell me about anything that falls outside my responsibility as the Minister for Local Government or the Minister for Suburban Development. You can't tell me anything else'. There have been some really good results where a council has said to me there is an issue that they would like me to talk about with my colleagues, who were not aware of it, which has been remedied, improved or implemented.

Mr Davis: On a point of order, President, it is a very narrow question. He needs to answer yes or no. Will he advocate or not? He has got 5 seconds left.

Ms Pulford: On the point of order, President, the minister was being entirely relevant to the supplementary question from Mr Davis.

The PRESIDENT: I was hesitating whether the supplementary question should be answered, but I left it up to the minister. Minister, you have got 5 seconds.

Mr LEANE: Mr Davis, bowl me another one up like that, but next time try and hit the pitch.

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (12:11): My question is for the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services. I have been contacted by CFA members with concerns about CFA spending priorities. Assessing vegetation for controlled burning is a significant responsibility. I was told some CFA districts can only fund this role one day a week, only a small fraction of the time necessary to do it properly. Despite loads of unpaid overtime, the job is still not getting done properly. At the same time, paid management coordination roles are being expanded and split. It seems there is plenty of money to expand the full-time bureaucracy but not to fund actual essential on-the-ground fire prevention activity. The CFA is not a wealthy organisation. It runs largely on volunteers and needs to ensure its funds are spent wisely. They need to use this funding to fill critical roles and buy essential equipment that allows them to do their job. Minister, why does the CFA prioritise funding full-time office staff over the ground staff to assess the need for hazard reduction burning?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:12): I thank Mr Quilty for his question. Again it is a very loaded question, and I have no way of believing the assumptions of his question. It will be referred to the Minister for Emergency Services for a response, and I am sure that she will provide a detailed response to you, Mr Quilty.

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (12:13): Thank you, Minister. I was also told about a recent small change made to CFA uniforms. It was decided to add a different patch to the uniforms, and volunteers were asked to send in their old uniforms. Many uniforms sent in were still brand new in packaging. Instead of altering the uniforms, I am told the old uniforms were thrown away and new ones sent out. These changes were requested by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and

Planning, I am told, but it is not clear how these patches improve performance. It is an example of how central management can make inefficient decisions. CFA volunteers could have affixed their own patches and saved a lot of money. In the past that is exactly what would have happened, or they could have waited to replace them with uniforms with the new insignia as they wore out. In my personal experience many volunteers laugh at the senior leadership and their obsession with pretty uniforms and box-ticking exercises rather than prioritising the fighting of fires. Minister, how does this kind of spending prioritisation help put out fires and keep Victorians safe?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:14): I thank Mr Quilty for his question. As he well knows, there have been a number of reviews, and they have all dealt with this issue. But again this is a question that is highly, highly operational. Nevertheless I will refer it to the minister.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: NORTHCOTE FESTIVAL FUNDING

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:14): I am very pleased to update the house on yet another exciting initiative of our government to support small businesses. It was an absolute delight earlier in the week to join the local member for Northcote, Kat Theophanous, and several traders in High Street, Northcote, at Zsa's Bar Bistro Deli to announce \$300 000 towards the return of a family-friendly festival for this iconic shopping strip. Kat is not only an excellent and hardworking, passionate representative for her community; this idea is something that she has developed alongside Zsa's owner, Zowie Minchin.

With this funding, Northcote's High Street will become a hive of activity celebrating all that the inner north has to offer. Local traders association Northcote Rise will build on the success of popular past events in the area, like the High Noon and High Vibes festivals of past, to create a new offering and experience for people of all ages. The Northcote festival will feature local artists, outdoor dining and bars, mini stages and stalls from local traders, and early planning is already underway. Funding from the government through this initiative in our budget will help Northcote Rise cover the costs of running the large-scale event, including equipment hire, health and safety officers, permits, traffic management and other related fees.

Before I wrap up, if I could, a quick plug: businesses or groups planning to hold an event or festival can access Business Victoria's new event-planning tool, which connects them with all the permits and resources needed to plan a safe and successful festival, at business.vic.gov.au. While the weather is a bit ordinary right now, it is the perfect time to start planning for sunnier times, and I am very excited to see what Zowie and her fellow traders put together in Northcote.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:16): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Minister, interest rates are surging, hurting small businesses, putting pressure on small businesses. Will you advocate in these circumstances within government, on behalf of small businesses, for a commitment that there will be no new imposts in terms of state government charges or taxes on small businesses?

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:17): It is a very exciting day when someone from the Liberal Party asks a question about small business. I have been waiting a while.

Mr Gepp: Because they don't understand it.

Ms PULFORD: It is because they do not understand it and it is because they do not care and it is because they do not talk to them. But in response to Mr Davis's question, it is a funny old question on the day—in fact only an hour or two after—this very chamber passed the State Taxation and Treasury

Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, the answer being contained within, and we are midway through the debate on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, also with answers contained within, including the reconciliation of the very, very significant support that we have provided to the small business community through the current financial year and the previous as those things have been brought to their final reconciliation or near-final reconciliation. The Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022, which we will get to later in the day, perhaps does not get to this question.

But I think your answer is pretty self-evident, Mr Davis. We will continue to support our small business community. I always advocate for our small business community, in the same way Mr Leane advocates for his local government community, with my colleagues across portfolios and to the federal government. To the old, not very good federal government and to the new, exciting, dynamic incoming federal government, we advocate on behalf of small business.

I had the opportunity in the last sitting week to meet my New South Wales counterpart, and we had a very good, very productive discussion about the things we can do together for border communities, the things that we can do together in advocating to the federal government, which is different now to the federal government that we had when we had the meeting, but the point remains the same around the things that we can do across tiers of government as well as of course the many things we do within government to create a better regulatory environment, to create an environment that is supportive and conducive to our small business community.

I would also remind Mr Davis that during the life of our government we have made numerous changes to some of the costs that always impact small businesses—payroll tax relief, the bringing forward of earlier payroll tax decisions, the waiving of fees and charges through those most challenging periods of the pandemic as well as around \$13 billion in business support. We are pretty proud of our record here. We work very closely with small businesses—individual ones, local traders groups, their peak organisations—across dozens and dozens of different organisations each and every day and will continue to do so so that we are representing them to the very best of our ability.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:20): Minister, I note that you did not indicate that you will say ‘no new imposts’. Let us be quite clear: you said a lot of things, but you did not say that. So let me ask a different question. Minister—

Ms Pulford: On a point of order, President, Mr Davis asked what I would do to advocate for small businesses in relation to costs, and I answered that fully. I spent every second of my time available, and he is making—

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Minister. There is no point of order.

Mr DAVIS: Minister, your government has already lifted the state tax take by 80 per cent and introduced more than 40 new or increased taxes since coming to government, many of which fall heavily, disproportionately on Victorian small businesses. I therefore ask what steps you will take as Minister for Small Business to wind back the tax load on Victorian small businesses.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:21): Mr Davis, grab a pen: www.vic.gov.au/general-orders. You should familiarise yourself with that, and I can refer your question to the Treasurer if you would like. As the alleged Shadow Treasurer, you, above everyone in your ramshackle team, should know who has responsibility for taxes. But again I would point out the very, very significant changes and reductions and supports that we have provided to Victorian businesses over the life—

Mr Davis: On a point of order, President, the question was what steps she would take—

Members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT: Minister, before I call you again, just bear in mind that during question time we do not take advantage and attack the other side or opposition, so please concentrate on the answer.

Ms PULFORD: Thank you for the gentle admonishment, President. It is very hard with Mr Davis, and I will refrain. I will take his question for the Treasurer and seek a written response in accordance with our standing orders.

Mr Davis: On a point of order, President, the question cannot be taken for the Treasurer, because it is about what steps she will take as Minister for Small Business.

The PRESIDENT: The minister has provided an answer to you, and that is her responsibility now. I cannot advise otherwise. I will check afterwards.

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (12:23): My question is for the minister representing the Attorney-General. Over the past six months or so my office has been liaising with your office about the short-term funding difficulties of the community legal centre sector, or the CLCs. Some CLCs have programs called health justice partnerships, which are early intervention programs that educate health professionals on signs to look out for of domestic violence or other legal troubles. A lawyer also works within the health service to help victim-survivors know their rights and entitlements before it gets to duty lawyer stage at the court or, worse, a crisis. This is incredibly important for family violence matters. These programs have been individually evaluated and have incredible results. The Barwon CLC model alone has reached 850 clients over three years who otherwise may not have engaged their service. Despite all of this we are in the middle of June and a number of CLCs across the state are still waiting to find out if their funding will be renewed. Attorney, when will the results of these grants and other available funding for health justice partnerships be made available to CLCs?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:24): I thank Mr Grimley for his question and his ongoing support for CLCs and the work that they do. Obviously this is a matter for the Attorney-General, and she will be able to provide you with the grant scheme that applies.

Mr GRIMLEY (Western Victoria) (12:24): Thank you, Minister. This problem highlights a much bigger one in the social services sector, and that is around continuity of funding. Every year the same agencies fight for the same funding for programs that have been proven to work. Some might wonder why it is so important that funding is made over a number of years or indefinitely rather than year by year, and the answers are simple: fighting against other CLCs for funding each year is a waste of their time and resources, and CLCs lose staff due to the unpredictable nature of whether funding will be made available. I am sure you are fighting for a better funding arrangement, Attorney, but we simply cannot repeat what has been happening this financial year. We need the government to commit to ongoing funding. Attorney, will the government provide longer term funding to community legal centres for health justice partnerships and early intervention strategies?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:25): I thank Mr Grimley for his supplementary. These are proposals that he is putting to the government. I am sure that the Attorney will look into these matters if she is not already. I am sure she is, and I am sure that she will abide by the standing orders and provide you with the relevant information.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: WORLDSKILLS COMPETITION

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:25): Today I am very pleased to advise the chamber that Victoria will host the 2023 WorldSkills Australia National Championships. WorldSkills is the nation's largest trades and skills competition and gives hundreds of apprentices, trainees and students the chance to showcase their talents across more than 50 disciplines, including carpentry, hairdressing, cybersecurity and health

services. It is the Olympics for skills and training, and the sector is really excited by the opportunities this event offers everyone by profiling excellence in the vocational education and training system.

Regional qualifying competitions will commence in Victoria next month, and I am so pleased that there will be a special focus on school-age participants through the VET-in-schools competitions. VET in schools is reaching new heights, and this is due to the Andrews Labor government's \$227 million investment in this year's budget to deliver the biggest reform to the senior secondary system since the VCE was established. I am proud that Apprenticeships Victoria is partnering with WorldSkills Australia to create these great opportunities for Victorians to represent not only our state but potentially the country at the international WorldSkills competition in France in 2024. This government support projects such as this because we know that skills and trades are critical for building strong communities, productive communities, confident members of society and of course caring communities. We know that skills and trades shape the world around us.

GAS SUPPLY AND PRICES

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:27): My question today is to the Minister for Resources. Minister, in 2017 the Liberal-Nationals coalition called for a domestic gas reservation policy to ensure gas supplies for businesses and households were readily available and at affordable prices. Why has it taken the Andrews Labor government five years to adopt the coalition's guidance on a domestic gas reservation policy?

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:28): I thank Mr Ondarchie for his question. I think I can pretty much rule out on behalf of the government us adopting any of their policies on anything.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:28): No doubt we will ask for a fulsome response in writing given that was a nothing response. Minister, given the Andrews Labor government's long delays in adopting a domestic gas reservation policy after eight years in office, will the government now apologise to Victorians for their higher gas bills as a result of its inaction?

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (12:29): Because Mr Ondarchie in his substantive question asked about our government's adoption of a coalition policy from 2017 about things like national energy policy—my answer to that being clearly no—and the time limits that our house provides under our standing orders of a minute only for answers to supplementary questions, I would dearly, dearly love to give Mr Ondarchie a long lesson in all of this. I will take his question on notice so that I can give it the regard that it deserves, because this is an incredibly important issue affecting industry and affecting households—2 million households in Victoria. There are a multitude of complex intersecting policy questions that their side of politics is wholly ill equipped to deal with. So I look forward to taking you to school on energy policy.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:30): I move:

That we take into account the minister's answer on the next day of meeting.

Motion agreed to.

YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:31): My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Youth Justice. Minister, it was recently reported that the government has dropped its plans to introduce new youth legislation in this term of government. This is a hugely disappointing decision, given the government's previous commitment. It means that children under 14 will continue to be held in prison cells, and it means all children in youth detention, but disproportionately Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, will continue to experience conditions of isolation in youth detention amounting to solitary confinement under the internationally accepted definition. In short it will mean

that Victorian children will continue to be treated in a way that is directly contrary to their minimum rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the convention against torture. Can the minister please explain why the government will deny Victorian children engaged in the criminal justice system their fundamental human rights until after an election?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:32): I thank Dr Ratnam for her question. This is an important question, and I am sure that Minister Hutchins will respond to her as per the standing orders.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (12:32): Thank you, Minister, for passing that on. By way of follow-up, specifically on the age of criminal responsibility, which we have been told would be best addressed through this now abandoned reform, the Attorney-General has persisted with the line that the Victorian government will apply the national agreement on the age of responsibility. But with Tasmania just announcing that it will raise the age of detention to 14, the ACT well on their way to legislating a minimum age of criminal responsibility of 14, the Northern Territory government agreeing to raise the age to 12 within their term of government and the Queensland government directly ruling out raising the minimum age from 10, it is clearly apparent now there will be no national consensus across all jurisdictions on this issue. Can the minister please now provide the real reason that the Victorian government will not raise the age of criminal responsibility?

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (12:33): Can I seek clarification as to whether the supplementary is actually directed to the Attorney-General or to Minister Hutchins?

Dr Ratnam: It is to the Minister for Youth Justice. I was referencing a statement by the Attorney-General, but it is to the Minister for Youth Justice.

Ms TIERNEY: Thank you. I will refer that to the Minister for Youth Justice.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: CHILDREN'S WEEK

Ms STITT (Western Metropolitan—Minister for Workplace Safety, Minister for Early Childhood) (12:33): I am really happy to bring it home with something happy and announce that grant applications are now open to Victorian not-for-profit organisations and local councils to help celebrate Children's Week. Eligible organisations can apply for a grant of \$1000 to help host activities for children and their families to celebrate this year's festivities, which will be held from 22 to 30 October.

Children's Week is an annual celebration across Australia dedicated to children, their rights and their achievements. Most importantly it is an opportunity to celebrate and advocate for children to enjoy their childhood. Grants will support free community activities such as art exhibitions, outdoor activities, dance workshops, arts and crafts, music and storytelling, drawing competitions and picnics. Despite the challenges of the pandemic last year, more than 18 000 Victorian children and families took part in Children's Week across 107 grant-funded events. This year's Children's Week will bring communities together after the challenges of the pandemic, and the grants will help local organisations to host fun and exciting events. Applications close on 15 July, and a calendar of events will be available in September.

Children's Week is a wonderful opportunity to remind parents about the importance of early childhood years, something that we are very dedicated to in the Andrews Labor government. Making Victoria the Education State starts with the early years, and I am proud to support eligible organisations with these grants.

WRITTEN RESPONSES

The PRESIDENT (12:35): Regarding questions and answers today: Mr Meddick to the Minister for Agriculture, Ms Tierney, two days, question and supplementary; Mr Barton to the Treasurer, Ms Tierney, two days, question and supplementary; Mr Quilty to emergency services, two days

because the Attorney-General is away sick, question and supplementary; Mr Davis, supplementary to Ms Pulford, one day; Mr Grimley to the Attorney-General, two days, Ms Tierney, question and supplementary; Mr Ondarchie to Ms Pulford, one day, question and supplementary; and Dr Ratnam, two days, question and supplementary, Minister Hutchins, Ms Tierney.

Constituency questions

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) (12:36): (1833) My question is for Minister Carroll, and it is in relation to the safety of Nicholson Street. There is a very active community group that has been advocating for changes to Nicholson Street up at the Coburg end, where in a 24-hour period just a few months ago there were over three collisions. A person has died in this particular area of Nicholson Street in Coburg. They have been writing to the minister, they have been writing to the department and they have just not received anything. Will the minister urgently provide a funding commitment to mitigate the risk of death or serious injury to the lives of people who live and travel through that locality?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (12:37): (1834) My question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Last sitting week I exposed the disgusting plans to commence shooting brumbies in both the Barmah and Alpine national parks. This planned slaughter is going ahead despite the Barmah Brumby Preservation Group having established a sanctuary which has ample space and that group having a list of names of people who wish to rehome a brumby. Sadly, the Andrews Labor government has already commenced the shooting, with locals finding the carcasses of at least 33 horses covered with branches and left to rot in the forest as of Tuesday, 31 May. This has caused extreme distress to many locals who have come across the carcasses. The slaughter is being carried out in secret despite the government's own advertised tender not even closing until 8 June, and it is sickening that horses are being shot when there are designated places for them to go. Minister, why won't the Andrews Labor government support the Barmah locals to rehome the brumbies instead of shooting them?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (12:38): (1835) My question is to the Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy regarding the Wangaratta Digital Hub, which has run out of state funding and will be forced to close without government support. The hub has submitted a business case to the minister's office, and I ask: will the government give this important service the funding they need to save them from closure? The Wangaratta Digital Hub was established in 2019 after an Australian Digital Inclusion Index report found that northern Victoria was the lowest ranked rural area for digital inclusion in the state. Their service was keenly appreciated during COVID as people needed help navigating QR codes and vaccination certificates and accessing claims and rebates. The minister visited the digital hub last year, so she has seen firsthand the great work they do. Digital service delivery will only continue to grow with the 2020 digital inclusion score for this region, which is substantially below the state average. They are running on saved funds and reduced hours to meet community demand, and their situation is absolutely desperate.

NORTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (12:39): (1836) My constituency question today is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Reservoir residents are concerned about their safety at the roundabout at Boldrewood Parade and Broadway. The Minister for Transport Infrastructure well knows these issues, as I have raised them before on behalf of constituents in this house, regarding traffic congestion in Reservoir. I have been contacted by the same constituents, who are frustrated with the traffic flow and safety at this roundabout. Residents have told me it is a nightmare to try and navigate. One of the residents said that it is a death trap trying to get uphill on a roundabout where you

have reduced visibility. The action I seek from the minister is to direct VicRoads or the Department of Transport to investigate potential safety measures to upgrade this intersection so drivers in Melbourne's north can get home safely to their families.

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) (12:39): (1837) My constituency question is to the Minister for Local Government. The area covered by Hume City Council is a major growth area in Melbourne's north and north-west. Thousands of new dwellings are currently under construction, with growth in business centres to accommodate new residents. Councils overseeing this growth must have their eye on the ball to ensure it is appropriate and conducted in a manner respecting the best interests of current and future communities. Instead of doing that, many Hume councillors have spent their time carrying out a campaign of persecution against one of their own number. Cr Trevor Dance was elected at the last election and has been subject to disgraceful treatment by his council colleagues, led by deputy mayor Steve Medcraft. Minister, will you appoint a monitor to Hume council to ensure bullying is stopped and the council returns to its core role?

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Ms VAGHELA (Western Metropolitan) (12:40): (1838) My constituency question is directed to the Honourable Ben Carroll MP, Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety. With Victorians returning to work, the Western Metropolitan Region is experiencing serious traffic conditions. A resident of the western suburbs must leave home many hours before 9.00 am to make it to the workplace in the city or eastern suburbs. My constituents in the Western Metropolitan Region will have to deal with traffic problems for the foreseeable future because of the West Gate Tunnel's construction delays. The outer western suburbs are facing harsher traffic situations as the roads are not developed and people do not have alternative routes. It is absurd to have such terrible traffic conditions in an era of soaring inflation and gas prices. My question to the minister is: can the minister please provide me an update on what steps are being taken to ease congestion on Western Metropolitan Regions roads?

NORTHERN VICTORIA REGION

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (12:41): (1839) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. In the small township of Rutherglen there has long been concern over trucks on the narrow historic Main Street. Everyone wants to slow them down. Many want them removed completely. It is a difficult issue because a proper solution will cost many tens of millions of dollars. While in Rutherglen a few weeks ago, it was suggested to me by a local business owner that there is a simple solution. He suggested the alignment with the entry from the Murray Valley Highway could be altered at the existing roundabout, causing truck drivers to slow down enough to have to drop to their lower gears. If another roundabout was installed at the top end of Main Street, truck drivers would not bother going back up through their gears and speeding up through Main Street only to then have to shift back down through the gears to pass through the second roundabout. This could eliminate speeding trucks at a relatively low cost while improving traffic flow. Minister, will you consider this slightly out-of-the-box solution to the vexed Rutherglen Main Street problem?

SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr HAYES (Southern Metropolitan) (12:42): (1840) My question is to the Minister for Planning. I have been approached by members of the M9 council group, which includes Stonnington, Port Phillip and seven other inner-metro councils in a collaborative effort to address public housing shortages in these regions. The projected shortfall in the area is 54 000 social housing units by 2025. There are nearly 7000 people experiencing homelessness. There are estimates that 52 per cent of moderate-income households cannot afford to live in the region, impacting the availability of key workers. The group has prioritised mandatory inclusionary zoning of affordable housing in the Victorian planning system to deliver affordable social housing with certainty and at scale. The question

is: can the minister provide information on the proposal to introduce mandatory inclusionary zoning controls for affordable housing and further engage with local government, including these M9 councils, to ensure a fit-for-purpose approach?

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr BARTON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:43): (1841) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I had a constituent in Knox contact me regarding the development of the State Basketball Centre. They support the development and are very excited to see the project, which will be completed next year. However, the centre, once completed, is expected to have 2 million visitors annually, and there is only one exit in the car park, which already suffers from traffic jams. My constituent is concerned that, with 12 more courts being built and one exit onto a one-lane road, fans will spend forever getting into and out of the complex. So, Minister, has there been a traffic management plan created for the State Basketball Centre in Knox, and if so, will you release it?

EASTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (12:44): (1842) The Liberal candidate for the seat of Ringwood has been approached by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nunawading with concerns about spoilage, waste product, from the Level Crossing Removal Project, which occupied part of the Seventh-day Adventist land during the construction of the Blackburn station development. The remediation of the land that they used is a real eyesore. It includes concrete and so forth that has been left there rather than a proper remediation of that land, which in fact has got some interesting species of plants on it because it was undisturbed territory. Some of that land is now to be used for retirement housing in a development by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and they are bearing the costs of trying to remove this spoilage, including the concrete and plastic and all sorts of things, from the LXRP's works. I wonder if the minister responsible for the LXRP could consider compensation for that waste removal.

WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (12:45): (1843) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the other place, and it is from Cr Daria Kellander from Hobsons Bay. Will the minister please install a signalised traffic exit on Millers Road? Residents of Brooklyn cannot turn right out of their streets safely onto Millers Road, and at peak times it is a huge safety issue. Annunciation Primary School is impacted by this, and the school drop-off and pick-up times are a nightmare for parents and children. Minister, residents desperately need to have this issue addressed. Many residents from Millers Road, Brooklyn and Altona have brought up many issues around trucks and issues off Millers Road over the years. I have brought them up numerous times in this chamber, but this has become a safety issue that the minister must address urgently.

SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGION

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (12:46): (1844) My matter is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it relates to a crossing over the Monash Freeway near Salesian College in Chadstone. This is a crossing that goes from the corner of Jacana Street through to the other side where Helen Road and Adrian Street join. This is a crossing that goes over the freeway. It is a longstanding crossing, but there are enormous works happening along the Monash Freeway—very significantly federally funded and important works that we all support. But in terms of safety, it has been raised with me by Asher Judah and members of the school community that it would be much safer to have wire or other barriers on that crossing to ensure safety for motorists but particularly to ensure that there are no untoward outcomes for local community people or school students. What I am seeking from the minister is: will she look at this issue?

Bills

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

*Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (12:48): The 2022–23 budget is like all the other budgets this government has introduced over the past eight years: it is essentially a document of fantasy. I say it is a document of fantasy because we have consistently seen the budgets produced by this government fail to deliver in reality. We see projections over four years which are never met. We see commitments made by this government which are never met, year on year on year. The Treasurer has made commitments around the direction of the budget and made commitments around constraints on spending, and he consistently fails to achieve them. In this year's budget we see probably the most outlandish commitment around spending, because the government is proposing in the budget year to cut expenditure by roughly 10 per cent. In previous years they have claimed they would cut spending by 1 per cent or 2 per cent, and they have never achieved it. Yet we are to believe that in an election year this government is going to cut spending by 10 per cent to try and rein in what have been a series of massive deficits. There is no reason to believe that is going to be achieved. We have seen year after year after year the government unable to hit its own targets, and the suggestion that this year it will achieve a 10 per cent cut in spending is simply laughable.

As a consequence, the size of government in Victoria has grown and grown and grown. When the government came to office in 2014 government spending as a share of the economy was around 14.4 per cent. In the year we are about to finish, the 2021–22 year, it has grown to 19 per cent of gross state product—a massive increase in the size of government in this state. Of course the biggest area we have seen growth in has been the public sector payroll. Just three years ago, in 2018–19, leading up to the election in the pre-election budget update Treasury forecast the size of the public sector payroll at \$24.9 billion. In the budget for 2021–22 that is now \$33 billion. In three years there has been a 33 per cent increase in the public sector payroll, which is absolutely unsustainable. We have seen the size of the public service grow enormously in headcount. Central government, the government departments, grew from 37 900 people in 2015 to 58 000 people by June 2021. In the broader public sector outside the core departments the growth has been from 277 000 people to 345 000 people, and more than 23 000 people were added last year alone—23 000 additional public sector workers in Victoria in just 12 months. So for the government to now suggest it is going to cut spending by 10 per cent in this year, an election year, is simply unbelievable—absolutely farcical.

Of course because we have been seeing such enormous and sustained growth in spending we have seen a massive blowout in the state's debt profile, in general government net borrowings, which are now forecast to hit \$167 billion by the 2025–26 financial year. Now, the government likes to say this is funding our infrastructure program, that we are borrowing to fund infrastructure, but in reality when you look more closely at the government's forecasts you will see that in fact the government has pared back its own spending on infrastructure while continuing to borrow. The best example of this is to compare this year's budget papers with last year's, for the 2021–22 year, where the Treasurer said infrastructure spending was going to be \$24 billion and as a consequence net debt was going to increase to \$102 billion. This year the figures have been revised and the infrastructure spend has in fact been cut. Rather than spend the \$24 billion on infrastructure that the Treasurer said he would spend, only \$18.9 billion is being spent on infrastructure, yet debt is still going to hit \$102 billion. So debt continues to rise even though the spending on infrastructure has been pared back, and of course that is so the debt can fund the ever-growing deficits that we are seeing year on year on year.

The government likes to say it is fine that we are having these additional borrowings, that we can afford the repayments within the operating statement and that we can afford to service that debt over the forward estimates, but of course as the debt has ramped up from I think \$44 billion in the year before last to \$167 billion in the out years, that debt servicing cost has increased enormously. In

2019–20 we were only spending about 3.5 per cent of total expenditure on servicing debt. In 2025–26 that is going to hit nearly 7 per cent of total spending, and that assumes we do not have increases in borrowing costs, that we do not have increases in interest rates. So we are going from 3.5 per cent of total spend just to pay the interest bill to 7 per cent just to pay the interest bill in six short years, without allowing for interest rate rises. In fact that assumes an interest rate or borrowing cost of around 4 per cent consistently as the debt profile rises, and we have seen already this week a very substantial increase in the cash rate as a consequence of the decision of the Reserve Bank on Tuesday which raised the cash rate to 0.85 per cent. We have gone from 0.1 per cent to 0.85 per cent in just on a month, with other rises expected, and that is going to flow through to government bonds.

So it is highly questionable whether the government can constrain its borrowing costs at the same level over the forward estimates period when other borrowing costs in Australia and around the world are rising. If that is not the case, if we see those borrowing costs rise, then the forecast 7 per cent of total spending to service our debt is going to increase rapidly, and that either means we will have bigger deficits in the future or government is going to have to pare back its spending, something it has consistently failed to do despite its claims that it would.

We talk about the budget and we talk about what the government is spending, but we cannot look at that in isolation. We need to also look at what this budget means and what the government's economic settings mean for the broader Victorian economy. What are the policy settings, what are the economic objectives the government has put in place to drive the Victorian economy? We have seen the economy in Victoria has been in long-term decline. Over the last 20 years, and I point out that a Labor government has been in office for 19 of the last 23 years, we have seen Victoria's share of national output decline. Back in 1999 Victoria accounted for a bit over 25 per cent of total national output in this country. Last year, 2021, that had declined to just under 23 per cent. So while we are still about 25 per cent of the national population, we no longer produce 25 per cent of national output—we are only producing about 23 per cent of national output.

We have seen over that period of time productivity growth in this state stagnate, and the reality is that productivity is the only game in town if we want to improve the living standards of the Victorian population. Over the last decade productivity growth in Australia has been poor. It has only been about 7 per cent in total over the last decade, and much of that has been driven by resources in Western Australia. We have seen population growth in Australia and we have seen population growth in Victoria, which has driven economic growth, but it has masked the fact that we have had no real productivity growth and therefore no real improvement in standard of living. Over the last decade New South Wales has managed to generate productivity growth of a bit under 7 per cent. In Victoria it has been just 0.5 per cent, so effectively no real improvement in productivity and no real improvement in standard of living, and that is simply not sustainable. If we want to improve the lives of Victorian citizens, we need to get productivity growth moving in this state.

Of course one of the big drivers of that is going to be investment, getting the private sector to invest in this state, and we have seen in recent years Victoria fall further and further behind New South Wales as we have an environment which is less friendly to investment and an environment which is more complex to invest in. The regulatory burden is greater. The tax burden is greater. It is a disincentive for investment. Consequently last year when I spoke about this point I referred to the fact that private sector investment in Victoria was \$12 billion lower than in New South Wales. This year the latest set of data from the ABS shows that gap has blown out from \$12 billion to now more than \$16.5 billion. In the year to June 2021 New South Wales was able to attract more than \$16.5 billion more in private sector investment than Victoria did. In Victoria's case we attracted a bit under \$48 billion of private sector investment and New South Wales nearly \$65 billion.

That differential is going to mean the differential in living standards between Victoria and New South Wales is going to continue to grow. Last year it was around \$8000 per person—New South Wales generated \$8000 more in output per person than Victoria—and that reflects the standard of living. If we continue to fall behind New South Wales in attracting investment, that differential is going to grow

between our two states. Victoria will fall further and further behind, and we will see the best and brightest leave Victoria. We have already seen that in the last two years. We have seen our population growth plummet. We were growing at around 1.8 per cent per annum in population year on year prior to COVID. That has dropped away. We have had population shrink, and it is continuing to shrink. The best and brightest are leaving Victoria, and that is going to have long-term consequences. Unless we get the policy settings right and unless we get the budget settings right and create an environment which attracts investment and attracts talent, we are going to see Victoria fall further and further behind.

The last two years have demonstrated that Australia has been caught napping—not just Victoria but Australia as a whole. We have seen fractured supply chains. We have seen shortages in imports. We have seen our export markets challenged, particularly where we have had high concentrations in some destinations. And now we are seeing that situation become worse. What was bubbling along as the early stages of inflation a year ago, with some shortages in some areas, has now turned into major shortages in all sorts of areas across the economy and of course massive price rises—and that situation is only going to become worse.

We are seeing our fuel situation becoming very difficult. Last year the federal government decided to back in the two fuel refineries which remain in Australia, down from seven previously, to provide some element of fuel security, but of course that is limited and short term. Earlier this year, in February, we actually saw a shortage of avgas on the east coast of Australia, with a maintenance-related shutdown of the refinery at Geelong. We saw bowsers across eastern Australia start to run out of avgas, and that was within only 24 hours of happening when the plant reopened after an extended—it was about 14 days—shutdown. But bowsers were running dry, and it was only at the last minute that the fuel supply was restored. That highlights the challenge we have with fuel in Australia and the challenge we will continue to have with fuel in Australia.

Likewise with energy, we are seeing now the consequences of energy policy in this state. I have talked previously about how the government's energy policies are going to ensure in summer we have a shortage of power and in winter we have a shortage of gas, and we have been seeing that in the last couple of weeks as we have had a particularly cold period of weather. Now, it is fine for the government to have a policy of shifting to renewable energy. It is not fine to have no transition plan, and that is what we have seen—a policy platform which has discouraged investment and continuing maintenance in existing infrastructure, be it coal power generation in Latrobe Valley or be it gas reserves or gas supply in a transition phase. Consequently we are now in a situation of critical energy shortages where we should not have them. In a nation which has so many energy resources, we should not be in a situation where we are struggling to get gas supply and in summer we are struggling for electricity supply.

This budget does not contain the vision and the direction to meet the challenges that Victoria faces. It is a budget with some very dubious numbers, and consistently year on year the government has not been able to meet its numbers in the past. We have no confidence that the budget will deliver the 10 per cent cut in spending that the government claimed it will deliver in an election year, but most importantly it does not have the vision and it does not have the direction to meet the challenges Victoria faces in this century.

Sitting suspended 1.03 pm until 2.08 pm.

Dr KIEU (South Eastern Metropolitan) (14:08): I rise not only with great pleasure but also with great pride and excitement to contribute to the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. This is a great bill, and it goes a long way to contributing to our state. In the Victorian budget 2022–23 the Andrews Labor government has invested billions of dollars in our electorates, schools, healthcare facilities, suburban development, energy, environment and climate change, community sport, public transport, roads, multicultural affairs—and the list goes on. It would take me a few hours to go through what the budget has covered, but I will not be allowed to do that, I know, so let me highlight some of the general

features that are applicable to all across Victoria, and then I will go into some of the contributions of the budget to my region of South Eastern Metropolitan.

First and foremost, the budget gives a much-needed boost to our health system—in fact more than \$12 billion—including delivering record levels of surgical capacity; more nurses, doctors, paramedics and health services; and new and improved health infrastructure so all Victorians can have access to high-quality health care closer to home. In particular there is some funding to train and hire up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses. For the healthcare workers who were at the front line of the pandemic for the last two years, we have strong support. Our health workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic, and Victorians are so proud of their contribution and their sacrifice. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank them again.

For Ambulance Victoria we will recruit 90 more paramedics, with a budget contribution of \$124 million of investment to put more ambos on the road. We are also investing \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase call-taking and dispatch capacity during the coming months for 000 services, including ambulances, and training more operators to allocate calls across our state. We will also build and upgrade Victoria's hospitals. This budget invests \$2.9 billion in health infrastructure, including building a new hospital and upgrading existing ones. We are investing more than \$900 million in a new tertiary hospital for Melbourne's west.

Apart from physical health, the government is also supporting mental health for the community. As we all know, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System has informed us that when it comes to accessing mental health care the Victorian community often struggle to access the mental health support they need until it is too late. Previously, in 2020–21, in the budget last year we invested \$869 million to lay down the foundations for a new mental health and wellbeing system, and we provided extra funding for mental health services throughout the pandemic. With this year's budget we are building on these investments with a further \$1.3 billion to take the next steps in this process, including \$218 million to operationalise 82 new beds in Victoria's mental health system and other priority initiatives.

With that said, the budget also strongly invests in jobs and job creation. Since November 2014, when the government came into power, our economy has generated 560 000 new jobs, including more than 80 000 in regional Victoria. When the pandemic hit our shores we responded with record investment to protect Victorian lives and livelihoods. We had planned to create 400 000 jobs by 2025—and do you know what? Today Victoria has already far exceeded that goal, with employment rising by 280 000 jobs since September 2020. We are well on track to reach our target of 400 000 jobs by 2025 as planned.

Also I have to mention the assistance in helping Victorians to meet the cost of living. In particular I want to highlight the assistance for households with energy bills. There are three phases. In the first one Victorians who came to the Victorian Energy Compare website were entitled to \$50. Then the second one was for concession card holders and people on JobSeeker or JobKeeper, and they were entitled to \$250. And now from 1 July, in a few weeks time, all Victorians who come to the website to compare their energy bills, with the potential to switch and save more, will also be entitled to assistance from the state government to the tune of \$250. So altogether potentially \$550 could go to a household.

Next, education is something we as a state are very proud of. This budget brings our total investment in improving and building new schools to more than \$12.8 billion over the past eight years. To help better meet the needs of local families this budget now contributes a further \$1.8 billion to build new schools and upgrade existing ones. We are also making a big investment in upgrading special schools in this budget. This means that since we took office eight years ago every single special school in Victoria has received funding for major upgrades, because students with disability deserve the same opportunities as every other student in Victoria. Those are some of the general highlights I would like to mention.

Now I want to mention and highlight some of the particular investments by the government in South Eastern Metropolitan in education: Banyan Fields Primary School received \$2.1 million to upgrade and modernise the school, including the multipurpose hall and prep building; Kingston Heath Primary School, \$5.99 million—nearly \$6 million—to upgrade and modernise the school; Mordialloc Beach Primary School, \$2.88 million; Kambrya College, \$18.95 million, at least, to upgrade and modernise the school, including to add an additional 400 spaces in permanent facilities; Dandenong Valley Special Developmental School, \$14.78 million; and the list goes on. That was education.

Now to health, ambulance and emergency services and mental health: the Monash mobile stroke unit will receive \$12 million, and that particular one—this is the second mobile stroke unit—will be based at Monash hospital. Casey Hospital's emergency department and Monash Health's emergency department mental health and alcohol and other drugs hub also received funding from the budget.

Now on to the next category—energy, environment and climate change—yesterday we had a debate on a motion put up by a member across the aisle talking about the shortage in energy and gas in particular. But that is not a unique problem that we are facing only in this state; it is across the nation and in fact across the world. In fact the gas that is being produced in this state is 70 per cent more than what we need, but because we have to pay in line with international price parity and with the crisis and the shortage elsewhere in the world, there have been some more expenses for households. The government is helping with that, as I just outlined. But also we are working as a nation towards resolving some of the difficulties there.

We will not forget about community sport. I could list here, for South Eastern Metropolitan, the Jells Park sports field upgrade, \$4 million; the Ballam Park athletic upgrade, \$750 000; and so on.

The last thing I would like to mention is multicultural affairs. The Afghan community centre at Dandenong—I had the privilege to attend the launch—has now received \$200 000 towards its facility. The Cambodian community, for the Wat Buddharangsi Buddhist temple playground equipment, has received \$250 000. There is also the south-east multicultural community services hub.

This government has a proven record of financial management. This budget delivers for industries that have the greatest potential to grow, industries that will leverage Victoria's strength to create the jobs of the future. Our continuing investment in our caring workforce and the Big Build are creating quality jobs. Victoria's economy is strong and the employment rate is 2 per cent lower than when we came to government. Demand for workers is high and business conditions and confidence are elevated. Victoria is on track for strong economic growth.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Treasurer and all the hardworking Labor government MPs for putting together this great budget.

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (14:22): I rise to speak on the 2022–23 Victorian state budget. We are coming to the end of a parliamentary term that has seen Victorians, the government and this Parliament face extraordinary challenges. The COVID pandemic tested all of us and is still a feature of our lives. The shadow of the last two years continues to impact all of us, and now we are facing more uncertain economic times. In the midst of a global pandemic the Victorian government acted on public health advice to protect the Victorian community and sought to ameliorate the devastating impacts of the pandemic on the community through various additional support payments and services. My Greens colleagues and I supported the government's public health response and advocated for the increased spending on payments and services for those who needed them. Rapid responses were needed to expand our healthcare workforce, administer tests and vaccines and assist those who fell ill with COVID, as well as support individuals and businesses with the impacts of the massive disruptions caused by the pandemic.

So here we are with a budget in deficit. The government spent what it needed to support Victorians through a very difficult time. In fact the argument is really about if more could have been spent, not less. I know of businesses that could have done with more support. Many artists and others involved

in the arts sector, devastated by COVID, really struggled, and renters faced a difficult time once the ban on evictions and rent increases was lifted prior to the last lockdown. You will hear no critique from us that the budget is in deficit in this context. Good governments spend to protect and support communities when they need to. Indeed with the health system still under so much pressure after years of underinvestment, massively increasing spending has become unavoidable. The additional billions of funding going into the health system in this budget, including into mental health, are necessary, and I commend the government on this important investment.

What this budget does show, however, is that the structural issue at the heart of the budget is not spending but revenue. Obviously, being an election year, it may have been too much to hope the government would bite the bullet on new revenue measures. Instead we continue with a budget propped up by relying on housing becoming more and more expensive and unaffordable and Victorians continuing to lose billions to the gambling industry. This is despite the fact that the government had a great idea that it unfortunately backed away from: its social housing levy. A levy on developments to raise money to build more housing was an idea worth fighting for, but the property developers said no and the government backed down. It certainly gives Victorians an insight into who really runs things in this state.

But it is also a lost opportunity. With the public housing waiting list growing by 55 per cent in the last four years, with now almost 120 000 people waiting for public housing, the government has no plans for more housing to reduce the waiting list apart from the 9000 primarily community housing dwellings committed to in the last budget. It is just simply not enough. Victoria needs a 10-year housing plan to build at least 100 000 new public housing homes. With such an investment we can end homelessness and make housing affordable. It is a cliché to say budgets are about choices, but it is also true. And in this budget the government is spending seven times more money on building two unnecessary and polluting toll roads than it is on building homes for Victorians in the midst of a housing crisis. How many quality homes could be built for \$20 billion? Tens of thousands. In fact less than 1.8 per cent of the accumulated debt over the forward estimates will have been spent on building homes to address the housing affordability crisis in Victoria. But the property developers said no, so now there is no 10-year housing plan and hundreds of thousands of Victorians will continue to struggle in the private rental market knowing owning their own home is increasingly becoming an even more distant dream.

Unaffordable housing, including rentals, is a major factor in cost-of-living pressures facing Victorians, but there is nothing in this budget to address this crisis. Not only did the government drop its housing levy idea, but it also had plans to cut the very successful program helping people experiencing homelessness into housing. The response to COVID showed us that governments with the right priorities can find the resources to help people out of homelessness, but even that program was to be cut. Indeed it was only after an outcry that the government found some extra money to keep this program going, although only for one more year. This piecemeal approach to homelessness is quite frankly unacceptable. Indeed the response to this year's budget from across the community sector was less than enthusiastic. Victorian Council of Social Service CEO Emma King summed it up well: 'Lean, lean, lean'.

The government also ignored the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service requests for additional funding but found an extra \$300 million for more police and PSOs. As VALS said at the time, this choice will mean:

... more of our children will be removed from their families, more of our people will be incarcerated, and more of our people will die in custody.

As I said, budgets are about choices. Another area I was hoping to see more attention in this budget for was family violence services, particularly for multicultural communities. While Victoria has made great strides in both its recognition of the scourge of family violence and its response post the landmark Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, there are gaps emerging in the types of

support reaching communities experiencing family violence. Victoria's multicultural communities, as the royal commission found, experience high levels of family violence, yet culturally specific family violence response services report that they are not getting the funding they need to meet the demand for their services. Victoria still does not even have one culturally specific women's refuge, a model that has been incredibly effective in New Zealand and has begun in both New South Wales and Queensland. Culturally specific services are more than just having an interpreter available; they are about having bicultural staff, understanding the issues specific to communities and having tailored, specialised support available and so much more. I am urging the government to rethink its approach to culturally specific services in Victoria, and this goes for both family violence and mental health services, which communities report they need much more support with. It begins by listening to communities and directly funding grassroots organisations, including culturally specific family violence refuges.

It is clear that our community sector needs much more investment, not less. But without additional revenue, not only are necessary investments in the community not being made but we are seeing significant budget cuts. Public sector workers are taking the heat. The government has persisted with its 1.5 per cent wage cap on public sector workers. With inflation going up, this translates as a wage cut for many workers. More than that, state wage caps are acting as a brake on wages growth across the economy. In the current environment of rising inflation, increasing interest rates and stagnating wages, Victorians are in difficult economic times. In a recent report for Unions NSW, Professor David Peetz found that under the New South Wales wages cap—which is 2.5 per cent; a whole 1 per cent higher than Victoria's current policy—public sector workers look set to lose thousands in wages. He goes on to say in the report that:

The most important factor shaping wage norms that state governments can influence is public sector pay policy.

This is a position also held by the Reserve Bank governor. We have a wages problem in Australia, and state governments, Liberal and Labor, are making it worse with these wage caps. The Treasurer is on the record as saying the cap on the public sector wages may be reviewed. I sincerely hope this is the case.

Another disastrous budget cut is the almost \$1 billion being slashed from the environment department. That is right—a billion dollars being gutted from the state's environmental programs at a time when Victoria's ecosystems are facing their biggest extinction threats. This is particularly disappointing given the biggest parliamentary inquiry ever held into our precious ecosystems made clear recommendations recently about how we need to invest more to better protect and restore our natural environment that gives us life. There are now 2000 species threatened with extinction in Victoria. This is a huge increase from 2014 when the number was just under 700. This is after we have already lost forever 81 different plants, mammals, birds and reptiles. We know that ecosystems are beginning to collapse, including Victoria's forests and rivers, which provide the essentials for our health and wellbeing, including freshwater and clean air. We also know that there is a path out. We can save our ecosystems and restore the natural environment. The parliamentary inquiry the Greens initiated found that a big funding boost can reverse the damage to our environment and restore it to health for all of us and future generations, but apparently not this budget. Hopefully we see some further commitments in the lead-up to the election. I sincerely hope so.

Finally, this is one more budget passing us without a plan to transition Victoria away from coal and gas. In fact we have the government opening up new gas projects and helping to keep our unreliable and expensive coal-fired power stations open longer than they otherwise would. The Latrobe Valley Authority continues to be funded on a year-on-year basis with no funding certainty—hardly a vote of confidence in the future of the region and the need for a comprehensive, community-driven transition plan. As the Environment and Planning Committee's recent report into renewable energy demonstrates, Victoria can be going much further and faster towards 100 per cent renewable energy. The current gas price hike impacting many Victorians is another reason we need to increase our collective efforts to move away from fossil fuels. We need big grant programs to electrify homes and

get them off gas. The government has taken some good actions to support low-income households to get off gas, but unfortunately yesterday we learned that Labor has shelved its gas substitution road map—a plan to get our state off gas—until after the election. This is a disappointing step from Labor and shows again why we need more Greens in Parliament to push the government further and faster on climate action.

Another important climate measure is protecting the carbon in our forests instead of logging them. Yet not only has the government pushed through laws to make illegal logging legal, thus allowing even more precious ecosystems to be destroyed, it is now proposing to crack down on the forest defenders who are putting their bodies on the line to protect these precious forests. The intent with which this government is logging our remaining forests puts their commitment to climate action in question.

In conclusion, the COVID pandemic continues to pose for our state significant challenges. It has exposed the fault lines in our society and the places and people who have not had the support they needed for years. But it has also given us an opportunity—an opportunity to rethink how we govern and how we can govern differently. We have seen what happens in a time of crisis: governments can and did find the resources to keep people safe and housed. Let that not only be a solution for a time of health crisis but a solution that the government continues to invest in in order to end homelessness in Victoria. We have seen Victorians reassess how they want to work, but the solutions that we found during the pandemic need not stop there. We can have greater flexibility at work that not only increases productivity but means that people are healthier and well.

We have seen Victorians re-evaluate the importance of a public health system to keep us safe and well, so let us keep investing in our healthcare workers and system. Let us move away from scarcity becoming the norm and let us fund our health system properly so that there are enough staff at all times to treat people when they get sick instead of them waiting months and months for treatment, because this will also mean that we have the surge capacity of enough trained health professionals to call on in a future health emergency.

We have seen people demand much stronger action to address the climate crisis and save our ecosystems from destruction. Victorians have relied on and appreciated our open spaces and natural environment like they have never before over the last two years, so let us keep investing in our environment because our survival depends on it. We have seen throughout this difficult time that bold and brave solutions are possible and have the potential to solve the big challenges we face. Let us continue with courage.

Mr ATKINSON (Eastern Metropolitan) (14:36): It occurs to me that a budget is simply a tool to implement policy. A budget by itself is not much good. It really needs to interpret the policy directions and decisions that a government is taking in terms of the services that it provides to Victorians. This budget has been formulated in a period of significant volatility—volatility globally, volatility nationally—brought on or affected particularly by COVID and the circumstances surrounding COVID but also by other issues such as conflict zones around the world that affect energy prices and so forth. We have had a period where I think governments have been timid in looking to the future and making the sorts of decisions and recasting some of their principles and particularly some of their policies to create a better future, and I put that on the federal government that has just changed as much as on the state government.

When I say timid I reflect particularly on tax reform. One of the crucial issues confronting Victoria and the other states is the issue of tax reform, because the reality is that the debt that the states have built up—and Victoria's is by far the worst; in fact Victoria's debt situation is the equivalent of Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia put together—on our current basket of taxes we cannot possibly pay back. We cannot eliminate that debt. We could fix the balance sheet by revaluing some of our assets, but some of those assets have been sold off the balance sheet anyway, the ones that perhaps have the most value. We have got some real concerns in terms of how we approach the future with such indebtedness. Certainly the current budget and the ones following it in the next two years

predict that there will continue to be deficits added to even our operating budgets. With interest rates rising, the surplus that the Treasurer in this budget has estimated might occur in 2025–26, which was a highly optimistic forecast, is now in doubt on any measure. That \$167 billion-plus debt that we face in Victoria interests me in the context that the Cain and Kirner governments' debt was around \$33 billion, as I recall, and saw a change of government—\$33 billion and we were all concerned about that level of indebtedness.

Well, now we have five times that level of indebtedness, and the opportunity to actually address that is very problematic—particularly problematic if the federal government is not prepared to consider tax reform and if Victoria is not prepared to look at that tax reform also. It is no good tinkering. We have heard the debate in the last couple of days about taxes that have been reduced, or thresholds that have been reduced on taxes. We have also heard obviously my party's claims about the number of new taxes or expanded taxes. Most of that is tinkering, and it is not going to go to the nub of the problem of how we continue to provide good-quality services for Victorians into the future and certainly how we meet those debt commitments that have now been amassed.

The New South Wales government has certainly been prepared to debate and to take some leadership in terms of tax reform. I can only hope that the other states, and particularly our own state of Victoria, now join with the New South Wales government to look at those opportunities for tax reform with the new federal government. The interest rate situation that we face now is going to create significant problems, certainly for all Victorians in terms of their daily lives but also for this government. As I said, it is going to have ramifications in terms of future budgets and predicted surpluses that the Treasurer has laid out in this budget.

I personally am a great critic of the Reserve Bank of Australia. I think that the Reserve Bank of Australia, for at least 12 months and maybe longer, has been making political decisions on interest rates rather than economic decisions. The fact is that now it is playing catch-up to try and address the inflation that was clearly going to be created by the amount of government money that was pushed into the economy. You did not have to be anyone other than Blind Freddy to realise that pushing all of that money into the economy was going to create inflationary pressures. That is quite apart from what we see now in terms of the energy issues internationally and quite apart from even the impacts of things like the COVID ramifications. We should have been measuring and tapering some of that spending all the way along the line, but all of the government agencies, all at once—state and federal—were there throwing out money. And now we have got problems, because now we have a level of debt federally and we have a level of debt at this state level that are going to cause a lot of pain going forward. It cannot simply be that we keep kicking the can down the road—we have actually got to start to do something about this.

One of the disappointments of this particular budget is that whilst there are forecasts about a surplus in 2025–26—which, as I said, now is most unlikely given interest rate rises and at best, prior to those rises, was certainly optimistic—the fact is that we are not going to get there with the sort of service provision that Victorians are expecting, the quality of services. We are not going to get there because this budget, apart from anything else, has no actual plan to reduce that debt. It expects simply that economic growth will somehow—magically—erase a historic level of debt in this state, and it will not happen.

In fact we have already got a problem. We talk about housing affordability and we talk about homelessness, and there are real issues that we have to address in those areas, but what is happening is that governments are exacerbating the problems of housing affordability and homelessness by their interventions in the economy and in those very markets. Around 42 per cent of a house cost is taxation, and the fact is that the government in Victoria at a state level is too reliant on property taxes. One of the solutions proposed to increase social housing was to lumber more taxes on the property sector. We simply cannot do that. It is an intervention that simply adds to costs in the property market.

I was talking to a real estate agent some weeks ago at Park Orchards, and he told me about the time that the state government reduced stamp duty by 25 per cent as an incentive to try and allow more buyers into the marketplace. He had a property on the market for \$720 000 in Croydon. People were sort of procrastinating about whether or not to put in their offer, and the state government came out that week and said, 'We're going to give you 25 per cent off stamp duty if you are first home buyers'. A couple rang up straightaway the real estate agent and said, 'Listen, we want to buy that property now', and he said, 'That's terrific, except that the property is now \$770 000'.

That is the dynamics of the market. Every time there is an intervention, there are problems. I was not a supporter of the coalition government's housing policies going into that last federal election, nor the Labor Party's, because they both represented interventions that were going to add to the problem for first home buyers. The problem of people not being able to get into houses because of the affordability crisis has real social implications, as I have discussed before, which include putting off having children. The fertility rate of the country is reduced because people are simply reliant on having two salaries to be able to pay for a mortgage. It is getting worse and worse and worse, and of course these interest rates are going to affect it dramatically.

We have got to recognise that this budget has a lot of good things in it. It would be churlish to say that it does not, because of course it does. There have been some good things that have been delivered in my own electorate in the north-east region, and I am particularly mindful of some of the areas that I think have been underdone for so many years, including the special schools. I congratulate the government on the investment there. The government has done quite a lot in terms of some of these other projects and so forth in the state.

But one of the key problems, and Dr Ratnam talked about it, is the wage cap. The wage cap is 1.5 per cent, but that is a fantasy as well because every one of the claims that have been put in by public sector unions is for more than 1.5 per cent and the government is agreeing to more than 1.5 per cent. I do not know who is stuck on 1.5 per cent. They are obviously not very good negotiators, because everybody else is getting a lot more. We have got an expanded public service. We have got an expanded executive level in the public service. I mean, Fire Rescue Victoria has got to be the classic, with the most executives per capita of their employees of any organisation.

I notice that some people say productivity has improved. I do not know who they are asking about productivity improvements. They are clearly not asking Victorians who are trying to access government services, because you ring up, you play Tattsлото on the phone and you cannot get to speak to anybody. The last thing you hear on the phone is, 'Look, we're extremely busy at the moment. Can you call back at another time?', and you fill in a form on a website, an inquiry form that goes to the department. Well, it does not; it goes into outer space, because nobody ever comes back to you. Where is the productivity improvement? Where are the services for Victorians? Yes, there are some good things in this budget, but there is also a lot of neglect. There is a fall in productivity in my view, a significant fall, and I think that there is a correlation in that in terms of many of the other economic indicators that we have.

We have talked about how great our unemployment rate is, but the fact is that it looks terrific because visas have virtually stopped. The federal government has strangled visas. We talk about the importance of international students for Victoria. There is no point us talking about them if the federal government does not issue visas to these students. We have got some work to do in terms of restoring our economy, and I am not hearing where that work is being done. We hear about more money being thrown at mental health, hospitals and so forth, and yes, more investment is needed in some areas. But at the same time there is no point throwing money at beds in hospitals, for instance, if we do not have the nurses and the doctors and the other paramedics to actually support them. So where is the training path? How much work are we actually doing on that training path?

We talk about all the money we are putting into TAFE, and it is terrific. One of the concerns I have about TAFE, though, is that it is always reactive. It is always retro technology that is being taught. In

industry we have people dealing with new machines and new technology, and TAFE is not catching up with that. We need to be looking more at the sorts of excellence measures that we use in TAFE. It is not just a factory to push students through. We have got to equip them better. Now, the government has done a lot of work in that TAFE area, and I acknowledge that, but I still think that some of the rethinking of how we do business, how we do achieve better productivity and how we do make a difference going forward needs to be part of the thinking that goes into the budget, the policies and the decisions that are then implemented through a budget.

Ms TAYLOR (Southern Metropolitan) (14:51): I would like to embark upon this budget discussion today with gratitude—incredible gratitude—in particular for our healthcare workforce, who have really borne the brunt of the pandemic. I mean, it has been felt on many, many fronts of course, but they have literally been putting in many, many hours over and above and beyond for the welfare of all Victorians. I am incredibly proud of all that they continue to do, because, as we know, COVID-19 is not over. The pandemic is not over, so it has made very good sense and it follows that we do have a pandemic repair plan. To address some issues that have been raised in the chamber, this will mean more staff, better hospitals and first-class care.

This budget gives a much-needed boost to our health system, including delivering record levels of surgical capacity across the state to give Victorians the specialist care they need before they end up in the emergency department; more than \$12 billion for health, including for more nurses, doctors, paramedics, health services and new and improved health infrastructure so all Victorians have access to high-quality health care closer to home; and training and hiring up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses. I should also note that Ambulance Victoria will recruit 90 more paramedics with a \$124 million investment to put more ambos on the road. While we are unclogging emergency departments to prevent ramping and other consequences we are also investing \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase 000 call-taking and dispatch capacity for 000 services, including ambulances, and training more operators to allocate calls across the state.

I have to say, there is something incredibly personal, I think, for all of us, because we have all in some way or another been touched by the pandemic, whether people have had COVID-19 or maybe are healthcare workers themselves or otherwise. I recently had the privilege of going on a visit to Sandringham Hospital to announce a \$4.8 million boost to refurbish and upgrade the outpatient unit, which will have many positive benefits for both staff and patients—because the principle we have is about putting patients first, but of course who looks after the patients? Our wonderful healthcare workers do, and we have therefore very much a holistic approach to making sure that we support the whole cycle of health. I was incredibly humbled, actually, to talk to nurses and doctors who have been through it and continue to protect us all, not only looking after the more customary elements of health care, if you can call them that, but also still dealing with the impact of COVID-19. They were so incredibly gracious in spite of all that they are having to do. From one minute to the next, still the priority is, ‘How can we best look after people coming into our hospital and putting their trust in us?’. So I just want to again express incredible gratitude for the work that they are doing, and I look forward to seeing the benefits of those upgrades in my Southern Metropolitan Region.

I did want to pick up on a couple of other points. I find it a little bit concerning and a little bit disturbing to see some non-government members seeking to trivialise our overall investment in social housing. We have a \$5.3 billion investment. Now, true to form, it did precede this budget, but the investment nevertheless is there and it is unfolding. So this will mean 12 000 new homes across Victoria, more than 9300 new social housing dwellings and, within that, 2900 affordable and market homes for first home buyers and renters. Two thousand more Victorians with mental health issues will have a home; 25 per cent of investment will be in rural and regional Victoria; all new homes will meet 7-star national housing and energy rating scheme efficiency standards; and 10 per cent of all new social dwellings will support Aboriginal housing needs.

I should say, as an added element—and this is what Labor governments do—not only are we investing in social and affordable housing but it is also the jobs that are created, because we know that, just as

in our health system we are looking after patients, obviously the infrastructure but also the healthcare workers that take care of our patients, we are also making sure that there are the jobs, because in order for people to pay for services et cetera and drive the economy they need jobs as well. We know that through our \$5.3 billion investment in social housing this has created 22 000 jobs already, and we can expect more than 40 000 to be created throughout the four years of the program. So those trying to equivocate or to trivialise this investment—I do find that bizarre, particularly from those who will in effect deliver no houses. It is very easy to talk about these things and to complain, but when you actually have to deliver you can see that we are very much committed. These very important projects are well underway, and they are supporting Victorians not only in the infrastructure but in the jobs they create as well.

There are many more elements to the budget, but the other one that I wish to speak about is one to do with cost-of-living pressures and how we are helping to alleviate those. It is nothing new of course that putting downward pressure on power bills is incredibly important, and this is why we have the \$250 payment for all Victorian households that use the Victorian Energy Compare website—this is actually the Victorian government’s independent price comparator website—to search for the cheapest electricity deal. This is just one component helping to alleviate the pressure on our power bills. Of course we have many energy efficiency measures that are well underway. We also have our Solar Homes program, which is for eligible households, including for renters, and that also includes the elements of installing battery storage systems and solar panels on their homes. So there are many, many measures that are being implemented to help offset the cost-of-living pressures, but of course there is an acute awareness right now that we are in winter with regard to keeping houses warm and keeping Victorians safe and healthy through the winter season as well.

On that note I am going to commend the budget to the house but, again, say a thankyou for all that our healthcare workers are doing: know that we fully acknowledge all that you contribute to our great state.

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (15:00): I rise today to speak to the budget 2022–23, which is obviously called the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. Where do I start? You would have to be absolutely crazy to vote for this government at the November election after you have looked at this budget and seen that Victoria’s debt is set to hit \$167 billion, which is that of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland combined. You would have to be crazy. I watched people vote for this government when they were going to rip up the east–west link, knowing that they were going to be tearing up a billion-dollar contract. They voted them in. A billion dollars would have been able to be spent on multiple hospitals at that time. But no, we got the Daniel Andrews government, and here we have what happens when a pandemic hits.

This budget shows the community what happens when a government mismanages a pandemic. It is quite clear the cost of six lockdowns when you have mismanagement of the health system and mismanagement of a pandemic and the government have an open chequebook within their grasp. Clearly the community was more than happy at the very start of this pandemic, in 2020, and the first lockdown, with the promise that this government was locking us down to fix the hospital system and make sure that we were ready for a pandemic. But what did occur? They cancelled elective surgeries for two years or thereabouts. They obviously did not get the hospitals fit for purpose, because we are currently seeing what happens when you mismanage and do not spend the money where you are meant to spend it.

I would have loved to, at the very start of this pandemic, have been working with the government to make sure that the money was spent where it should have been spent: straight into our hospital system and straight into our ambulance services. I would have sent the money straight into local government and made sure that we had local community health responses through community facilities in local areas that were open and fit for purpose to deal with the pandemic. That money, had it been spent in those community services and community areas, would have been lasting rather than this takeaway, pop-up response that we received, with tents put up at Highpoint and people wandering through, which

was not a long-lasting pandemic response. Respectfully, the community deserves a health system that is fit for purpose, a community health system that will go for years to come.

Then we come to mandates. This government decided that lockdowns were not enough to make sure that we were in a huge amount of debt, and they added mandates which were never needed. This budget shows what happens when you put mandates in. Why do I say this? How many people fled the state for work or due to fear of more lockdowns and mandates? They went interstate to be able to work. I have a sneaking suspicion that this government wanted the community to fail. They wanted them to lose their homes, and they wanted them to sell their homes. They wanted them to flee the state, the reason being that they get stamp duty. Every time a house is sold, they get stamp duty—\$30 000 or \$50 000.

I know that history will show you that. After Keating, the recession that we had to have, John Cain wrote in his book about the absolutely bumper amount of money that he received at the time when people had to actually sell their houses. Mr Cain at that time was disgusted. But I have no doubt that that is Mr Andrews's playbook this time, making sure that he is just watching people fail and fail and fail and go interstate, fleeing this state, and that he gets the state duties and taxes.

So for me, I have watched what the costs of lockdowns have increased in this budget. There is the mental health cost for our children—now we have one in 10 being diagnosed with either depression or anxiety; the amount of loss of small businesses; the amount of homelessness, with people living in their cars. In my area people are queuing up for food and food hampers. The cost of living has gone up. We were known as the food bowl, and then we had such a distinct lack of people being able to have jobs, with the loss of jobs due to the mandates and other things. The cost of living has gone up. Our farmers have not been able to have the staff. Our food and beverage industry has not been able to have the staff. Small business everywhere has a lack of staff. That is how we are living. So obviously if you read this budget, you can see that this is another election budget. There are lots of promises that this government have not delivered on in the last four years, and there are lots of things sitting in this budget.

The government have not fixed our ambulances, when they knew that there was a problem. Like I have said in this chamber, they knew in 2014 and they did not fix the problem. They have not built our hospitals in a timely way or with a sense of urgency. With our schools, yes, there are plenty of schools in this budget to be built, but have they done this in a timely way? No, they have not. Have they fixed our roads? Everyone can attest that in the last two years they have been in traffic, even with lockdowns. Did they fix them in a timely way? No, they did not. They are splashing cash around at the moment, and that is our cash—the money hardworking Victorians have paid. It is their taxes. There is nothing for free—it is our taxes.

This budget the government has called 'Putting patients first', and the Premier and the Treasurer have told us that they are making record investments in our health system. To use their spin—and I have heard it out of our Premier's mouth—there is a massive \$12 billion boost to our healthcare system. That is far from the truth. He should be honest about the billions that have been spent so far, because the vast majority of that was federal government money. When I look at this budget—and you can look at budget paper 4 to be exact, which gives the capital program for our health—it shows that there is \$2.813 billion for new and existing projects in 2022–23, yet the estimated expenditure for the current financial year is over \$3.5 billion. Now, that looks to me to be a decrease.

Back in October 2018 the Premier announced that the government would build a new hospital in Footscray, and I was glad. It was something that I had pushed for for 20 years in my community, and I was so pleased to see that occur. You would think that once the pandemic hit they would have absolutely made that a number one priority. The Premier said:

... if their loved one is sick, they'll be able to get the world class, affordable public health care they need, right around the corner.

Later that same month in 2018, he announced that planning would begin for the new hospital in Melton and that only Labor would make sure that Melton families get the very best affordable health care close to home—2018. Again I will quote the Premier:

Melton is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia and locals deserve a 24-hour public hospital for the very best care, close to home. With this investment, we'll make sure they get one.

In another announcement in October 2018 the Premier announced that this government would invest \$675 million to build and upgrade 10 community hospitals across the state, including one in Point Cook and one in Sunbury—in 2018. In his words:

Nothing is more important than having the peace of mind that when a loved one gets sick, care is just around the corner.

Only a once-in-a-generation boost to deliver new community hospitals will give patients the best care—and only Labor will get it done.

Well, thankfully the construction of Footscray Hospital is underway and there is funding for the coming year, but the project has blown out to half a billion dollars—half a billion dollars, but it has not made it any quicker. But what about Melton hospital? It is supposed to be completed in 2027. This was an announcement made in 2018, mind you. Despite the announcements and the press call-outs on the site there is not one single cent in this budget, just a bunch of promises. All there is is a line saying 'To be confirmed'. Now, on the community hospitals, not one has been delivered, and there is only \$20 million in this year's budget—\$20 million for a \$675 million project. That is going to get some planning, and that is about it, kids. So much for the Premier saying that the government would provide the very best affordable public health care close to home. \$167 billion they spent in this pandemic. Where—for some pop-up tents? The hardworking people in my electorate certainly are not getting it, despite all of the promises.

Let us have a look at another of the budget papers, budget paper 3, 'Service Delivery'. It shows that the funding for the output initiatives is \$2.62 billion, yet it was \$3.56 billion for the current year. Even more disturbing is that there does not appear to be additional funding for dental services. Now, I have brought this up in this place. It does not refer to dental services for children, and there is no measure to address the time that people are waiting for dental services. People in the west are having to wait years—not just weeks or months but years—to see a dentist under the public system. Of the 34 000 patients across the state that have to wait more than three years the vast majority come from my region in the west—over 20 000 of them. I could go on—and I have done before—about the actual amounts and times in each of my areas, from Melton to Hume to Brimbank to Hobsons Bay, but I will not. Yet there is no money in this budget to fix that, not just dental care but denture care, and everybody knows that fixing your teeth means that you can get a job.

Thankfully there is funding for ambulances—hallelujah, praise the Lord—but in 2014 the Premier said that he would actually save the minutes that save lives. In 2016 the Minister for Emergency Services was warned about the serious staff shortages at the state's 000 call agency, but can we really trust the government to get it right? I certainly do not think so, and I do not think that anyone in the west really thinks that this budget is what it claims to be, which is 'Putting patients first'.

I might just go off track on two little emails that I received last night. These are just like the many, many, many that I have received, but I will touch on two from just last night. Let us just go to last night. One is from Johanna Tomlin. She said:

I am a 52 year old grandmother who resides in Sunshine North.

Last year, after experiencing bad headaches, she had a scan and found out that she had polyps. She was referred to the eye and ear hospital. She has been waiting several months for the hospital to contact her. She said a couple of weeks ago she was told:

... the waiting time is 1100 days. This is not good enough ... I still have headaches, jaw pain, phlegm built up in my throat and forever sounding like I have a cold.

Why are they virtually saying that she will be on the waiting list for four years to remove some polyps from her nose? That is the eye and ear hospital.

This one is from last night also:

Dear Catherine,

... my 11-year-old son has been on a public hospital waitlist—

to get his tonsils out. In 2017 he started on the list. She was calling up before the pandemic and was told that there were 2000 kids on the waiting list. She went back to the GP and got more referrals and was calling throughout the pandemic. She said her daughter got her tonsils out after four years of waiting on the public waiting list. But she also said that during the last two years she continued to call the hospital, which is the Sunshine Hospital, about the waiting list and she has been told that the waiting list is now 3000. From 2000 it has gone up to 3000, and her son has already been on the waiting list for five years.

I do not know about others here in the chamber, but when I was a child and throughout my teens and the like children were a priority and getting their tonsils out was just something that happened. To think that you can be on a five-year waiting list to get your tonsils out is quite insane. Not only that, I could touch on all the people, the elderly and others, that are wanting to work and that are in chronic pain. But because of the lockdowns the government stopped elective surgery and made doctors and surgeons sit at home when these people would have been looked after.

I will move off health and into another area. Let us look at education. In November 2018 the Premier said:

Victoria is growing and we need to plan ahead to make sure that every child has access to a great local school.

He announced that during the next term, if he was re-elected, another 45 new schools would open up, with planning for another 55 to get underway. These included seven schools in Wyndham, six schools in Hume, five schools in Melton and more schools in Maribyrnong. He did say it can take more than two years to undertake the planning, buy the land and build a new school—3½ years later have all of these schools been built? No. This budget clearly shows that not all have been delivered. There are a number from 2019 yet to be completed, and the minister has advised me that some will open in 2023 or maybe 2024, which is just not good enough. The western suburbs of Melbourne are some of the fastest growing areas in this state. Every child should have access to a great local school, but apparently that is not the case if you live in the west.

Now there are roads and transport; let us touch on that. There is funding for the Calder Highway—something that for years we have been crying out for—but it is only for planning and there is no completion date. Thank goodness the \$50 million comes from the feds, otherwise this probably would not even have been included in this budget. There is funding for the rail overpass at Werribee, but there is no completion date.

Then there is the West Gate Tunnel Project—the project that the west did not even ask for—which is running over time and over budget. Everyone just wanted WestLink—a simple project—straight from Footscray Road, under Footscray, jumping up in Brooklyn and connecting to the Western Ring Road. Now we have this octopus of problems—of contaminated soil and going through some of the filthiest areas, around Coode Island and under the Mobil terminal. It is just unbelievable that they would even have gone down this route. It is nearly \$4 billion over budget. That amount could have built Melton hospital and the Point Cook and Sunbury community hospitals, duplicated the Calder Freeway and fixed all the roads in Melton. Do not get me wrong. I am very grateful for every bit of funding that we actually get in the west, but I also know that the funding that we get in the west is half the amount, if not a tenth of the amount, that marginal seats get.

Is the funding giving the community what it needs where it needs it? I really appreciate every cent that has been given to fund a number of the projects that I have raised in this chamber, but the local councils

know their communities and they know the priorities. They have engaged with the communities to check their priorities to find out what is really important to their local communities. Local councils met with the Treasurer and let him know what their priorities were, but unfortunately so many of these priorities were ignored. I will give just some examples. In Brimbank funding for the Sunshine and Albion precincts, the energy park and the localised mental health programs was ignored. In Wyndham only \$2.8 million was provided for activating East Werribee, an employment cluster that could have created 60 000 jobs. There was no funding for a new sports centre in Wyndham or for a new library in the fastest growing areas that desperately need community infrastructure. Like I said at the start of this, if this government actually put the money into creating long-lasting infrastructure, that could have been used. They could have flipped the funding on buildings into things that could have been used in the pandemic—to be able to have testing, to be able to have a local health response—but no, they put up pop-up tents. There was no funding, Wyndham have said, for the cycling and walking paths that they wanted, which are very important in an area with young families that has poor public transport.

In Hume the Bulla bypass is desperately needed. This government has promised it for years, and again—no funding. Councils requested funding to prevent family violence—virtually nearly every single council in my area has requested this—to support victims, and they all have been ignored. These are small grabs of cash with which they could actually deliver services to their local areas, and they know how on the ground they could help quickly. The government likes to splash cash around on big projects. They like their West Gate Tunnels, they like their Suburban Rail Loops and they like their level crossings. But apparently when it comes to infrastructure that the community actually want—that they have put under the nose of this government and they have put under the nose of the Treasurer—they always get ignored. They only want to spend it on their priorities—the things in the local areas that the community knows and needs.

For me, I have said before that people were more than happy feeling that this government was going to spend money on our hospital system, but it seems it has just come up again—not there. What do they expect us to believe—that they are actually going to get this budget back in surplus in 2026? They must be kidding me. It would be a miracle if this government could get any budget back to a surplus. The way that they have spent their money over the last two years is quite incredible, and to think that they have outspent New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland—I mean, we were all going through the pandemic—it shows you what happens when you have the kind of response that we have had here in Victoria, with the most lockdowns.

This budget is exactly what lockdowns cost the community, what mandates cost the community. Do not be fooled that this is not what it is. The amount of money that has been spent and wasted over the last two years, only an inquiry or a royal commission will tell us. Other countries around the world have done the work on what lockdowns cost them. Canada, the UK and other places have drilled down on what the cost has been for them. This government continues to be arrogant around holding on to mandates for workers when we have a worker shortage and crisis. Why? There is no science involved in this, no medical science, but this is what cost us in the way of the budget. This is what is going to cost us in the future—compounding costs and compounding problems. Bring on November, because all we are going to get are more blowout budgets, spending like there is no tomorrow and a disappearing of Victorians interstate.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (15:26): I rise to speak on the state budget 2022–23, or the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 as it is actually called. This is what I would class as a typical Labor budget. It is a big-spending budget, but it also drives our state into big debt. As many people have said, this forecasts \$167 billion worth of debt for the state of Victoria.

Like previous Labor governments, this government have adopted a city-centric approach to their infrastructure funding, which is denying regional Victorians their fair share of state government funding. Regional Victoria has continuously missed out under Daniel Andrews and Labor, with less than 13 per cent of the capital spending in the 2022–23 state budget estimated to be directly allocated to regional Victoria, and just 11.4 per cent allocated in the 2021–22 state budget for major state asset

investment, being projects worth \$100 million or more. This year the Andrews Labor government will invest only 13 per cent of its infrastructure spend in regional Victoria while it squanders billions on mismanaged projects in the city and ignores major projects in Northern Victoria, including the Shepparton bypass, the Mildura hospital and the Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment.

Labor's big bill is one of the areas where they will squander money. Not only do they invest all of their money in metropolitan infrastructure, but they invest in their cost blowouts on metropolitan infrastructure. We have seen the cost blowout on their West Gate Tunnel Project climb to \$4.7 billion; their North East Link Project, \$10.4 billion; the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, \$3.36 billion; and the Suburban Rail Loop will be up to \$100 billion. That is in blowouts alone. Then there is the additional cost of the blowout to the public service and the increased wages and the sweetheart deals that they do with the unions to increase wages beyond the 1.5 per cent provided for salary increases in the budget.

The CFA is another regional organisation that continuously misses out under this government. What we see in this budget is just \$49.6 million allocated to the CFA for their fire stations. They have 1200 fire stations to upgrade, replace or refurbish, yet FRV, with only 80 stations, receives \$120.6 million. Four of the stations that I have been advocating for recently have been Rochester, Yarrowonga, Strathbogie and Chiltern. All of these are very, very cramped stations that have the pegs where the volunteers hang their turnout gear right beside the trucks. People are changing beside trucks as trucks are rolling out of the station, and these stations have no female change facilities either. Yet the CFA are given a minuscule amount to try and upgrade their 1200 stations to cater for their volunteers, to cater for the safety of volunteers and particularly to cater for the growing number of female volunteers. This is just completely inadequate.

The *Weekly Times* recently compared the Rochester station and its inadequate and dangerous facilities to those of the new FRV station in Derrimut, but you do not actually have to go that far. You do not need to go to Derrimut to compare it to what FRV are getting at their stations. The new station in Shepparton, which was actually funded and built by the CFA, was supposed to be for the CFA, but of course the legislation changed that and it had to be handed over to FRV. It was completed and then handed over prior to it being occupied. I am told that the FRV facilities in Shepparton are quite amazing, with a massive gym, a TV room that has an enormous screen and a theatre-style setup with recliner chairs in it, an outdoor barbecue area and a commercial-style kitchen. They also have extremely good change facilities for the FRV firefighters, but I am told that the change facilities for the volunteers are extremely cramped. It is just typical that once again the FRV are being looked after but not the CFA.

In Shepparton we received funding for a few projects. There was the Graham Street intersection, which I have long advocated for. We also received \$24 million for the Verney Road special school, and I am delighted to see Verney Road, who do an excellent job in our community, getting an upgrade. There was some money for some trains, but of course those trains are a little bit on the never-never. They will not be delivered until quarter 4 of 2026–27. That is June 2027 that those trains will come in, so that is actually beyond the four-year forward estimates of this budget.

There was also some money for mental health in the budget for Shepparton, but it is still a little bit unclear what that will bring to Shepparton. It is listed as a package for regional Victoria, with beds that go to Ballarat and to Wangaratta as well. There are more beds going to Ballarat and Wangaratta than there are coming to Shepparton, but there is a component of the money that will go to replacing facilities in Shepparton. But again we are in the midst of a mental health crisis in Shepparton. The mental health unit is completely overwhelmed, yet the completion date for this is not until quarter 2, 2026–27. That is 4½ years away and, again, beyond the forward estimates of this budget.

I would like to congratulate those in our community who actually brought forward this issue and put it on the agenda. Many of them presented to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and this has been a desperate need in our community for a long time. But it does not go far enough, and it will not be delivered quickly enough. We know that unfortunately in the last couple of

months of last year and the first few months of this year we had at least six youth suicides in Shepparton, yet it is unclear whether this money will deliver any more for child and adolescent mental health services in Shepparton. Particularly what we need are some acute inpatient beds for child and adolescent mental health located in Shepparton at Goulburn Valley Health. Currently young people have to travel if they need an inpatient bed to Box Hill Hospital, which only has 12 beds to cater for the whole of north-east Melbourne and the whole of north-east Victoria. That is just completely inadequate, and I would encourage the government to make sure that there are some dedicated child and adolescent mental health beds in that redevelopment.

It is inexcusable that the government has not funded the full redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health. There was bit of money for the early parenting centre in Shepparton, which is again something that the community have long advocated for, and they have been supported by both Suzanna Sheed and me in advocating for that facility. It is fantastic that we are getting it, but there is more to the completion of Goulburn Valley Health than just mental health and the early parenting centre. The government trumpeted their investment in stage 1, but now we are not even talking stage 2 when we are talking mental health and the early parenting centre. The government have forgotten all about staging and there is no talk of completing our hospital. That is a great shame because there is a vast amount of other areas, like outpatients et cetera, that are inadequate and need to be upgraded. Our hospital must be completed.

There are a number of projects that the government missed out funding in the budget this year for Greater Shepparton, particularly the bypass, which has been on the agenda for over 20 years. We know what this government has done to frustrate the development of the business case there and to put this project off and off and off. It is time it came onto the agenda; it is time for it to be funded. The Shepparton sports and events centre is also something that the community were disappointed not to see funding for. This was something that would have helped us to attract events for the Commonwealth Games, but obviously this government are ignoring Shepparton when it comes to the Commonwealth Games even though the idea came out of Shepparton. Funding for the new Shepparton FoodShare premises is something else that was desperately needed. The federal government have contributed \$600 000. FoodShare must move. They are a vital service in our community. They saved our community during the two-week lockdown that we experienced, and this government must come to the table with funding for them as well. Other things are the construction of a new technical school in Greater Shepparton, something that is desperately needed; the construction of an autism centre; and the establishment of residential drug and alcohol centre in Shepparton—again nothing for that. There was nothing to upgrade the dangerous Kialla West Primary School crossing and nothing for a clinical health school in Shepparton.

We know now that there are severe shortages in our health workforce in Shepparton. In fact it was reported in the paper only last week that there is a shortage of 80 full-time equivalent doctors in Shepparton. These are vacancies that are not filled now. These are registrars, interns and house medical officers—80 full-time equivalent vacancies. There are 110 full-time equivalent nursing positions vacant right now—not illnesses, vacancies—and an additional 230 full-time equivalent clinical positions will be created by the completion of stage 1 of the hospital. La Trobe University have put forward a plan for a clinical health school, but this government did not support that, so I do not know where these health professionals are going to come from. Our community is suffering because of this.

Pioneers Memorial Lodge in Numurkah is another facility that did not get any money. They were expecting to be funded. They have 34 residents, and they have two respite beds and two transitional care beds. Their full redevelopment would have been worth \$20 million, but again that was missed out in this particular budget.

I am running out of time, so I am going to go through these really quickly. The big thing for Mildura that the government did not fund is their new hospital. This government knows that community needs a new hospital. Matthew Guy has been up there and committed \$750 million to a new hospital, but this government is totally ignoring that need in this community. They also failed to put any funding in

this budget to complete the Murray Basin rail project or for an upgrade of the Mildura Airport. There is nothing for the establishment of an early parenting centre in Mildura and nothing to fund an increase in kindergarten capacity. Funding for stage 1 of the motorsports and community precinct was missed out, and funding for the construction of additional social housing that is definitely needed in Mildura was overlooked.

In Bendigo they overlooked the full redevelopment of the art gallery. It was an \$18 million ask of the state government, but they overlooked that. They overlooked the need for investment in the iconic Golden Dragon Museum. The Central Deborah Gold Mine was only asking for \$150 000 to redefine its business case, and yet it did not even get that.

The proposed Bendigo regional employment precinct was also overlooked, despite the council advocating strongly for it. Construction of the new regional resource centre in Bendigo was also overlooked, despite council advocating for it. The construction of a shade structure at the Bendigo Livestock Exchange is another thing that should have been funded. And the City of Greater Bendigo have plans for a number of cycling tracks that also went unaddressed in this particular budget. I do not have time to go through all of the projects or the things that were unfunded in my electorate or all of the 11 lower house districts that are in my electorate.

But there were a couple of other ones that I would like to mention that did get funding. I was delighted to see funding for 72 beds at the Mansfield District Hospital for aged care. I actually went there with the federal minister for aged care, Richard Colbeck, in December and we looked at that project and advocated for that project to be funded. There is also some money for planning upgrades at Bright hospital. It is only \$1.52 million. This should have been a full investment in the redevelopment at Bright. Bright hospital have completed their feasibility, their master planning and their business case. They need \$63 million in capital funding, and yet this government ignored that need in that ageing community. The government should be ashamed of themselves. To give them \$1.52 million just to now have their plans reviewed and agree on a concept for detailed design, with no time line for completion, is an insult to that community.

Mr TARLAMIS (South Eastern Metropolitan)

Incorporated pursuant to order of Council of 7 September 2021:

It's a pleasure to make a contribution on the Appropriation (2022–23) Bill 2022.

Being in government is rarely ever straightforward.

In fact, the last few years have been very challenging as we've navigated our way through a global pandemic and all the complexities that came with it and we led our state and communities through this unprecedented period.

We navigated our way through this period as a collective, taking the complexities into our stride so that we could continue to deliver for Victorians—doing everything we could to stop the spread of this highly infectious virus, while keeping everyone safe.

But when it came time for this budget—where we had to decide how we will support Victorians across the next year with our spending—it could not have been clearer and it could not have been simpler that we needed to deliver to our communities across Victoria.

We knew this budget needed to invest in:

- health care
- education
- mental health
- cost of living
- jobs
- and much more.

We recognised, plain and simple, that this was what Victorians wanted.

This was what Victoria needed.

So, in our fourth budget as a Labor government this term, we have gotten to work so that we can deliver for our communities.

We acknowledge the circumstances in which we are presenting this budget.

Though the brunt of the pandemic has passed us, by no means do we claim it's over; in fact, the period we are in now will constitute one of the most difficult times for our state yet.

We always knew the height of the pandemic would have long-lasting, residual effects on the community; these effects are coming to light now.

So now it comes time for us as a government to support Victorians through recovering.

That's why we're investing where the community needs it the most, to foster people growing and continuing forward in the face of this pandemic.

Our pandemic repair plan is a prime example of how we will deliver this.

The plan will provide newer and better hospitals, more staff and first-class care, easing the current pressure on our hospitals and healthcare workers that arose during the pandemic.

We're investing more than \$12 billion towards health.

In addition to the pandemic repair plan, we have also established the Victorian Future Fund.

We provided the necessary funding to support Victorians throughout the brunt of the pandemic; however, we recognise that the debt burden encountered during this period should not translate across to our future generations.

The Victorian Future Fund addresses this issue; drawing on proceeds from the VicRoads modernisation joint venture, it will be used to repay COVID borrowings.

We will continue to supplement the fund by investment returns, land sales and a proportion of future surpluses once our net debt stabilises.

Looking now to other areas of our budget that will benefit Victorians, education is certainly at the forefront.

Our spending on education builds upon the many investments we have made in previous budgets to support the sector.

Across the last eight years, we have invested \$12.8 billion into improving our existing schools—we've also built new schools to accommodate for population growth across the state.

In this budget we have invested a further \$1.8 billion toward instigating even more meaningful change within our schools.

What we will see because of this spending is more access to good-quality schools, no matter where that student lives or comes from.

We will see better facilities, more extensive resources, and an overall improved quality of education for schools and students.

Our investments will see that every single special school in Victoria has received funding for a major upgrade—because every single student with special needs or a disability deserves the same opportunities as every other student.

Another area we have focused on in this budget is mental health reform.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated the issue of mental health within our community, so we made addressing it a top priority within this year's budget.

The royal commission into our mental health system in 2021 identified that Victorians were experiencing extreme difficulty when trying to access mental health care in times of urgent need.

Our response to this issue has been cumulative; in the 2020–21 budget, we invested \$869 million into laying the foundations for a new mental health and wellbeing system.

We also provided extra funding for mental health services throughout the pandemic, where many Victorians struggled with their personal wellbeing.

Then, last year, we invested a record \$3.8 billion to continue to support these reforms.

Now, in this year's budget, we're continuing to build on these investments by providing \$1.3 billion to take the next steps toward reforming our mental health care system for good.

This funding includes \$218.4 million toward supporting the operation of five emergency department mental health, alcohol and drug hubs across the state.

We acknowledge that our work supporting the mental health of Victorians is far from over; however, we are prioritising addressing the systemic issues found and supporting Victorians to the best of our ability.

Looking away from the entirety of Victoria and at my electorate, I can say with great confidence and great pride that this budget delivers for the South Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The South Eastern Metropolitan Region covers a large area and comprises many diverse communities, and whilst there are many common issues and needs, there are also some differing needs associated with some parts of the electorate.

This budget does a good job of addressing the needs locals are concerned about and have identified.

This budget will see record spending on education for the region, with a spend of almost \$63 million on upgrading our schools.

We are supporting education in areas of the south-east where there are high volumes of young families and young people—our \$18.95 million investment into upgrading Kambrya College, Berwick, is a prime example of this.

This funding will see the school be modernised and upgraded, including an additional 400 spaces in permanent facilities to meet growing demand from the community.

We will also investigate options for a performing arts centre in later stages of the upgrades, an addition which would add great value to the school's co-curricular activities.

A further eight schools within the South East Metro are also receiving funding—supporting even more upgrades.

We are making sure every student has equal opportunity to a world-class education, with investments made toward upgrading three specialist schools in the South East Metro:

- Dandenong Valley Special Developmental School will receive \$14.78 million
- Naranga Special School will receive \$7.61 million
- Springvale Park Special Developmental School will receive \$8.89 million.

This funding will allow for works such as new classrooms, replacement of relocatable buildings with permanent facilities and administration facilities, upgrades to toilets and more across the three schools.

Moving on from education, this budget will deliver significantly for health care within the south-east.

We will support the expansion of the Monash Health Casey Hospital in Berwick.

Casey Hospital's emergency department expansion will include a dedicated paediatric space for children and their families and support an additional 52 000 presentations annually.

This will see the emergency department's capacity doubled, allowing more people to be treated when they need critical, often life-saving care.

It will also mean patients can leave the emergency department sooner, improving the hospital's overall efficiency.

We are catering for the growing needs of our community in Frankston also, by investing \$29 million into converting the Frankston Private Hospital surgery into a public facility—this is a landmark project, significantly expanding our ability to treat patients in the area.

We have delivered \$12 million for a second mobile stroke unit, to be based at Monash hospital, Clayton.

This is significant to the community here in the south-east. In the event of a stroke, sometimes a matter of seconds can make a critical difference to the patient's survival and recovery.

With more capacity to treat stroke patients, this funding will ensure we are doing the most we can to protect Victorians during an extremely vulnerable time.

Monash Health's emergency department will also receive funding as part of the five emergency department mental health and alcohol and other drug hubs that are funded in this budget.

We're also investing significantly in sport and recreation in the south-east through this budget.

We have invested \$4 million for the establishment of new sports fields, new facilities and other upgrades at Jells Park so that residents can access and enjoy higher quality facilities in their day-to-day activities.

There is \$5.5 million to upgrade the Dandenong police paddocks, including improving infrastructure picnic facilities and signage, addressing environmental degradation and improving connections with the Dandenong Creek Trail, Melbourne Water wetlands, Tirhatuan wetlands and Churchill National Park.

We'll develop a new masterplan for the police paddocks, ensuring that the site remains accessible and welcoming for future generations and that visitors can learn about and reflect upon the colonial history of the site, helping them to fully appreciate the role the paddocks, as the initial headquarters of the Native Police Corps, played in the dispossession of our First Nations peoples.

We've allocated \$3 million for the Patterson River National Water Sports Centre to improve pathways, create dedicated viewing areas, plant new vegetation, design a new multipurpose building and to perform a feasibility study for a pedestrian bridge.

The upgrades will make the National Water Sports Centre more accessible and safer for the wide variety of its users.

We're upgrading and improving existing recreation facilities and making them more accessible, with funding being allocated towards:

- Seaford Life Saving Club to support the purchase of all-abilities infrastructure for the whole community to utilise
- the redevelopment of the pavilion and replacement of the athletics track at Ballam Park
- the delivery of improved change room facilities, including female-friendly facilities, at Mordialloc Braeside Junior Football Club
- the delivery of turf and synthetic cricket nets and other reserve upgrades at Mulgrave Reserve
- a covered green at Frankston Bowling Club
- the construction of two full-size netball courts at the Botanic Ridge netball facility
- completing and upgrading the track and facilities at Frankston BMX park.

We understand the pressures being faced by households and we're continuing our work to drive down the cost of living for Victorians.

Current measures to support household budgets include:

- \$250 power saving bonus for eligible concession card holders (extending to all Victorians from 1 July)
- \$191 million to expand the Solar Homes program, including 42 000 additional solar rebates
- Victorian default offer—providing annual bills around \$440 lower for a typical residential customer compared with 2019
- short-term vehicle registration
- capping council rates
- funded kinder—saving families \$2000 per child
- free TAFE to give Victorians more training and new careers
- free RATs to eligible recipients through health services, schools and community organisations
- public transport fares were frozen in 2021 to support economic recovery from COVID-19; in 2022, metropolitan fares increased by an average of 2.3 per cent, and regional fares by an average of 1.1 per cent (both below the most recent annual CPI growth figure).

We have also invested significantly in further major road upgrades and projects—too many to list in the limited time I have today—building on the extensive list of projects already completed or underway.

We're also continuing to provide funding to support our multicultural communities in my electorate and across the state.

And there is so much more for the south-east in this budget.

And I'm thrilled that we will be delivering such a vast array of upgrades and improvements for my community.

This budget is what the people of Victoria deserve after a lacklustre budget delivered by the previous federal government earlier in the year.

It was a budget of bandaid solutions.

It was a budget that neglected the needs of our communities.

It was a budget that short-changed Victorians, robbing us of our fair share.

We've made it our priority to right these wrongs in the 2022–23 budget and to simply DELIVER for the people of Victoria.

I'm confident that this budget delivers not only on what matters to my electorate, but what matters to ALL Victorians.

We've set up long-term economic growth for our state.

We've invested in critical areas of concern, such as health care, cost of living, education and mental health.

We've shown that we understand the community and that we will take care of Victorians when they need it the most.

I'm proud to support this year's budget, our fourth budget this term—a budget that proves that we are a state government that listens to, cares for and supports all Victorians.

I commend the Appropriation (2022–23) Bill 2022 to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (15:41): I thank all members. Most members in the upper house have made a contribution to this debate over Tuesday and Thursday of this week, and I thank them all for doing so. The budget is an annual occasion on which the government of the day can express their values but also respond to the significant needs and the really divergent and competing needs of communities across Victoria. Through the course of the debate members have reflected on things that have been in the budget and things that might perhaps be in future budgets, and of course there are many thousands of decisions that are made in preparation for a budget. Whilst the upper house has a different role in terms of the passage and provision of supply to our colleagues in the other place, it is a really important moment in each parliamentary year when we get to express our views on the budget.

For me, just briefly, because I do know Mr Davis is interested in taking this to committee and we will get to discuss some of these things in a bit more detail, I am very, very proud to be part of a government that is managing the significant challenges and the significant pressures that have been brought to bear on the Victorian community over the last two and a bit years now as we have weathered the most significant health and economic crisis to face this community in more than 100 years. These have been unprecedented challenges, and we have worked every day with people across the Victorian community to respond in the very best way that we can.

The budget papers that were presented to the Parliament last month by the Treasurer bring to account some of that past expenditure, but of course they also outline our ambitions and plans for this year. As members here will be well aware, our government is one that delivers on the promises that we make to the Victorian community, and you can see that through the budget as well, perhaps most notably in some of the funding and support for implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

From the get-go our government has been making sure that young people in our school system and slightly older young people in our vocational training system have every opportunity to achieve their full potential, and again there is some really exciting news for a whole lot of communities around school projects and school upgrades. They have been many of the things that we have heard about through the course of this debate.

This budget does two things perhaps above all other things. Firstly, it responds to the significant pressures that our health system and our hospitals are facing, and I take this opportunity to thank all of the people that are working across our health system in what must be extraordinarily challenging daily experiences. We are still experiencing this pandemic, we are still experiencing very significant cases of COVID and we are experiencing some delayed presentations to our health system as people have deferred treatment and check-ups and the like. For those people for whom this is their daily experience, this budget seeks to ease some of the significant burden that they carry for all of us.

The other thing that I think is really important that is a hallmark of this budget is that it takes us those next couple of steps along the journey of budget repair. The 2020–21 budget that was brought down six months out of cycle, in November 2020, and also the May 2021 budget were really very significant both in their ambitions around economic stimulus and economic transition but also in providing

support to the most vulnerable people in our community and making sure that in both the economic and the social and community recovery people were not left behind. That task continues. This budget makes investments in areas where those needs are most acute but does so in a way that is fiscally responsible. We will be seeing a return to a cash surplus and, over the forward estimates, to that operating surplus—not simple things to achieve when we still have really, really significant cost demands on a whole lot of those services that are important for the daily wellbeing of people across the Victorian community.

I congratulate the Treasurer and his team and thank all of the people in all of the organisations across the state who come across our doorsteps or come across our Zoom or Teams meetings to advocate for the things that matter to them in their communities or in their sectors. In fact I think my favourite thing about being a member of Parliament is when people come and talk about the thing that they are motivated by, the thing that is really important to them, and they have thoughtfully put together their case. Of course there are always more demands for budget funds than there are budget funds. But to every person in the Victorian community who has contributed to this budget and to all the people in our Department of Treasury and Finance, who probably did not get a lot of sleep for a whole lot of months, I thank them as well.

I look forward to some discussion on some of the issues that have been canvassed in the debate during the committee stage. Just before I wrap up and we move into committee, I indicate for the record that the opposition and indeed the Shadow Treasurer, Mr Davis, have sought answers to a number of questions about the budget but also around particular policy and portfolio issues, and I thank Mr Davis for doing that.

Mr Davis: To expedite.

Ms PULFORD: Yes. Mr Davis and I are jointly interested in expediting discussion on these matters, as I am sure all people are, so I thank Mr Davis for that. I just indicate for the record that we have provided answers to those questions as fulsomely as we could in the time that was available. There are a number that we have not been able to provide a full answer to or an answer to in the time frame that we have had available as I speak to you now, but I am happy to indicate that we will continue to work on those and provide those answers by the next sitting week. I thank Mr Davis for the cooperative approach he has taken to that because, having previously at one time taken such a bill into committee, there are limitations to what people advising in the box or any one minister at the table can know in terms of the full breadth and depth of everything that is in the budget. So we will work through these things as best we can. I commend the bill to the house, and I look forward to the committee stage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (15:51)

Mr DAVIS: I want in the first instance to thank the Leader of the Government in particular for the approach that we have adopted this year and last year where, in an attempt to expedite the process, we have provided a list of questions ahead of time, enabling the departments and so forth to provide answers. I accept the government's assurances, and any slowness by us in providing those questions we apologise for. But we thank the government for indicating that they will provide some now and some over the period ahead before the next sitting week.

I should just begin by seeking to incorporate a few tables into *Hansard*. I have spoken to Hansard; they are comfortable with that. They make one indication, though: these are in colour, but they will

not appear in colour in *Hansard*. I should just make sure that the minister has got a copy there, and there are other copies available if people want one.

Ms PULFORD: These are all from the budget papers, yes?

Mr DAVIS: Yes, they are all from the budget papers. And the ones where there is an interstate comparison are from the relevant state budget papers elsewhere.

I just want to make a couple of points about this at an early point. We indicate that indeed if you look at the period from 2013–14 there is a significant increase in overall state taxation of around 80 per cent, from \$16.9 billion in 2013–14 to \$30.5 billion in 2022–23. Land tax is up from \$1.7 billion to \$4.8 billion—that is up 192 per cent over the period to the 2022–23 estimated number. Land transfer duty has increased from \$4.2 billion to \$8.2 billion over that period, a 97.4 per cent increase. But I note that for this year, the 2021–22 year that we are still in, the actual figure is \$10.194 billion, noting the government expects revenue collections from land transfer duty to fall from what is a high—and I think we all understand the reasons for that. Payroll tax is up from \$4.95 billion to \$6.8 billion.

I make the point that there are a number of assumptions in the budget, and I will ask about a couple of those in a moment, but if you look at gross state product, it is up about 24 per cent to this financial year that we are in now. We are not particularly enamoured with the government's estimates going forward. We think that they are heroic because they have got population assumptions and other points in them, but I am happy if the minister wants to make some comment on that.

I just want that put in the context that we face a particularly challenging position with Victorian debt. People will have seen the increase in interest rates that has been flagged, and I guess that my first point to the minister is whether the government would be prepared to provide some details, further details than are in the budget papers. I know what is in budget paper 2. I have read it very closely in terms of the assumptions in terms of interest rates and other outlook points, and I am conscious of the sensitivity analysis in the appendix in budget paper 2, which fundamentally shows that a 1 per cent increase in interest rates over and above the government's projection is likely to result over four years in a \$2.55 billion increase in interest charges.

That is a long way of getting to the point, which is simply to ask a question about whether the government will release further details about its presumptions at the time of the budget about interest rate increases. We knew what the interest rate was; indeed there was a movement on budget day. Obviously that could not have been precisely factored into the budget, but the government would have had a schedule or a document that allowed projections forward in terms of interest rates. It is important to measure those points, so the simple question is: Minister, is there a document or a schedule that estimates the presumed—

A member interjected.

Mr DAVIS: No, it is one question. I am just putting it in context. Is there a document that lays out the government's assumptions on interest rate increases?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis, while the minister is getting advice, there is a process for incorporation of material into *Hansard*. It is standing order 12.17. I would just invite you to have a look at that and check that you have met the criteria for that.

Ms PULFORD: In terms of Mr Davis's question around the movement in interest rates, the budget assumptions and estimates are based on the Treasury Corporation of Victoria's analysis of the market and bond rates, not an estimation of what the Reserve Bank is going to do, so they are based on our own assessment of market conditions.

If I could just make a couple of additional comments about this, interest expense as a share of total revenue is expected to remain modest, averaging 6 per cent over the budget and forward estimates, well below levels seen historically—for instance, during the 1990s—but the government's borrowing

strategy does take into account the risk of potential near-term interest rate rises. Our budget forecasts are based on market expectations for interest rates. We are confident that interest rates will remain manageable and modest. I hope that assists.

Mr DAVIS: I thank the minister. I am aware of the claim in budget paper 2 that it is based on market expectations, and that is what I would expect, but is that documented somewhere? The government must have a document or a schedule or a paper that lays it out. And I get that there are lumpy payments and borrowing processes involved, and they are partly in the sensitivity analysis of course. But is there such a document?

Ms PULFORD: Some of this will be publicly available through the Treasury Corporation of Victoria, but perhaps I can take on notice whether or not there is anything else we can provide.

Mr DAVIS: What steps the government has in place to lift productivity in the Victorian economy.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Minister, do you want to answer that now, or do you want to come back after the cleaning break?

Ms PULFORD: There are various things in my portfolio, off the top of my head, but that is a good idea. If we are a minute away from a cleaning break, then I will come back to Mr Davis in 15 minutes.

Sitting suspended 4.00 pm until 4.16 pm.

Ms PULFORD: For those that have just joined us during the cleaning break, Mr Davis asked if I could give some examples of some productivity measures in the budget and what the government is doing to improve productivity. This is not an exclusive list, but I will provide you with some. All of the Big Build infrastructure, in addition to creating jobs now, enables productivity growth in the long term. There is the \$120 million Victorian Industry Fund, which includes supporting local businesses with investment attraction, and an equity investment pilot fund for advanced manufacturing. We are investing in medtech through the breakthrough fund. There is the Business Acceleration Fund, which is about cutting red tape and helping businesses both to start and also to grow and reducing those input costs that impact businesses. That has got a number of different subsets or components to it that we will develop in partnership with industry, and that also will focus on areas of greatest imposition as well, so we will work backwards from an assessment of what is of greatest impact.

The mental health investments that the government is making will boost productivity. From the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, as all members would recall from discussions on that reform in this place, we know that the burden of mental ill health in the community is profound, and these reforms will certainly seek to address that and will be beginning to address that.

Ms Tierney, who has joined us, knows as much as anyone about training reforms. There has been a very big reform to VCE since its inception, making sure that our young people leaving the school system are ready for full and productive employment in a labour market that cannot wait for them to turn up, and also of course there have been the TAFE reforms and expansion of TAFE courses and programs, as well as the reforms around new courses to respond to our fairly rapidly changing economy.

This next one will take a little while to pay dividends, but it has the evidence base, and the Deputy President will be well familiar with the evidence on early years education and three-year-old kinder. Yes, it will be a while until those people are entering the workforce and participating fully in the economy, but three-year-old kinder is a massive investment in the future productivity of all of those little people.

There is an early intervention investment framework across multiple portfolios as well, which helps people address problems early that pose challenges to their participation in the economy and boosts employment outcomes.

Across my portfolios we have very significant investments in telecommunications infrastructure both in regional Victoria and throughout Melbourne suburbs, with a real focus on outer suburban areas where people are needing that ability to get their work done, for those that are still working from home or partially working from home or just trying to get things done at home, so that all of those workplaces in all of those communities are operating with better and more appropriate for the times telecommunications infrastructure. Our employment portfolio program is very much about enabling fuller participation in the economy by people, including many who are not currently participating in the labour market and in the workforce.

Across the resources portfolio we have a number of regulatory reforms underway to improve approval processes for that industry. In minerals we are genuinely experiencing a second goldmining boom. In extractive resources we are working closely with industry and have been for some time, but we will continue to have some funding in the budget to improve the productivity of that industry and have quicker and better approvals.

We have a number of programs in the small business portfolio to help businesses become more digitally adept. Some of them are for businesses that are small now but have had identified or have self-identified their potential for very, very significant and rapid growth, so that is super exciting. But also at the more micro-enterprise end and small and family business end of the vast and diverse community that is our small business community we have sort of an entry-level trial program, the digital adaptation program, which is lovely. It is a huge program in digital skills.

Probably most of the ministers could do this across their own portfolios at a moment's notice, but Mr Davis as a former health minister would well understand some of the improvements to reduce the burden of disease that our medical research community work on as well.

Those are just some highlights, but it is certainly something that the government is incredibly conscious of—our need to continually improve and work on it. The productivity challenges associated with a pandemic and a really significant burden of illness through the community through this winter are not insignificant, and we need to continue to work to make it easier for people to do business, to reduce the costs of doing business, to make sure that people have as full a participation in the economy and in the labour market as they can and also that they can get around as efficiently and effectively as possible, because those input costs can be very, very significant for people no matter what industry or line of work they are in. I hope that helps.

Mr DAVIS: Productivity is incredibly important, and I will ask a couple of simple questions. The first is: does the government have a target for productivity improvement, and if so, what is it?

Ms PULFORD: For the private sector?

Mr DAVIS: For the whole economy.

Ms PULFORD: The government does not limit its ambitions here with a target. I would add to that that there are things within the government's control and things within the commonwealth government's control, and we work closely with local government around the things that they can do to support improvements to productivity across the economy and the actions of individuals and individual enterprises as they reduce their input costs and increase their outputs.

Mr DAVIS: And how will productivity improvements, if they occur—noting that the last eight years have not been a great time for productivity in Victoria, with it basically static—be measured?

Ms PULFORD: The Australian Bureau of Statistics, I understand, will continue to measure that in the way that they do and have done.

Mr DAVIS: I only have a very small number of further questions. I want to take the minister to the bill, schedule 1 on page 5. As I understand it, this is what has been appropriated by the actual budget process, and you will see the amounts per portfolio area. I have a couple of questions. Why has the

budget for courts been cut from \$667 070 000 in 2021–22 to \$641 479 000—a cut, I make it, of \$25 591 000? Why has that been cut?

Ms PULFORD: The advice I have here is that the provision of outputs has increased by \$45.2 million, primarily relating to the new 2022–23 budget decisions, including continuing therapeutic court programs, helping courts respond to the impacts of the pandemic, operationalising the Bendigo law courts and improving access to justice for children and their families—they are individual initiatives, the four of them; prebudget policy decisions, including placing accommodation for Court Services Victoria and the Dandenong specialist Children’s Court; and some administrative adjustments, including rephasing. Additions to the net asset base decreased by \$70.7 million, primarily driven by a reduction in the courts capital program due to projects nearing completion. This is partially offset by new budget decisions, including new federal jurisdiction matters in the Magistrates Court, decisions including the Dandenong specialist Children’s Court and administrative adjustments such as rephases. You may wish to follow that up.

Mr DAVIS: I might ask a similar question about the Department of Treasury and Finance. And I should add, Minister, that the charts are slightly expanded if you go further forward. For example, for Treasury and Finance, you might want to look at page 15. It falls from \$20 752 234 000 to \$18 410 009 000, a \$2 342 225 000 reduction.

Ms PULFORD: The change in appropriation here, I am advised, is due to the following. Provision of outputs has decreased by \$23.4 million, primarily related to the funding profile of programs funded in previous budgets. This decrease is partially offset by new 2022–23 budget decisions, including the supporting Victorian manufacturing initiative, the Business Acceleration Fund initiative, and the supporting better customer protections in essential services initiative. Additions to the net asset base have increased by \$25.3 million, primarily driven by the rephasing of funding associated with the acquisition of the Bendigo GovHub and new budget decisions such as supporting better customer protections in essential services. Payments made on behalf of the state have decreased by \$349.4 million in 2022–23, primarily reflecting the expenditure profile of the Victorian Transport Fund and the forecast budget sector debt portfolio increased expense.

One of the significant changes you will note on that table, Mr Davis, is the ‘Advance to Treasurer’, which has decreased by \$2 billion, primarily reflecting a decrease in decisions made where funding has not been allocated to departments. You would appreciate that the year that is coming to an end at the moment has been really unusual, and so spending profiles across some departments, across some programs, are concluding as they were emergency responses or as they were stimulus responses, which is why we have across the budget fluctuations that you would not have seen, say, comparing 2017 to 2018 or 2018 to 2019 in the same way. We have had some very, very significant increases; we have also got a number of things that are at the end of their time because they were only ever conceived to be shorter term interventions.

Mr DAVIS: Essentially the allocation here is \$14 billion for Treasury advances. In that table on page 15, at item 4, the 2022–23 estimate is a \$14 billion Treasurer’s advance pool. Is that funding that is in any way as yet allocated, or is it entirely unallocated?

Ms PULFORD: The government regularly holds funding in contingency. This is substantially for significant capital projects, so projects that have already been announced, like North East Link and Melbourne Airport, among others. Funding is released progressively in line with government approvals processes—so milestone payments on progress. Funding is also held in contingency to provide for estimated future demand for significant items, like school enrolment and hospital demand, and that is released in budget updates with the passage of time, where those things are able to be accounted for. The budget process provides for quarterly reports on actuals as well as a midyear forecast, and of course because this year is an election year there is also a pre-election budget update as well.

Mr DAVIS: Is a breakdown of that \$14-odd billion available? I understand you will not have that here now, but it would be helpful to have a breakdown of that figure to see which part of it is contingency for significant capital projects, which is approved projects and which is contingency for significant events and so forth—demand.

Ms PULFORD: These are reported on as they are settled through that quarterly reporting process in the midyear and pre-budget update process. So because the year has not begun, it is too early to account for things that have not happened yet, and the accounting of the \$16 billion for 2021–22 will happen in the normal way.

Mr DAVIS: It is clearly not too early to break down the \$14 billion at least into categories. The government has actually come up with this figure to put in the budget and sought an appropriation of that amount, so the government must have some basis for that. I would seek a breakdown. I understand you could not possibly do that now, but that would be helpful.

Ms PULFORD: Well, let me see what additional information I am able to provide to you on that.

Mr DAVIS: Just heading back to the front of the schedule on page 5, this is obviously an estimates summary. There is a budget figure for 2021–22, and there is an estimate for what will be spent and what is sought to be appropriated for 2022–23. But I would argue there is a third figure that I would seek for each of those categories, and that is the revised budget figure.

Ms PULFORD: The actual.

Mr DAVIS: Yes, the actual—as far as is possible. Obviously the end of the financial year is not here yet, but budget figures will have been produced to produce a revised budget figure, which would sit in the middle of these two here. So in some areas there will be variance from the budget in the normal way. It would be helpful to understand what the revised budget figure is for each of those categories. Again, I know you cannot possibly have that now. Maybe take it on notice.

Ms PULFORD: Let me see what I can find for you. I thank Mr Davis for his further question. It is in September that the actuals are all finished and reported on. If I am able to provide you with some further information, I am happy to do so. We have obviously just been through our public accounts and estimates process where the parliamentary committee has had ministers and senior departmental people speaking to such matters on item-by-item bases. We have still got a few weeks to run in this financial year, and then those final numbers are accounted for in the usual way. But if there is anything in particular that you are looking for, I am happy—

Mr DAVIS: That list of revised figures, which I think would be available.

Ms PULFORD: Yes.

Ms CROZIER: Minister, thank you. Could I take you to page 54, which talks about a number of output initiatives. I am particularly interested in the immunisation of Victorians against COVID-19. I am referencing particularly five to 11-year-olds on page 61. I know that the government had a number of programs and projects to assist with that cause. You will have to take this on notice, and I am sorry I did not provide it previously to get the answers. Basically what I am asking is for the following vaccination hubs: the Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Sea Life aquarium, Melbourne Museum, Immigration Museum, Scienceworks, State Library Victoria and Legoland. Could you please provide each hub's cost and how many vaccinations took place in each of those hubs? It might be a question you need to take on notice.

Ms PULFORD: It is a question I will definitely have to take on notice because I do not think I even knew we had a hub at Legoland. I am feeling like that is something of a missed opportunity as a massive Lego nerd, but how lovely. Let us take that on notice.

Ms CROZIER: I appreciate that. Thank you very much, Minister. If I could just also go to a number of other issues in the output initiatives around equitable cancer care and prevention. There is

funding in the budget provided to BreastScreen Victoria. Unfortunately I did not get to the biggest morning tea, the Cancer Council morning tea, this morning.

Ms PULFORD: Oh, it was this week, wasn't it?

Ms CROZIER: Yes, it was this morning.

Ms PULFORD: I did not get to it either.

Ms CROZIER: No, you might have been in here too. I did not get to that, but I understand that there were a number of screenings that had been missed. I am just wondering what the government's anticipated number is or what they have according to the Cancer Council. I know that Todd Harper has been out recently saying there were 500 bowel cancer screenings missed. I am just wondering what the total number the government thinks that will be is and how that will impact on those admitted services.

Ms PULFORD: Okay. That is obviously a level of inquiry that goes well beyond the knowledge of the lovely people assisting me today, who know lots of things about the budget but not every breast screening place across the system. I too missed the breakfast, but it is a—

Ms CROZIER: Morning tea.

Ms PULFORD: Sorry, the morning tea. I missed the morning tea today as well, but hopefully we have not had a single person more than necessary miss their appointments. I know from my personal interactions with my local breast screen folks in Ballarat that they are working hard to catch up with some people who have let their appointments fall behind. There has been plenty of public messaging to make sure that people have known that those things have been open and available throughout and that they are very good and important things that people need to continue to do. Let me take that on notice and see if we can get you that sort of information.

Ms CROZIER: Thank you, Minister, for that undertaking. Minister, I know there has been significant discussion around the future of our health workforce. There are shortages across the system. We understand that COVID has put enormous pressure on so many of those frontline healthcare workers and all those that work in our health services. Again I say that they have been faced with some extraordinary challenges over the last two years and have done an extraordinary job on behalf of us all. I do understand that there are many issues with senior clinicians who have been speaking out. Regarding the standing with our health workforce and the funding that is provided particularly around supporting newly graduated enrolled nurses et cetera—there is clinical placement activity and consolidation of transitioning from registered nurses into various programs—what I am keen to understand out of this is where the numbers are, because I cannot get any visibility about just how many have left and how many this will actually put into the system to assist with the workforce shortage that we have got now. I am wondering if the advisers have any further information on that.

Ms PULFORD: I suspect that the advisers with me today probably do not have that level of information. Staffing numbers are typically included in the annual reports of our health services, and they will be published as the year comes to a conclusion and the reporting period September-October comes around. But if we are able to provide you with some further information on that, I will seek for us to do so.

Ms CROZIER: I appreciate that, Minister, because I do think it is important that we understand the extent of that funding and if there are any further gaps. That is why I asked that question.

Ms PULFORD: I just take the opportunity to also express my profound support and admiration for people who are turning up and working in this environment each and every day. We all take our hats off to these people, and they are an inspiration. But it has been unbelievably challenging, and for some people it has prompted them to think about what else they might do. But just given that you have raised this very particular topic, the Premier announced earlier today a bonus to support staff retention

and to support our health workforce, particularly over these challenging winter months, and we are certainly hoping that that will be an effective initiative and also some recognition of the additional burden and the additional costs that people are incurring by working in such a challenging environment.

Ms CROZIER: Thank you, Minister. I just want to move to the schedule that Mr Davis was also referring to on page 10 on the Department of Health. In the budget papers, page 220, the revised budget for 2021–22 was \$27 billion, down to the 2022–23 budget of \$25 billion. There is a decrease there, so I am just wondering in relation to the schedule, page 10, what is the revised figure for this schedule?

Ms PULFORD: Sorry. Page 10, schedule 1, Department of Health, the revised figure, as in—

Ms CROZIER: Is there a revised figure?

Ms PULFORD: I already answered that for Mr Davis a moment ago. He asked across all departments a question that captures your question, and I said that at the end of the financial year, as all things are brought to account, the quarterly update in September will provide this information. But I did undertake to provide further updates if we are in a position to do so.

Ms CROZIER: Apologies. I missed that. Thank you. Could I just go—I have not got too many more questions—to again the output initiatives for the Department of Health, ‘Investing in a thriving North Richmond’, and there is funding to provide improved access to health and social support services. I am wondering if the government could provide an update about what is happening with the Yooralla building. I know that it was purchased for \$44 million. There was some speculation that that was going to be used for a second injecting room. I know the government has not released the Lay report as yet, and we have not got any visibility about what that is. But is there anywhere in the budget funding that is going to be utilised in that building, or is it just going to be sitting there, lying dormant?

Ms PULFORD: I will take that one on notice if that is all right.

Ms CROZIER: I have just got one more, thank you. It was a question I provided. I do not think I made myself very clear in the question. I am just wondering if I could rephrase that. I think we spoke about this in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in terms of taxis being used for transport. I have not read through the transcript in its entirety, so please forgive me if it has been answered previously, but is there a total cost for taxi transfers for patients?

Ms PULFORD: I will take that on notice as well. If you have finished all your questions, then I do not think we have any others, in which case there is just one other thing I want to say before the Deputy President wraps us up and moves us on to the next item of business for the day. I understand that there were some crossbenchers who provided questions ahead of this committee stage, as the opposition did, and that we have not been able to provide complete responses to all of those questions. I just wanted to place on the record, as we did for Mr Davis and the opposition, that I am happy to commit on behalf of the government that we will endeavour to provide further or remaining responses, for people who submitted them ahead of this committee stage, by the next sitting week.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis indicated to the committee earlier that he wanted to incorporate some documents into *Hansard* and that *Hansard* had agreed. Mr Davis sought leave of the President, and the President has agreed. Mr Davis now needs to seek leave of the house.

Mr DAVIS: I seek leave of the house to incorporate them, noting they will not be colourful.

Leave granted and material incorporated at pages 2135–8.

No question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clauses 2 to 9—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Schedules 1 and 2—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Reported to house without amendment.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (16:54): I move:

That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (16:54): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Pursuant to standing order 14.27, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council have agreed to the bill without amendment.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms SYMES:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) (16:55): The Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022 is a bill which the Clerk might give me a copy of so I have got it in front of me. Thank you. I want to make just a few brief comments about this. This is a bill that is a standard bill that comes through every year. It appropriates resources for the Parliament and for independent officers and others. It is a very important bill. It does provide the independence from the general appropriation bill that is important, and I just put on record the opposition's view that we did not want the bills debated concurrently for that reason—because they are actually separate bills, and I think the significance of separating them is important and the symbolism of separating them is important too.

I do want to indicate that the opposition does, as has been communicated in this chamber several times now, want to see improved funding for the Ombudsman and improved funding for the IBAC. If you turn to the schedule at the back of the bill, you will quickly see that aside from the Assembly and the Council, the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Auditor-General, there is funding for the IBAC listed in schedule 1 on page 12. It shows a very modest increase from \$53 294 000 to \$54 896 000, and as the community will understand, that is not the large increase that the government has been rumbling around talking about. The increase in funding that is needed for the IBAC is significant. It does need to be in the order of \$10 million. We have committed to that as a policy, and I should just lay out very clearly and directly the policy and the reasons for the policy of the opposition on this matter.

IBAC should not be crimped in its work to prevent corruption. It should not be nobbled by government, and that is what has been going on. I note the entreaties on the Ombudsman's website and the reports and the IBAC's commentary about the lack of funding over recent years. It is true that the government has tried to keep the tap tied very tight, keep the tap closed as far as possible, noting that without proper funding the IBAC would not be in a position to do the work that it needs to do. So we will seek to amend that schedule and put an additional \$10 million onto the IBAC budget. In the

case of the Victorian Ombudsman, we will seek to put \$2 million onto the budget. Those amendments can be circulated if that is the will of the Clerks just at the moment. That would be appropriate.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr DAVIS pursuant to standing orders.

Mr DAVIS: The chamber has canvassed at length some of these matters before. We believe it is important that the IBAC has sufficient funding. We believe it is important that the Ombudsman does too. We note that reviews of the office have occurred in both cases and Treasurer's advances have been promised in certain cases, and funding that is contingent upon the completion of base reviews in the IBAC's case is not the correct way forward in our view. In our view there needs to be a proper, more independent process. We do not think the Integrity and Oversight Committee has had the capacity to do that legislatively, and we have indicated that there should be reform. We have said that there is a New Zealand model which should be looked at closely in this context, although I am quite clear that the model cannot be exactly replicated because it is a unicameral chamber there, but it does point to a greater independence in long-term funding for the IBAC. We have also indicated publicly that in the case of the IBAC we would repeal or reverse the changes that were made in recent years that limited the IBAC's ability to do the public hearings that it does from time to time need to do.

Additionally, I should make mention to the chamber—and people will probably be aware of this—that yesterday we introduced a bill which provides greater clarity for the Supreme Court about the Parliament's views, if it is carried, and also provides a balance, protecting the rights of those on whom IBAC may make negative reflection but at the same time laying out a format which prevents the misuse of legal process to prevent or stymie or block in effect the tabling of reports in a timely way. The IBAC's work is not only about the integrity of government and government departments but is also an important lead for the whole Victorian economy. We need the minimum of corrupt behaviour, and we need to give IBAC the resources to educate but also to prosecute where it needs—or to recommend certain steps in that direction—and to report to Parliament without being stymied.

The changes that are recommended in our amendments to this bill we think are important. We know that some in the chamber do not agree. Now, that is their right, but nonetheless we are clearly and strongly prosecuting the case for additional funding for IBAC and additional funding for the Ombudsman. It is not satisfactory to have those agencies unable to do the work they need to do or to limited in any way that is unreasonable in doing that work, so those amendments we think are very important. We think it is wrong that the Premier has not been up-front in a number of these matters. He has obviously been to IBAC at least twice and probably three times—a frequent flyer, you may say—and obviously there are issues with the Supreme Court. You can tell in the response of the IBAC Commissioner the concerns that are there with respect to the ability to table reports. It would be an absolute democratic bombshell if any of those major IBAC reports that are due to be tabled in the Parliament were stymied or blocked by legal proceedings that prevented the community seeing what was there. No, they should step back. The government should be pushing very hard for transparency on these matters. It should not be in cahoots with any groups or individuals to whom there may be negative reference made in very concerning IBAC reports.

With those comments we will seek the amendments, and those amendments we believe would put IBAC and the Ombudsman in a better position to do the work they need to do. We obviously understand that there needs to be a longer term and more secure funding arrangement, and we have presaged that. There needs to be the reversal of the changes that were made recently that diluted the ability of the IBAC to do public hearings, and further, beyond that, we need to make sure that there is timely tabling of reports. It is wrong that there is that restriction and that the restriction appears to be unbalanced.

Ms PULFORD (Western Victoria—Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Resources) (17:04): I am very pleased to make some short comments this afternoon on the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022, and I am very pleased also to see this bill including some record funding for

those important integrity and oversight bodies that play such an important role in providing the Victorian community with every assurance about the manner in which decisions are made in their best interests and in their best interests alone. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our parliamentary staff. I know that electorate officers, for their sins, often have the Parliament running in the office in the background during the day, so I might start with a shout-out to the electorate office staff across the 88 lower house members' electorates.

A member interjected.

Ms PULFORD: It is 5 past 5; I reckon there are still plenty of them there. So hello to all of you from all of us here in the Legislative Council this afternoon and of course to our fabulous Legislative Council electorate office staff supporting the 40 of us here across five very, very large electorates. We recognise what you do, we recognise that the demands upon you have been quite extraordinary in recent times and we thank you for your service to the communities that you serve. The parliamentary appropriation bill appropriately separates from general government spending these things, and it is a hallmark of our system of government in this country that the role of the executive and the role of the Parliament are very clearly delineated.

In terms of the funding for our integrity agencies this year, I might also just add that we are providing \$32.1 million to provide that funding certainty that of course is important for any organisation but also to increase the base operational capacity of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission to ensure that it operates effectively and efficiently into the future. This funding responds to the base review that was announced last year. The funding is the full amount that IBAC sought, and it is held in contingency subject to the formal conclusion of that review. The 2021–22 funding outcome is elevated due to an allocation from the IBAC trust fund, which has not been part of their base funding. We are also providing \$1.6 million over the forward estimates to establish an annual minor capital works budget to fund the Victorian Ombudsman's tangible assets renewal to replace ageing IT equipment—laptops and servers and software solutions and things like that—which will improve system functionality and efficiency. It is supporting those integrity agencies so that they can do their very, very important job for all of us.

But if I could, I will just return to the staff that support us in the Parliament. I know we have got a bit of preselection season going on, with the parties selecting candidates where candidates have not yet been selected for the forthcoming state election. You might wonder how this is relevant to the bill, but bear with me a sec. I do not know if anybody else did this, but when I was first preselected I remember having a look at *Hansard* and thinking, 'Oh, my goodness, they're so articulate—all of them. This is going to be terrifying.' And then only afterwards did I realise *Hansard* tidy up our ums and our ahs and make us all sound delightfully articulate and coherent, even when sometimes we are not 100 per cent those things. So we love your work, *Hansard*, thank you. Of course it is incredibly important to provide an accurate record of the proceedings of the place for all time. For those preselection candidates that might be looking at *Hansard*, do not worry: they will tidy you up a little bit too and make sure all your facts and figures are recorded dutifully but edit out some of your ums and ahs. Our clerks of course, our council committees office and our attendants look after us so well even when we sometimes stay here all night and all day into the next day, always with a smile and always so supportive.

The community engagement and education unit is really important. We have just had a federal election. I have an 18-year-old who voted for the first time, and all his mates voted for the first time. I am sure all members of Parliament from time to time wander into a school classroom and get interrogated about what we do, why we do it and how we do it. The community engagement work of the Parliament is a really, really important part of protecting and preserving our democratic institutions and making sure that young Victorians can understand how the decisions that affect their lives and their families' lives and their community are made, and also importantly how they can participate in them. We have, of course, the procedure office over on the other side and the tours and customer service unit. Every time I overhear a tour, I think, 'Golly, I must tag along on one of these', because

the people who conduct tours of this building know where all the bodies are buried and know all of the great secrets and stories of this exquisite but impossible-to-maintain building, and they add a really important dimension to the place.

There are our people in the Department of Parliamentary Services, whether they be our IT folks, keeping our emails safe from the hackers and the spammers; the building folks, who seem to have a work program that will endure for all time and have a really, really challenging job but also do it in a way that provides minimal disruption for the functioning of the Parliament during sitting weeks, committee hearings and the like, with work all around us; the information services folks; the HR people, who support us from time to time to make sure that we are looking after our teams and managing issues with people coming and going; of course catering—the scones are world famous, the sausage rolls are world famous and we thank you for your service; security; or financial management—really important. Having been here for nearly 16 years—and I know there are members in this place who have been here a good while longer than me and some newer ones that are here in this chamber for this debate this afternoon—I know we have continual improvement to these systems and modernisation of these systems, and that is all to make sure that we have really high standards of integrity and reporting around this sign-off of the expenditure out of our office budgets as well as of course the other financial management across the department.

Of course security has been a little more challenging lately. We have been through a really trying time. There have been people who have been, each for their own reasons, very upset by some of the things that have come to bear on the Victorian community through the course of the pandemic and pandemic management, and so there has been an additional call on the security folks to support us, particularly at some points through debate. I know members who have had to have dealings with our security team here have always appreciated their attentiveness, their care and their professionalism.

To the leaders of the department—the secretary, the deputy secretary and the chief information officer—it is a pretty thankless task, running the Department of Parliamentary Services, so I thought I would jump up and say a few words on this occasion where we provide the funding for your continued work and say that we recognise what you do and the way in which you do it and that it is appreciated by members in this place, even if occasionally we grumble from time to time. We are very grateful for the support we have to be able to represent the Victorian community, our own electorates and our parties and various issues, agendas and ambitions to the best of our ability, and we could not do it without you. So that all of that can continue, I would like to commend this bill to the house.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (17:13): I rise today to speak on the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. It provides funding in the next financial year out of the Consolidated Fund for the Parliament and all its various activities. One of the benefits of us passing this bill today is it gives each of us the privilege to serve our communities, and I think we should not disregard how important that is in terms of our opportunity to provide that level of community service to our local communities. I am to indeed privileged and honoured to serve as a member for my constituents in Northern Metropolitan Region.

I do have some concerns with this bill in that it probably does not provide enough funding to the Victorian Ombudsman and to IBAC. I know the minister who spoke before me touched on that, and it is something we will probably explore a little later in the day today. But I think making sure there is appropriate funding for these organisations, the Victorian Ombudsman and IBAC, is pretty important to some of the things that we could be doing.

In saying that, I do want to take the opportunity to say thank you to a number of people and groups who serve us so well in this place. It must be very difficult to deal with, particularly in the upper house or across the Parliament, 128 different individuals who have 128 different ideas and 128 levels of importance. So I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people.

The IT team, Chris Prasad and the team, when Luddites like me yell out, ‘Help, I’m not sure what’s happening with my laptop’, are there to fix it for us. Thank goodness for them, Chris and the whole IT team. To Hansard, who clean up some of my very awkward speeches so they make some sense and look good; to the catering team, who do us so well, in serving both people who come to visit us and also us; to the security team, who, as Minister Pulford indicated, have had an extraordinary 12 months in terms of the challenges—and for me personally they have done an extraordinary job helping with some personal matters as well; and to the property team, who keep this building, other buildings and our electorate offices in good nick, we give our thanks.

The fleet vehicles team—Helen Donaldson, you are a gem. How you deal with the various whims and desires of members of Parliament and their particular vehicles, colours and designs—I take my hat off to you. To Helen and the vehicles team, we say thank you. To the Legislative Council attendants, to Greg and that team, for the great job they do in supporting us in our activity so often, we give thanks, as we do to the clerks. To Andrew, the team and all the support people as part of that wider team, we give thanks. The table office and staff, who deal with our morning rushes—‘We need this urgently’—just seem to deliver right on time. Thanks to our HR people and to our accounts and budgets teams as well.

Often we ask our library staff for information and they look at us curiously like, ‘I’m not even quite sure what they’re asking for’, but they find a way of delivering that information to us. Our grounds team provide gardens that are so lovely for us and our visitors to be able to enjoy at the people’s house here. And particularly I might just note that, while they are not directly affected by this particular bill, the PSOs do an awesome job here in looking after us—an awesome job 24/7.

In saying that, none of us could function as we do without the support of our own electorate office staff. They take the bulk of the calls, they take the bulk of the inquiries that come through and they make sure that we are fit, ready and organised for our parliamentary sessions and our time with our constituents. So personally—heartfelt—I could not do what I do in this job without my wonderful team. I am truly blessed by them all. To Nadine, to Phil, to Nick, to Jacky, to Goldy and to Fiona, bless every one of you individually for the way you support me and allow me to carry out the job on behalf of each of us for our constituents. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (17:17): I will be brief.

Mr Ondarchie: As brief as me?

Mr QUILTY: Probably briefer. This bill sets out the new budget for the Parliament and related spending. Most MPs pay close attention to it because it is where our salaries come from, but there is another reason why it is important. The Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022 is where the money for most government oversight comes from. It includes the funding for IBAC and the Ombudsman. Both agencies are set to receive increases of about 3 per cent, which after inflation is likely to be a real cut in both cases. The IBAC chief tells us that they only have the resources to investigate 2 per cent of matters that are referred to them. Meanwhile the Ombudsman tells us that Victorians have launched a record number of formal human rights complaints.

The government tell us that they are under more scrutiny than ever, but what they mean is they are under more pressure to be transparent. They are still trying to sweep the entire pandemic under a rug. They hide behind cabinet in confidence, they refuse to explain or identify the reasoning behind the public health directions and they continue to maintain token transparency measures solely to give an impression of legitimacy. This government is going to spend \$85 billion of taxpayers money, and it expects you to believe that it cannot afford \$0.1 billion to check that it is all above board. IBAC and the Ombudsman together account for only 0.09 per cent of the budget—less than one-tenth of 1 per cent. We cannot afford the spending in this budget, and we definitely cannot afford to leave that spending unchecked. Every dollar spent at the discretion of a minister or a bureaucrat is an incentive for corruption. Every ounce of power held by those ministers and bureaucrats is another incentive

again. State spending is skyrocketing, and use of government power is reaching new heights in Victoria, but the only things not getting more funding and power are the agencies that investigate the government. The best way to reduce corruption is to reduce government spending, reduce government power and create more and stronger checks against government authority. This budget does not do that. The Liberal Democrats believe strongly in government transparency and accountability. We very rarely call for increased government spending, but we will always do so when it comes to funding the integrity agencies.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (17:20): I am pleased to make some remarks this afternoon on the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. I would like to start, as other members have, by thanking the staff of the Parliament, the Department of the Legislative Council and the Department of Parliamentary Services and the broader parliamentary staff for all the work that they do in supporting the work of members of Parliament, and I would also in particular like to thank my own electorate office staff, Sophie and Laura, for their ongoing support and hard work in helping me represent the 550 000 constituents of the South Eastern Metropolitan Region.

This bill we are dealing with this afternoon has at its core funding for the Parliament and funding for the independent integrity agencies. It funds the departments of Parliament, it funds the Parliamentary Budget Office and it funds the Victorian Inspectorate, the Auditor-General, IBAC and the Ombudsman. The bill is carved out from the general appropriation in recognition of the need for those institutions to be seen to be independent of government. Of course the bill is still a government bill. It still goes through a government budget process. But there is the need to create a perception of financial independence.

Mr Davis in his contribution spoke about the concerns the coalition has with the level of funding that has been provided to some of the integrity agencies and the intention to move a suggested amendment seeking to increase the funding for those integrity agencies. As we have heard, those agencies play a very important role in public administration in this state, and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission in particular as a new agency, an agency that was established just eight years ago, has a very important role to play in the fabric of public institutions in this state. It is an unusual institution, IBAC. It is an institution which has very broad coercive powers and is not bound by the ordinary rules of evidence, and the reason for that is to provide it with the capacity to undertake inquiries, to go through an inquisitorial process and to understand what is happening in the public sector and what is happening with public sector corruption.

But it is important to keep in mind it is not a judicial process. It is not the judge and jury. If issues are identified through IBAC processes, if corruption is identified through IBAC processes, it is then a matter for the courts to determine whether there is guilt and whether there are offences or not. So while it has that evidence-gathering process, it does not have the role of determining guilt. In saying that, that highlights why it is important when establishing bodies such as IBAC that the legislation is made soberly and is made judiciously to ensure the powers are there to undertake an inquisitorial process, an evidence-gathering process, but also to ensure there are appropriate checks and balances.

We have seen in New South Wales what happens when you get it wrong. We have seen case after case in the New South Wales jurisdiction. We had the debacle of the Margaret Cunneen situation. We have had so many other debacles in New South Wales where adverse findings were made against people, accusations were made against people, only for them to be found to be untrue. That is something, in setting up IBAC in Victoria, the previous coalition government was very conscious of—the need to avoid that, the need to have a proper structure for IBAC which avoided those miscarriages we have seen in New South Wales—while ensuring there was a framework that would allow proper investigation of corruption activities in this state. We do not want to go down the path that New South Wales has been down. Its ICAC has harmed its own credibility, but it has also done a lot of damage to people that have been falsely accused of things in that jurisdiction. So in considering the framework of IBAC in Victoria and in considering any changes to that framework we need to be as sober and judicial in consideration as the Parliament was with the original establishment of IBAC back in 2013.

Another matter I would like to touch on this afternoon is in relation to the Parliament itself, the way in which the Parliament is working and whether the Parliament is effectively doing its job for the people of Victoria, because this bill is essentially about funding the institution of Parliament and those other integrity bodies. Earlier this morning I referred to the Evidence Based Policy Research Project, which is a piece of work undertaken out of New South Wales to look at the way in which legislation around Australia is put together, the way in which the policy process is followed for legislation to be produced across jurisdictions. The model that was used in order to undertake this assessment was to engage separately two think tanks—a right-wing think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs, and a left-wing think tank, Per Capita Australia—to between them agree on a selection of legislation across Australia to assess. Each year they look at 20 pieces of legislation. Each of those think tanks look at the way in which legislation was developed, the process that was followed by government in developing legislation and the process that was followed by Parliament in considering that legislation to determine whether there was a proper, evidence-based approach to policy development and legislating. Each of those think tanks assesses the 20 bills across the Australian jurisdiction and gives them a rating out of 10. Then the way in which the final report is put together is that the ratings of each of the two think tanks are effectively averaged.

What is interesting in looking at the samples of legislation which have been considered in the most recent report is that both the left-wing think tank and the right-wing think tank generally reached the same conclusion as to the effectiveness of the policy development process that was pursued in each of the individual pieces of legislation. Unfortunately the findings of the most recent report, referring to legislation in 2021, were that Victoria was at the bottom of the rankings. Of the four pieces of legislation which were considered from Victoria, which were the legislation on drug courts, the legislation on the conversion practices ban, the legislation on public drunkenness and the legislation for the constitutional fracking ban, the policy process leading to that legislation for two of those was regarded as mediocre and for the other two it was regarded as inadequate. That is the bottom ranking of all the jurisdictions that were considered in this report. The commonwealth was considered. I think the bulk of legislation, 10 of the bills, considered were out of the commonwealth and a sample out of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Across the commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, Victoria had the lowest rating on the policy development process that led to those pieces of legislation. It is simply not good enough that legislation being developed in Victoria ranks so poorly in terms of the process that has been followed.

As a consequence of this report, and similar models undertaken over the last four or five years, the New South Wales Parliament has actually moved to take remedial steps. Last month the Legislative Council in New South Wales moved amendments to their standing orders, seeking to introduce a new mechanism for the assessment of bills when they come into the house, requiring the member introducing a bill to identify whether it has been subject to or is accompanied by a statement of public interest.

The intent of a statement of public interest—similar to the statement against the human rights charter that we have in Victoria—is to outline to the house, when a bill is introduced, the process it has gone through in its development. The framework for a statement of public interest is that it should identify the need of the bill; what policy need the introducer of the bill is seeking to address by way of legislation; what the objectives are of the legislation, couched in terms of public interest; what options were considered against the legislation; what alternatives to that legislation or alternatives to legislation altogether were considered prior to the bill being brought to Parliament; what analysis had been undertaken of the particular legislative framework that is being introduced; what the process was for putting the legislation in place and then enacting the legislation and whatever mechanism was introduced by the legislation, and what process had led up to that legislative phase; and what consultation had been undertaken—what stakeholders were consulted and what the views were of those stakeholders on the piece of legislation.

The intent of this step in the New South Wales Parliament is to add robustness to the legislative process. When you look at the way in which we consider legislation in this place, so often those are the types of questions that are raised in a committee of the whole consideration, but they are rarely questions which are adequately answered, and they are rarely questions which, by virtue of the dynamic environment of the committee of the whole, can be given adequate considered answers in the way in which a written statement, tabled with a bill at the time the bill was introduced, could.

This is a measure the New South Wales Legislative Council has recently given consideration to. It is a way of ensuring that Parliament is more robust in its consideration of legislation, by requiring the introducer of a bill to be more robust in the consideration they give to legislation before bringing it to the house, and I think it is something that should be given consideration in this Legislative Council. This is a house of review—this should be a house of review. This house operates very differently to the other place where, by virtue of being the house of government, government bills are essentially rubberstamped through, irrespective of who is in government. This is the house where scrutiny should take place. The house attempts to do that on some occasions, but we do it without a lot of the detail which should be provided with legislation and without the detail that a statement of public interest would provide to the house up-front when legislation is introduced.

The coalition obviously is not opposing this bill, which is to provide funds for the parliamentary departments, but I do note that we should always be looking at ways in which we can improve the operation of Parliament and we can always be looking at ways of how we can improve our scrutiny of legislation to ensure that it is appropriate. The New South Wales Parliament Legislative Council is now leading with its introduction of statements of public interest, and I think there is a good opportunity there for the Victorian Legislative Council to catch up and introduce some new initiatives to ensure we do a better job in scrutinising legislation for the people of Victoria.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (17:34): I also add my voice in thanking all of the staff here at Parliament and back in our electorate offices for the work that they do day in and day out. I would encourage anyone that is listening that has not actually visited Parliament to do so, because it is a particularly interesting place—for all sorts of reasons, but most importantly for the people that work here. You do not have a clue really, until you come here, or understand all the different types of work that are undertaken by a whole range of different business units, including Hansard—who, everyone has indicated, makes us read really well, and that is absolutely true. But it is also catering, it is the library, it is the Clerks, it is our attendants, it is the gardeners, it is security—you name it.

Everything that you could possibly think of actually operates here in our community called the Victorian Parliament, and it is not until you do one of those all-night stints when there is a break and you see the queue for coffee that you get some idea about all of the people that work outside of this chamber that enable us to actually get about the business of what Parliament is all about—and that is what we are about to do again in a moment in relation to dealing with the bill that is before us. So again, can I thank everyone that is here in this house now and at other times but also our electorate officers, who absolutely do a mountain of work in our electorates talking to constituents, resolving issues and promoting issues that need to be dealt with and have solutions found for. I thank you for all of your work regardless of which political colour you might work for.

In terms of the bill before us this evening, as people have indicated, it is the legal authority for the appropriation of monies from the Consolidated Fund to Parliament in respect to this financial year, including ongoing liabilities incurred by Parliament such as employee entitlements that may be realised in the future. So it is pretty important to a whole range of workers that are connected to the operation of this Parliament. It covers the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Auditor-General, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the three integrity bodies—IBAC, the Victorian Inspectorate and the Ombudsman.

The total appropriation for bodies funded under this bill has increased by \$4.6 million, from \$264.1 million to \$268.7 million. Consistent with previous years, Parliament received an exemption from the general efficiency dividend, which applies to other government departments. That includes increases in the total funding for all of the integrity agencies: \$8.4 million for the Victorian Inspectorate, up from \$7.7 million in 2021–22; \$18.8 million for the Auditor-General, up from \$18.3 million; and \$20.2 million for the Ombudsman, up from \$19.6 million. There will also be a separate increase of \$0.7 million in response to the Ombudsman’s request to manage urgent activities in the coming financial year. Since 2015–16 the Ombudsman’s funding has grown by 61 per cent. There is \$54.9 million for IBAC, up from \$53.3 million last year. This is before the additional funding to acquit their base review outcomes, which will add a further \$7 million this year to this total once the review process is finalised. The additional funding totalling \$32.090 million over four years and \$8.609 million ongoing was announced in the 2022–23 budget for IBAC to meet new and increasing demands, deliver on its expanded oversight role, address gaps in capability and capacity and find sufficient efficiencies in its operating model and structure to optimise its performance as the leading integrity agency. This funding allocation equals the amount sought by IBAC in its bid during the budget process. IBAC has received the largest funding increase of any integrity agency since this government came to office. By 2025–26 their funding will have almost doubled—that is, 96 per cent-plus since 2015–16.

This year’s appropriation bill also includes funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office to manage costs associated with the upcoming general election. In 2021–22 \$0.9 million was announced, representing a 28 per cent increase in the PBO’s funding for the 2022 state election, higher than funding provided to the PBO for the last state election in 2018. This funding has been rephased to cover the 2022 calendar year at the PBO’s request.

The funding for the Council and the Assembly has increased by 3.3 per cent each, in line with the increase in the number of enrolled voters, as per the determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

Funding is also provided to upgrade Parliament’s legacy and end-of-life broadcasting equipment for both houses of Parliament. Updated technologies will also be implemented to enable members and their staff to remotely participate in proceedings in emergency situations. So in a nutshell the government will not be supporting the suggested amendments that have been put forward by Mr David Davis, and I look forward to further discussion in the committee stage.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Committed.

Committee

Clause 1 (17:41)

Mr DAVIS: I am just going to make a number of comments on this purposes clause and explain our position, and then we can move to the clauses and just simply vote on the amendments that are proposed by the opposition. As I have outlined, we consider the independent agencies very important. Others in the chamber have laid out the importance of the Council and the Assembly and the committees and so forth. I do want to just note our strong support for the Parliamentary Budget Office and the policy that we have released on the budget office, ensuring that it is properly resourced into the future. We will not on this occasion be seeking to amend the support for the Parliamentary Budget Office, but I do want to just place on record our view of the importance of that office, which was our commitment in government—and it took the new government a long time to bring a PBO into existence.

But with respect to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, in schedule 1 on page 12 we would seek to add another \$10 million to the estimated support for 2022–23. I listened closely to the minister's points—there is this large review process, this base review and other steps. We think the money should be there and legislated, not hanging on a thread, not in a position where the IBAC Commissioner can be cajoled or pushed or leant on, or perceived to be, because the funding has not actually been provided. What you read in budget paper 3 is not what is actually being allocated; what is being allocated is in the schedule, and it is plain to see on page 12. It is \$54 896 000. So others in this chamber who have made commentary suggesting adequate budget increases are referring to the processes that are occurring, the funding that may come through, the funding that is dependent on the Treasurer's sign-off, a Treasurer who himself may be subject to IBAC investigation—let us be clear, a Treasurer who himself may be subject to IBAC investigation. That is why we do not think that is a satisfactory process, and if the money is to be allocated—and the intimation is \$7 million per year; we are saying it should be \$10 million per year—why not allocate it right now by amending the figure in the schedule? Why not do it now? Put it beyond doubt, put it beyond question, put it beyond the pulling of strings by ministers, treasurers or others in the government. Why not make it clear?

The same applies to the Ombudsman. We say \$2 million. The Ombudsman has been provided with some Treasurer's advances. Again I point out the processes that are involved here. A Treasurer's advance is where agencies request funding. There is obviously need for that on certain occasions. If there is a flood and the money is needed, then people apply for resources to go out and do what is required and provide the support. We all understand that, but in this case it is an integrity agency that is investigating the government. It is looking at politicisation of the public service—a reference from this house—and at the same time we are asked to take it on trust that what is in budget paper 3 will flow through to the Ombudsman. We say again: put the money in this schedule and then it is there and it is beyond doubt. It is not dependent on the good graces or the honesty or integrity of government officials or a Treasurer; it is legislated. We say legislate it. Put it in the schedule, put it beyond doubt, put it beyond the capacity of a government in the coming months before the election to influence any agency, to hold back money because they want them on the go-slow.

We already know that the IBAC is facing pressures from court processes which prevent it tabling reports. Let us be super clear about this: we need a better process long term. That cannot be fixed today, but what can be fixed today is to put \$2 million into the Ombudsman's column and \$10 million into the IBAC column and then they have got the resources and they do not have to grovel or grease or slime up to the government to get the money that enables them to do the work that the community wants them to do. That is what we think should occur.

I make the point that a number of people in this chamber, and I include a couple of independents here, have not understood that what is going on here is the government is seeking to keep these agencies on a thread, keep them on a string, keep them just so, so that they cannot go too harshly against the government in the lead-up to the election. That is what is going on here, and I say legislate the money.

Ms TIERNEY: I think most people's comments are probably directed more around IBAC and the Ombudsman's office, and that certainly has been the case in terms of the contribution that we have just heard. I did deal with some of this in my summing up, but I think it is important that in terms of the Ombudsman's office the provision of output funding for that office has increased by \$0.6 million due to the funding profile initiative, sustainable base funding for the Victorian Ombudsman. This decision included providing the VO with 2.5 per cent indexation on its funding from 2022–23 onwards, at a total of \$3.0 million over three years and \$2.0 million ongoing.

There were no new initiatives for the VO as part of the budget because no budget bid was lodged by the entity. However, as I said in my summing up, there is a Treasurer's advance of \$700 000, and it will be approved for urgent and unforeseen activities that the Victorian Ombudsman may face over the coming financial year. The VO's funding will be boosted to a level equivalent to—I will check this figure—\$75.50 per Victorian public servant in 2022–23. This is higher than New South Wales, which provided its equivalent agency with \$71.90 per public servant equivalent. The VO continues to

be exempt from the general efficiency dividend that I mentioned before. The VO does not receive any appropriation for additions to the net asset base, and as I said in my summing up, there has been a 61 per cent increase in VO funding since 2015–16. Also this matter of course was raised at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee when the Treasurer was before PAEC, and the Treasurer laid out exactly what the situation was, including the commitment to the \$700 000.

With respect to IBAC, again, similarly, this was raised at PAEC and in other areas as well. The Treasurer again was very forthright about the money that will be provided to IBAC. The money that has been set is not an arbitrary figure. The \$32.1 million held in contingency, with \$8.6 million ongoing, fully implements the base review findings—that is, provides 100 per cent of what was asked for. There is not a problem with this funding amount, and we believe that the amendment that is being proposed undermines the thorough processes that IBAC itself has undertaken in order to properly ascertain the level of funding that would be required to meet its demand needs. IBAC, as I said in my summing up, has received the largest funding increase of any integrity agency since this government came to office. IBAC will receive around \$217 per Victorian public servant in 2022–23 compared to \$78 per New South Wales public servant for their ICAC.

No question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clause 2—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Clause 3 postponed.

Clauses 4 to 7—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Schedule 1 (17:53)

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis is to move his suggested amendment 2, which tests his suggested amendments 5 and 6 completely and partially tests his amendment 4.

Mr DAVIS: I move:

2. **Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly—**
Schedule 1, line 17, omit “54 896” and insert “64 896”.

Dr RATNAM: Can I just seek clarification that this is the substantive suggested amendment around IBAC funding? Just to clarify, I would like to speak to that amendment should that be the case.

Mr DAVIS: Yes.

Dr RATNAM: Thank you. I would just like to make some brief comments in support of Mr Davis’s suggested amendments. The importance of integrity across government and in our Parliament cannot be overstated. As we saw in the recent federal election campaign, it is an issue the community takes very seriously. IBAC and the Ombudsman are key integrity agencies that keep a check on governments and government agencies. We appreciate the government’s briefing on having given both IBAC and the Ombudsman the funding they have requested, but we also know that IBAC only investigates 2 per cent of police misconduct allegations. With more funding for IBAC we could see and investigate more police misconduct, because police should not be investigating police. Furthermore, the Ombudsman and her office could do so much more to help people in the community navigate the complexities of government systems with more funding. With more funding the Ombudsman could help more public housing tenants get a better deal from the state, for example. Therefore we will be supporting these suggested amendments.

Ms TIERNEY: The government has already put its position in relation to this and other suggested amendments proposed by Mr Davis.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The question is that Mr Davis’s suggested amendment 2 be agreed to. This tests his amendments 5 and 6 in full and partially tests his amendment 4.

Committee divided on suggested amendment:*Ayes, 11*

Atkinson, Mr
Bach, Dr
Burnett-Wake, Ms
Cumming, Dr

Davis, Mr
Finn, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Ondarchie, Mr

Quilty, Mr
Ratnam, Dr
Rich-Phillips, Mr

Noes, 18

Barton, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Erdogan, Mr
Gepp, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Kieu, Dr

Leane, Mr
Maxwell, Ms
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms

Shing, Ms
Stitt, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Watt, Ms

Suggested amendment negated.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Mr Davis, I invite you to move your suggested amendment 3, which tests your suggested amendments 7 to 8 and the remainder of your suggested amendment 4.

Mr DAVIS: I move:

3. **Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly—**
Schedule 1, line 18, omit “20 177” and insert “22 177”.

Ms TIERNEY: The government has already put its position in relation to this.

Committee divided on suggested amendment:*Ayes, 11*

Atkinson, Mr
Bach, Dr
Burnett-Wake, Ms
Cumming, Dr

Davis, Mr
Finn, Mr
Lovell, Ms
Ondarchie, Mr

Quilty, Mr
Ratnam, Dr
Rich-Phillips, Mr

Noes, 18

Barton, Mr
Elasmar, Mr
Erdogan, Mr
Gepp, Mr
Grimley, Mr
Kieu, Dr

Leane, Mr
Maxwell, Ms
Meddick, Mr
Melhem, Mr
Patten, Ms
Pulford, Ms

Shing, Ms
Stitt, Ms
Taylor, Ms
Terpstra, Ms
Tierney, Ms
Watt, Ms

Suggested amendment negated.

No question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Postponed clause 3—no question put pursuant to standing order 14.15(2).

Reported to house without amendment.

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (18:05): I move:

That the report be now adopted.

Motion agreed to.

Report adopted.

Third reading

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria—Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education) (18:06): I move:

That the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

The PRESIDENT: Pursuant to standing order 14.27, the bill will be returned to the Assembly with a message informing them that the Council have agreed to the same without amendment.

CASINO AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022*Introduction and first reading*

The PRESIDENT (18:09): I have a message from the Assembly:

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council ‘A Bill for an Act to amend the **Casino Control Act 1991**, the **Gambling Regulation Act 2003**, the **Liquor Control Reform Act 1998**, the **Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011** and other Acts in relation to casino regulation, to provide further for the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, to establish the Victorian Liquor Commission and for other purposes’.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:10): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Mr LEANE: I move, by leave:

That the second reading be taken forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:10): I lay on the table a statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the ‘Charter’), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

In my opinion, the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill amends the *Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011* (VGCCC Act), *Casino Control Act 1991* (CCA), *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (GRA) and the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (LCRA) to fully establish the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) and the Victorian Liquor Commission (VLC). It also implements recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence (Royal Commission) and the Government’s Independent Policy Review of Casino Regulation.

Human Rights Issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are the right to:

- protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 10);

- privacy and reputation (section 13);
- a fair hearing (section 24); and
- certain protections in criminal proceedings (section 25).

Section 10—Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

Section 10 of the Charter states that a person must not be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. Amendments that provide new powers or increase existing powers for police or inspectors may engage this right.

Casino and gambling inspectors

New section 107 of the CCA at clause 8 of the Bill extends the existing powers of casino and gambling inspectors to require them to report to the regulator any observations they make of money laundering, loan sharking or the sale or supply of illicit drugs at the Melbourne casino. Under new section 107(2), the VGCCC must, in turn, refer these observations to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. While the amendments may engage the rights protected by section 10, they fall outside the meaning of ‘cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’. This increase in inspectors’ powers is a reasonable and necessary response to the Royal Commission’s finding that money laundering and other criminal financial activity were regularly occurring at Crown Melbourne. The inspectors will be required to report observations of reportable conduct to the regulator, not to directly intervene where reportable conduct occurs. It is worth noting that these powers are further safeguarded by existing provisions in the VGCCC Act which require inspectors to be of good reputation, with regard to character, honesty and integrity and to undergo criminal records and probity checks before they can be appointed as an inspector.

Liquor inspectors

New section 172ZA of the LCRA in clause 22 of the Bill provides for the appointment of liquor inspectors and new section 172ZC empowers them to perform their functions, including bringing proceedings for offences against liquor legislation. While these provisions may engage section 10 of the Charter, they do not come under the definition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Inspector appointments will be limited under new section 172ZA to people who are competent and demonstrate good character, honesty and integrity. Further, new section 172ZB provides for persons being considered for appointment as an inspector to undergo a criminal records check before appointment. Accordingly, these amendments do not limit the right to protection under section 10.

Section 13—Privacy and reputation

Section 13 of the Charter provides that every person has a right to freedom from unlawful or arbitrary interference with their privacy. This freedom may be subject to reasonable limitations under section 7 of the Charter, provided the limitations are clearly defined in law.

Casino and gambling inspectors

New section 108 of the CCA in clause 9 of the Bill engages the right to privacy by giving inspectors the power to access and use surveillance equipment in a casino. This would, on the face of it, interfere with the privacy of casino patrons and personnel. However, this interference is neither unlawful nor arbitrary.

New section 108(2) limits these powers to where an inspector is carrying out functions under casino or gaming legislation and where there is a reasonable suspicion of reportable conduct (which includes loan sharking, money laundering and supplying illicit drugs).

Further, safeguards are provided at new section 108(2)(c) which requires the inspector to obtain the written consent of the regulator before accessing surveillance equipment. These amendments have been introduced to address widespread criminal activity at the casino which were in part due to a failure of the casino to appropriately use its surveillance capabilities. The amendments constitute a reasonable limit on the right to privacy.

Establishing the Victorian Liquor Commission

The new liquor regulator provisions include disclosure requirements that engage the right to privacy.

New section 172P of the LCRA in clause 22 of the Bill compels a commissioner and the Chairperson of the Commission to disclose any interest in a matter being considered by the Commission. Subsections (3) and (4) require the Commission to make guidelines specifying the types of interests that must be disclosed.

New section 172ZB requires a potential liquor inspector to have their photograph, fingerprints and palm prints taken and provided to both the regulator and the police. New subsections (4) and (5) safeguards inspectors’ personal information, by mandating that the Commission keeps it no longer than necessary, and destroys their photographs, fingerprints and palm prints within six months.

While these amendments may engage the Charter right to privacy, they are neither unlawful nor arbitrary. Rather, they are included to prevent conflicts of interest arising in Commission decisions and protect the integrity of the liquor inspector appointments process.

Section 24—Fair hearing

Section 24 of the Charter provides the right to a fair and public hearing. Under this right, parties to a civil proceeding are entitled to be heard by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal. This right may be subject to reasonable limits under section 7 of the Charter where the limits are demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

New Part 9A of the LCRA in clause 22 of the Bill establishes a new liquor regulator, the Victorian Liquor Commission. An amendment which creates a new court or tribunal is likely to engage the right to a fair hearing. The Commission will have powers to make licensing decisions, conduct inquiries and investigations, take disciplinary action against licensees and permit holders and conduct an internal review process where licensing decisions are appealed.

New section 172E of Part 9A provides the new Commission with the powers necessary to perform its functions. Other sections promote the right to a fair hearing by providing that:

- the Commission is bound by the rules of natural justice (section 172W) and that specified inquiries be heard in public (section 172Z); and
- Commissioners must have certain skills and experience, including legal qualifications and experience in the health sector (section 172G).

New section 172V of Part 9A will provide the Minister with a power to issue directions to the Commission. However, this power will be limited to directions relating to the Commission's objectives and functions, and will exclude decisions and other operational matters under the LCRA. In this way, the Commission's independence is preserved.

Section 25—Rights in criminal proceedings

The Charter provides:

- a right to be presumed innocent until found guilty (subsection 25(1)); and
- that a person charged with a criminal offence is entitled to certain guarantees outlined in the Charter right (subsection 25(2)).

New section 108 of the CCA at clause 9 of the Bill introduces two new offences for refusing an inspector access to security and surveillance equipment, books and records and failing to assist an inspector gain access to the security and surveillance equipment.

These offences will include the officer in charge of a casino and any officer, employee or agent. They support the new powers giving inspectors increased access to the casino. Clause 9 does not breach the Charter as the offences do not reverse the onus of proof or place the evidential burden on the accused. Even if this offence was to engage the Charter right, it would be justifiable on the basis that it is a necessary and proportionate response to the casino operator's systemic failure to cooperate with the regulator. The offences will ensure that inspectors are able to effectively address the risks of harm in the casino.

For the reasons set out above, I consider that the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is consistent with the Charter of Human Rights.

Hon Shaun Leane MP
Minister for Local Government
Minister for Suburban Development
Minister for Veterans

Second reading

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:10): I move:

That the second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Motion agreed to.

Mr LEANE: I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 (the Bill) marks the next stage in the Victorian Government's response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence (the Royal Commission) and the overhaul of gambling regulation. The Royal Commission revealed widespread misconduct on the part of the casino operator, including persistent efforts to obstruct the regulator.

When the Government tabled its response to the Royal Commission last October it committed strengthen oversight of the casino to prevent the kind of misconduct that had been documented in the Royal Commission. It immediately introduced the first tranche of reforms with the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021. These laws went beyond the Royal Commission's recommendations by providing for automatic cancellation of the licence should Crown fail to become suitable as well as increasing the maximum fine for disciplinary action under the Casino Control Act 1991 (CCA) to \$100 million. This legislation also established the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) and gave it the powers required to hold the casino operator to account.

The new VGCCC was established to be a stand-alone gambling regulator, with a dedicated casino regulation division focused on holding Melbourne's casino operator to account. The VGCCC, alongside the special manager and the acquittal of the royal commission recommendations, will result in the most thorough set of regulation and oversight of the casino in the state's history.

Since it commenced in January this year the VGCCC, led by inaugural Chair and CEO, Fran Thorn and Annette Kimmitt respectively, has initiated disciplinary action against the Casino for conduct uncovered by the Royal Commission. The VGCCC is also protecting Victorians from serious financial crimes, having signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with federal anti-money laundering body AUSTRAC to improve coordination across agencies.

I now turn to the provisions of the Bill before the House, which will ensure the VGCCC has the powers and governance model it needs to continue this critical work.

The VGCCC was established by this government on 1 January 2022 in the first tranche of legislation following the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. This Bill will complete the VGCCC's transition, providing it with further functions and powers required to effectively regulate the casino. It will also separate liquor regulation from the casino and gambling regulator, enabling the VGCCC to focus on the casino and the gambling industry more broadly.

The Bill will ensure that minimising gambling-related harm is part of the core business of the VGCCC. The legislated functions and objectives of the VGCCC will be amended to clarify its role in minimising harm from gambling and enhance its ability to regulate gambling providers. The Royal Commission highlighted the significant harms caused by gambling. The Bill will insert these objectives into the VGCCC Act with a particular emphasis on harm minimisation. It will also expand the regulator's existing education function to include educating the public about its regulatory practices and requirements, as well as delivering activities which minimise gambling harm. By embedding harm minimisation in the core functions and objectives of the VGCCC, this Bill will ensure that it shapes every decision being made by the regulator and protect Victorians from gambling-related harm.

In response to the Royal Commission, the Bill will also confer new powers on casino inspectors and expand their role to include reporting certain activities that they observe within the Melbourne casino. The Royal Commission identified consistent failures on the part of the casino operator to use its surveillance equipment to detect money laundering and other crime. To address this, the VGCCC inspectors will be given further access to the casino, including unfettered access to all security and surveillance equipment, as well as books and records, wherever they are located. Penalties will be introduced for interfering with an inspector's performance of their functions. Where inspectors observe money laundering, loan sharking, or the sale or supply of illicit drugs, they will be required to report this to the VGCCC which, in turn, will be required to refer the reports to the relevant law enforcement authority or authorities. These measures will ensure that inspectors have the powers they need to do their job and support the VGCCC in safeguarding the casino to be free from criminal influence.

Further to this, the Bill will specify the key skills required by VGCCC Commissioners while retaining flexibility in making appointments. It will provide that the Commissioners must have, as far as practicable, a mix of regulatory experience, financial acumen and legal qualifications. At the same time, the Minister will be able to assess an applicant for Commissioner in light of the skills and experience needed by the VGCCC's board. The Bill also provides for limits on which functions Commissioners may delegate to staff to ensure decisions are being made at the appropriate level.

The Bill will allow the Minister to provide high level directions to the VGCCC to ensure the regulator's overarching priorities are consistent with the Government's. This new direction power will allow the Minister

to issue written directions on matters of general application, relating to the VGCCC's objectives or functions. To preserve the independence of the regulator, the ministerial powers expressly exclude making directions on any specific regulatory functions of the VGCCC. In the interests of public transparency, ministerial directions, including a statement of reasons, will be published in the Victorian Government Gazette.

New provisions around disciplinary proceedings will give the regulator additional tools to regulate the casino. The VGCCC will be able to accept a written undertaking from a casino operator, following a breach or potential breach of casino or gambling legislation. If the casino operator breaches that undertaking, a court may direct them to comply. The breach of an undertaking will also become a ground for disciplinary action under the CCA.

Further to this, the grounds for disciplinary action will be expanded to include a single breach of the Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct (Code of Conduct) by the casino operator, where previously the law required multiple breaches. These measures will bolster the ability of the VGCCC to take a strong position on breaches of the Code of Conduct and signal the Victorian Government's clear intent to address harm at the casino.

The Bill separates the regulation of liquor from the VGCCC's functions and establishes a new liquor regulator. The Victorian Liquor Commission (VLC) will consist of independent commissioners performing the same functions in relation to liquor as they do currently, supported by Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) staff. As with the VGCCC, Commissioners will have a mix of relevant skills and experience including health sector, regulatory and legal experience. The Minister will also be given the ability to direct the Victorian Liquor Commission on its functions and objectives. Transferring the regulation of liquor to DJCS will allow the VGCCC to maintain focus on upholding the highest standards in the regulation of the casino and broader gambling industry.

Finally, the Bill introduces all of the savings and transitional provisions necessary to set up the new liquor regulatory arrangements. This will ensure continuity for, and minimise any disruption to, the liquor industry during the transition.

This Bill is the next step in the reform of casino regulation in Victoria.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (18:11): I move:

That the debate be adjourned for one week.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned for one week.

CHILD EMPLOYMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

The PRESIDENT (18:11): I have a message from the Assembly:

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council 'A Bill for an Act to amend the **Child Employment Act 2003** and the **Education and Training Reform Act 2006** to make further provision in relation to the employment of children and to make consequential amendments to other Acts and for other purposes'.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:11): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Mr LEANE: I move, by leave:

That the second reading be taken forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:12): I lay on the table a statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the **Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Child Employment Amendment Bill 2022 (the **Bill**).

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

Overview of the Bill

The Bill amends the *Child Employment Act 2003* (the **Principal Act**) to, amongst other things:

- amend the meaning of employment for the purposes of the Principal Act;
- replace child employment officers with authorised officers and to provide for the appointment and powers of authorised officers;
- enable the Wage Inspectorate Victoria to issue compliance notices for contraventions;
- increase the penalties for certain offences and to provide for the criminal liability of nominated officers and employer representatives in certain circumstances; and
- provide for a new system of licences to allow the employment of children under the age of 15 years.

Human rights issues*Amendments to provisions regulating child employment*

The Bill makes a number of amendments to provisions in the Principal Act that regulate the employment of children under 15 years of age in Victoria, including:

- amending the definition of what is employment for the purpose of the Principal Act to provide more clarity and include not-for-profit entities (clauses 6 and 46);
- raising the age for child employment in pharmaceutical delivery from 11 years old to 13 years old (clause 11);
- providing for prohibited conduct in entertainment employment, involving employer duties to ensure that a child employed in entertainment is not subjected to certain behaviour or strong adult content (clause 14) and supervision requirements for children participating in casting or audition processes (clause 18);
- altering the exception applying to child employment in a family business to only apply where children are directly employed by their parents or another person who has parental responsibility for the child (clause 5) and to impose a duty of direct supervision on that person with parental responsibility (clause 23);
- increasing the minimum age of a person who is supervising a child to 18 years old to ensure that children aged 15 to 18 years old are not attributed the responsibility of implementing Child Safe Standards (clause 17); and
- replacing the current individual permit system with a licensing system to streamline and simplify the process for obtaining permission to employ a child under 15 years (Part 3 of the Bill).

These amendments will engage the rights to protection of children (s 17(2)), equality (s 9), privacy (s 13) and protection of family (s 17(1)) which I will discuss in turn.

Rights of children (s 17(2))

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being a child. This right recognises the special vulnerability of children, and requires states to adopt social, cultural and economic measures to protect children to foster their development and education. The scope of the right is informed by the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration. The Convention recognises that children face greater risks to their health, safety and welfare at work, due to their physical, mental and emotional immaturity, and their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The scope of the right thus includes a right to protection from economic exploitation or any work likely to be hazardous or interfere with a child's education, or be harmful to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. The right obliges legislative protection,

including providing for minimum employment ages and appropriate regulation to the hours and conditions of employment.

The suite of amendments to the provisions regulating child employment will promote this right by ensuring that the Principal Act remains effective and best practice at protecting the risks to children posed by child employment in light of a changing social and work environment. The amendments take account of developments such as broadened child safe standards, increased focus on risk-based frameworks to target regulatory activities and changing expectations for education participation.

In relation to the removal of the current permit scheme and replacement with a licence scheme, I am satisfied that these suite of amendments will continue to provide strong protection of children from exploitation in the workplace, whilst supporting opportunities for children to benefit from employment. Licence applicants will be required to satisfy a 'fit and proper person' test, particularly in relation to past compliance with child employment and other relevant workplace laws (clauses 56 and 57). Compliance with the new Child Safe Standards under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* will be a requirement under the new child employment licence.

The Bill will apply existing monitoring and enforcement powers in the Principal Act to the licensing scheme, and, as will be discussed below, will broaden such powers to ensure effective investigations into contraventions or possible contraventions of the Principal Act and the regulations. The Bill provides for licences to be suspended or cancelled where the health, safety, wellbeing or development or education of a child is suffering or is likely to suffer from the employment, the child is being or is likely to be subjected to any form of exploitation in the course of the employment, or the employment is prohibited employment (clause 61). Additionally, the Bill introduces a suite of contravention offences for employer representatives and nominees, who knowingly permit or authorise a range of prohibited conduct involving child employment to occur, or fail to take reasonable steps to prevent such conduct occurring (clause 68).

Accordingly, I am satisfied that these suite of amendments will promote the children's right to protection in the Charter.

Rights to privacy and equality (s 8 and 13)

Section 8 of the Charter relevantly provides that every person is entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination. 'Discrimination' under the Charter is defined by reference to the definition in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (EO Act)* on the basis of an attribute in section 6 of that Act, which includes age. Direct discrimination occurs where a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that attribute.

Additionally, section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Privacy is a broad right that protects, amongst other things, an individual's interest in the freedom of their personal and social sphere, including their freedom to pursue their chosen employment and develop social relations in the course of employment. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

The suite of amendments to the provisions regulating child employment will engage a child's right to equality and privacy, in that these amendments may place additional restrictions on a child's capacity to engage in their chosen employment, or prevent employment entirely in certain circumstances, and does so on the basis of a protected attribute (being their age). However, in my view, any limits on the right to equality are reasonable justified and any interferences with privacy are proportionate to the aim and not arbitrary. The important objective of these provisions is to protect children from undertaking work posing risks to their health, safety or wellbeing, or prejudicing their attendance at school. The amendments are informed by the findings of a significant review on child employment in Victoria and extensive consultation with key industry stakeholders, peak bodies, community organisations and relevant government agencies. The amendments target a number of key issues and risks identified by research and consultation, including a lack of clarity around the meaning of employment, an absence of protections for children aged between 15 and 17 years (particularly in the entertainment industry), concerns and confusion around the exclusion of family business from existing permit requirements and concerns about school exemptions for children working in entertainment and the potential impact on their education. Accordingly, I am satisfied that these provisions are compatible with the Charter.

Protection of family (s 17(1))

Section 17(1) of the Charter provides that families are the fundamental group unit of society and are entitled to be protected by society and the State. The right in s 17(1) is related to s 13(a) of the Charter, which relevantly provides that every person has the right not to be subject to unlawful or arbitrary interferences with their family.

It remains open as to whether the scope of this right would extend to protecting against interferences with a family business, and specifically a family's capacity to employ their children, however, should these amendments be considered to limit this right, I consider any limits to be reasonably justified on the basis of protecting the best interests of the child, for the reasons advanced above. I note that case law has considered that the best interests of the child in s 17(2) are the paramount consideration when interpreting this right, and that the family's interests are ultimately subordinate to those of the child.

Notification and information sharing requirements

The Bill makes a number of amendments to notification and information sharing requirements, including:

- ongoing notification requirements of licence holders relating to an employed child's name, date of birth, home address, parental details, workplace, employment duties and hours of employment, amongst other things (clause 61);
- broadening the confidentiality provision to permit authorised officers to share information with the Secretary, the Department and the Minister (clause 37).

These provisions are relevant to the right to privacy, in relation to any personal information of a person captured by these provisions. In relation to the first amendment, the notification obligations are necessary to ensure the Wage Inspectorate Victoria is able to properly assess and monitor the risks of a particular employment. Any information provided under this provision will be subject to the existing confidentiality provision in the Principal Act prohibiting any unauthorised disclosure. In relation to the second amendment, as the Secretary and the Department advise the Minister in relation to the administration of the Wage Inspectorate Victoria, and Minister is in turn responsible to Parliament, such information sharing is necessary to facilitate the effective operation and funding of that entity and facilitate Ministerial responsibility.

Accordingly, I am satisfied that any interference with privacy resulting from these amendments will be proportionate and not arbitrary.

Broadening existing compulsive powers

The Bill transfers the existing enforcement functions and powers provided for in the Principal Act to authorised officers appointed by the Wage Inspectorate Victoria. The Bill also broadens these existing powers, which previously could be exercised in relation to investigating an application for a permit or monitoring compliance with the child employment law, in the following ways:

- providing for an additional purpose for which such powers can be exercised, which is to the extent reasonably necessary to investigate contraventions or possible contraventions of the Principal Act and regulations (clause 30);
- expanding the purpose in which a power of entry over a place of business can be exercised to also include investigating contraventions or possible contraventions of the Principal Act and the regulations (clause 31);
- broadening the powers on entry to include photographing, audio-recording or filming any part of a workplace (clause 32);
- broadening the scope of the power to compel production of documents to include for the purpose of investigating contraventions or possible contraventions of the Principal Act or regulations (clause 32); and
- broadening the power to give directions to apply where reasonably necessary to do so to respond to an immediate or serious risk to health, safety, wellbeing or development of any child employed at the premises (clause 33).

The broadened powers engage the right to privacy (s 13), and in the case of the compulsion of documents, the right not to be compelled to testify guilty (s 25(2)(k)), in that they may be potentially exercised over a greater cohort of persons.

The primary purpose of these amendments is to ensure that authorised officers have adequate powers to conduct investigations into contraventions or possible contraventions of the Principal Act, which advance the underlying objective of child safety in employment. These targeted amendments address identified limitations of existing powers, which, if not remedied, risk compromising these underlying objectives of the Principal Act to protect children.

The expansion of the statutory purposes for which the compulsive powers can be exercised, from mere 'monitoring of compliance' to include investigating possible contraventions, is necessary to ensure authorised officers are able to respond to identified risks in certain sectors of employment. This includes permitting compulsive powers to be exercised against third party providers who may be engaged in the employment of a child, but are not considered to be the employer for the purposes of the Principal Act. This is particularly

prevalent in the entertainment industry, such as through the engagement of talent agents. These providers act as an intermediary between the child and employer, and may have relevant evidence to the investigation of a contravention of the child employment laws, such as correspondence with parents or employers about conditions of employment relevant to a contravention. The amendments allow evidence to be sought from this third party, which may arguably not otherwise come within the scope of the existing purpose of monitoring compliance with the Act (as third party providers have no obligations or need to comply under the Act).

The inclusion of powers to take photographs, audio-recording or filming of a workplace are necessary to support these investigative powers, and ensure that evidence of a contravention can be collected to support compliance and prosecutorial processes. The amended power to issue directions is necessary to ensure the power to give protective directions can be exercised in relation to identified serious risks that may not be immediate, and is consistent with comparative powers of work safety inspectors under occupational health and safety laws.

These expanded powers remain subject to the existing safeguards in the Principal Act, including requiring all powers to be exercised with as little inconvenience as possible, limiting powers of entry to places of employment during ordinary working hours with the requirement to not remain on premises any longer than is reasonably necessary, requiring occupier consent to enter any residence and the protection against self-incrimination in relation to compelled provision of information (with the exception of provision of documents required to be kept under the Principal Act).

Accordingly, I am satisfied that these amendments are compatible with the Charter.

Compliance notices

Clause 38 introduces a scheme of compliance notices, which the Wage Inspectorate Victoria may issue to a person where the Inspectorate reasonably believe the person has contravened the Act. The Notice must state the action that the person must take to remedy the alleged contravention and the date by which such action is required to be taken. It is an offence to fail to comply with a compliance notice, by failing to take the action specified in the notice by the specified date.

As the prosecution of a failure to comply with a compliance notice does not require proof of the commission of the underlying contravention to which the notice was issued, this may engage the right to the presumption of innocence in the Charter (ss 25(1)). Section 25(1) provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. Additionally, a proceeding for a non-compliance offence may also require a person to respond to matters relevant to the alleged contravention, engaging s 25(2)(k) of the Charter which provides that a person cannot be compelled to testify against themselves or confess guilt. The scope of both these rights have been interpreted as extending to protect a person to circumstances prior to the issuing of a criminal charge.

However, in my view, the provision attracts adequate safeguards so as to not constitute a limit on these rights. As a preliminary point, the compliance notice scheme serves an important objective of providing authorised officers with a timely and targeted mechanism for compelling a person to take necessary remedial action in response to an identified or alleged (on the basis of reasonable belief) contravention of the Act. It facilitates the immediate and direct prevention or remediation of conduct which may be putting a child risk and may be continuing, in a way that proceeding with a prosecution for an alleged contravention is not able to do.

Secondly, to protect the above mentioned criminal process rights, new section 46D provides that during the period specified in the compliance notice (including any extensions), no proceeding may be commenced for an offence against the Principal Act that is constituted by the alleged contravention to which the compliance notice relates, and no other enforcement action may be taken in relation to that alleged contravention. If a person fulfils all of the requirements of the compliance notice, no proceeding may be commenced for the alleged contravention to which the compliance notice was issued, and no other enforcement action may be taken in respect of the alleged contravention. The clause further provides, amongst other things, that the fulfilment of the requirements of a compliance notice by a person is not to be taken as an admission of guilt in relation to the offence or an alleged contravention of a provision of the Principal Act. Finally, a person retains the right to seek judicial review of the issuing of a compliance notice, particularly in circumstances where it is disputed that any alleged contravention has been committed.

Accordingly, I am satisfied the compliance notice scheme provided for in the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:12): I move:

That the second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Motion agreed to.

Mr LEANE: I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:**Background**

The Bill amends the *Child Employment Act 2003* (the Act) to improve the efficiency and operation of the child employment regulatory scheme, whilst maintaining levels of protection for children in the workplace. It introduces a streamlined child employment licensing system which is risk-based and targeted, to replace the current individual permit system. It also provides additional clarity and certainty for persons who engage children under 15 years as well as providing the Wage Inspectorate with a new suite of compliance tools in line with its role as a modern regulator.

The Act regulates the employment of children under 15 years of age in Victoria. The last few years in particular have seen significant changes to the employment landscape as well as to regulation around child protection which may impact on children in the workforce. In light of this a comprehensive review of the Act was undertaken to ensure it was responsive to contemporary workplace issues and provided an effective, modern regulatory regime.

The Act is designed to:

- set out the age, types of work and conditions applicable to child employment;
- protect children from performing work that could:
 - be harmful to their health or safety;
 - impact on their moral or material welfare or development;
 - impact on their attendance at school;
- protect children from being subject to any form of exploitation.

The current regulatory scheme

The employment of children under 15 years is primarily regulated through a permit system. Children aged 11 years and over can undertake delivery work where their employer obtains a general industries permit. Similarly, children aged 13 years and over are able to be employed under a general industries permit.

There is no minimum age for children to work in the entertainment industry, which generally includes performing, modelling, photographic and television/film work. However, a specific entertainment industry permit is required. A mandatory code of practice further prescribes conditions around the employment of children in the entertainment industry.

Children of any age working in family businesses are exempt from the permit requirements.

Children are only permitted to undertake light work (as defined) and are excluded from employment in a number of hazardous industries and from performing dangerous tasks.

Review of the Act

A review of the Act commenced in 2019 by procuring a significant piece of research which focused on gathering data about the incidence of child employment in Victoria, the types of work children were doing and their experiences in the workplace. ABS data generally only collects information on persons over the age of 15 years in the workforce and there had not been any substantial research done in this area since 2006. Therefore, there were considerable knowledge gaps about child employment in Victoria and across Australia more broadly.

The research found that the retail (35%) and food services (21%) industries were employing the largest number of children under 15 years, with the entertainment industry third. It also found that there were a large number of employers who were unaware of the Act and also a widely (but wrongly) held belief that children are able to be employed from the age of 14 years and 9 months. Children generally reported positive

experiences of working and were largely motivated by wanting to earn their own money and gaining skills and experience in the workplace.

Upon completion of the research, Industrial Relations Victoria (IRV) undertook extensive consultation with key industry stakeholders, peak bodies, community organisations and relevant government agencies. The consultation included a number of targeted, in-depth focus groups as well as a survey and invitation for written submissions utilising the Engage Victoria website.

The research and consultation identified a number of key issues with the operation of the Act, including a lack of clarity around the meaning of employment and a high regulatory burden associated with the individual permit requirements as well as the regulatory regime's inability to respond to dynamic industry needs.

Proposed reforms

New licensing system

The Bill introduces a streamlined child employment licensing system which is risk-based and targeted to replace the current individual permit system.

One of the key issues identified by stakeholders and industry participants during consultation was the inefficiency of the current permit system. Employers currently require a permit for each individual child they engage. This means that some employers who engage children frequently, such as those in the entertainment industry, can have hundreds of permits at a time, creating a significant amount of administrative work. Moving to a targeted licensing system where an employer only requires one licence will streamline the process and make it easier for employers to comply.

The new licensing system will, however, maintain the distinction between an entertainment licence and a general industry licence, recognising the unique protections required for children working in the entertainment sector. The new licensing system introduces two key new roles for the entertainment licence—the nominated officer and the employer representative. These roles create an additional level of responsibility and accountability for the protection of children performing work under an entertainment licence. A licence applicant will also be required to satisfy a 'fit and proper person' test. This ensures that current levels of protections for children in the workplace are maintained moving to the new system. The general industry licence covers all children's work that is not entertainment work.

The other key issue identified during the review and the consultation process is that the current permit system is not targeted to risk. Currently the same information is required on a permit application irrespective of the work the child is performing and the risks involved. The new licensing system will be risk-based and the information required for a licence application and any conditions of a licence will be targeted to risk.

New definition of 'employment'

The Bill updates the definition of 'employment' to provide greater clarity and certainty to people engaging children about what activities performed by children are considered employment for the purposes of the Act. The definition recognises that children can be engaged in a variety of different ways and in activities that may not ordinarily meet the multi-factorial common law test to determine an employment relationship. It further recognises that sometimes children are not remunerated in the usual way and may be provided with products, merchandise or experience for the work or tasks they carry out rather than with monetary payment. The amended definition makes the application of the Act clearer and easier to understand.

In addition to providing clearer boundaries to what employing a child does and does not include, the definition is also amended to remove the reference to a business, trade or occupation being carried on 'for profit'. This extends protection for children in employment, as the profit status of an organisation is not determinative of potential risk to children in this setting. The Department sought a Legislative Impact Assessment (LIA) to determine the impact on the not-for-profit sector. The impact was found to be low to moderate with the additional protections for children clearly outweighing the burden.

The exclusions for certain activities remain. This includes participating in a church, religious service or program and performing in a project or entertainment for the benefit of a church or religious body. This is because there are other, more effective legislative mechanisms to address known risks, such as the criminal law, reportable conduct scheme, work health and safety laws and the Child Safe Standards. Ministers of religion are also required to obtain a Working with Children Check. Employment of children in relation to low-risk sporting activities (such as coaching, refereeing and umpiring) also remain excluded. The Child Employment Act aims to regulate risks to children associated with work and the tasks they are required to perform as part of that work, such as fatigue, risk of injury, disruption to education etc. These work-related risks are considered unlikely to arise in the context of the above excluded activities children might be employed to undertake.

Sporting activities with a high risk of injury, such as martial arts, gym instruction and horse riding, remain covered by the Child Employment Act as it is important that children participating in those activities are safe.

As is currently the case, children working in their family's business, including on their family's farm, may continue to do so without needing a permit/licence provided they are directly supervised. The Bill clarifies that 'direct supervision' means direct supervision by the child's parent, a person who has parental responsibility, or for limited periods, another responsible adult who works in the family business.

The Bill provides stronger protections for children by increasing the minimum age of a person supervising a child in the workplace to 18 years. This requirement will only apply to supervision of a child in the workplace who is under the age of 15 years. Children under 15 are particularly vulnerable in the workplace so requiring their supervision to be provided by an adult adds a further safeguard. The Bill explicitly excludes children under 15 years old participating in formal work experience from the requirement to be covered by a licence as this is regulated under education legislation.

Compliance and Enforcement

Amendments to the Act also increase the effectiveness of the Wage Inspectorate's compliance and enforcement regime by expanding its suite of regulatory tools and increasing the penalties for contraventions of the Act.

Part 4 of the current Act provides necessary functions and powers to Child Employment Officers to enable them to monitor and enforce compliance with the Act, including powers of entry and information gathering powers. It also creates offences under the Act, provides relevant protections for individuals and enables prosecution of detected breaches in appropriate circumstances. The powers of Child Employment Officers are limited and may currently only be exercised when investigating an application for a permit or determining compliance with the Act.

The Bill substitutes Child Employment Officers with Authorised Officers and provides them with expanded functions and powers aimed at delivering a stronger, more contemporary and responsive enforcement scheme. These include a power to issue compliance notices and infringement notices which will provide the Wage Inspectorate with more options to effectively monitor and enforce compliance with the Act. Currently the only option for the Wage Inspectorate where a breach is detected is prosecution, which is not always an appropriate or viable option, in addition to being costly and adversarial. The new enforcement tools also recognise the Wage Inspectorate's new regulatory responsibility for the Child Safe Standards.

The Bill increases the penalties for primary offences proportionate to the gravity of the conduct and aligned with other offences under comparable risk-based schemes.

The scheme also provides for a public register of child employment licences, allowing parents and other persons interacting with child employees to assess a given workplace's compliance.

Benefits of the reforms

There are clear social benefits to children engaging in some form of part-time or casual employment, including gaining important work experience, improved self-confidence and independence and being able to earn their own money. The proposed amendments to the Act balance these benefits with the additional protections needed for this vulnerable cohort in the workplace.

A key benefit of these amendments is creating a clearer, more streamlined system to support the ongoing protection of children from exploitation and harm in the workforce. The system is designed to be risk-based which means the requirements under a licence will be greater where the risks to children are higher. Work that is low risk will have fewer licensing obligations. Whilst there will be some initial burden transitioning to the new system, for both stakeholders and the regulator, this will be offset by the reduction in ongoing administrative requirements and regulatory burden in the future. To ensure that there is no reduction in the level of protection for children in the workplace, there are key oversight and accountability provisions within the scheme, including the roles for nominated officers and employer representatives as well as the fit and proper person test.

The amendments will facilitate greater compliance with the scheme by reducing red tape for business in the longer term and clarifying key definitions of which businesses are covered by the Act. This will be supported by a targeted education campaign about the changes by the Wage Inspectorate.

The amendments also increase the effectiveness and capacity of the Wage Inspectorate, who will now only be required to review and enforce a single licence for each employer rather than potentially thousands of individual permits. In 2018/19 there were over 11,000 permits issued so the move to the licensing system will reduce the administrative burden significantly. The expanded suite of compliance and enforcement tools provides the Wage Inspectorate with additional options to achieve compliance, aligned with contemporary developments in risk-based regulation.

The amendments improve the overall operation of the child employment regulatory scheme, maintain protections for children in the workplace and support businesses to understand and comply with their obligations when employing children.

Commencement date

The licensing provisions of the Bill and the new requirement for supervision during the casting and audition process, as well as the expanded coverage of not-for-profit entities, will commence on 1 July 2023 to allow time for stakeholders to transition to the new licensing scheme and for the Wage Inspectorate to implement the new system. The remainder of the Bill will commence on a day or days to be proclaimed or on the default commencement date of 1 July 2023 for provisions not proclaimed earlier.

I commend this Bill to the House.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (18:12): I move:

That the debate be adjourned for one week.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned for one week.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (NAZI SYMBOL PROHIBITION) BILL 2022*Introduction and first reading*

The PRESIDENT (18:12): I have a message from the Assembly:

The Legislative Assembly presents for the agreement of the Legislative Council ‘A Bill for an Act to amend the **Summary Offences Act 1966** to make the public display of Nazi symbols an offence and for other purposes’.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:12): I move:

That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

Mr LEANE: I move, by leave:

That the second reading be taken forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:13): I lay on the table a statement of compatibility with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022.

In my opinion, the Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022 (the Bill), as introduced to the Legislative Council, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill amends the *Summary Offences Act 1966* by creating a criminal offence which prohibits a person from intentionally displaying a Nazi symbol in a public place or in public view. The new offence will apply to the public display of specified Nazi symbols—initially, limited to the Hakenkreuz—in circumstances where the person knows, or ought to know, that the symbol is a symbol associated with Nazi ideology.

The Bill’s purpose is to reduce racism and vilification in the community by preventing Nazi symbols from being displayed publicly and by allowing them to be removed from public display. It will deliver on the

Government's commitment to implement a key recommendation of the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into Anti-vilification Protections in Victoria (Inquiry).

The Bill will:

- prohibit the intentional public display of a Nazi symbol (a Hakenkreuz), or a symbol that so nearly resembles a Nazi symbol that it is likely to be confused with or mistaken for that symbol;
- provide exceptions to the offence where the display is engaged in reasonably and in good faith:
 - for a genuine academic, artistic, religious, scientific, cultural or educational purpose;
 - in making or publishing a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest; and
 - in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies;
- provide exceptions to the offence where:
 - a Nazi symbol is displayed on a person's body by means of tattooing or other like process; and
 - the display occurs in the performance of a law enforcement officer or member of an intelligence agency's duties and is done in good faith; and
 - the display occurs in the course of official duties connected with the administration of the justice system, including the investigation or prosecution of offences, and is done in good faith;
- create powers for a police officer to direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol from public display, and to apply to a magistrate for a warrant to enter a premises to search and seize a Nazi symbol.

The Bill will also provide that the written consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions is required before a child can be prosecuted for the offence.

Human Rights Issues

The Bill promotes the following rights under the Charter:

- right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8);
- right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14); and
- right to culture (section 19).

The Bill limits the following rights under the Charter:

- right to privacy and reputation (section 13);
- right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14);
- right to freedom of expression (section 15);
- right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16);
- right to take part in public life (section 18);
- right to culture (section 19);
- right to property (section 20); and
- right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law (section 25).

Under the Charter, rights can be subject to limits that are reasonable and justifiable in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom. Rights may be limited in order to protect other rights.

As discussed below, these limitations are reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the Charter.

Right to recognition and equality before the law (section 8)

Section 8 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to enjoy their human rights without discrimination, and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination. Justice Bell in *Lifestyle Communities Ltd (No 3) (Anti-Discrimination)* [2009] VCAT 1869, 277 noted the equality rights in section 8 are 'the keystone in the protective arch of the Charter', and the fundamental value underlying the right to equality is the 'equal dignity of every person'.

The public display of symbols associated with Nazi ideology impinges this right by causing significant harm to the Jewish community and a wide range of other groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability and other racial and religious groups. For these communities, the Nazi symbol represents hate, genocide, and trauma.

Victoria has seen an unwelcome number of recent instances where the public display of Nazi symbols has been used by various individuals and groups to intimidate and convey a message of hate and intolerance. The extent of harm caused by the display of a Nazi symbol was evidenced by a high-profile incident in January 2020 where a Nazi flag was flown on a private property in Beulah, in north-west Victoria. This display of Nazi ideology caused extreme distress to observers and the wider community. Both the Yarriambiack Shire and Victoria Police were unable to compel the residents to take the flag down.

The Inquiry highlighted the rise in the public display of vilifying materials, such as the Hakenkreuz, and the importance of sending a clear message to the community that the public display of Nazi symbolism is not acceptable and has wide-ranging, negative societal impacts.

The creation of an offence to prohibit the intentional public display of Nazi symbols therefore promotes the right to recognition and equality before the law by protecting against the harm and distress caused by these symbols to individuals, the Jewish community and other groups, and the wider Victorian public.

The Bill will also promote this right by empowering a police officer to direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol from public display, and to apply to the Magistrates' Court for a warrant to enter a premises to search and seize a Nazi symbol. These powers can be used in situations where there has previously been no power to remove the display of a Nazi symbol, such as the Nazi flag being flown on private property in Beulah. This will better enable police to act quickly to remove Nazi symbols from public display, thereby reducing the potential harm and distress caused to others.

Right to privacy and reputation (section 13)

Nature of the right

Section 13(a) of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

According to Justice Bell in *Kracke v Mental Health Review Board (General)* (2009) 29 VAR 1, the right to privacy 'protects people from unjustified interference with their personal and social individuality and identity.' This includes protection from interference with a person's individual identity and physical integrity.

An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise and appropriately circumscribed. It will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

The Bill limits the right to privacy by interfering with a person's ability to display a Nazi symbol in private, if the symbol can be seen by people in a public place, or on their person (such as on clothing) in public.

The importance and purpose of the limitation

The limitations support the Bill's purpose to reduce racism and vilification in the community by minimising the harm caused by the display of Nazi symbols and by allowing such symbols to be removed from public display.

Nature and extent of the limitation

New section 41K in clause 3 limits the right to privacy by prohibiting the intentional public display of Nazi symbols and is intended to prevent the harm caused by the public display of these symbols, regardless of whether the symbols are physically located on public or private property. The offence is only aimed at public display and will not prevent a person from owning or displaying these symbols in private where they cannot be viewed from a public place (for example, inside a private home). Additionally, the offence will not prohibit Nazi symbol tattoos or other like processes (such as branding), even where the tattoo is visible on a person's body while in public. This ensures the Bill is not more restrictive than necessary to fulfill its purpose and preserves rights to bodily integrity. Given the limited scope of the offence and the harm the offence is seeking to prevent, this limitation is lawful and does not arbitrarily or unreasonably limit the right to privacy.

New section 41L in clause 3 limits the right to privacy by allowing a police officer to direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol from public display (whether on public or private property). The purpose of new section 41L is to support enforcement of the offence and to prevent any further harm caused by the continued display of a Nazi symbol. It requires the police officer to reasonably believe the person is committing an offence, or an offence has been committed. A person who does not comply with a direction to remove the symbol is liable for a fine of 10 penalty units, which is commensurate with the severity of the conduct. The defence of reasonable excuse will ensure a person who does not receive the notice would not be liable for a penalty. Given the limited circumstances in which a direction can be given and that a Nazi symbol can still be displayed in private, interference with the right is lawful and does not arbitrarily or unreasonably limit the right to privacy.

New section 41M in clause 3 limits the right to privacy by empowering a police officer to exercise search and seizure powers in relation to property containing a Nazi symbol that contravenes the offence. New section 41M, which provides that an existing warrant power under section 465 of the *Crimes Act 1958*

(Crimes Act) applies to this offence, requires a police officer to apply to the Magistrate's Court for a warrant to search premises and seize property that displays a Nazi symbol and is in connection to, or as evidence of commissioning of the offence. This is the same as an existing power under section 28 of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (RRTA). Police can only seize property if a warrant is obtained from the Magistrates' Court, which requires the magistrate to be satisfied by evidence that there are reasonable grounds to believe that there is, or will be within the next 72 hours, in a building, place or in a vehicle something that is connected with the offence that has been committed or might be committed in the next 72 hours, or anything that will afford evidence for the offence. Given the narrow scope of the power, the requirement for police to seek a warrant and the oversight provided by a court, any interference with the right to privacy as a result of a warrant would be lawful and not arbitrary or unreasonable.

The relationship between the limitation and purpose

These limitations are intended to support the effectiveness and practical enforcement of the offence and to prevent or minimise any harm caused by the public display of a Nazi symbol.

Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

To achieve the aim of preventing a Nazi symbol from being publicly displayed, the Bill could exclude the power to direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol from public display and instead rely on general deterrence arising from criminal penalties under the offence. This option however does not adequately prevent a person who has committed an offence from continuing to display the symbol. It also does not address circumstances where a Nazi symbol has been displayed on property by a third party (for example, by means of graffiti), as it may be necessary to direct the owner or occupier to remove the symbol, even though they have not been involved in the commission of the offence.

The general search and seizure powers are necessary to ensure sufficient evidence can be obtained to prosecute persons under the offence. It is also possible for secondary evidence of a Nazi symbol (e.g. a photograph) to be used instead of the property item. Under the Victorian Police Manual, police officers are required to apply the test of essentiality before seizing any property. This includes an assessment of whether the property is lawful, whether it is necessary to seize it and whether secondary evidence can be used in its place.

Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (section 14) and the right to culture (section 19)

Nature of the right

Section 14 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, including to adopt the religion or belief of their choice and to demonstrate their religious belief in public or private. A person must not be coerced or restrained in a way that limits their freedom of religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.

The right to culture in section 19 is based on Article 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This right ensures individuals, in community with others that share their background, can enjoy their culture, declare and practise their religion and use their language. It protects all people with a particular cultural, religious, racial or linguistic background.

The Bill promotes both rights by allowing people of Jewish faith to practice religion, hold beliefs and engage in cultural celebrations, without fear of harm or vilification.

The Bill limits these rights by placing an evidential burden on people using the symbol for a religious or cultural purpose, such as people of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain faith. The exception for religious use is intended to ensure any limitation of religious or cultural rights is the least restrictive possible. However, a person seeking to rely on an exception may need to adduce or point to evidence that the display symbol was for a genuine religious or cultural purpose.

Importance of the purpose of the limitation

The purpose of the limitation is to minimise the harm that display of a Nazi symbol in public causes to the Jewish community and other affected groups, by restricting display to a list of prescribed circumstances.

The Inquiry found that the Jewish community in Victoria is experiencing vilification on the basis of their religion in increasing frequency and severity. In November 2020, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry reported a marked increase in the number of the most serious categories of antisemitic incidents, including physical assault, direct verbal abuse, harassment and intimidation. Prohibiting the public display of Nazi symbols minimises the harm caused to the Jewish community and others by such displays and sends a clear message to the entire Victorian community that the public display symbols of this nature is extremely harmful and not acceptable.

Nature and extent of limitation

By creating reasonable and in good faith exceptions, the offence places an evidential burden on the accused, requiring them to raise evidence that the display of the symbol was for a genuine religious or cultural purpose. However, in doing so, this offence does not transfer the legal burden of proof. Once the accused has pointed to evidence of an exception, the burden shifts back to the prosecution to prove the essential elements of the offence beyond reasonable doubt.

The preamble or opening statement in the Bill acknowledges the importance of the swastika as a benevolent symbol for Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and other religions, which signals to the public, police and courts, that the ongoing use of the religious and cultural swastika by faith communities is not intended to be inhibited by the Bill or prosecuted under the offence.

The relationship between the limitation and its purpose

The limitation is consistent with the Bill's purpose to reduce racism and vilification in the community by denouncing and prohibiting the display of hateful symbols and ideology, while also ensuring appropriate uses of the Nazi symbol are permitted.

Less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

It is possible the burden for demonstrating a religious or cultural purpose for a public display of a symbol could instead rest with the prosecution as an element of the offence. However, this would require the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a symbol was not displayed for a good faith and reasonable religious or cultural purpose in every case, even where there is no evidence suggesting such a use. It would also create inconsistencies with the approach to all other exceptions, such as artistic use or opposition to Nazism and neo-Nazism. In addition, whether a person is displaying a symbol for a religious or cultural purpose is a matter peculiarly within the knowledge of that person. Such persons are best placed to provide evidence as to whether the display was for a religious or cultural purpose.

For these reasons, any limitation on these rights is reasonable and justified in the circumstances.

Right to freedom of expression (section 15)

Nature of the right

Section 15(2) of the Charter provides the right to freedom of expression includes the freedom 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds'. The right protects criticism and protest as well as offensive, disturbing or shocking information or ideas, rather than merely favourable or popular expressions (*Sunday Times v United Kingdom (No 2)* [1992] 14 EHRR 123).

The right contains an internal limitation that allows freedom of expression to be limited where it is reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputation of others, or for the protection of national security, public order, public health or public morality.

The Bill limits the right by restricting a person's ability to impart certain information and ideas through the public display of specified Nazi symbols.

The importance of the purpose of the limitation

The Inquiry highlighted the rise in the public display of vilifying materials, such as the Hakenkreuz, and the importance of sending a clear message to the community that the public display of Nazi symbolism is not acceptable and has wide-ranging, negative societal impacts.

The creation of an offence to prohibit the intentional public display of Nazi symbols is therefore intended to protect against the individual harm and wider community distress caused by these symbols.

Nature and extent of the limitation

The Bill limits the right to freedom of expression by restricting the ability of any person from freely expressing information or ideas through any medium that depicts a Nazi symbol in public.

Given how deeply upsetting and harmful the display of Nazi symbolism can be to community members that view these symbols, especially for Jewish communities and other groups, this limitation is considered lawful and reasonably necessary to protect people's rights not to be intimidated, vilified or harassed, to feel safe, and to maintain public order.

Additionally, the offence will only apply to the Hakenkreuz, the most widely recognised symbol historically associated with Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology.

In line with the purpose of the Bill, the application of the offence is further confined so it does not apply to situations where the Nazi symbol is being displayed for another appropriate purpose, rather than as a symbol

of hate. The Bill also contains a list of exceptions which exempt situations where a symbol is publicly displayed for reasons such as:

- for a genuine academic, artistic, religious, cultural or educational purpose; and
- making or publishing a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest; and
- expressing opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies.

The relationship between the limitation and its purpose

The limitation is consistent with the Bill's purpose to reduce racism and vilification in the community by denouncing and prohibiting the display of hateful ideology, while also ensuring that appropriate uses of the Nazi symbol are permitted.

Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

The Bill does not include a requirement that a person intended to harm or vilify a particular person or group as a result of displaying a Nazi symbol. This reflects the fact any display of a Nazi symbol to which an exception does not apply can cause harm to members of communities impacted by the Nazi regime, by making them feel excluded or at risk of harm.

The Bill is also limited in scope to only displays of the Hakenkreuz, rather than a large number of other symbols associated with Nazi ideology. This recognises the Hakenkreuz's position as the most well-known symbol of Nazi ideology and is the symbol which has most frequently been used in Victoria to intimidate, cause offence and promote hateful ideologies.

Further, the offence will not prohibit Nazi symbol tattoos or other like processes (such as branding), even where the tattoo is visible on a person's body while in public. This ensures the Bill does not provide further restrictions than what is necessary to fulfill its purpose.

The approach taken by the Bill is therefore the most appropriate option to achieve the purpose of the Bill, and the limitation of the right to freedom of expression is justified.

Right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association (section 16) and right to public life (section 18)

Nature of the right

Section 16(1) of the Charter protects every person's right to peaceful assembly. Under the ICCPR, the right to peaceful assembly entitles persons to gather intentionally and temporarily for a specific purpose.

Section 18(1) of the Charter provides that every person in Victoria has the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs. The UN Human Rights Committee, when commenting on article 25(a) of the ICCPR, considered the right to participate in public life to lie at the core of democratic government.

The offence limits the right to freedom of association and right to public life by preventing people who wish to use a Nazi symbol to display their political ideology from doing so in public, such as in gatherings or while attending a council meeting. The offence also limits the right to freedom of association by disincentivising membership to groups with Nazi or neo-Nazi ideologies, for fear of criminal sanctions if this association is conveyed through the display of Nazi symbols.

The importance of the purpose of the limitation

The creation of an offence to prohibit the intentional public display of Nazi symbols is intended to prevent the harm caused by the display of these symbols. The Inquiry's findings showed that far-right extremist cohorts are rising in number and have led to an increase in public gatherings displaying symbols of hate.

Nature and extent of the limitation

The narrow scope of the offence means that groups who hold beliefs associated with Nazi ideology may still assemble in public or participate in the conduct of public affairs without a Nazi symbol being displayed in public. Persons who support such ideology will therefore remain free to express their opinions in gatherings or at council meetings, subject to existing laws, and may continue to own or display Nazi symbols in private. They will also be able to publicly display their association with or support for such ideologies or groups through other means, including the use of symbols to which the offence does not apply.

The limitations on both rights are reasonable and justified given the significant harm caused by the public display of these symbols and the impact on the right to equality and non-discrimination of groups targeted by these symbols, outweighs the limitations placed on people that wish to use these symbols to display their ideology.

Relationship between the limitation and its purpose

The inclusion of ‘public place’ in new section 41K(1) of clause 3 (the offence) is essential to the purpose of the Bill. The significant harm caused can only be addressed by prohibiting public display as this is where the harm is caused.

Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

The Bill does not include a requirement that a person intended to harm or vilify a particular person or group as a result of displaying a Nazi symbol. This reflects the fact any display of a Nazi symbol to which an exception does not apply can cause harm to members of communities impacted by the Nazi regime, by making them feel excluded or at risk of harm.

The Bill is also limited in scope to only displays of the Hakenkreuz, rather than a large number of other symbols associated with Nazi ideology. This recognises the Hakenkreuz’s position as the most well-known symbol of Nazi ideology and is the symbol most frequently used in Victoria to promote hateful ideologies.

Right to property (section 20)Nature of the Right

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. The right contains an internal limitation which provides that the right is not limited where property deprived is in ‘accordance with the law’. For deprivation of property to be in accordance with law, the law (whether legislation or the common law) authorising the deprivation of property must be clear and precise, accessible to the public, and not operate arbitrarily.

The right to property is limited by the power to seek a warrant to search and seize property that may be publicly displayed within the next 72 hours or that has already been publicly displayed. This power under new section 41M in clause 3 permits Victoria Police to enter any place to seize property which displays Nazi symbols.

Importance and the purpose of the limitation

The limitation supports the Bill’s purpose to reduce racism and vilification in the community by allowing police to prevent the imminent public display of a Nazi symbol and enabling Nazi symbols to be removed from public display.

Nature and extent of the limitation

Police can only seize property if a warrant is obtained from the Magistrate’s Court and the magistrate is satisfied that the conditions for obtaining a warrant have been met under section 465 of the Crimes Act. Given the narrow scope of the power and the requirement for police to seek a warrant from a court, any interference with property as a result of a warrant would be lawful and not arbitrary.

Relationship between the limitation and its purpose

This limitation is intended to support the practical enforcement of the offence and to prevent any further harm caused by the continued display of a Nazi symbol.

Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

The general search and seizure powers are necessary to ensure sufficient evidence can be obtained to prosecute persons under the offence. It is also possible for secondary evidence of a Nazi symbol (e.g. a photograph) to be used instead of the property item. Under the Victorian Police Manual, police officers are required to apply the test of essentiality before seizing any property. This includes an assessment of whether the property is lawful, whether it is necessary to seize it and whether secondary evidence can be used in its place

Right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law (section 25)Nature of the right

Section 25(1) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. The right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto an accused in a criminal proceeding, so that the accused is required to prove matters to establish, or raise or point to evidence to suggest, that they are not guilty of an offence.

The Bill limits the right by creating an offence for the public display of Nazi symbols which contains a list of exceptions under new section 41K in clause 3 that place an evidential burden on the accused to raise evidence to suggest that display was ‘engaged in reasonably’ and ‘in good faith’ for one of the prescribed exceptions.

Importance of the purpose of the limitation

The limitation minimises the harm caused by the display of Nazi symbols in public by limiting display to a list of defined circumstances.

Nature and extent of the limitation

By creating reasonable and in good faith exceptions, the offence places an evidential burden on the accused since it requires the accused to raise evidence that the display of the symbol was for a prescribed purpose. However, in doing so, this offence does not transfer the legal burden of proof. Once the accused has pointed to evidence of an exception, the burden shifts back to the prosecution to prove the essential elements of the offence beyond reasonable doubt.

The imposition of this evidential burden is necessary to support practical enforcement of the offence, acknowledging that Victoria Police will not always have clear evidence to demonstrate the accused's intention for displaying a Nazi symbol. By contrast, the manner and purpose for which a Nazi symbol is publicly displayed will be knowledge held by the accused in all cases, as it concerns their own actions and intentions. The burden is also necessary to prevent a person from displaying a Nazi symbol under an exception dishonestly for some inappropriate purpose. The limitation reflects the significant harm that display of a Nazi symbols cause to the community and is proportionate with the maximum penalty imposed (maximum one year imprisonment or a fine of 120 penalty units or both). This limitation is therefore reasonable and justified in the circumstances.

Relationship between the limitation and its purpose

The limitation is consistent with the Bill's purpose to reduce racism and vilification in the community by denouncing and prohibiting the display of hateful ideology, while also ensuring that appropriate uses of Nazi symbols are permitted.

Any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve

It is possible that the burden for demonstrating an exception applies for a public display of a symbol could instead rest with the prosecution as an element of the offence. However, this would require the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a symbol was not displayed in good faith and reasonably for all prescribed purposes in every case, even where there is no evidence suggesting any such purpose applies. In addition, whether a person is displaying a symbol for a prescribed purpose is a matter peculiarly within the knowledge of that person. Such persons are best placed to provide evidence as to whether the display was for a prescribed purpose.

For these reasons, any limitation on the right to be presumed innocent is reasonable and justified in the circumstances.

As discussed in this Statement of Compatibility, all of the limitations in the Bill are reasonable and justified.

Jaclyn Symes MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Emergency Services

Second reading

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:13): I move:

That the second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Can I note with the chamber that upon further consultation the government moved an amendment in the Legislative Assembly to bring forward the commencement of the bill by six months. A default commencement period of six months means that public displays of Nazi hate symbols and subsequent harm this causes can be dealt with sooner, while still allowing time for the offence to properly be implemented.

Motion agreed to.

Mr LEANE: I move:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Incorporated speech as follows:

I am proud to deliver this Bill which fulfils a Victorian Government commitment to implement recommendation 24 of the 2021 report of the Legal and Social Issues Committee's (Committee) Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections in Victoria (Report) to ban the public display of Nazi symbols. It also forms part of the Government's broader commitment to introduce a suite of reforms to strengthen anti-vilification protections in Victoria.

The Government is committed to protecting the rights of all Victorians to be free from racism, vilification and hatred, and to ensure all Victorians feel welcome and accepted. The harm caused by hate conduct and vilification can be profound, affecting the physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals and often preventing them from feeling comfortable participating in their community.

The Government is deeply concerned by the recent increase in the public display of Nazi symbols in our community. In particular, recent displays have used the Hakenkreuz (often commonly known as the Nazi swastika) to convey messages of hate and intimidation, given the broad recognition of this symbol and its association with Nazism. Recent examples include:

- in January 2020, a Nazi flag depicting the Hakenkreuz was flown on private property in Beulah, easily visible by members of the community,
- in May 2020, a Hakenkreuz was graffitied onto Cranbourne Golf Club, which was founded by members of the Jewish community,
- in March 2021, a person was photographed wearing a hat with a Hakenkreuz at Richmond train station, and
- in April 2022, Federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's campaign signs bearing his image were defaced with antisemitic imagery, including a Hakenkreuz drawn on his forehead, in the electorate of Kooyong.

The display of symbols associated with Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology is harmful and offensive to all members of our society, and particularly to the Jewish community. The display of such symbols in Victoria is particularly abhorrent given, outside of Israel, Melbourne has the largest per capita concentration of Holocaust survivors in the world. The Government also acknowledges that the public display of Nazi symbols is used to communicate hatred and cause harm to a wide range of other groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability and other racial and religious groups.

The dissemination of these ideas through the public display of Nazi symbols undermines social cohesion by provoking animosity between Victorians of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and threatens the viability and success of our democratic, multicultural and multi-faith society.

The Government respects and acknowledges that the swastika has great cultural and religious significance for some faith communities—particularly the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities. The use and significance of the symbol by these communities long pre-dates its more recent associations with Nazism. The swastika has been used in these communities for millennia as an ancient and auspicious symbol of purity, love, peace and good fortune. It was only after the swastika was misappropriated by the Nazi party and the Third Reich in Germany that it became a symbol of racism and hate, especially in western society. Sadly, it is this more recent association that will be more familiar to many in our society, who may not appreciate the long history and deep significance of the symbol for our faith communities. The swastika continues to be embraced by members of these religions and can be found in places of worship, architecture and religious books, as well as in commercial and personal settings such as people's homes. The Government makes clear that the use of the swastika by these religious communities should continue unimpeded and should never fall within the scope of this offence. Importantly, the Bill directly recognises the cultural and religious significance of the swastika, and clearly distinguishes this symbol from the Hakenkreuz used by the Nazi party and Third Reich.

Purpose of the offence

The Bill creates a criminal offence in the **Summary Offences Act 1986** which prohibits a person from intentionally displaying a Nazi symbol in a public place or in public view if the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the Nazi symbol is a symbol associated with Nazi ideology.

The offence is accompanied by powers for Victoria Police to direct a person to remove a Nazi symbol from public display, and to apply to the Magistrates' Court for a warrant to enter a premises to search and seize a Nazi symbol.

The Bill sends a clear and strong message to the community that the public display of Nazi symbols is not acceptable and has wide-ranging impacts on affected groups and society.

The Bill offers a clear response to the recent rise in the public display of Nazi symbols by addressing existing gaps in the criminal law which enabled these displays to occur.

Opening statement

The Bill includes a preamble, or opening statement, which provides vital context to the application of the offence. The opening statement was co-designed with leaders from the Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities to ensure it appropriately reflects their views. The government thanks each community for their important contributions to the opening statement and their generosity in assisting with the development of this Bill.

In particular, the opening statement recognises the historic and ongoing use of the swastika in the Buddhist, Hindu and Jain communities as an ancient and auspicious symbol of purity, love, peace and good fortune. The distorted version of the symbol is also known as the Hakenkreuz (twisted or hooked cross in German). The Hakenkreuz became a symbol of the Third Reich, under which heinous crimes were perpetrated against humanity, particularly the Jewish people.

It is important to acknowledge that a swastika and Hakenkreuz are visually very similar and in some cases may appear identical. However, the intention behind the use of a swastika and Hakenkreuz is fundamentally different. The opening statement is intended to acknowledge these similarities but make clear that the use of the swastika by Buddhist, Hindu and Jain faiths should never fall within the scope of the offence.

The government acknowledges there is a diversity of views within Victoria's religious communities about the creation of this offence. Throughout consultation on this offence the government heard clearly that all faith communities strongly support the intention of the offence to reduce vilification of Victoria's Jewish community. However, there are also concerns the offence may lead to increased vilification of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities who continue to lawfully display the swastika. The offence has been carefully drafted to ensure the rights of these faith communities to display the swastika are not limited. However, for some faith communities this does not fully address their concerns and they do not support the Bill in its current form. The government recognises these concerns and the ongoing need to ensure the offence does not negatively impact these faith communities.

Prohibited symbols

The Bill only lists one symbol—the Hakenkreuz—as a prescribed Nazi symbol. The Government recognises there are a range of other Nazi symbols which are often used to promote Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology such as the SS (Schutzstaffel) symbol, the Nazi Iron Cross and the Nazi eagle. The public display of these symbols also causes harm and fear for the Jewish community and others targeted by the Third Reich.

However, the Hakenkreuz is specifically targeted by this ban given it is the most widely recognised symbol historically associated with Nazi and neo-Nazi ideology and its display in any form can cause harm and offence. In addition, the Hakenkreuz sadly continues to be the symbol adopted in many high-profile displays, such as the Nazi flag which was flown on private property in Beulah. Limiting the list of prohibited symbols to only the Hakenkreuz also appropriately balances the breadth of the offence and the absence of a requirement to incite hatred or cause harm through the display of the Nazi symbol.

The Government acknowledges by limiting the offence to only cover the Hakenkreuz, it is possible other Nazi symbols may be publicly displayed to avoid penalties under the offence. As noted in response to recommendation 25 of the Committee Report, the Government will work with Victoria Police and other relevant agencies to monitor the public display of other hateful symbols to determine whether further symbols should be prohibited under the offence in the future.

Definition of 'Hakenkreuz'

The Bill defines a Hakenkreuz as 'a symbol of the cross with the arms bent at right angles in a clockwise direction', or a symbol that so nearly resembles a Hakenkreuz that the symbol is likely to be confused or mistaken for it.

Although the Hakenkreuz is more widely known as a swastika or Nazi swastika, this term is adopted as it creates a distinction in language from the swastika of the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and other faith communities, which has been used for millennia. The word swastika comes from the Sanskrit svastika, which means 'good fortune' or 'well-being'.

For the avoidance of doubt, the distinction in the Bill between the words Hakenkreuz and swastika does not create a de facto intention element requiring that the display of the symbol must intend to promote, or relate to, Nazism or neo-Nazism. Any display of a Nazi symbol as defined under new section 41J in clause 3 is prohibited unless an exception applies.

The display of a Nazi symbol is not limited only to its display on a Nazi flag. The offence would apply to the display of the Nazi symbol in any format, whether on a flag, graffiti or clothing.

Definition of 'public place'

The offence will prohibit the intentional display of a Nazi symbol in a public place. The term 'public place' relies on the existing definition within the **Summary Offences Act 1986** with some modifications. In particular, the definition of public place has been expanded beyond only government schools to also include non-government schools and other post-secondary education institutions. This ensures equal application of the offence across all educational settings. It is appropriate the offence applies to some places that would otherwise be private due to the possibility of a Nazi symbol being displayed in these places and the potential for the display to cause considerable harm.

The offence also applies where a display is in public view (i.e. occurs in sight of people who are in a public place). This encompasses displays of a Nazi symbol on a private premises if it is visible to the public. For example, it would capture the January 2020 incident in Beulah where a flag was flown on private property but was visible from the street. This acknowledges the harm public display of Nazi symbols causes in the community, regardless of where the symbols are physically located.

The private possession of Nazi symbols will still be allowed, provided the symbols are not able to be seen from a public place. This recognises the broader harms caused when Nazi symbols are used to communicate hatred and racist ideologies to the public.

Fault elements of the offence

The offence has two fault elements. First, the offence has an intention element which requires that the person intentionally displayed a Nazi symbol in a public place or in public view. Second, the offence has a knowledge element, requiring the person knows, or ought to know, the Nazi symbol is a symbol associated with Nazi ideology.

The offence adopts an intention element to ensure accidental public displays are not captured by the offence. For example, the offence would capture the March 2021 incident where a person wore a hat with a Hakenkreuz at Richmond train station as this display was clearly intentional. It would not capture a person who, while walking in a public place with posters in their bag which contain the Hakenkreuz, trips and the posters are inadvertently displayed to members of public.

The knowledge element requires either that:

1. the person knows the symbol is associated with Nazi ideology (subjective knowledge), or
2. a reasonable person in the position of the person who displayed the symbol would have known that it was associated with Nazi ideology (objective knowledge).

The knowledge element safeguards against an offence being committed innocently or unintentionally. For example, by a child who does not understand the connotations of the Hakenkreuz, and where a reasonable person (of the same age) in the child's position ought not to have known the Hakenkreuz is a symbol associated with Nazi ideology, taking into account any other relevant circumstances. Similarly, it will safeguard against a person with cognitive impairment, who does not understand the implications of the Hakenkreuz and the harm it can cause, from committing an offence.

The intention and knowledge elements ensure the offence clearly targets the conduct intended to be prohibited and penalised and is not unfair in its application.

Penalty

The offence for the intentional public display of a Nazi symbol has a maximum penalty of one year imprisonment or a fine of 120 penalty units or both. This penalty is consistent with vilification offences under the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001** and across Australia. It reflects the breadth of the offence and that no injury or harm needs to be proved as a result of the display.

Exceptions

In line with the Committee Report's recommendation, the Bill includes a range of exceptions to the offence. The exceptions are based on current exceptions to unlawful conduct in the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001** with some modifications to reflect the specifics of the offence. The exceptions to the offence apply where the display was engaged in reasonably and in good faith:

- for a genuine academic, artistic, religious or scientific purpose;
- for a genuine cultural or educational purpose;
- in making or publishing a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest; or
- in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies.

The offence also does not apply where the display is by means of tattooing or other body modification, or where displayed by a law enforcement or intelligence officer in the performance of the officer's or member's duties and is done in good faith.

Genuine academic, artistic, religious and scientific purpose

The exceptions for genuine academic, artistic, religious and scientific purpose specifically mirror the current exceptions to unlawful conduct in the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001**. The religious purpose exception is particularly important to those of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths, to ensure the swastika can continue to be displayed as symbol of purity, love, peace and good fortune. The use of the swastika by religious communities should never be the target of this offence. To this end, the Bill includes a number of

examples which reflect some of the circumstances in which the swastika continues to be used by the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths to aid with education, training and awareness about the religious exception.

Genuine cultural and educational purpose

The Bill includes two exceptions which are not currently contained in the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001**. These exceptions have been included to reflect stakeholder feedback about the breadth of circumstances where the Hakenkreuz or swastika should continue to be allowed to be lawfully displayed.

The cultural exception recognises while the swastika has its origins in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain faiths, its use can often be a mixture of both religion and culture. Religion and culture are closely intertwined and often not readily able to be separated. To ensure faith and cultural communities can continue to use the swastika with confidence, the Bill includes a separate cultural exception to overcome concerns the religious exception alone may be too narrow.

An educational exception has been included to reflect the very broad range of circumstances in which the Hakenkreuz is displayed to educate and raise awareness. It overcomes concerns the academic exception alone may be too narrow to cover all such circumstances. For example, the Hakenkreuz is often displayed as part of Holocaust awareness training. Similarly, the Hakenkreuz may be displayed on educational items for sale, such as textbooks in a bookshop.

Making or publishing a fair and accurate report of any event or matter of public interest

The Bill includes an exception where material is displayed reasonably and in good faith in the making or publishing of a fair and accurate report on any event or matter of public interest. This exception reflects a current exception to unlawful conduct in the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001** and is intended to ensure, for example, news coverage of a demonstration or political commentary on the harm caused by the display of Nazi symbols can continue.

Opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies

The Bill includes an exception where material is displayed reasonably and in good faith in opposition to fascism, Nazism, neo-Nazism or other related ideologies. This exception is based on an exception to a similar offence in Germany and is intended to balance the right to protest against the breadth of the offence. It would allow, for example, the display of a Nazi symbol at a public rally in denouncement of Nazism.

The exception is not limited to opposition to Nazism and neo-Nazism alone and includes ‘other related ideologies’. This acknowledges the fact the Hakenkreuz is often used to promote a range of hateful ideologies, such as racism. The inclusion of ‘other related ideologies’ ensures displays of a Hakenkreuz to clearly oppose such ideologies—such as displaying a flag of Nazi Germany with a marking through it—would not fall within the scope of the offence.

Tattoos and other like processes

The offence does not apply where the public display of a Nazi symbol is done by means of tattooing or other like process (e.g. scarification, branding). The exclusion of tattoos or like processes takes account of human rights considerations and the practical enforcement issues of capturing such displays.

In terms of human rights considerations, as noted in the accompanying Statement of Compatibility, a ban on public displays by means of tattooing or like process would be incompatible with the Charter at this time. If the offence applied to an individual with a Nazi symbol tattoo in a conspicuous position on their body (e.g. face), that person’s rights to freedom of movement and expression, as well as taking part in public life, would be strongly curtailed. The individual would be required to perpetually cover their tattoo or would otherwise commit a new offence each time they were in public. At present, there is insufficient evidence suggesting displays of Nazi symbol tattoos gives rise to a social pressing need to warrant such a strong limitation of human rights. However, should the display of Nazi symbol tattoos become a significant issue, there would be a greater case to expand the offence to capture tattoos in the future.

Aside from human rights issues, tattoos create many practical enforcement issues. While it may be possible to ban prospective Nazi symbol tattoos (i.e. tattoos given after the commencement of the offence), this would be very difficult to enforce as police would not be able to easily determine when a tattoo was created. The Government is also not proposing a ban on new tattoos in Victoria. This would have only a small impact as individuals could still receive such tattoos outside Victoria.

The Government will monitor the public display of Nazi symbol tattoos. The display of tattoos and other like processes to incite hatred or violence will be considered when implementing the Committee Report’s recommendations to reform vilification offences. These included recommendations to lower the civil incitement test, implement a new civil harm-based provision and to simplify and lower other thresholds for criminal vilification offences.

Law enforcement or intelligence officer exception

There is a specific exception for a law enforcement officer and member of an intelligence agency, where the public display of a Nazi symbol occurs in the performance of their duties and is done in good faith. This might apply where such an officer has an assumed identity and is displaying Nazi symbols as part of their role.

Connected with the administration of the justice system

The Bill includes an exception for a person that displays a Nazi symbol in the course of official duties connected with the administration of the justice system, including the investigation or prosecution of offences, if the display is done in good faith. This exception is intended to ensure that the proper administration of justice is not impeded by the offence, such as where a Nazi symbol is produced as evidence when considering an offence in court. It is modelled on section 51J of the **Crimes Act 1958**, which provides a similar exception to the child abuse offences under the Act.

Consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions before the prosecution of a child

The Bill requires the written consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions before the commencement of a prosecution of a child for the offence. This will act as a safeguard (along with the knowledge element of the offence) to limit the circumstances in which children could be prosecuted. In many cases, a more appropriate response for children would be educating the child about the harm caused by the display of the Nazi symbol.

Trade and sale of historical Nazi memorabilia

The government acknowledges the harm which can be experienced through knowing Nazi memorabilia is being traded for profit, even where such items are not being publicly displayed. While the offence does not prohibit the public trade and sale of historical Nazi memorabilia, it will have some direct impact. In particular, for trade that does not fall within an exception—such as trade purely for commercial or personal reasons—traders will need to cover the Hakenkreuz or avoid trading altogether to avoid prosecution. This reflects the focus of the Bill on public display as the most significant harm.

Trade of Nazi memorabilia that is clearly educational or cultural in nature—such as the sale of an educational textbook on World War II which has a Hakenkreuz on the cover—will fall within the exceptions for display for a genuine educational or cultural purpose. The government will continue to consult with the Jewish community to monitor the impact of the offence on the trade of Nazi memorabilia, the impact of such trade more broadly and whether any further changes are required in the future, noting the difficulty posed in regulating online environments.

Police powers

The offence is accompanied by powers for Victoria Police to remove a Nazi symbol from public display as soon as possible, to support the enforcement of the offence and enable police to take immediate steps to prevent continuation of the harm caused by the display of these symbols to the community.

The Bill will empower a police officer to direct a person to remove from display a Nazi symbol (whether on public or private property) if the police officer reasonably believes an offence is being committed. A police officer may give a direction to the person who caused the display, or the owner or occupier of a property on which the Nazi symbol is being displayed. The direction can be provided orally or in writing and can be left at a property or on a vehicle if the direction is not able to be given in person.

This power could be used in situations where there has previously been no power to remove the display of a Nazi symbol. While existing police powers will apply to the offence, this new power enables the removal of a Nazi symbol where it cannot be seized as evidence.

A person who, without reasonable excuse, does not comply with a direction to remove material is liable for a penalty of 10 penalty units.

The Bill also provides the warrant power under the **Crimes Act 1958** applies to this offence, to ensure police can enforce the offence appropriately. This enables police to apply to the Magistrates' Court for a warrant to search premises and seize property that displays a Nazi symbol and is in connection to, or as evidence of commissioning the offence. This is the same as an existing power under section 28 of the **Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001**, which enables serious vilification offences to be treated as indictable offences for the purpose of applying for and executing search and seizure warrants.

Commencement

The Bill will commence one year after Royal Assent, unless proclaimed earlier. This allows time to provide guidance and training on the offence to Victoria Police, and to develop and implement a community education campaign on the origins of the religious and cultural swastika, its importance to Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and other faith communities and its distinction to the Hakenkreuz. There will also be guidance and education provided to police officers and support for police engagement with faith groups on a local level.

I wish to thank all the stakeholders who engaged with the development of this Bill. In particular, I wish to extend a sincere thank you to faith leaders in the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain and Jewish communities, who took the time to share their lived experiences and provide vital input on the Bill. While I acknowledge that members of these communities may not support all aspects of this Bill, your contributions are greatly valued and have shaped and strengthened this landmark legislation. Future engagement will be undertaken to inform implementation of this reform and I wish to thank everyone in advance who will contribute to the implementation process.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (18:14): I note the government's amendment, following the coalition's indicators. I move:

That the debate be adjourned for one week.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned for one week.

Adjournment

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:14): I reluctantly move:

That the house do now adjourn.

FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES

Dr CUMMING (Western Metropolitan) (18:14): (1977) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence in the other place, and the action that I seek is for the minister to work with Hume City Council to ensure that the gaps in accommodation, health services and programs are addressed for locals experiencing family violence. Now, family violence is against the law and there is no excuse for abusing a loved one. Unfortunately Hume city was home to one of the highest rates of family violence, with 4185 incidents occurring in the 2020–21 financial year.

Family violence has short- and long-term physical, emotional, psychological, financial and other effects on men, women and children. Every man, woman and child is different, and the individual and cumulative impact of each act of violence depends on many complex factors. Additional funding to agencies is required to offer increased support for men, women and children so that all in our community can feel protected and know that they can be safe, especially in the one place they should feel safe, which is in their own home. Further investment is also needed in crisis and long-term funding as well as in behavioural change programs for men and women.

Family violence tears lives apart. It affects men, women and children and the family and the broader community. It has significant personal, social and economic effects, and while each child will experience family violence differently, there are common effects of living with violence and fear. The obvious physical effects of family violence are physical injuries and death. Along with the visible physical impacts of family violence, victims are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress syndrome and suicide. Ongoing funding and support to address provisional gaps, especially in growth areas in Victoria, especially in my western region, are vital in addressing family violence. This means investment in more crisis and long-term accommodation, health services, prevention and behaviour change programs in the Hume city area and my Western Metropolitan Region.

ATTWOOD HOON DRIVING

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) (18:17): (1978) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Police. The people of Attwood are concerned about dangerous hooning on their roads. Hooning and antisocial behaviour on our roads are dangerous for pedestrians and for other motorists, including the perpetrators themselves. I recently invited the people of Attwood to complete a community survey, and I am thankful to the many, many that responded to my survey. It has been reported through those surveys that hoon drivers and antisocial road rage drivers are giving young learner drivers a hard time in those new estates. They are honking, they are tailgating, they are

overtaking dangerously. This behaviour has just got to stop. There is a reason that L-plates are displayed—to help these young people learn how to drive without the harassment they are getting from these antisocial activities and these hooners. The action that I seek from the minister is for the government to commit extra police patrols in the Attwood area to deter hoon driving on Mickleham Road, because Attwood residents really care for their suburb and they deserve a safer area for themselves and their families.

WALLAN QUARRY

Dr RATNAM (Northern Metropolitan) (18:18): (1979) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is that he reject the planning permit for a new quarry near Beveridge and Wallan. I was delighted this week to meet with members of the Mitchell Shire Council and local Wallan and Beveridge communities on the steps of Parliament. The group travelled down to Melbourne to present a petition to this Parliament calling for the government to reject plans for a quarry to be built near Beveridge and Wallan.

Planning is currently underway for the new Beveridge North West precinct, which when completed will include more than 80 hectares of parklands and sporting fields, seven future school sites, four local town centres and approximately 16 000 new homes—and also a quarry within 1 kilometre of residential development. Mitchell Shire Council has twice rejected a planning application for a quarry. The quarry was not included in the original precinct structure plan (PSP) and appears to have been brought in at the last minute to assuage concerns that the small amount of rock available at the site would be lost if the land were developed.

Beveridge and Wallan residents are outraged. They have repeatedly raised concerns about the impacts of the quarry, which will be felt by the community for more than 30 years. The community has highlighted their concerns around the significant dust and noise pollution that would be caused by the quarry, the health impacts of living so close to a quarry, the traffic chaos heavy trucks would create on already busy roads and of course catchment and water table pollution. The quarry would be located adjacent to the Burrung Buluk wetlands and swamp, which the PSP suggests will be rehabilitated and restored as part of the precinct planning but totally fails to consider the impacts an adjacent quarry would have on this rehabilitation. The quarry will also have significant downstream impacts on the Merri Creek, which is already at risk from the urban development along the creek corridor.

The community are making their voice heard with over 1000 submissions to the planning panel, a well-attended community forum and the petition they presented to us this week. Yet with the responsible minister about to retire and the local member due to change due to electoral redistribution, they feel that the government has successfully passed the buck and is set to allow the quarry to go ahead without anyone having to take responsibility for it. The minister has an opportunity to intervene on behalf of the community to protect the health and wellbeing of the Wallan and Beveridge communities and the local environment. I echo the voices of the community and ask the minister to reject the proposed quarry permit.

CONNECTING VICTORIA

Ms BURNETT-WAKE (Eastern Victoria) (18:20): (1980) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy. The action that I seek is for the minister to prioritise the Dandenong Ranges when addressing the telecommunications issues as part of the Connecting Victoria program. The state government recently conducted its Connecting Victoria initiative by collecting information about connectivity issues across the state. The \$550 million program intends to fast-track better mobile and broadband coverage in problem areas throughout Victoria. One of my constituents, Peter Brennan, saved the government a lot of time by collecting data from households and businesses about connectivity issues in the Dandenongs. Mr Brennan has been campaigning for stronger telecommunication infrastructure in the Dandenongs community since the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009.

From speaking to local emergency services, the issues with communications have not improved over the years. These communities are deeply concerned that we have not learned from the failings of the past. This proved to be true in the 9 June storms last year when telecommunications failed my constituents during an emergency once again. The government included Mr Brennan in their Connecting Victoria media release, making note of his work in data collection, but sadly that is as far as it went for the Dandenongs.

The government is yet to announce a full list of locations to receive telecommunication upgrades. However, the Connecting Victoria website lists 54 sites that have already been prioritised. Not one of these sites is in the Dandenong Ranges. In fact the entire Yarra Ranges LGA has been completely ignored. I have no doubt that telecommunication issues exist right across the state. However, many of the locations on that priority map are not fire prone or storm prone. They have significantly less risk of emergency, yet they are on the list of areas to be prioritised for connectivity upgrades. In this very week, this time last year, we had people trapped in their homes in the Dandenongs. They were cut off from help, not only by blocked roads but by a lack of phone reception. People could not call 000 and they could not call their local SES unit while they were trapped. My constituents felt like sitting ducks, and it is an absolute miracle no-one was killed. The ability to make a call can be the difference between life and death, not only in weather emergencies but also in family violence situations, when accidents occur and when elderly residents have falls.

The government may think weather disasters are rare, but the need for proper communication exists daily. I call on the government to prioritise the Dandenong Ranges for upgrades as part of its Connecting Victoria program. You have used Mr Brennan in your media release. You know what the issues are. Now it is time to actually deliver.

MURRAY BASIN RAIL PROJECT

Ms MAXWELL (Northern Victoria) (18:23): (1981) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and it concerns the unfinished Murray Basin rail project. With a Labor Party-led commonwealth government now in office, the communications and planning pathway should be clear and present a real opportunity to deliver for the north-west. So the action I seek is for the minister to seek federal funding to complete the project in full. Having discussed this project with the minister in some detail, I know the government had its reasons for not accepting the \$5 million that was on the table from the former federal Liberal-Nationals government to re-examine completion of the Murray Basin rail project and deliver stages 4 and 5 of the original plan.

I have worked very closely over the past two years with Ouyen Inc, who are well advanced in planning for the Sunraysia Mallee port link. The Sunraysia Mallee port link is an intermodal facility that is looking to put half to two-thirds of 800 000 tonnes of freight and 19 million truck kilometres each and every year off our roads and onto rail. This will deliver both economic and environmental benefits for our state. This region is in desperate need of a new intermodal facility, one that can provide five train services per week. It requires the reinstatement of the Ballarat rail corridor, which is unappealing for the government but once finished would deliver a plethora of benefits to the industry and wider economy.

The opportunities of the revised Murray Basin rail plan are far-reaching. We have the opportunity to preserve our roads, deliver more jobs and boost regional growth and harvesting potential in the north-west. It is estimated that 75 per cent of the export grain at Ouyen last year went to port on road when it could have been on rail. Completing the project should deliver substantial environmental benefits, important as we look at ways to meet a net zero emissions target. The Minister for Transport Infrastructure cited an increase in passenger trains to Ballarat as one barrier to completing the project to its original scope. We recognise the importance of rail to Ballarat residents. It is something my colleague Mr Grimley, as a member of the western region, is keenly aware of.

Ouyen Inc wants Ballarat to retain its confidence in its rail network too. They are committed to working with the government to find a solution and a win-win that could deliver the intermodal for

the region and meet the concerns of the government. Ouyen Inc and other stakeholders have submitted proposed solutions to the minister's concerns, and these would see freight trains move through the Ballarat overlap section in under 5 minutes. I think it is worthy of consideration. This is a significant infrastructure project and one that I think the federal government could fund itself to deliver this asset for Victoria. When the Victorian Premier announced this project in 2015, he knew it was the right thing for Victoria and said it was good for farmers, their families and our economy. The Premier most recently said his government would be making their case for additional funding on key projects. The Murray Basin rail project is a key project, and I hope the government finds a way to get our fair share of funding to deliver it.

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) (18:26): (1982) In February this year I raised a matter for the Minister for Health, and it was around maternal and child health nurses, particularly after the code brown had been declared, when maternal and child health nurses had been redeployed into the public health system. I have not had a response to that adjournment matter, but nevertheless I have been raising this issue about the shortage of maternal and child health nurses for quite some months.

I am glad that Mr Leane is in the chamber tonight, because I did raise an issue with him in a question I asked on 23 March, and it was the issue around the western suburbs councils, Melton and Wyndham, that were having a particular shortage. That has been in the news again today, and we have got thousands of newborn babies that have not got appointments for these really critical follow-up visits by nurses with the expertise that can pick up so many things, such as developmental delays, feeding issues, settling issues, postnatal depression in the mother or family violence within the family unit. These are really critical visits that pick up so much, and these things can have significant ramifications if they are not detected. I am very concerned about the state of what is going on, and I understand that there is a shortage. But this shortage was prior to COVID, which is not what the Premier and others came out and said today. There have been inquiries into this, and the perinatal inquiry back in 2018 highlighted the shortage. So to say that it is due to COVID is an absolute furphy, another absolutely disingenuous comment by the Premier. Nevertheless, this issue is very significant, and I am very concerned about the state of where it is at.

In response to my question to the Minister for Local Government—and, Minister, this adjournment matter is addressed to you—he said that he meets with the Municipal Association of Victoria regularly. My question was, 'Have you met with the MAV about this specific issue?', because it involved councils and was—

Mr Leane: They didn't, though. They didn't bring me that.

Ms CROZIER: Well, I will get you to comment, because you said:

... and if the MAV want to brief me on anything, including this issue, I am more than open to it.

Because these councils have spoken out, have been speaking out for quite some time and have been making their issues known, the matter I ask about is: have the MAV briefed you on this? Has any council briefed you on it? I see you nodding, 'No, they haven't', so you are answering my question. Would you please then reach out to these councils and find out their concerns so that you have a greater understanding and perhaps bring that back to the house? I would very much appreciate that. Thank you so much.

FOSTER CARERS

Mr QUILTY (Northern Victoria) (18:29): (1983) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Child Protection and Family Services. Sadly, some kids find themselves in dangerous and neglectful situations in their homes. The foster care system is absolutely vital to protecting them. Finding stable homes for them is often a matter of urgency. I have heard from Victorians who have committed to becoming foster-parents, something I think we can all agree is a great service to the community. This

is especially important when there are tens of thousands of children on waiting lists of six months or more for foster homes right across the state right now. According to an independent not-for-profit organisation that supports foster families, OzChild, in 2020 nearly 600 Victorian foster care households exited the system and were only replaced by around 350. We should all be alarmed that there has been a net loss of 250 foster households in Victoria.

It is difficult to say why there has been such a dramatic drop, but one reason has been brought to my attention. This young couple who came to see me signed up to become a foster family and did weeks of training in preparation. But after jumping through the hoops, they received a letter informing them they could not be foster-parents, because they were not vaccinated. They have since heard of many cases similar to their own. On behalf of Victorian children who are waiting to find stable homes, my request to the minister as a matter of urgency is to reverse the policy of rejecting foster-parents because of their vaccination status. Children should not be put at risk for no useful purpose.

PARKDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) (18:30): (1984) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education in the other place, and it relates to schools in the Mordialloc electorate. The Liberal candidate for Mordialloc, Phillip Pease, has been energetically out on a program of visiting schools across the electorate, both state schools and independent schools, to understand their immediate needs, to understand how they are recovering from COVID—how the student population is recovering from COVID, how the staffing situation is after COVID—and, importantly, to understand the future plans for many of the schools. Whether it is Edithvale Primary or Parkdale Primary or Mordialloc College, the recurring theme is the need for new investment.

Phillip Pease is a passionate advocate for schools in the Mordialloc electorate, and last week I was pleased to join him in visiting a couple of schools, including Parkdale Primary School, to see how it is going—how its staff and student body are going—but also to hear about its needs. One of the key issues that was raised in relation to Parkdale Primary was the need to upgrade its grade 2 building for the grade 2 classes. This is a very old building at Parkdale Primary. It is one that dates from probably no more recently than the 1970s. It is a very old-style school building, it is not suitable for disability access and it is really not fit for purpose for education in 2022. The rebuilding of that building or indeed the replacement of that building is going to be a multimillion-dollar investment, so the action I seek from the Minister for Education is to ensure that funding for the replacement or rebuilding of the grade 2 building at Parkdale Primary is made a priority for the government so that that can be delivered in a very short period of time.

GREATER SHEPPARTON SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) (1985)

Incorporated pursuant to order of Council of 7 September 2021:

My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Education and concerns the decline of enrolments at Greater Shepparton Secondary College.

Action: the action that I seek of the minister is that he investigates the loss of over 500 enrolled students at Greater Shepparton Secondary College since 2018 and detail to the Greater Shepparton community the identified reasons why there has been such a dramatic decline in student enrolments at the school.

- The Andrews Labor government and independent member for Shepparton, Suzanna Sheed, have implemented a public education policy in Greater Shepparton that has completely divided the entire community.
- Under stage 1 of the government's *Shepparton Education Plan*, the minister and Ms Sheed closed the four existing public secondary schools to create a single campus super-school to immediately cater for up to 2700 students.
- This decision was implemented despite many concerns being raised by local students, their families, and teachers at the time that the removal of educational choice would be to the detriment of student learning.

- Inexplicitly, Ms Sheed simply refused to meet with angry families to even discuss their concerns or the matter itself.
- In 2018 the My School website revealed the four previous public secondary schools, Wanganui Park Secondary College, Mooroopna Secondary College, McGuire College, and Shepparton High School, had a total student enrolment of 2645 students.
- Since the closure of the four schools to create the one single-campus school, the student enrolment had steadily declined each year to a reported current enrolment of 2135 students.
- Greater Shepparton Secondary College has reportedly lost 31 students since the start of March this year, proving that the lack of choice imposed by the Andrews Labor government and Ms Sheed continues to impact Greater Shepparton families.
- The decline in student numbers directly contradicts the *Shepparton Education Plan* that predicts student numbers in government at the college would continually grow to reach 3117 by 2026.
- Together with the Greater Shepparton community I am extremely concerned about the number of students who may have been lost to the education system altogether and the government must investigate the loss of over 500 students and publicly report the reasons for the decline.
- The one-school model imposed by the minister and Suzanna Sheed in Greater Shepparton does not suit all students and the community needs reassurance these young people have not been lost to the education system altogether.

RESPONSES

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development, Minister for Veterans) (18:32): There were eight adjournment matters from eight MLCs this evening to eight different ministers. I will ensure seven of those adjournment matters, to ministers other than me, are directed to those ministers and that responses are sent to the members in line with the standing orders.

Ms Crozier has directed an adjournment matter to me, and I did sort of interact with her through nodding and in a number of ways. I only met with the Municipal Association of Victoria probably, forgive me if I am wrong, about a couple of weeks ago, and it was not one of the items on their agenda at that time, so recently. And I have not directly been approached by the two councils you mentioned in the western suburbs over this issue, but as I said in this chamber even today, I appreciate that if I ruled out talking to councils about things outside my portfolio I probably would not have any great interaction with them whatsoever. On her action, I will get Local Government Victoria, the department that works with me, to reach out tomorrow to those two councils, and any further interaction I am more than open to. I say to councils, in the days that we have been living in recent years, that I am only an email and a Teams meeting away, so I like to think I am approachable on any issues. I do know in this circumstance that the health department and the Minister for Health are actually doing some work on this issue as we speak, and I do know that neighbouring councils have been terrific in supporting those councils with maternal health nurses and other resources as well. I understand that there is a baby boom in that area and there are a number of challenges, but I hope that acquits Ms Crozier's adjournment matter.

In saying that, President, I would like to think I speak on behalf of all the members of this chamber and all the staff in wishing you the best you can be in the coming week.

The PRESIDENT: On this basis the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.35 pm until Tuesday, 21 June.

Following material incorporated by Mr DAVIS (see page 2091):







