

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2022

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

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Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Treaty and First Peoples ...	The Hon. G Williams MP
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FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

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Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

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The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

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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

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FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Ms Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Mr Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Mr Stephen John	Melton	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brayne, Mr Chris	Nepean	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma	South-West Coast	LP	Newbury, Mr James	Brighton	LP
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Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
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Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
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Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
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Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Labor Party; Greens—The Greens;
Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish and Mr Morris.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Mr Angus, Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Ms Theophanous and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee

Ms Allan, Mr Carroll, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan, Ms Staley and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee

The Speaker, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Settle, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley, Ms Suleyman and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

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

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

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

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

House Committee

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

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

Integrity and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Mr Grimley.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

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

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Tuesday, 8 February 2022

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.03 pm and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:03): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

Condolences

HON. ROBERT ‘ROBIN’ FITZGERALD COOPER

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:04): I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Robert (Robin) Cooper and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the district of Mornington from 1985 to 2006 and Minister for Transport from 1997 to 1999.

Robin Cooper was born in Melbourne in 1936. The Honourable Robert ‘Robin’ FitzGerald Cooper attended Xavier College and later the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology before embarking on a cadetship at the *Age* newspaper. He then went on to a career in sales and marketing in the building supply sector.

Mr Cooper then entered politics—not in this place but as a servant of his local community, his beloved Mornington Peninsula—as a councillor on the Mornington shire. He joined the Mornington shire in 1972, serving in the role for 13 years, including two terms as the president of the shire. Now, particularly for someone who knew, understood, revered and was passionate about the beauty of the Mornington Peninsula and the beauty and the historic nature, the special nature, of Mornington township itself, that might have been enough, but he was called to do more than that when he was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1985 in the seat of Mornington. He was immediately elevated to the front bench, serving as the Shadow Minister for Local Government and Shadow Minister for Public Works.

Mr Cooper then went on to serve in various parliamentary roles. He was appointed as the parliamentary secretary for transport after the election of the Kennett government in 1992—Parliamentary Secretary, Transport, Roads and Ports in 1996 in fact—and then was promoted to the ministry as the Minister for Transport in 1997. Mr Cooper represented the seat of Mornington for more than 20 years, and it is fair to say—for those of us who know and love that part of Victoria, and I think we all know—that he was a very good and strong and effective local member and someone who loved his community and had a great passion for the role and the responsibility and the opportunities that he could provide to safeguard all the special parts of that part of Victoria and also to make sure that it was strong, growing and had the services and the facilities and the infrastructure that it needed. He of course served in that long and distinguished parliamentary career for more than 20 years before he retired in 2006—at least retired from this place. His work in the community continued for many years after that.

I did not know Robin Cooper particularly well, but you do not need to know someone well to learn quite a lot from them if they are particularly good at what they do. I can well recall—in fact I will not easily forget—arriving here in 2002 as a 30-year-old, perhaps unburdened by self-doubt, as often 30-year-olds are—

Mr Newbury interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Indeed. I do thank my honourable friend. How old are you again?

Mr Newbury: 43.

Mr ANDREWS: See? This can be a long-term predicament. This can plague you for indeed more than a decade if you are not careful. I thank the member for Brighton for his interjection.

The Honourable Robin Cooper, the then member for Mornington, sat just where the member for Malvern is sitting at the moment, just next to Hansard. He was a former minister and could have spoken from the table, but I do not think I ever saw him do that. I had the great privilege of being Parliamentary Secretary for Health, with a big legislative workload that the minister would then call upon me to usher through the house, and I would spend a lot of time in here. It did not take me long to work out that not only was Robin Cooper particularly good at what he did in this place, but he enjoyed it. He knew this place. He had that wonderful baritone broadcaster's voice, a radio voice really, and always had a fob chain in his lapel. I am not sure what was at the end of that fob chain, but he had a presence about him. Maybe it was the fact that he had been here quite a long time. He had a confidence. To interject on him was not a smart thing to do. I learned this the hard way. I am not sure if Hansard picked it up, but on many occasions—well, perhaps not many; on a few occasions and more than there perhaps should have been—I might have had a few things to say about the points he was making. I soon saw that it was wiser to not do that so much.

He was a great parliamentarian. He understood the theatre of this place. He understood the power of this place, and argument and debate, good humour and wit—a quick wit. He was a consummate parliamentarian, and he knew this forum for what it can be: a place where you can change minds and a place where you can advocate and influence things, whether you sit on this side as we have the great pleasure to do, or whether you sit on that side; whether you have just arrived as a 30-year-old, or whether you are a bit more senior than that and perhaps in the last term of your time in this place. He was a great orator, a great parliamentarian and someone who loved his community and served his community with distinction as a local councillor, as a member of this place and indeed as a volunteer and a coordinator of other volunteers supporting the vulnerable—those who without that sort of support never get the fair go they are entitled to. I did not know him well, but I had a great and endearing respect for him. I wish him to be well remembered for all that he was able to achieve, and of course I send my very best wishes to his wife, Jennifer, and three children, Rebecca, Jeremy and Anna. Vale, Robin Cooper.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (12:10): The current members for Murray Plains, Rowville and even Mornington will no doubt agree with me when I say that Robin Cooper was a no-nonsense kind of guy. You knew exactly where you stood with him at all times, in every conversation and at every occasion. His colleagues knew this, the press gallery knew this and as a government adviser in the 1990s I knew it first hand. I worked with his daughter Rebecca for those years in the 1990s and had many interactions with Robin Cooper through that time.

Robin arrived here in the Assembly after some time—as the Premier said—as a marketing man in the building industry and after more than a decade in local government. In the days of the Shire of Mornington he was a councillor from 1972 and mayor in 1975. He was a tower of local politics in Mornington: everyone knew him and he knew everyone. Elected to the state Legislative Assembly district of Mornington in 1985, Robin began a career here that would last more than two decades. He held many roles in this place: Shadow Minister for Local Government, Shadow Minister for Public Works, Shadow Minister for the Arts, Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Shadow Minister for Corrections and then finally Shadow Minister for Public Transport.

It was that last role, public transport, which captured his keen policy interest, and with the retirement of Alan Brown in early 1997 he became the Minister for Transport for almost three years in the latter period of the Kennett government. Unlike many ministers for public transport, he did what many do not do. I remember he used to catch the train to work. He would drive to Frankston, leave his car at the station, catch the train all the way to Parliament talking to passengers and come back and tell the then Premier's office everything he had heard on the trains—everything. It was not a one-off. There

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was no media—and in those days, obviously, a lack of social media to boast or show off a gratuitous selfie. It was something he did by choice and on a very regular basis. He liked it. As I said, many people talked to him on the trains and he talked to many of them. At that time public transport was being reformed in Victoria. He was integral to this. We were leaving the days of the Met and going to a franchise system—back then with two operators. It was something Robin was heavily involved in, firstly as the parliamentary secretary and then as the minister. The franchise agreements were detailed. New rolling stock was mandated for both operators, which saw the eventual arrival of the Siemens and X'Trapolis trains, which Robin was integral to. It was the same for the trams—hence the arrival of the Siemens trams and the Citadis trams, both in particular to accommodate all forms of mobility and mobility scooters, which in the 1990s were new ideas, and Robin was central to all of them.

I remember the discussions with Minister Cooper and his office back in the 1990s about regional rail upgrades. What came next was the Hamer government's New Deal for public transport, which was introduced in 1981 and which still forms the basis of our country rolling stock, the N-class carriages, some 40 years on. Minister Cooper was, I would say, very vocal about seeing what was next—the next generation of where transport would go in Victoria. He was involved heavily in the government's transport committee and later as the parliamentary secretary, as I said. He then became the minister, where he was also, I remember, heavily involved in the acquisition and the operation of Sprinter railcars. Now, this is a key point, because it was a key point of pride in some ways. Sprinters operate at 130 kilometres an hour. It was the first time a country passenger train had been allowed to travel faster than 70 miles an hour, which is 115 kilometres an hour, since the Spirit of Progress days of 1937. So there was a measure of pride on their delivery, and maybe for him it was a little overdue.

Also overdue was the use of XPT trains on the Melbourne–Sydney corridor. Tired and a bit overused as they are now, 41 years after their introduction, they had been promised to take over from the Southern Aurora way back in 1985, 1987, 1988—just before the election—and in 1990 as well. Robin particularly was one of those government MPs—and he told many about this—who pushed and worked hard to see it replaced by a 3-hours faster service, the XPTs, which are now used on the daylight service thanks to him as well.

Robin served on the Parliament's Privileges Committee for 14 years. For that alone he deserves major commendation, and while those meetings are and should always remain private, I have no doubt that his forthright personality would have been in the fore in those meetings, which I hear can be quite robust.

Robin was a family man. He had three children. He adored his wife, Jennifer. I noted when Robin passed in November last year the Parliament placed a public notice on his passing which stated that he was a good friend and loyal colleague to all he served with. That I believe is a very accurate description of Robin Cooper. He was a good friend to many. He was a loyal colleague to those here in the Liberal Party. I would also add that particularly in transport he was a man who saw beyond his time. He noted and knew great change had to happen for public benefit, and he was central to much of it. Vale, Robin Cooper, member for Mornington, Minister for Transport, husband, father and unwavering advocate for the community he served.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:16): I join the condolence motion for Robert 'Robin' Cooper moved by the Premier and supported by the opposition leader. Robin Cooper's political life and political career I think would be a very good case study for those who aspire to go into politics or those who are actually in politics in this place. As both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have said, Robin was a very forthright person and never left you in any doubt as to what his thoughts were about any particular issue, which is a lot better than some that do not do that, in my personal view.

Robin stood for preselection twice I think before he actually became a member of Parliament, and he was very passionate about his area, having lived at Mount Martha for a substantial period of his life. In his election pitch as a champion of the local area and having been a councillor for 13 years, as has already been mentioned, he was very strong about the fact that he felt the Mornington Peninsula and

the area he was going to represent had missed out under the current government at that particular time. Some would argue that, particularly through COVID and the rules and restrictions that were imposed on the Mornington Peninsula, those people down there probably feel that they have missed out again. The people I talk to from down there are very passionate about it being classed as part of regional Victoria rather than part of the city of Melbourne, and I think that Robin would have been a great champion for that particular cause.

Can I thank the library for what they prepare when we do condolence motions, because they provide us with a lot of useful information. One of those bits of useful information is that coming up to the election Robin had been busy working for 10 months doorknocking his electorate as we all do when we want to get elected, and at the end of a day when he had been out doorknocking he dropped in on the Mornington Cup just to be seen at the Mornington Cup. He made a comment to the press at that particular time when he realised the Labor MP, David Hassett, had actually spent the whole day at the Mornington Cup and had not been out working and doorknocking to win votes that he felt that he was finally starting to get an edge there and that obviously the incumbent member had taken it for granted and enjoyed himself at the races rather than being out meeting and greeting and trying to get more votes.

The other thing that is interesting with condolence motions is that for most people it is probably the next time that anyone actually reads their inaugural speech. We always go back and have a read of the inaugural speech—what people come to this place with, their aspirations in coming to this place in representing their particular community—and if you go through Robin’s inaugural speech, or his maiden speech as it was called at that particular time, he talks very much about his area of Victoria, him being a champion for that area, how much he liked living in that area and, as I said, the fact that he believed that part of Victoria had not been well treated by the incumbent government at that particular time.

It is interesting that he was appointed actually the Shadow Minister for Local Government, because he had experience with local government in the 13 years he had spent on the Mornington shire and, as the Premier said, a couple of terms as president of that particular shire. But one of the things he had to do as the shadow minister was lead the charge to stop the then Cain government from amalgamating a whole heap of councils. If you read the history of that, that was a very turbulent time for the Cain government and for all those in local government that did not want to be merged at that particular time.

Robin was probably very glad he was not the minister for local government in the Kennett government—there would have been some *deja vu* around that particular debate—but he did put a lot of effort in as a former local government member to protect local government at that particular time. He did not gain a ministry immediately on the election of the Kennett government, but he received a phone call, when there were some changes, from someone in Premier Kennett’s office that asked him to come and meet the Premier and have a discussion about some change of roles. He is quoted as saying, ‘Damn, this just wasn’t suiting me. I actually had a big day planned, but I thought I’d better go and talk to him anyhow’, and obviously he became a minister and felt that it was a bolt out of the sky that he had become a minister. He was very privileged to serve as Minister for Transport here.

Pat O’Connor of the Public Transport Users Association actually welcomed Robin coming into that role. I am not sure that ministers like to be welcomed by particular people into their roles because they might be seen to be not hard enough in that job, but Robin did go on to cover himself with distinction. One of the key roles he had was to introduce automatic ticketing at that time, and the union actually came on board with him and understood the changes that were being made, particularly the changes that the Kennett government made to privatise some of the public transport system. The union at that time said they recognised that if they were going to survive, they had to work in a privatised world and get along with those people that owned the businesses into the future.

The Premier made his comments about Robin. Robin was a Liberal supporter to the core and in 2018 made some probably not so complimentary comments about the Premier at that time—that he had

respected him when he first came into Parliament but felt the Premier had lost his way in some of the decisions that he was making at that time. Robin was very loyal to the cause.

Mr Dimopoulos: The joys of retirement.

Mr WALSH: The joys of retirement. The joys of the newspapers and being able to have an opinion, which we all do. But I think Robin, as has been said, was passionate about that part of Victoria and was very grateful for the opportunity to represent that part of Victoria for nearly 22 years. To his wife, to his three children, our sincere condolences—he was someone who was dedicated to representing his community and getting good outcomes for his community. Vale, Robin Cooper.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:23): Perhaps I can fill in that blank for the Premier: what was on the end of the chain was actually the gold pass for the Mornington electorate, and he carried it with him every day that he served in this place.

Today we pause to recognise the contribution to the Victorian community of the Honourable Robin Cooper, my predecessor of course in the seat of Mornington. The debate is occurring because Robin was a minister, as has been said, between January 1997 and October 1999. And while his time in cabinet, I think it is fair to say, marked the pinnacle of his political career, it was a relatively brief interlude in a very long period of public life and an even longer period of public service.

In preparing for the debate I managed to unearth a copy of the 1985 Liberal candidate biographies. I am not going to read it out, but when you look through, they mostly run to about half a page; Robin's well and truly filled the page. It makes for some interesting reading. As I say, I will not go through it in detail, but it does mention that he was educated at Xavier and later at Taylors College, which was not at all unusual in the 1950s, and then followed that with a management supervision course. As others have said, 20 years followed in the building industry, interrupted—I do not think anyone has mentioned this yet—in 1964 by national service. In those days that was effectively two years out. That period ended as a self-employed consultant, but still in the building industry, from 1980.

But in terms of that profile, when you get to the community section, that is when you start to see the Robin Cooper that I really knew: 20 years service as a volunteer firefighter at the Mount Eliza CFA; election to the Shire of Mornington in 1972—there seems to be some controversy about when he was actually shire president, but my understanding is it was the council year 1979–80; member and chair of the Peninsula Regional Library Service; member and president of the Mount Eliza High School council; member of the Western Port Regional Planning Authority; member of the Mornington Peninsula development committee; and so on and so on, you get the idea. Not content with all that, he was a player in a Mount Eliza Cricket Club premierships side and a long-suffering but ultimately triumphant Demons supporter.

Robin was elected to the Mornington council in 1972 I think a few months before Henry Bolte, the long-serving Premier, retired. As many would either recall or have learned, one of Bolte's signature policies was creating the 'Ruhr of Victoria' in Western Port and developing Hastings and French Island and turning that area into an industrial hub—it has got to be said—despite the wishes of most of the locals. When Bolte retired that opened an opportunity to reassess that plan, so Robin's time in local government, the 1970s and early 80s, were an absolutely critical time for the Mornington Peninsula. If that industrialisation had gone ahead, if we had had that nuclear power plant on French Island, if we had had the suburbs that were expected to go on the Moorooduc plain with tens of thousands of houses for factory workers and port workers and so on, the Mornington Peninsula that we enjoy today would be a very, very different place. The contributions of the three councils then on the Mornington Peninsula and councillors like Robin Cooper were significant in getting those things changed.

Like many parts of Victoria, the peninsula experienced change as a result of the 1982 election. The seat of Mornington had been established in the 2nd Parliament, but in 1967 it was renamed Dromana. The footprint was pretty much the same, but the name was changed. In 1982 Dromana was captured by the ALP and for the first and only time in local electoral history the Mornington area was represented by a

Labor MP in this place. Now, Robin's political ambitions I do not think were a secret from anyone. He was active in the party. He contested preselection for state seats, as the Leader of The Nationals said, on two occasions, and he actually contested preselection for the seat of Flinders as well, so his plans were out there. As an energetic Liberal and an experienced local shire councillor he was absolutely determined that the continued presence of the ALP in the seat of Dromana, as it was then, would not be tolerated, so he put his hand up again. There was a redistribution—the seat of Mornington was recreated—and when he stood he gained a 3 per cent swing and returned the seat to the Liberal Party. As others have said, he held it for 21 years: he was re-elected in 1988, 1992, 1996, 1999 and 2002.

But in 1985 it was a very different seat to the seat we see today. On the Port Phillip side it was only the southern half of Mount Eliza and the town of Mornington that were included in the seat. Then it was sort of a long, narrow, horizontal seat that went right across to Western Port and included French Island—not Phillip Island but French Island. As the population grew the seat changed dramatically, and eventually it contracted westward and moved north and south and took in the whole of Mount Eliza, kept Mornington, took in Mount Martha and was pretty much the seat we have today although a little bit smaller. As we all know, when you have change on that scale it can make things a little bit challenging for continuing in this place, but despite those changes Robin's reputation as a very strong local representative endured, so he ensured continued success at the polls.

When he was elected to Parliament in 1985, as others have said, he went straight to the front bench as Shadow Minister for Local Government and Shadow Minister for Public Works. And unlike today where councillors if they are elected need to immediately resign their council seats, for some time Robin was actually Shadow Minister for Local Government and a councillor at the Shire of Mornington as well. I believe his term ran out in August of the year he was elected, but he did six months wearing those two hats, so he had skin in the game when it came to the amalgamation debate.

Of course that debate immediately put him in the spotlight, and I know he relished the opportunity it gave him to get up and belt the government. I remember sitting up in that gallery one night probably in the late 1980s, and he was still waving the local government flag. He did a very vigorous adjournment—with far more vigour than you would see in most adjournments today—and was clearly performing for the audience as well. He had that spotlight, but when the reform agenda collapsed—and I do not think there is a kinder word you can use than that—he moved on. He became Shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and he became Shadow Minister for Corrections as well, which I know he was not that enthusiastic about. He returned to local government in 1989 but added tourism and then the shadow ministry of public transport in 1990.

When Jeff Kennett returned to the leadership I think the nicest thing you could say is that Robin's progress temporarily stalled. So he went to the backbench. And when the Kennett government was elected in 1992 he took the chair of the Public Bodies Review Committee, which does not sound particularly exciting, but if you think about it in the context of a reforming government and all the work that was done on amalgamating, eliminating and reforming the public sector at that time, it was a significant role. When the government was re-elected in 1996 he became Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, Roads and Ports, and he joined the cabinet in the following year as Minister for Transport and held that post until 1999. In the years of opposition that followed he, as the Premier said, sat in that chair. He mostly supported the leadership but always had serious input into parliamentary strategy—if you were to ask Robert Doyle, he might have a different view—and of course finished his time in this place as Manager of Opposition Business under leader Ted Baillieu.

The final comment I want to make in terms of Parliament is both in government and out of government he was a very strong supporter of the committee system, and when I was elected he actively encouraged me not only to be involved but to turn up and engage. And that was certainly very, very good advice. Not only did he chair the Public Bodies Review Committee but, as the Leader of the Opposition said, he served on the House Committee. He had a couple of turns on the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee and 14 years as a member of the Privileges Committee. I am coming up for 12 years on the Privileges Committee, and I certainly endorse the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition.

Community service remained a priority for Robin after his retirement. He remained almost until the end a very active member of the community. He was a particularly active member of the committee of the Mornington Information & Community Support Centre and was for a time their president.

From a personal point of view, when I joined the Mornington business community in 1980 Robin was shire president, and at that time of course he was trying to balance the conflicting demands of public office, a growing family and a fledgling business. He was one of those people you think you know because you read about them in the paper. You might see them down the street and give them a wave, but you really do not have anything much to do with them. I cannot recall when we first met, but I suspect it was 1982 or 1983 and was probably in the context of discussions between the Mornington Chamber of Commerce, of which I was an office-bearer, and members of the council—something to do with Main Street, I suspect.

But I can certainly clearly recall sitting next to Robin at a chamber of commerce dinner in around 1984. He would have been the Liberal candidate for Mornington. I was amazed that one person could sit on one 7-ounce glass of beer for the entire night and drink the last half inch or so as he left. But I probably now understand better the demands of public life and attending dinners. At the time, though, I was a lapsed member of the Liberal Party, having joined in 1975—

Members interjecting.

Mr MORRIS: and relocated to the Mornington Peninsula from Canterbury. I had a new business, open seven days a week, and that really did not leave very much time for anything else, so as I said I had lapsed. At that time no-one was going to convince me to go and put time into a political party when I really was not getting enough sleep running the business. But by 1986 Robin had convinced me to rejoin the Liberal Party, and the following year, partly with his encouragement, I stuck my hand up for a seat on the shire council, contested a seat and won it, and that really I think began a partnership that endured for more than 20 years. For almost five of those 20 years I chaired the electorate for him, and then of course he was generous enough to work very closely with me during the campaign in 2006.

Sometimes when you work closely with people you find they are not who you thought they were, but certainly—as again the opposition leader said—that was not the case with Robin Cooper. What you saw was what you got. You might not have liked what you were getting, but that was it. I think that in part was one of the secrets of his success in public life, because he was absolutely fair dinkum. Certainly it was his example and that of another great Liberal, Alan Hunt, that fed any political ambitions I might have had, and I certainly thank him for encouraging that and for his support to allow me to be here speaking in this debate this afternoon.

All of us who serve in this place know that we cannot begin to do so without the strongest support of those closest to us. Robin's marriage to Jennifer—it endured for most of his adult life—was a life partnership in the true sense of the word, and as the children arrived and grew, they joined and strengthened the partnership. Robin would have been the first person to admit that he could not have achieved everything he did without the backing of his family and particularly not without Jennifer's enduring encouragement and strong support.

Robin served his electorate—the greater Mornington Peninsula—and the state of Victoria with distinction. His family can be justly proud of his service and of his achievements, and my thoughts, and I know Linda's thoughts, are with Jennifer and with Rebecca, Jeremy and Anna. Vale, Robin Cooper.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (12:38): Robin Cooper was a man of many flavours and colours. Born in Melbourne, Victoria, he attended Xavier College and later RMIT. He began his career in sales and marketing of building supplies. In 1972 he was elected to the Mornington shire, as mentioned, and became president in 1979–80. In 1985 he was elected to this place and was the MP for Mornington for 21 years, and as mentioned earlier he served numerous shadow portfolios.

Robin came from a strong family and when he came into politics he was absolutely committed to the Liberal cause. When he stood in this chamber he could be loud, sarcastic, cutting and scathing like no-one else. He was smart and absolutely articulate in the way that he framed his debates. He was hard and tough, and no-one ever had to second-guess where they stood with him. When he was made Minister for Transport in 1997 by Premier Kennett I was super impressed by how accessible he was and his readiness to travel the entire state to listen and to solve problems.

When we lost office in 1999 I served with Robin on the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, which did incredible work, but again there was never, ever second-guessing where Robin stood on law and order issues. One of the issues we had to deal with was the push by Labor to decriminalise public drunkenness, which he and the Liberals and Nationals were opposed to, but we did support sobering-up centres. These were committee meetings with a full and frank debate.

On the social side, he was one of those people you wanted to sit next to at dinner. He was always incredibly entertaining. He always had a very funny story to tell. In these days it would have been totally inappropriate, but that would have never bothered Robin. Robin was a passionate Demons supporter and did something that I do not think I will achieve or match: he saw another premiership before he died.

I will end where I started. Robin was a man of different flavours and colours. We were overseas together and we had a free day. I naturally assumed that Robin would find the local butcher shop and just chew on red meat all day, but the female MPs on the trip elected to go to a perfume factory. Robin said he loved the smell of perfume and joined them, a decision about which to this day I still shake my head in dismay. He was a very good man, Robin Cooper. My condolences to Jennifer, Rebecca, Jeremy and Anna.

Motion agreed to in silence, members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:42): I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory and contribution of the Honourable Robin Cooper, the house adjourns until 1.45 pm this day.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 12.43 pm.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 1.47 pm.

Bills

PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:47): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (13:48): I ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill.

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (13:48): This bill amends the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to strengthen the act in relation to the regulation of prescribed accommodation, the control and management of infectious diseases, the removal of stigmatising references to HIV and hepatitis C and a range of measures that bring Victoria's public health system into line with other jurisdictions.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

ALPINE RESORTS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:49): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 to repeal the establishment of the alpine resort management boards and the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council by that act, to establish Alpine Resorts Victoria, to make consequential and related amendments to that act and other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (13:49): Despite that explanation, I would seek a further brief explanation of that bill.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:49): It will be a brief explanation as I am doing this on behalf of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and, as I am sure the shadow minister is aware, the minister for the environment has been working very hard in recent years on governance matters to do with alpine resorts. There have been for some time now a number of alpine resorts—the different resorts have different bodies that look after the management of those resorts—and this bill brings to that structure a future reform program that the minister has been working very hard on, as I said, in recent years.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice given.

Members

ACTING SPEAKERS

The SPEAKER (13:52): I wish to advise the house that under standing order 20 I have tabled my warrant amending the panel of members to preside as acting speakers. I have added Tim McCurdy, David Morris and Gary Blackwood and discharged Anthony Carbines.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE ROADS

The Petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the road hazard presented by the Coal Creek Bends at Korumburra.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Andrews Labor Government to commence works on the realignment of the Coal Creek bends as soon as possible.

By Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (1 signature).

PARKDALE ELEVATED RAIL

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that there are risks and issues associated with the proposed sky rail at Parkdale.

The proposed sky rail will negatively impact the character of the neighbourhood. Parkdale has a unique village feel and cafe culture that thrives on community interaction in natural light and flora. The sky rail visual bulk will cast a shadow that catastrophically impacts this culture and directly affects small businesses. This can attract crime and anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, graffiti and dumping of rubbish. The sky rail will also increase noise to the surrounding community. We accept progress is inevitable, but sky rail is not the best solution for Parkdale. We require consultation with businesses prior to construction to ensure adequate parking is available during construction. A heritage overlay exists on Parkdale shops on Como Parade West.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the Government to immediately stop work on the proposed sky rail at Parkdale, conduct community consultation that includes local residents and small businesses and ensure that level crossings at Warrigal Road, Mentone and Parkdale Railway Station are placed underground.

By Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (2873 signatures).

Tabled.

Documents

NORTH EAST LINK PROGRAM

Primary Package (Tunnels): Project Summary

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:53): I table, by leave, the North East Link *Primary Package (Tunnels): Project Summary*.

Committees

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Report on Procedures for Joint Sitzings under Section 165AU of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (13:53): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Standing Orders Committee on procedures for joint sittings under section 165AU of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, together with appendices.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 1

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (13:54): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest No. 1* of 2022 on the following acts and bills:

Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021

Equal Opportunity (Religious Exceptions) Amendment Act 2021

Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021

Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021

Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021

Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021

Windfall Gains Tax and State Taxation and Other Acts Further Amendment Act 2021

Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978—Order under s 17D granting a lease over Flagstaff Gardens Reserve

Essential Services Commission—Inquiry into the Port of Melbourne compliance with the pricing order

Financial Management Act 1994—Budget Update 2021–22

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission:

Annual Plan 2021–22

Operation Dawson: An investigation into alleged misconduct by a former Victoria Police Superintendent—Ordered to be published

Integrity and Oversight Committee—Report on the appointment of a person to conduct the independent performance audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate—Ordered to be published

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984—Notices under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to:

Statutory Rule 116 (*Gazette S 675, 30 November 2021*)

Statutory Rule 159 (*Gazette S 3, 6 January 2022*)

Major Events Act 2009—Major Sporting Event Orders for the:

Australian Open Tennis Tournaments 2022 to 2026 (*Gazette S 732, 21 December 2021*)

Melbourne Marathon Festivals 2021 to 2023 (*Gazette S 691, 7 December 2021*)

Murray-Darling Basin Authority—Report 2020–21

Ombudsman—Investigation into decision-making under the *Victorian Border Crossing Permit Directions*—Ordered to be published

Planning and Environment Act 1987:

Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Bayside—C175

Boroondara—C341, C369, C370

Campaspe—GC196

Corangamite—C51

Darebin—C206

East Gippsland—C163

Gannawarra—GC196

Glen Eira—C229, C232, C236

Greater Bendigo—GC196

Greater Geelong—C440

Greater Shepparton—GC196

Hume—C259, C260, C264

Loddon—GC196

Maribyrnong—C173

Maroondah—C130

Melbourne—C323, C390, C408, C419, C423

Moirā—GC196

Moonee Valley—C200, C207

Moreland—C179

Mornington Peninsula—C242, C287

Port Phillip—C161 Part 2, C182

Stonnington—C313

Swan Hill—GC196

Victoria Planning Provisions—VC174, VC199, VC204, VC205, VC207

Whittlesea—C241, C258, C262, C263

Yarra—C299

Yarra Ranges—C203

Report 2020–21 on Infrastructure Contributions and Development Contribution Levies

Project Development and Construction Management Act 1994—Documents under s 9 in relation to the Fishermans Bend Innovation Precinct Access Project (three documents)

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008:

Report to Parliament on the extension of a pandemic declaration

Report to Parliament on the making of a pandemic declaration

Road Safety Act 1986—Documents in relation to the Order in Council to Amend the Order in Council Declaring Certain Motor Vehicles Not to Be Motor Vehicles—Electric Scooter Trial

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme Act 2021—SR 4

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987—SR 162/2021

County Court Act 1958—SR 158/2021

Crown Proceedings Act 1958—SR 152/2021

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981—SR 174/2021

Education and Training Reform Act 2006—SR 160/2021

Essential Services Commission Act 2001—SR 145/2021

First Home Owner Grant and Home Buyer Schemes Act 2000—SR 176/2021

Fisheries Act 1995—SRs 161, 163/2021

Gender Equality Act 2020—SR 177/2021

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009—SR 157/2021

Livestock Management Act 2010—SR 159/2021

Magistrates' Court Act 1989—SRs 167, 168/2021, 5

Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009—SR 150/2021

Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003—SRs 148, 149/2021

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004—SR 1

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2010—SR 155/2021

Owners Corporations Act 2006—SR 147/2021

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—SRs 156, 165, 175/2021

Sentencing Act 1991—SR 170/2021

Service Victoria Act 2018—SR 154/2021

Spent Convictions Act 2021—SR 146/2021

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—SR 173/2021, 3

Surveillance Devices Act 1999—SR 169/2021

Transport Accident Act 1986—SR 166/2021

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—SR 2

Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996—SR 151/2021

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007—SRs 153, 171/2021

Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019—SR 164/2021

Wildlife Act 1975—SR 172/2021

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 142, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 152, 153, 155, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 172, 173, 174, 176/2021, 1, 2, 5

Documents under s 16B in relation to the:

Environment Protection Act 2017:

EPA Class Exemption—Exemption from requirement to provide a certificate of conformity for sand filter treatment plants

EPA Designation—Classification of PFAS-impacted soil

EPA Determination—Specifications acceptable to the Authority for receiving processed organics

Food Act 1984—Classes of food premises and requirements—Variation of declaration and exemptions

Service Victoria Act 2018—Service Victoria Identity Verification Standards

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission—Report 2020 on the operation of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities—Ordered to be published

Victorian Inspectorate—Inspection Report February 2021 under the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*

Victorian Rail Track (VicTrack)—Report 2020–21 (replacement for the copy tabled on Thursday 28 October 2021)

PROCLAMATIONS—Under Standing Order 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Act 2021—Section 19—21 December 2021 (*Gazette S693, 7 December 2021*)

Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021—Whole Act—1 January 2022 (*Gazette S733, 21 December 2021*)

Education and Training Reform Amendment (Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters) Act 2021—Parts 1 and 4—24 December 2021 (*Gazette S717, 14 December 2021*)

Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Act 2021—Division 1 of Part 2 and Division 1 of Part 3—31 December 2021 (*Gazette S717, 14 December 2021*)

Liquor Control Reform Amendment Act 2021—Part 1, ss 4(2), 4(3), 4(5), 11(5), 18, 19(1), 20, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 43, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60 and Part 4—16 December 2021; ss 46(2), 47 (except paragraph (a)), 48 and 49—31 January 2022 (*Gazette S693, 7 December 2021*)

Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Act 2021—Division 2 of Part 5—8 December 2021 (*Gazette S693, 7 December 2021*)

Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Act 2021—Part 1, Division 3 of Part 2, Division 2 and 3 of Part 4, Part 5, Part 6, Division 2, 3 and 4 of Part 7 and Part 8—1 January 2022 (*Gazette S717, 14 December 2021*).

Bills

CASINO AND GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

CIRCULAR ECONOMY (WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING) BILL 2021

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY (RELIGIOUS EXCEPTIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (13:57): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Bill 2021 and the Equal Opportunity (Religious Exceptions) Amendment Bill 2021.

CASINO AND GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021
CIRCULAR ECONOMY (WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING) BILL 2021
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY (RELIGIOUS EXCEPTIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2021
PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING AMENDMENT (PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT)
BILL 2021

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (13:58): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Bill 2021, the Equal Opportunity (Religious Exceptions) Amendment Bill 2021 and the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Bill 2021.

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (QUALITY AND SAFETY) BILL 2021
LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ANIMAL ACTIVISM) BILL 2021
REGULATORY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2021
WORKPLACE SAFETY LEGISLATION AND OTHER MATTERS AMENDMENT BILL
2021

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (13:58): I have received messages from the Governor recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021, the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021 and the Workplace Safety Legislation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2021.

Committees

PANDEMIC DECLARATION ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER (13:58): I wish to inform the house that I have received the resignation of Mr Carbines from the Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee, effective from today.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:59): I move, by leave:

That Mr Bull (Sunbury) be a member of the Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Business of the house

SESSIONAL AND JOINT SESSIONAL ORDERS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:59): I move, by leave:

That, as recommended by the Standing Orders Committee's report on procedures for joint sittings under section 165AU of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, this house:

- (1) adopts new sessional order 18 as detailed in appendix A of the report, to come into effect immediately;
- (2) adopts the joint sessional order detailed in appendix B of the report, to come into effect immediately on the agreement of the Legislative Council; and
- (3) sends a message to the Council requesting their agreement to the joint sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

MINISTRY

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): I wish to advise the house of changes to the ministry, which took effect on 6 December 2021. The member for Ivanhoe has joined the ministry as Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and Minister for Child Protection and Family Services.

MINISTER FOR PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): Further I wish to inform the house that this week the Minister for Regional Development will answer questions for the portfolios of Aboriginal affairs, prevention of family violence and women.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

ELECTIVE SURGERY

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Minister for Health. Rebecca from the City of Casey is one of many Victorians who require urgent surgery, in her case to deal with complications from a double mastectomy due to a 2021 breast cancer diagnosis. Her diagnosis includes triple-negative breast cancer and a BRCA1 gene, which is the most aggressive and dangerous of breast cancers, so every day with her daughter is precious. She needs surgery urgently, but due to the elective surgery bans May is the earliest it can be done. Her chemo has been delayed six months, her tumour has doubled in size. Why won't the minister allow the bans on elective surgery to be fully lifted so that Rebecca and thousands like her can get the vital surgery they so desperately need?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As honourable members will know, it is not my practice in this place—a long-held practice—to discuss particular circumstances of particular members of the Victorian community. Nonetheless, should the honourable member seek to provide me and my office with the details of this case, I will of course pursue those in confidence with him and that person.

But in regard to the broader issues that the honourable member raises in regard to the delays in non-category 1 elective surgery that are in place at the moment and were in place for the large part of January, I was pleased to see in regard to the initial lifting of those restrictions that that commenced yesterday. But in regard to the reasons why these measures need to be taken—measures that nobody in the entire state and indeed in the entire country, given that similar measures are in place right around the country, wants to see in place for a moment longer than they need to be—they are in place because at the moment our health system is under pressure like never before. No-one's lived experience in our health system has seen the pressure and the demands of COVID-19 and particularly the omicron variant, which has seen record levels of infection and chains of transmission—no-one has seen these pressures. That has seen, at its peak, over 5000 people furloughed—close contacts or indeed immediate cases taken out of our public healthcare system. It has seen hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of highly infectious cases of COVID-19 in our hospitals. It has seen even higher levels of Hospital in the Home care and wider care in the care of our hospital system in the community. Putting all these together—the rationale of sadly having to prioritise the sickest people in our opportunities to deal with them in the most important locations in our hospital system—has necessitated these measures being put in place. They will not be in place for a moment longer than they are necessary.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Noting that Rebecca twice contacted the minister's office regarding her dangerous breast cancer diagnosis, I further ask if the minister could guarantee that with new variants of COVID he will not shut elective surgery and IVF all over again.

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:06): Predicting the future in a global pandemic is a mug's game, and indeed you can pretty much pick the mugs who do it. You can pretty much predict the mugs who one day call for the abolition of masks and for a scrapping of all the public health orders, only to pivot away from that the minute—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Members on both sides will come to order.

Mr Guy: Speaker, on a point of order, I did not ask the minister to comment on the opposition or anyone else. I asked for a ministerial guarantee that elective surgery, like in other states, will not be shut in Victoria again.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The members on my right! The Minister for Government Services is warned. I take the opportunity to warn all members that I could not hear the minister's answer clearly enough to know whether or not the point of order was an accurate one. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr FOLEY: I can assure the honourable Speaker that I was not reflecting on the Leader of the Opposition, but if he takes the assessment of a mug as a reflection on him, then that is up to him. In regard to the issue around what the future will bring, this government will continue to engage with the private hospitals, with our public health sector, with the workforce and with all those who need that public health system to make sure that it stays effective and relevant to their ongoing response to this global pandemic.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VICTORIA POLICE

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (14:07): The evening of 22 April 2020 will be forever etched in the minds of many Victorians. Many will forever remember exactly what they were doing when they heard the news that four members of our Victoria Police force had lost their lives doing their job, lost their lives in the line of duty. After almost two years, due to the pandemic, we were finally able to come together with the families who lost their loved ones and with the broader Victoria Police family to honour their service, to honour the service of all Victoria Police members and to acknowledge the toll this work has on many families.

Last Thursday I joined the Premier, the Chief Commissioner of Police, other colleagues, distinguished guests and their families to formally honour the lives of Leading Senior Constable Lynette Taylor, Senior Constable Kevin King, Constable Josh Prestney and Constable Glen Humphris at the state memorial service—Victorian heroes who shared a passion to keep our community safe. Some had worked with Victoria Police for many decades, others only for months, but their contribution to our community will be forever remembered and their loss will be forever mourned by their families, the Victoria Police family and our community. Landmark buildings across the city were again lit up in blue following the service, and Victoria Police formed a guard of honour as a mark of respect for their fallen colleagues.

We are once again reminded that policing is dangerous, difficult and challenging. Every day police face the challenges of that work with energy, commitment and bravery. I want to thank each and every member of Victoria Police for the work they do every day to keep us safe and to thank every family member who, despite the dangers, supports them in their work. Our government stands with them and will continue to support them in any way we can.

COVID-19

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Health. How many private hospital beds commandeered for COVID use and which were the result of elective surgery bans were actually used for COVID care?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:10): Can I thank the honourable leader for his question. If I can just set him straight on some of the language that he uses. These beds are not commandeered. There is a national partnership agreement in place right across the commonwealth that we all value and which every state and the commonwealth have used. It is because we are in the middle of the greatest public health crisis that we have seen in living memory—right across the world, let alone here in Australia. A key part of that approach is to make sure that we have in place a whole-of-system capacity to respond to a public health crisis—a proposition that was put to the states by the honourable Prime Minister as to how states could align their public health demands with the capacity in the private sector—and it has been invaluable. So I reject the notion that this is somehow a notion of commandeering the private health system. It is a genuine partnership, one that both the state and the commonwealth have put substantial resources into, and which the private sector operators have overwhelmingly supported and welcomed.

In regard to the specifics that the honourable member talks about, it is not a notion of beds, it is a notion of people, capacity and resources. In that regard I am pleased to say that since the start of this arrangement way back in April 2020, 43 354 Victorian public patients have been supported in the private sector through that arrangement, and I want to thank both the private and the public sectors for operating in such a close partnership.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): Will the minister commit to investigating or auditing the health consequences of cancelled surgery to Victorians, whose health is suffering as a result of the government cancelling elective surgery for lengthy periods of time?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:12): I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. I refer the honourable Leader of the Opposition to the publicly available national partnership agreement, which has built into it an auditing facility that goes to all sorts of issues around quality, cost and numbers. It is publicly available. I would refer the honourable leader to it.

Mr Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is not relevant to the question that was asked. The question that was asked was in direct relation to Victoria cancelling elective surgery, and I have asked the minister: will he hold an audit into the consequences of that in Victoria alone? I ask you to bring the minister back to answering a specific question about cancelling elective surgery in Victoria.

The SPEAKER: Order! On the point of order, the minister is being relevant to the question. The minister has concluded his answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ELECTIVE SURGERY

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:14): I rise to update the house on the resumption of elective surgery. We saw a resumption of elective surgery in the private sector yesterday, and that is a result of the fact that this is a safe and prudent set of measures that we have put in place to make sure that our public and private systems operate in the best possible cohesive and coordinated manner in response to the sort of pressure that has not been seen in the lived experience of both sectors. It is clear that omicron and COVID-19 have put pressure on our system like never seen before, which is why, amongst other things, a pandemic code brown was declared for non-urgent elective surgery earlier in January.

Depending on case numbers, hospitalisations and, sadly, the critical need for ICU and other care, further changes to the 50 per cent rule that was introduced yesterday we can foreshadow, I hope, for elective surgery based on the advice from both the public and the private health sectors in coming

days. From yesterday private hospital day procedure centres were able to resume up to 50 per cent of elective surgery as a result of case loads and hospital demands now starting to head in the direction that we all welcome. In addition, subject to that ongoing decline of the rolling seven-day average for hospitalisations, I look forward to formalising arrangements with the private hospitals to continue their support for the public health system during the COVID-19 response and, should that capacity be required, moving to 75 per cent and beyond.

ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Health. There are more than 80 000 Victorians now on the public elective surgery waitlist. On top of this, can the minister advise just how many thousands of additional Victorians are still waiting for surgery at private hospitals?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:16): Can I thank the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party for his question. Whilst we welcome the national partnership agreement that is in place with the public and private systems right across the country and we acknowledge that as a necessary measure in regard to how to get through this unprecedented level of demand, we have seen the public and private systems come together in an unprecedented manner. What we have seen, as the honourable member touched on, is non-category 1 elective surgery temporarily postponed. But with that measure now being eased as of yesterday, and I am confident of further measures in coming days to further—

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, I asked the minister for a number. Minister, what is that number?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Speaker. As I was indicating, there are now unprecedented levels of coordination, cooperation and investment by the public sector into the private hospital sector, and that has helped get us through this arrangement. I am very alert to the fact that there are in fact, as the honourable member points out, now more than 80 000 people on that public waiting list for category 2 and category 3 surgeries, and I look forward to measures to further address that and bring that down as quickly as possible, again in partnership with the private sector.

In regard to the specific numbers in the private sector, for arrangements that are in place between private surgeons, private practitioners and private hospitals, these are matters that are a direct relationship between those patients and those private sector operators. These are not matters that are on the public record. They are regularly commercial-in-confidence matters, and they are all the time private matters between those patients and those operators.

The SPEAKER: Order! Just before calling the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party on a supplementary, the level of noise and shouting across the chamber has become excessive, so the warning to every member is if they shout across the chamber, they will be removed without further warning.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:19): Why didn't the minister take the advice of the perioperative committee, made up of surgeons, anaesthetists and other health experts, who told the minister that the private system had capacity to continue operating and warned him not to suspend elective surgery?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:20): We now operate under a set of legislative arrangements, and I thank the Legislative Council and the lower house for delivering us the most transparent, accountable and public system of not just the delivery of advice but how it is acted on, when it is acted on and why it is acted on. I would

refer the honourable member to that advice, to my reasons that are set there on the public record for all to see.

But in regard to advice, particularly from the medical profession, let me just detail all of the various advice that I received on this particular matter. I received advice from those nurses on the front line, the thousands of nurses who are being redeployed to all sorts of surge arrangements— (*Time expired*)

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:21): I rise to update the house on the successful return to school for students and staff across Victoria. Last week we saw more than 1 million students and 110 000 staff safely return to the classroom, just as we promised they would, and it has been wonderful to see parents, students and teachers so excited about the return from holidays back to face-to-face learning.

The Andrews government will continue to make sure that the return to school remains as safe as possible through a suite of COVID-safe measures. We said we would deliver 51 000 air purifiers by the start of term 1, and that is exactly what we have done. We are now delivering 15.6 million rapid antigen tests to schools and early childhood centres for surveillance and close contact testing, and an additional 30 million face masks. On face masks, we have got the requirement, as you know, to wear face masks indoors. Well, I can tell you that kids in grade 3 are better at wearing face masks than the Leader of the Opposition—children who are more mature than those opposite.

We have got 30 pop-up school sites, 200 partnerships with GPs—

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, I know we are just back for the first run and the Deputy Premier might have forgotten the rules, but you have repeatedly held that question time, including ministers statements, is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. I perhaps think you might need to remind them.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The Deputy Premier to come back to making a statement.

Mr MERLINO: Mental health support in schools, thousands of tutors to support kids, additional camps, excursions and sporting and cultural events, and we have mandated a third dose vaccine for all school staff because we know that vaccines offer the best protection against COVID-19.

But there is an alternative approach. There are those who oppose vaccine mandates, who prefer to listen to conspiracy theorists, to Neo-Nazis, to Wobbly the Wizard on the steps of Parliament, chasing the preferences of anti-vaxxer micro-parties and putting politics ahead of public health. On this side of the house we have a clear position on mandatory vaccination for school staff, not five positions like those confused people opposite.

REFUGEE DETENTION

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:24): My question is to the Premier. Premier, right now 33 refugees and asylum seekers are being held in detention at the Park Hotel in Carlton, just a few minutes up the road from here. Most of these men have been locked up for nearly 10 years despite committing no crime. They were flown to Melbourne nearly three years ago for medical treatment but have been locked up in Melbourne hotels without access to the outside since then. It is a form of torture happening right under our noses. Premier, we have heard very little publicly from the Victorian government about the fate of these men. My question is: will the Premier publicly advocate to the federal government for the refugees locked in the Park Hotel to be freed immediately?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:24): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. I will try and provide some commentary, albeit briefly, and then, if I have to, write to the member for Melbourne detailing all the steps that we have taken, I think in partnership with an NGO

provider of health care that are doing the best they can to provide care and support to those individuals that she references.

I have not had an opportunity over our time together in this place to have a conversation with the member for Melbourne in relation to my views about these matters. Immigration detention and the issue of border security and those coming here without appropriate authority is a wicked problem. I have throughout my time in public life always said that we need not have a wicked solution to a wicked problem. I want to see humanity. I want to see a sense of caring, a sense of love and a sense also of course of pragmatism, but I have on many different occasions advocated for the reunification of families that have been separated by arbitrary rules. I have on many different occasions advocated for children who are Australian citizens because, whilst their parents came here without the appropriate authorisation, they were born here. These are not matters for a state government, but I would like to think—

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: I am not sure what the member for—

A member: Mr Irrelevant.

Mr ANDREWS: indeed—was on about, but this is a serious matter. The question has been asked seriously, and I would have thought that the member for Melbourne was entitled to an answer rather than the commentary and the idiocy of some. This is a serious matter.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: How dare I? You have got to be joking.

Ms Ryan: Speaker, my point of order relates to the fact that over the last couple of years I have noticed a pattern of behaviour from the Premier where he seeks to paint the opposition doing things that we are quite simply not doing because he knows it plays to the cameras and to a recording that other people will see later. I would like to ask you to actually review that and the appropriateness of that and perhaps counsel the Premier because he is doing this place a disservice. I think the Victorian public need to be aware and need to know that his actions do not reflect the reality of events in this chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Euroa has not raised a valid point of order.

Ms Allan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will come to order.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, while the member for Euroa was making a point of order, the deputy leader interjected and called ‘you lot’, referring to us as a bunch of Neo-Nazis. I take offence to that and I ask the deputy leader to withdraw. It is insulting, and you cannot just cast those words around this place; it is offensive.

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear any interjection, and it sounds, from the point of order taken by the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, that if any comments were made they were directed to a broad group of people—that is, members on the other side of the house, not an individual. There are clear rulings—

Mr Walsh interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals knows that when I am making a ruling I do not like people interjecting across me. There are clear rulings around the seeking of a withdrawal, so I cannot seek a withdrawal from the Deputy Premier at this point in time.

Mr ANDREWS: As I was saying in response to the very serious matter that the member—

Mr Southwick: On a further point of order, Speaker, I am one of those on the side which was referred to and I am personally offended by those comments that were made. I ask the deputy leader to withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on the point of order.

Mr ANDREWS: As I was saying, Speaker, in response to a very—

A member: You got away with it, James.

Mr ANDREWS: No such comment was said, and that is a fact. I am sitting next to the Deputy Premier, and no such comment was made—none whatsoever. So on that basis those opposite can try this latest tactic—a summer of hard work to come up with this nonsense. They come up with this sort of low-road nonsense. The member for Melbourne asked a serious question that is about those in our community who have the very least amount of power, and those opposite could not even listen to the answer, so disrespectful are they of not only the member for Melbourne but this Parliament and those who in the community with no power.

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, just on relevance, I appreciate there is a debate between the government and the opposition in terms of interjections and what have you, but the real issue is the matters raised by the member for Melbourne in regard to these men. I would ask the Premier to come back to answering directly the question of the member for Melbourne.

The SPEAKER: On the point of order, the Premier was coming back to answering that question.

Mr ANDREWS: Thank you, Speaker. I will write to the member for Melbourne detailing all the different steps that we have taken in partnership with others to provide the very best care that we possibly can. I do make two further points: one, these are fundamentally issues for the commonwealth government and, secondly, if you do a search of the record, you will see consistent—albeit not three times a week, but consistent—representations and views put on the record by me for a more compassionate approach on these very issues.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:31): I appreciate that the Premier says these are not really a matter for state governments but, Premier, you have a direct line to the Prime Minister. These men are being held in our state just minutes down the road from here. With his platform the Premier of Victoria's loud public advocacy on this issue would make a big difference—in fact it could make all the difference—to these men's lives. Will the Premier speak up more loudly and publicly to advocate not just for health care for these men but for these men to actually be released?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:31): Again, the member for Melbourne has asked a serious question, and I do not want to be partisan in my answer, but I think it is somewhat self-serving to inflate and elevate the special relationship that I have on matters of immigration policy and border security with the Prime Minister. Like, seriously, I am more than happy to be consistent, to be loud. I think the Prime Minister knows that there are many things we do not agree on, and this would be one area of policy that we do not agree on, but the notion that he is ringing me up to get advice on who should get in and out of the country—that is not happening. We saw that most recently in relation to a tennis player, for heaven's sake. What I will do—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: I let him in, did I? I do not think he played, actually. I do not think he played, and the tournament went along just fine without him. I will write to the member for Melbourne, but the member for Melbourne ought not doubt my commitment on these matters or weaponise them in her own political games.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VICTORIA'S BIG BUILD

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:33): I am very pleased to rise to update the house on the massive summer of progress on projects right across the state, big and small, as part of the Andrews Labor government's Big Build program. There were thousands of workers working hard over this summer period, and I want to thank them. I want to thank those who worked so hard while so many others were enjoying a bit of a break because they kept our construction program going—and they have kept it going through a pandemic, keeping their worksites safe and keeping these worksites moving. Delivering major projects delivers better transport connections. It also delivers jobs. It employs thousands in the construction industry and thousands more across small businesses who are part of our really important supply chain because we prioritise local jobs on our projects.

I also want to thank Victorians for their patience. Some of these projects did involve some considerable disruption in different parts of the state; for example, the adding of extra lanes on the Monash Freeway between EastLink and Warrigal Road—work continued on that project. On Fitzsimons Lane in Eltham work continued. And of course the Cranbourne line duplication powered ahead as well with that important duplication work. Victorians who travelled into regional Victoria, or those of us who have the pleasure of living in regional Victoria, would have noticed that our Big Build was particularly big in the regions this summer. Work powered ahead on the Echuca–Moama bridge project, on the Princes Highway east in Gippsland between Traralgon and Sale and on Barwon Heads Road and on the Great Ocean Road upgrade as well. Plus there were works completed on the Waurn Ponds station, and I was particularly proud to open the brand new Goornong station as part of our Bendigo metro 3 program.

While this work was underway we did get calls from some to wind back our major projects. We received calls to cancel the Sunbury Road project and the Narre Warren North Road project, and there were the usual calls to cancel level crossings. They came from the Victorian Liberals, who want to see this Big Build wound right back.

MEMBER CONDUCT

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:35): My question is to the Minister for Police. In 2019 the minister refused an interview request from Victoria Police over the red shirts scandal. How can the minister's role not be compromised, given her refusal to be interviewed by Victoria Police two years ago?

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (14:35): Can I thank the shadow minister for his question, and can I reject the question—the presumptions behind the question. I am not going to comment on allegations that are being made by an individual who himself is before IBAC.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:36): Will the minister give a guarantee to the house that she will comply with any further requests that Victoria Police make of her into the red shirts scandal, currently under investigation?

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (14:36): Firstly, I just remind the member I have rejected the premise of his previous question. Secondly, what I can guarantee to the member is that I never discuss individual investigations with the Victoria Police. That is absolutely clearly within the realm of Victoria Police operations under the Victoria Police Act. It is for them to determine what they investigate, what they do not investigate and who they call.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19 VACCINATION

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:37): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the fact that more than 93 per cent of Victorians over 18 have got two doses of the vaccine.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Some can sigh about it. Others are proud of it—and every single Victorian should be. It might be a cause of weariness for some, but let us be very clear: Victorians have done a mighty job, an amazing job, in getting vaccinated. We are not far away, it would seem, from the experts confirming that we need three doses of this vaccine to be protected, to get the maximum level of protection possible. That ATAGI advice—we will wait and see that come in due course, and we will be well served by that advice, I am sure. But if it is a three-dose project rather than just two, then as pleased as we are to see 46 per cent of Victorians having got a third dose, we all have to do more and we all have to do better. That is why difficult decisions have been made quite recently by the Minister for Health in relation to schoolteachers and—never let us forget—school support staff. And we may need to go further than that. Victorians have done an amazing job. This summer has not been the summer that people wanted with the wildly infectious omicron variant—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: There is the sigh again. It is a good thing they are not running anything. They could not run a bath, and it is a good thing they are not if this is all ‘Boring, boring’ and ‘I’m a bit tired of all this, I’d much rather play political games’. Political games do not keep people safe, only difficult decisions do, made by people who take their responsibilities seriously and are not bored by the precious gift that has been given to them. That is how you keep people safe. 46 per cent is a good start. We need to go further and we will. I thank every Victorian who has isolated this summer, every Victorian who has got a test this summer, every Victorian who has got a booster this summer and every Victorian who has contributed to nearly 50 per cent of five- to 11-year-olds being vaccinated. Victorians can do anything when they stick together.

Constituency questions

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:39): (6176) My question is to the Minister for Planning. On Christmas Eve, while many locals were enjoying their holidays, you exercised significant ministerial power under the cover of darkness to remove significant trees and buildings at the Caulfield Racecourse without consultation. Having been aware of the impending plans even a month later, many locals were left shocked when several trees, some 100 years old, were swiftly cut down in January. As a result residents have expressed their outrage that you gave approval for the felling of these trees and the demolition of these significant buildings without proper community consultation. Of particular significance among these trees is an Aleppo pine tree grown from the seed of Gallipoli’s Lone Pine, which was also destroyed in the process. Minister, why did you make this order without consultation, and how will you protect the heritage significance of the Caulfield Racecourse precinct going forward?

CARRUM ELECTORATE

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (14:40): (6177) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Minister, last week I joined you to announce the start of works on the Western Port Highway, where we are removing two roundabouts at Ballarto Road and Cranbourne-Frankston Road. Following that terrific announcement for the more than 22 000 motorists who use this highway, I have had a number of constituents contact me. Minister, what are the next steps around the Andrews Labor government’s massive commitment to upgrade Hall Road between McCormicks Road in Skye and Cranbourne-Frankston Road in Cranbourne? This major project will transform the lives of residents in my electorate by adding an extra lane in both directions on Hall Road between McCormicks Road and Western Port Highway and upgrading five intersections to improve safety for everyone and reduce

congestion. There is overwhelming community support for this project. My constituents and I look forward to the minister's response.

EUROA ELECTORATE

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:41): (6178) My question is to the Minister for Education. Seymour College has been forced to close its 10-year-old hydrotherapy pool because the school does not have enough money to keep it open. Maybe that very tough decision by the school should not be a surprise given the Productivity Commission's report last week, which shows that Victoria has the lowest level of funding per student for government schools of any state or territory in Australia. But this pool was not just used by the school. It was also used for therapy by locals who have disabilities, and the town's disability services provider, Goulburn Options, is absolutely dismayed by its closure. My question for the minister is: will the minister provide the funding that is required to immediately reopen this pool and guarantee its ongoing availability not just to the school but to the wider community?

ST ALBANS ELECTORATE

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (14:42): (6179) My constituency question is to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and my question is: how will the minister ensure that residents in my electorate are able to access appropriate in-home care and support through aged care packages? Over the past year a St Albans constituent has been corresponding with my office in an effort to gain access to in-home support services after having extensive surgery. There have been significant challenges for this constituent in accessing the care that he and his wife need and require. There is a high demand in my area for these services. Our older Victorians deserve to be safe and supported, and I know many in my community rely on these critical services to secure their independence at home as they move to an older age. I look forward to the minister's response on this very important matter for my community.

RIPON ELECTORATE

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:43): (6180) My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Will the government review its banking and financial services state purchase contract to allow existing state government agencies and organisations in Ripon to continue to bank with their local community bank? I am particularly referring to Inglewood and District Community Enterprises, which is a Bendigo Bank that has had the local health services bank with them for many years. They have written to me on the back of correspondence from the minister to them, and they note that what he has said means that they can only be entrusted with the cash raised by the fruit tree drive and the next raffle, a crumb of comfort in mitigation of a bad policy. This is really harming my local communities, this latest contract, and I ask the minister to vary it.

NEPEAN ELECTORATE

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (14:44): (6181) My constituency question is for the Minister for Small Business. Earlier this year the Victorian government announced a record investment of \$3.8 billion in mental health services, and in addition to this record investment Business Victoria has been providing wellbeing and mental health support for Victorian small businesses. My electorate of Nepean is home to many small businesses that are currently doing it tough because of the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. With reduced patrons and staff shortages leaving many small businesses struggling, it is more important than ever that our locals are provided with mental health support to help them deal with the challenge of running a small business during this difficult time. My question to the minister is: what wellbeing and mental health support is available to Nepean small business owners who are doing it tough and are looking for support this summer?

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:45): (6182) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Will the minister once and for all commit in the upcoming state budget the allocation of funds to duplicate Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, and in particular to fix the dangerous intersection at Killara Road and Maroondah Highway before there is another tragic accident, and will he provide a start date for actual roadworks? Why is the government still sitting on funding from the federal Liberal government and allowing this important road safety project to gather dust? I have raised this in Parliament at least eight times in the last three years, and Coldstream residents, traders and CFA volunteer firefighters are simply frustrated and fed up with the Andrews Labor government for dragging its feet on fixing this dangerous stretch of road and installing the traffic lights the community so deserves. The minister's lame response when asked last year was that they were investigating treatments at the intersection. You have had 2½ years to investigate. Why is Labor delaying this and putting lives at risk? When will these works start?

NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:46): (6183) My constituency question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and concerns the Supporting Access to Vaccination for Priority CALD Communities program. Minister, how will this program encourage and support COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters amongst my multicultural electorate of Narre Warren South? Throughout the pandemic it has been important to ensure that everyone is provided with the best health advice while always keeping safe. Vaccination is our main method of keeping COVID-19 under control and preventing hospitalisations and deaths. I thank groups such as our local Le Mana Pasifika organisation in Narre Warren South for helping to connect our multicultural community to vaccination support and reliable information. I would appreciate any further information that the minister can provide on how the Supporting Access to Vaccination for Priority CALD Communities program will benefit my constituents.

SANDRINGHAM ELECTORATE

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:47): (6184) I am going to sound like a broken record with this one, because I have given this issue a crack more than two dozen times. My constituency question is addressed to the Minister for Fishing and Boating, and I ask: when will the Andrews Labor government commit to repairing and reopening the Hampton Pier? After two years there are no details about when it will be repaired and reopened. It is just sitting there, neglected and fenced off. There is no date, no plan and no funding to fix it. By contrast, on 15 January the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Brighton and I announced our commitment to rebuild and reopen Hampton Pier. It seems that this will be the only way to reopen the pier that means just so much to my community. After two years of sidelining this important issue for my community, we frankly deserve the respect of an answer to this very simple question by the Andrews Labor government.

BURWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (14:48): (6185) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Can the minister please provide an update on the power saving bonus program, which was due to close on 31 January 2022? As part of the Andrews government's 2020–21 state budget, the power saving bonus program provided a \$250 payment to vulnerable households to assist with their energy bills. This is crucial financial support for Victorians who are doing it tough. \$250 can make a significant difference to households relying on Centrelink payments. More than 350 000 Victorians have accessed the payment, providing more than \$87.5 million to those who need it most. My office has assisted hundreds of members of my community with their applications, especially those who do not have access to a computer or the internet or otherwise struggle with online forms. I have received many grateful calls from constituents after receiving their payment, and I am proud to be part of a government that cares for the community through outstanding programs like this one.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to question 6126 addressed to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure that was due to be answered by 17 December, and I ask you to ask her to answer my question.

The SPEAKER: I will follow that matter up for the member. Can I just remind members in a general sense when they are asking constituency questions to direct their questions through the Chair, not to directly ask a minister a question.

Business of the house

INDEPENDENT BROAD-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

VICTORIAN INSPECTORATE

Performance audit

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:50): I move, by leave:

That:

- (1) Under s 170 of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011, Callida Pty Ltd ('Callida Consulting') be appointed:
 - (a) to conduct the performance audit of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission;
 - (b) in accordance with the agreement for the provision of services for the performance audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate; and
 - (c) at the following fixed-fee levels of remuneration:
 - (i) \$66 000, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's audit plan, representing 20 per cent of the total fee;
 - (ii) \$99 000, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's progress report, representing 30 per cent of the total fee; and
 - (iii) \$165 000, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's final draft report, representing 50 per cent of the total fee.
- (2) Under s 90D of the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011, Callida Pty Ltd ('Callida Consulting') be appointed:
 - (a) to conduct the performance audit of the Victorian Inspectorate;
 - (b) in accordance with the agreement for the provision of services for the performance audits of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission and the Victorian Inspectorate; and
 - (c) at the following fixed-fee levels of remuneration:
 - (i) \$21 600, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's audit plan, representing 20 per cent of the total fee;
 - (ii) \$32 400, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's progress report, representing 30 per cent of the total fee; and
 - (iii) \$54 000, plus GST, upon acceptance of Callida Consulting's final draft report, representing 50 per cent of the total fee.
- (3) A message be sent to the Legislative Council requesting their agreement.

Motion agreed to.

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:52): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 pm on Thursday, 10 February 2022:

Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021

Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021

Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021.

I am very pleased to present the first government business program for the start of the 2022 parliamentary calendar year, and I look forward each week with anticipation for the government business program that I move each week to be enthusiastically and unanimously supported by members of this house. If I cannot get unanimous support, I will at least take the passing of the motion through the chamber, because as we will see as the weeks unfold and as we have seen over the past three years the Andrews Labor government each week continues to put forward a government business program that contains a strong legislative agenda that contains policy proposals that are implementing either commitments we made through the election or other forums or indeed other important reforms from across the whole suite of different ministerial portfolios.

This week is a good example of the diversity of the work that is being done across government. These bills should be well ventilated around the chamber, given that they were second read some time ago. So I am confident that members who wish to participate in the debate this week will have worked very hard over the summer to make sure that they are across the details of the bills to participate in the debate on the various aspects of the bills. I note that the Manager of Opposition Business has sought the government's support for the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill to go into consideration in detail later in the week, and that will be considered should there be time available later in the week.

I did also want to note that it is the government's intention to conclude this week the take-note motion on the fabulous 2021 budget. It is always a good day to talk about the Treasurer's fabulous 2020–21 budget, but sadly we must bring that conversation, at least in this place, to an end in a formal sense. That is a signal for any colleagues who wish to speak on that fabulous 2021 budget to do so over the course of this week.

In conclusion can I once again say thanks for the work that has gone on over the summer period to have some modest changes in arrangements to how the Parliament is operating in the context of the latest—omicron—variant of the COVID-19 pandemic that, as we know, is now entering into its third year. I would like to also acknowledge and thank the Manager of Opposition Business for the discussions we have had on this matter. The ongoing wearing of masks in this chamber is a sensible measure. Endeavouring to manage where possible the numbers of people in this place—whilst we are operating with a full chamber and a full normal program, we do need to continue to be mindful of our proximity to each other. The wearing of masks is very important, as are the air purifiers. And of course I would like to say thanks for the work that the Presiding Officers and the clerks and the parliamentary staff have undertaken in relation to the provision of rapid antigen tests and the encouragement for them to be undertaken by members as we come in for the parliamentary week.

They are sensible, practical measures that mean we can operate our Parliament for full days, full sitting hours and full participation on the floor of this house with all members in this house. It has always been our intention for it to be that way. From time to time we have had to make some changes, but I am really pleased that we are at this point where we can have the full normal operation of the house. With those comments, I commend the motion to the house. I look forward to its universal and enthusiastic support from colleagues in the chamber.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:57): I also lived in hope that this week we could at least not oppose the government business program given that there are only three bills on the agenda. I was hopeful that when the Leader of the House approached the minister on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 the Minister for Agriculture would enthusiastically embrace the idea of a consideration-in-detail stage. Unfortunately, while the Leader of the House has not ruled it out, she has not given a guarantee, and that is insufficient given the previous experience we have had. In other words, we have never gone into consideration in detail. As a result the opposition, which was really prepared to not oppose the government business program this week, will in fact be opposing it.

We will do so because we have repeatedly asked, and we will continue to ask on occasion, to go into consideration in detail. We will do so because we want to flesh out some of the issues around the bills that come to us. We want to fully examine some of the clauses within them and occasionally we might want to move an amendment, and we can only do that through that phase. I know the Leader of the National Party is keen to do so on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021.

Just on that bill, the Leader of the House did correctly note that we have had the summer to look at this bill and the other two and to fully understand them. I would like to remind the house that it was only through the efforts of the Leader of the National Party that we even got this bill brought into the Parliament in the dying days of the 2021 sitting. The Minister for Agriculture had to be embarrassed into bringing this bill forward, because the government had said that they would legislate to stop animal activists invading people's farms and not being properly fined or held to account for that but then nothing happened. Nothing happened and it went on and on and on. And it was only after—

Mr Walsh: Two years.

Ms STALEY: Two years, the Leader of the National Party tells me, since it was announced that that would happen and only when that pressure was applied that we belatedly saw a bill. Now of course we do actually have some further questions. We do not oppose—could I give you the mail—the idea of you legislating in this way. We have been asking for it for years. So again, it is not always about us being in opposition. We actually do want to make things better. This is about something we care deeply about.

Ms Ryan: Improving the legislation.

Ms STALEY: We really want to improve the legislation. That is absolutely right, Deputy Leader of the National Party.

Now, on to the other two bills that are before us today. The Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021—there will be a number of speakers from our side wanting to address this bill. It does go to some important issues around how the health system is run in this state and some of the problems that are clearly evident with the government's management of the health system. The final bill, which is the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021, is a catch-all. It amends maybe 10 pieces of legislation in various ways, and I am sure that many members across the whole Parliament will have something of interest to them and want to speak on that bill.

So I agree that there are interesting and worthwhile bills that need consideration. We really want the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 taken into consideration in detail. I have every faith that the Minister for Agriculture, having spent two years trying to get it to this, should be across the brief and be quite capable of managing a consideration in detail. It would be unacceptable if in fact she is frightened of that and that is why we are not getting a guarantee. In a week when we only have three bills we should have the time—at least for an hour. We are not actually talking about the whole of Thursday; we are talking about one hour of consideration in detail to go through a few clauses and perhaps move some amendments. With that, I conclude by saying that the opposition will be opposing the government business program motion.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (15:02): Well, that is disappointing but not surprising. That is okay. That is what we are here for: to talk about these things. I am a bit confused about the Manager of Opposition Business's comment that there seems to be only one way of raising amendments. I am pretty sure I have been here for about three years now. I am relatively new still, but I seem to have seen a lot of amendments done in other ways. All right, things have changed apparently.

Welcome back, and isn't it good that we are all back, we are all up and about and we have all had a bit of a pep talk and had a break? I believe the word of the morning was 'the fourth quarter'. That was interesting—the fourth quarter. I thought about that. I thought about it coming into the fantastic government business program that we have in front of us. I know that the Leader of The Nationals has been speaking about the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 for a long time, and I am really looking forward to hearing his support for it. I might be surprised, but I am still hopeful because that is what we do in here: we are hopeful and we are optimistic. Even though I am disappointed about those not supporting it, we will still try and get it through. We will see how that goes.

But I did think about the Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021 coming through, and part of that is about being open and transparent—again, these are things that we all agree with. I again wanted to hear their support, but we did not get it. And obviously there is the omnibus Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021, which is coming up at the end, so we will all have a chance with that.

I will make my comments brief because we all really want to get into this fantastic government business program. But I do think, in relation to the fourth quarter, most games of footy I have seen do not change the captain at half-time—it is not usually a good idea—and usually the coach is present before the game starts. But sure, bring him in at the fourth quarter huddle, and good luck. I commend the government business program to the house and cannot wait until it passes.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:04): Well, that went well. There were some zingers in there, member for Mount Waverley—really, really good. I am pleased to rise to speak on this, but I am always perplexed when the Leader of the House gets up with great optimism, and the member for Mount Waverley also has great optimism. Every week with the government business program there is one thing we ask for—one thing. We ask if we can go into what the member for Mount Waverley said is an open and transparent process, actually go into consideration in detail. And the Leader of the House every time says she is optimistic and she is hopeful that we might support her, but every time she fails to give us what we ask for.

It is pretty simple: if you want us to support the government business program, give us a bit of that open and transparent process and let us go into consideration in detail, which, as the member for Ripon has pointed out, is all we want to do on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, which we have been waiting for for years. As the member for Ripon quite rightly pointed out, this is a bill that was pushed by the Leader of The Nationals. I want to give great credit here to my colleague in the other place Melina Bath, without whose work on the committee that looked into this issue we would not have had this recommendation and would not have had the government dragged kicking and screaming into introducing some penalties for people who invade farms, so great credit to her. We want to actually debate this bill. I am not giving away any secrets. I think the member for Ripon has already said we are happy to support this bill, but there are a couple of things we would like to pursue a bit further, things we can improve. We would do that if we had the openness and transparency that this government likes to talk about and if it allowed us to go into consideration in detail. I continue on that. I liked the words of the Leader of the House when she said that these three bills had been well ventilated—boom, boom! Right on message—we have got the ventilators, the air purifiers in here. So these bills have been well ventilated, according to the Leader of the House, a bit like the pandemic bill before Christmas was well ventilated—oh, no, hang on, we had three days to consider that one. But for legislation of great importance, like the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021, we get months. The record of this government should stand: when it comes to openness and transparency, when it is something important, there is none from this government.

I also would like to just pick up—and it is great to be back here; we are here to do our job and it is great to have a full chamber—that the Leader of the House mentioned that we have got the full, normal operation of the house. I do not know whether anyone else was interested to note during question time where the government members were. I looked across to my left, where there is normally quite a lot of noise coming from. There was no-one here in the supposed full operation of the house.

Ms Allan: I have a point of order on two matters, Deputy Speaker. One is on relevance. The presence of members in the chamber is not a subject canvassed by this motion directly. However, I will also note that when I discussed in my contribution the arrangements that have been put in place for this sitting week, I did directly go to the point that the discussion that the Manager of Opposition Business and I had was that we would collectively work, where we can, to see if we can get the numbers down in the chamber just a little bit to manage the safe operation of the house. It is the agreement I have with the Manager of Opposition Business. The fact that there are so few members on that side of the house, thanks to the decision of the Victorian community at the 2018 election, is a matter for them, and I would ask that the member for Gippsland South not cast those sorts of negative aspersions on my colleagues.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order, and I ask the member for Gippsland South to come back to the government business program.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am glad I have been schooled and educated. I noticed when we started up this morning the entire chamber was in here, so it is beyond me as to why there were so many disappearing from question time. But anyway, it has been explained. I would just like to finish up by saying the actual bills on the government business program are quite pertinent to the last couple of years. We have got health legislation, we have got regulation legislation—we have all lived under all sorts of regulations for the last couple of years—and we have got livestock, and that is probably a reference to herding cats, because that is what it has been like here in the last couple of years as well.

We continue to live in hope that one day the Leader of the House will actually listen to us and deliver some of the openness and transparency that the member for Mount Waverley talked about. But as it stands, we are still not getting the opportunity to go into consideration in detail, so we will oppose this government business program.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (15:09): I do not usually get up to speak on the government business program, but I am starting today with a really big smile because this is quite a lively debate and quite interesting indeed. It reminds me of something very, very similar that happens in my house on a daily basis. I have got an eight-year-old and an 11-year-old. Quite often there are a lot of things that they want and I have to make a ruling, and I have to say they quite often do not get what they want. The behaviour of those opposite and the narky little jibes just remind me of little Leo and little Emily, who will soon be picked up from school by their father.

This is going to be a jam-packed week, with three fantastic bills coming before the house. I do have to take a moment to mention the Manager of Opposition Business making comments towards the Minister for Agriculture, talking about her feeling afraid—I do not think she called her a coward but she called her afraid of having the debate or talking about different amendments to the legislation. Well, I have to say I do not think on this side of the house the Minister for Agriculture has ever been called anything like afraid or a coward. I think it is in quite the opposite way that we would refer to the minister. I just happened to be outside a moment ago, stopping the minister on her way to the chamber and said that I have read through the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021—yes, I am speaking on that this week—and that it is a really great bill. It is a very, very important bill that is going to come before the house that we will be able to debate. I cannot wait to sit here and look at the other side of the house and see if they actually turn up to debate the bill in any kind of numbers or grouping because over the past three years as a new member I still have never seen that side of the house full to talk about anything or support members on that side of the house on

legislation that is going through or on amendments and motions they feel strongly about. I have never seen them sit here and take the time to listen to and debate something in any kind of way that suggests any of the seriousness that they are trying to pretend they have when it comes to amendments to legislation that we have got before the house.

One of the bills that we are putting up this week that we will be speaking on—I am actually looking forward to speaking on it on a personal note—is the Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021. This is a bill that is really important. It is important for all Victorians who have interacted in some way with our health services and health system and have had an incident, had something happen to them. I am hoping to be able to tell—and I am not sure about the way in which it will come out for me—a very personal story about the benefits of this legislation and how it will help people to move forward and find closure.

The other piece of legislation I am really excited about getting up and speaking in favour of is the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021. It is a biggie but a goodie, and there is a lot in it. I know we will have a full remit of speakers on that piece of legislation, and I have no doubt it will cause a bit of debate here in this chamber as we kick off a brand new year with the first sitting week for 2022.

I am going to finish up by saying not only that I look forward to debating the bills in the chamber this week but also as the Premier has said on so many occasions—I know I do not need to remind anyone on this side of the house of what the Premier has said to us on many occasions—that every day in government is a precious gift. It is really important not to waste it—not to waste your time here and not to waste one day we have in government. The bills that are before the house this week, these three bills, are an indicator of the massive legislative reform agenda that we are going to go ahead and roll out this year—a very exciting election year, with two elections that will be underway no doubt and will very much affect the future direction that Victoria goes towards. If we keep up the pace on delivering and debating legislation, as we will go forward and do this week, as we have throughout this term of government, I have no doubt that we will live up to the saying of the Premier and make every sitting week count.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:14): I also rise to address the government business program this week. It is a fascinating government business program. There are some very interesting bills there. There are some colleagues who are very interested in addressing those bills as well. But I feel like it is a bit like groundhog day again, for the times that I addressed the government business program over the course of last year, time and time again members of the opposition raised the same point. We on this side of the chamber would like to take some, not all, pieces of legislation into consideration in detail, and we do so with good reason. The consideration-in-detail stage allows us, as the member for South-West Coast has mentioned, to address the detail of the bill and to scrutinise the bill—to get ministers of the Labor government on their feet answering questions that relate to the bill itself and to go line by line through different clauses of the bill in order to look at it in more depth. That is a fair request by the opposition. That is a request that has been made by the opposition in good faith to the government, and once again the government has said that they may get around to allowing us that opportunity. For us, that is not good enough. It is simply not good enough. What we want is certainty. What we want is confirmation that we will in fact move to a consideration-in-detail stage for the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, which the Leader of The Nationals, my good friend and colleague, will be leading the debate on. He will very enthusiastically lead that debate, followed by the member for Gippsland East, the member for Polwarth, the member for Eildon and others. I think it is a fair and reasonable request from this side of the chamber to move into consideration in detail in relation to that bill.

Of course during the course of these sitting days we will also consider the Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021, and I know that the member for Lowan will enthusiastically and vigorously lead that debate on behalf of the opposition. Then we will move to the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021. To say that the member for Brighton will

address that bill with vigour and enthusiasm is an understatement. I think that that will be an epic contribution from the member for Brighton, an absolutely epic contribution from the member for Brighton, and I would encourage those members of the government and those members of the opposition who wish to see the member for Brighton in full flight to attend the chamber at that time because I fully expect the member for Brighton to deliver with both barrels during the course of the debate on the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021.

The opposition's request for the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 to go into consideration in detail is a reasonable request. We are actually quite disappointed that the government will not agree to that outright, and for that reason we will be opposing the government business program.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (15:18): (*By leave*) I rise to speak on the government business program, and I have to say it is with some disappointment that we are starting a new year and we are still fixed in the ways of not having the opportunity for consideration in detail in this house. I think we all know that this is where the ministers sit—most of the ministers on most of the important bills that get debated in this house—and it is surely the role of ministers to step up and answer questions from the opposition, independents and Greens. There are no opportunities for this to happen in this house, and it really starts to make a mockery of what the role of an opposition is in a Legislative Assembly. It is very disappointing.

We do have three important bills before the house. The Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Bill 2021 has some very important issues in it, including that notion of a duty of candour by hospitals to allow people to understand what may have happened to them and to have a full, detailed explanation of things that have happened to them in hospital and even an apology, and it sets up a situation where that can happen, among many other things.

The Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 has been on the table for a long time, and there are aspects of that where fleshing out some of the detail I think would be very useful for all sides of the house to better understand, because it will have a significant impact.

The Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021 contains many small issues, some of which are incredibly important, and one may well relate to the future of regional newspapers. The planned removal of advertising in the printed form in newspapers may well lead to the reduction of advertising. Small newspapers depend enormously on government advertising to actually exist. We are losing our capacity to be heard in regional areas: newspapers are disappearing, regional radios are being soaked up by multinationals and television has almost disappeared, with WIN Television going and Prime television going. Very little coverage is left for anyone to tell the stories of regional people within their communities. These are really important issues that are here to be debated.

I think the opportunity for members on this side to be able to debate and have a say on these issues often only comes in consideration in detail, because here in this house we have no non-government business program—the only house in the Westminster system that does not provide an opposition with a non-government business program, and that is truly an astounding thing. I have stood up here every Tuesday to move a motion to remedy that, and I am not getting the support that is required. Here on this side the Greens certainly support me, and other independents do. I am yet to hear others speak up in support of such a fundamental change to bring back into the Victorian Parliament in this Legislative Assembly the sorts of democratic processes that we should have. So I oppose this for all of these reasons, but particularly that removal of the ability for us to do our job and for us to be able to address ministers, raise questions and get answers in what is really a very civilised fashion. You only have to see how that operates in the upper house and in other parliaments to see that it is the one opportunity that members get to really flesh out the details around a bill. It disappoints me to have to oppose this government business program, because the bills themselves are important and generally supported, but because of the lack of capacity to investigate and to ask questions, I will be opposing the government business program.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:23): (*By leave*) I just very briefly put on the record that the Greens will also be opposing the government business program. I wholeheartedly agree with so much of what was just said by the independent member for Shepparton. We have never had consideration in detail of any bill in this entire Parliament. Nearly four years we have been here and we have not had it. It is a fundamental part of our democracy. We only had it a couple of times in the last Parliament. There are many new members of Parliament here who have never, ever experienced it.

The Greens do not actually support the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. We think it is a bill that is overly punishing people who try and stand up against animal cruelty. But nonetheless, even though we do not support the bill, we support going into consideration in detail where the minister answers questions about it. We would have a chance to ask questions about how it would work in practice. It is a fundamental part of our democracy. There is no reason why the government should be hiding from that transparency. It is something that we should do on every single bill in fact. We have done it on no bills in the last four years. I think it is a reasonable request that when an opposition, an independent or a Green asks for consideration in detail on a bill, it is given. And when that happens and it is not given, we do not really have much choice apart from opposing the government business program.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 46

Addison, Ms
Allan, Ms
Brayne, Mr
Bull, Mr J
Carbines, Mr
Carroll, Mr
Cheeseman, Mr
Connolly, Ms
Crugnale, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms
Dimopoulos, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr
Edwards, Ms
Eren, Mr
Foley, Mr
Fowles, Mr

Fregon, Mr
Green, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms
Hall, Ms
Halse, Mr
Hamer, Mr
Hennessy, Ms
Horne, Ms
Hutchins, Ms
Kennedy, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms
Maas, Mr
McGhie, Mr
McGuire, Mr
Pakula, Mr

Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richards, Ms
Richardson, Mr
Scott, Mr
Settle, Ms
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Tak, Mr
Taylor, Mr
Theophanous, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Ward, Ms
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 30

Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Britnell, Ms
Bull, Mr T
Cupper, Ms
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr

McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Newbury, Mr
Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr D
O'Brien, Mr M
Read, Dr
Riordan, Mr
Rowswell, Mr
Ryan, Ms

Sandell, Ms
Sheed, Ms
Smith, Mr R
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Tilley, Mr
Vallence, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (15:32): I rise today to congratulate some of my constituents who received awards on Australia Day. Congratulations to Riddells Creek resident Gill Metz, who was awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal this year. Gill has spent over 20 years with fire services as a volunteer at CFA, as a staff member

at CFA and in her roles at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as assistant chief officer and deputy chief fire officer. Gill has championed the cause of diversity within the fire services now over many years, and she passionately believes that brigades should reflect the communities that they serve. In her current role as secretary of Riddells Creek CFA Gill has mentored many young women and men to fulfill their potential and has created a fantastic community atmosphere. Congratulations to Gill on this much-deserved recognition.

I would also like to acknowledge local Australia Day award winner and Woodend local and sustainability campaigner David Gormley-O'Brien, who took out Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Citizen of the Year award for his tireless grassroots environmental advocacy. Daylesford stalwart Danny Moynihan was awarded Hepburn shire's Citizen of the Year for his tireless volunteering and selfless commitment to the region. Both of these men contribute in so many ways to the regions in which they live and serve, and they are both part of that great spirit that makes Macedon such a wonderful place to live.

3RD CAVALRY REGIMENT (VIETNAM) ASSOCIATION

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:33): I raise the concerns of the Vietnam veterans who served in the 3rd Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam. The 3rd Cavalry Regiment (Vietnam) Association have established a living memorial in Tongala for those who served in this regiment in Vietnam. Each year the association members come to Tongala and pay their respects to the former members of that regiment. It is a very powerful and very moving service involving both former and current service personnel. The two primary schools come along, and the wider community are very engaged in that particular service.

The concern the association has is that the memorial is partly on VicTrack land, which is leased to the association, specifically lot 46. Michael Thompson from the 3rd Cavalry Regiment (Vietnam) Association has tried to gain freehold to that land rather than leasehold. The association is concerned that sometime in the future this lease may be taken back and that part of the memorial will be destroyed because of that.

I ask the Minister for Veterans or the Minister for Public Transport to actually come to Tongala and see firsthand what the 3rd Cavalry Regiment (Vietnam) Association have created there with that memorial and to meet with Michael Thompson and have him show them around that particular memorial. The association needs a more secure tender for that memorial than a 10-year lease that could be taken back at some time in the future. I ask either minister to get involved and fix this issue.

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (15:35): 27 January was International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945. It is a day to reflect on the millions who were murdered and to honour that suffering by ensuring that current and future generations know about the atrocities of the past to ensure that they never happen again. Meeting the challenges presented by the pandemic over the past year has sadly seen a rise in antisemitic activity and a despicable appropriation of the Holocaust by some protesters. Local anti-vaccination activists have likened mandatory vaccines and lockdowns to the rise of Hitler, posted selfies wearing yellow stars and striped pyjamas as signs of protest and distributed stickers around Jewish neighbourhoods bearing swastikas and the words 'No jab, no job'. As Courage to Care New South Wales chairman Eitan Neishlos has said:

The trivialisation of the Holocaust—an unparalleled human catastrophe—both dilutes and distorts vital historical lessons necessary to prevent such an event from ever happening again.

Sadly, these incidents do not occur in a vacuum. They occur when some of those elected to this very Parliament not only turn a blind eye to these activities but embolden these groups when disgraceful comparisons are drawn between the actions taken in response to a one-in-100-year health emergency and the remorseless genocide of a population. Social media posts showing the Premier as Hitler or

drawing comparisons between the public health response to the pandemic and the litany of race-based laws passed in Nazi Germany are offensive, show a lack of understanding of history and are disrespectful to all others who have served in this place.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (15:36): Here we are back in 2022, and I can only imagine the mood in the Labor party room. Since we last met here we have seen the Premier wield his power to make sure his political enemies will not be setting foot back in this place next year. These enemies include the members for Narre Warren North, Kororoit and Preston and the once hailed future Premier the member for Broadmeadows, whilst in the other place Ms Vaghela, Mr Melhem and the President himself, Mr Elasmara, were not safe from this Premier and his crusade to purge the Parliament of those who would dare speak against him. These members were all once fierce advocates for the Premier, but that does not matter to him. This should stand as a warning to all remaining Labor members. I wonder out loud whether those who have survived the purge are allowed to associate with the outcasts, or would the Premier take a dim view of that? This man may describe you as his good friend, but any moment he will turn on you if he sees an opportunity to mete out his petty revenge.

Victoria is currently facing one of the biggest ever health crises, a crisis overseen by the Premier for 11 of the past 15 years, but out of fear for their jobs you will not hear anyone from the Labor side speak about the agony of their constituents who are in desperate need of elective surgery. Why is that? Because the Premier will not allow any of his minions to speak the truth about how bad our health system actually is. I plead with government members: stop being sheep, stand up for your local communities and hold the Premier to account, because Victoria is watching, and if the Premier does not throw you out, Victorians will.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (15:38): It is 2022, and it is my fourth year here. It is great to be here, and it is great to be delivering for local schools, one of my biggest priorities. 2022 is going to be a big year for local schools in Bayswater. We have already delivered so much. Just this year I can tell you that planning is well underway for major upgrades already announced at Bayswater Secondary, Fairhills High, Templeton Primary, St Bernadette's Primary, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary, Boronia West Primary and Heathmont College, not to mention some small upgrades already in planning at Boronia Heights Primary, Regency Park Primary, Fairhills Primary, Wantirna Primary, Bayswater South Primary and Bayswater West Primary, just to name a few. It is safe to say there is plenty happening. It is a massive list, but there is always more work to do, and I intend to get on with delivering for education locally.

It was also great to get out and meet fantastic local principal Kerri Emonson at Wantirna South Primary School very recently—a fantastic local school and one I am looking forward to working with over the course of the journey. A very big thanks to the school leaders for showing me around as well. They were so articulate and able to tell me exactly what they see for the future at Wantirna South Primary School—wonderful young people. I know 2022 is going to be exciting at Wantirna South Primary, and it is great to see the kids up and about.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS

Mr TAYLOR: It has also been fantastic making my way around the local community and meeting some of the fantastic grassroots community clubs and the volunteers within them who make it all work. It has been great to connect with groups like Mountain Gate Cricket Club, Johnson Park Cricket Club, Knox City Cricket Club as well as Templeton Tennis Club, Wantirna Tennis Club and Knox City Tennis Club, to name a few. I am grateful for their work in continuing to support our community.

VICTORIA ELIXIR COFFEE ROASTERS

Mr TAYLOR: I will just give a very quick shout-out to Victoria Elixir Coffee Roasters located on Erica Avenue, Boronia—an absolutely fantastic brew where we announced the business facade grant recipients in the Boronia revitalisation program. They received one too. Thanks so much for the great coffee—love your work, legends.

COVID-19

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:39): Giving birth should be one of the happier times of your life, but during COVID times for many women it has been anything but. Michaela's story is just one that represents what many women have gone through this year. When Michaela went into hospital to give birth a few weeks ago she unfortunately tested positive to COVID. Her husband also tested positive, so the hospital told him he could not come in to support her or witness the birth of his first child. But to make matters worse, Michaela was told she could not have anyone come in to support her birth at all, not even if they were COVID negative, were vaccinated and wore PPE. She had to give birth with no-one to support her except the hospital staff. When her daughter was born she was taken into isolation and Michaela did not get to see her for 36 hours, with little explanation of why.

I know many people are suffering right now—people are unable to get surgery they need and cannot visit loved ones dying in hospital, and nurses and hospital staff are doing an amazing job after a horrendous two years—but people giving birth should be allowed to have a support person with them even in COVID times. Many hospitals—like the Royal Women's, where I will hopefully give birth to my baby in the middle of the year—are making this work and allowing support people, but it seems the decision is up to each individual hospital. I would like the Minister for Health to make a public statement making it clear that all hospitals should allow people giving birth, whether they have COVID or not, to have a support person with them. It would make the world of difference to people giving birth at this really uncertain time.

MIRCO ANGELOVSKI

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:41): I would like to pay tribute to Mirco Angelovski, a great man who I was lucky enough for my part to call a friend. Sadly Mirco passed away on Friday, 14 January, at the young age of 59. He was a passionate and loyal advocate for Macedonian Australians, holding many positions and roles, including president of the Macedonian Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria. He was a man of generosity, strength and vision.

The Macedonian cultural centre in Epping was Mirco's vision—a centre that would display, preserve and teach Macedonian culture and identity for years to come. I worked with Mirco to secure a Victorian government multicultural capital grant of \$300 000 to help build the centre. This was the first multicultural grant that the Macedonian community in Victoria had ever received. The fact that the application was successful was a credit to Mirco, our advocacy together and the professionalism and hard work that went into the extensive application, and for that part I must also acknowledge Mirco's fellow committee members, Vasko Nastevski and John Branov. The cultural centre was indeed part of Mirco's legacy. I commend his hard work and tenacity, which will be a benefit to present and future generations.

On a personal level, I miss Mirco for his humour and commitment. I am also forever in his debt for the advice, contacts and knowledge he gave me to prepare for my wonderful trip to Macedonia in 2016. My sincerest condolences to Mirco's wife, Vesna, and his sons, Hristijan and Stefan.

MISSION TO SEAFARERS, PORTLAND

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:42): Mission to Seafarers, Portland, supports foreign seafarers when they dock in the port of Portland. These international seafarers play a critical role in getting imports into Australia as well as shipping our goods overseas. Throughout the COVID pandemic they have been unable to leave their ship, even to visit the Mission to Seafarers store at the

port, a place to relax and buy essential items. Many of these workers have been at sea for months and even years, which has had a huge impact on their mental health. The vast majority of foreign ships docking at Portland have been at sea for at least 17 days, a quarantine in itself of sorts. This minimises the risk of COVID coming into Australia. However, the mission has committed to paying for and helping coordinate vaccinations for those seafarers who remain unvaccinated. Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania have all started relaxing their rules to allow vaccinated seafarers onto the shore, but the Victorian Labor government continues its ban. The Portland Mission to Seafarers tell me they cannot even get a response from the Labor government on this issue.

With our international borders to reopen to vaccinated travellers later this month, the Victorian Labor government needs to allow vaccinated foreign seafarers access to our shores or support them to get vaccinated through the Mission to Seafarers. The Mission to Seafarers in Portland do such a wonderful job of selfless work in looking after the welfare of these foreign workers, so it is only right that we do everything we can to provide the mechanism to safely allow vaccinated seafarers onto our shores. The government needs to show some compassion.

DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:44): Wishing you a happy birthday for your recent special day, Deputy Speaker.

BLACK SATURDAY

Mr EDBROOKE: Yesterday, as many people know, marked the 13th anniversary of the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. We remember the 173 people lost, the hundreds of people injured and those left to rebuild. We acknowledge the contribution of every person who responded that day to overwhelming adversity and faced over 400 fires, 3500 buildings destroyed and 1.1 million acres burned.

FRANKSTON HOSPITAL

Mr EDBROOKE: Last week, whilst the Prime Minister visited the federal electorate of Dunkley to wash a woman's hair, we were announcing initiatives that will actually change women's lives. The preferred bidder was named for the state government funded \$605 million Frankston Hospital redevelopment. This includes an expansion of women's and children's services, including a new maternity, obstetrics and paediatrics ward; a women's clinic; and a special care nursery.

Congratulations to the Exemplar Health consortium, which has been announced as the preferred bidder to enter into an exclusive negotiation with the Victorian government to deliver this life-changing and huge project—in fact the largest health build outside of metropolitan Melbourne in Victoria's history.

Construction is expected to start in the first half of 2022, with the redevelopment creating up to 1700 jobs at the peak of construction. This will deliver an amazing health outcome for families in the south-east.

LOWAN ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (15:45): On New Year's Eve the Poolajelo and Langkoop communities were devastated by a quick-spreading grassfire that destroyed thousands of head of sheep and cattle, dozens of farm outbuildings, hundreds of kilometres of fencing, extensive pasture and vehicles. Fortunately no lives were lost, and while beautiful gardens were destroyed, all occupied homes were spared through the excellent work of the CFA. I thank everyone who was involved in the response and recovery, particularly the local CFA volunteers, who have been called out almost every single day over a dreadfully busy fire season for the region.

In a major disappointment for the community, the Minister for Emergency Services has rejected the calls and the request by West Wimmera Shire Council to declare the event a disaster. This region has extremely limited access to resources and desperately needs state government support. The low

population and the great work of the CFA to save homes should not be used against them. They need the support and they need it now. They cannot access Bushfire Recovery Victoria support without this declaration of a disaster. I therefore urge the minister to immediately review her decision and declare this fire a disaster to give this remote Victorian community the bushfire recovery support they desperately need.

LOWAN ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms KEALY: Usually over summer we see extensive roadworks, but this year we are seeing more reduced speed limit signs than we are road-repairing machinery. I would like to invite the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to join Ryan Milgate, who recently invited those ministers to come and jump on his truck and see what the roads are like out our way. I encourage these ministers to take up Ryan's generous offer. We need to see in this year's budget more— *(Time expired)*

FOOTSCRAY ELECTORATE PLANNING

Ms HALL (Footscray) (15:47): When Victorians think about notorious planning decisions, they might think about the actions of the Leader of the Opposition when he was planning minister in places like Fishermans Bend or Phillip Island. But today I want to speak about the scandalous decisions that he made in my electorate of Footscray, which perhaps did not get the same media attention, in what is known as the Joseph Road precinct. The area will accommodate around 7000 new residents. I am speaking on behalf of those residents, many of whom are rightfully asking, 'Why do we have dirt roads? Is it possible to have more trees and more green space in here, or bike paths?'. These are normally matters that are sorted out before permits are granted, but in Footscray the Leader of the Opposition approved the permits without the support of council and whilst ignoring the objections of the Victorian government architect. He also approved the permits without requiring the developers to pay the appropriate contributions for essential infrastructure.

A lack of setbacks has meant that there is a lot of work to be done to ensure that Footscray's newest residents have the infrastructure that they deserve, including trees, cycling infrastructure and asphalt roads. The Andrews Labor government had to take action to get the developers to pay their fair share to cover the costs of essential infrastructure, and that was challenged in court. I am pleased that finally the money needed to build the roads is coming, and council will start construction on the roads shortly. The Andrews Labor government is putting in a pocket park to provide much-needed green space.

GREATER SHEPPARTON SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (15:48): School has resumed after the summer break, and I am happy to see students back in the classroom after two disrupted years. With the help of rapid antigen tests, it is hoped the spread of COVID will be controlled and education will be able to continue in the usual way. I congratulate all of the students in the Shepparton district on their resilience and flexibility in navigating their way through the past two years of schooling. It has truly been challenging.

The new Greater Shepparton Secondary College is being attended by 2223 students, and they are enjoying a world-class school with its wonderful and extensive new facilities. I have heard from many people and students how delighted and excited they were to begin term in a new school. There is plenty of space within the new school building and grounds for the children to socialise, know and use in their own way.

The \$120 million *Shepparton Education Plan* has been a smart investment in the young people in our area, who did the best they could in substandard buildings with outdated facilities due to decades of underfunding in our region's schools. The community has supported the development of this school, including the Committee for Greater Shepparton and Greater Shepparton City Council and so many of our businesses, who are now interactively involved with the school to provide students with the opportunities they may need to help them determine the sorts of pathways they will have into the future. We want to see all children leave school with a pathway, whatever that is.

GEELONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE

Mr EREN (Lara) (15:50): It was a great pleasure to join my local Geelong Labor colleagues, along with the Minister for Regional Development, over the Christmas break to announce that work has started on a bigger and better than planned Geelong convention and exhibition centre, GCEC as I call it from now on. This precinct on the Deakin waterfront car park site will also include a luxury hotel and other commercial opportunities. The Victorian government will contribute an additional \$120 million to the project on top of its existing \$141 million investment, creating a total project worth \$294 million, with additional contributions from the commonwealth government and the City of Greater Geelong.

The Victorian government will soon begin a market-sounding process for architects, designers and builders suitable for the project's scale. The Victorian government will be looking to partner with the private sector to deliver the GCEC as part of a broader precinct development, with hotel and other commercial opportunities to activate the area and create better connections to the CBD and Western Beach. The new precinct will include a 1000-seat plenary venue, which will be developed with 3700 square metres of flexible multipurpose space to enable large and small events to run concurrently. As the previous Minister for Tourism and Major Events I understand firsthand the value of a project like this for our region, and I wish it all the best for the future.

GROWING SUBURBS FUND

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (15:51): I rise today to call on the Auditor-General to undertake a full investigation into the Growing Suburbs Fund. During the last budget debate I drew the attention of the house to the blatant pork-barrelling being undertaken by the government using this fund as a vehicle. Eighty per cent of the total funds available in last year's rounds went to government-held seats. Nowhere was the manipulation of the fund more blatant than on the Mornington Peninsula, where the seat of Nepean received 9 per cent of total funds available. Mornington got nothing. Hastings got nothing.

I thought things had changed when on 3 February this year the Mornington Peninsula shire made a very welcome announcement that \$3 million had been allocated from the fund to support the development of a peninsula trail network. Seeing the headline, I said, 'Fantastic. They've finally agreed to fund the primary section of trail from Moorooduc to Mornington'. I should have known better. Why would Labor be spending taxpayer funds in a Liberal-held seat? No surprise, they were not. The funded section runs from Somerville to Baxter. While this is certainly welcome news, the blatant politicisation of the fund is not. Why is Hastings suddenly getting funds when previously none have been available? Could it be something to do with the fact that following the redistribution Hastings is now notionally a marginal Labor seat? Of course the priority section, Moorooduc to Mornington, is in a Liberal seat. It is about time Labor stopped playing politics with public funding and provided every seat with the infrastructure and services required. In the meantime the Auditor-General needs to have a serious look at this fund.

JOHN CAIN MEMORIAL PARK

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:53): The Greens-dominated Darebin council in my electorate of Northcote is destroying local sport. At John Cain Memorial Park (JCMP) in Thornbury the State Lawn Bowls Centre was built ahead of the 2006 Commonwealth Games. As Victoria contemplates hosting the 2026 games, these once-celebrated elite facilities owned by the council sit degraded and dishevelled. In 2020 I spoke about the demise of the Darebin City Bowls Club, muscled into oblivion by the Darebin council. The club has disintegrated, its members scattered and bonds broken—over 50 years of club history lost. In 2026 Victoria may again host the Commonwealth Games, bringing with it global prestige, excitement, tourism and jobs. Sadly, John Cain park will not be part of it, nor will its soccer fields be part of the women's world cup in 2023—another opportunity lost.

The Greens are no friends of local sport or the unique community bonds it creates. Across the inner north they have been on a mission to dismantle clubs and repurpose sports facilities, culminating in the Victorian Greens leadership plotting with Greens councillors to close down the Northcote golf course. In the Greens arsenal is hiking up ground fees, litigation against clubs, callously withdrawing funding and removing sports infrastructure. Many times I have called on Darebin council to see the value of sport in our suburbs and the potential of JCMP as a world-class ground for international and local clubs alike. The dream of revitalising the park was the last thing John Cain Jr spoke to me about before he passed away. Locals are angry. *(Time expired)*

MELTON ELECTORATE

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (15:54): As we return from the summer break, hopefully well rested, the Andrews Labor government has still been busy in the Melton electorate. In January the government commissioned a business case exploring a new TAFE campus in Melton to make more skills and training opportunities accessible for jobseekers in Melbourne's west. Melton is one of the fastest growing areas in Victoria, with a forecast population of 330 000 by 2026, but there is no dedicated TAFE or post-secondary education provider meeting the needs of local jobseekers and industry. The business case is another commitment from the Andrews Labor government to ensure TAFE opportunities.

The finishing touches were made on the brand new Strathulloh Primary School that the Minister for Education and Minister for Mental Health opened with me last week. Students gleefully started at their new school in their state-of-the-art classrooms and school grounds. Ground was broken and works were begun on the second Melton ambulance branch on High Street, Melton West. We look forward to having more paramedics servicing the Melton community. The government has also secured and taken ownership of land in Cobblebank to bring us another step closer to delivering the new Melton hospital. The Growing Suburbs Fund also announced last week the delivery of \$4 million for the Cobblebank community services hub, \$800 000 for Bridge Road Recreation Reserve and over \$560 000 for upgrades to Navan Park. While others sit on their hands complaining that nothing happens, this government gets on and delivers for the constituents of Melton.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (15:56): It has been a busy summer across the Wendouree electorate, with the state government continuing to deliver for the Ballarat community. Yesterday we celebrated an exciting new chapter for the Ballarat railway station bluestone goods shed, with the opening of conference rooms, a theatre and banquet rooms thanks to \$28.3 million from our government. The goods shed redevelopment has transformed Ballarat's landmark railway precinct and stimulated the local economy by creating jobs for local suppliers, contractors and construction workers. We have also opened stage 2 of the Ballarat Sports and Events Centre in the heart of Wendouree, made possible by \$5.2 million from the Andrews Labor government. This brings the total investment into the greater Eureka sports precinct to \$38.5 million since 2014.

Our government has also delivered a new bus interchange at the Ballarat railway station, giving passengers a safer and more comfortable place to wait for their bus, plus easier connections between the bus and train services. It has also taken buses off nearby streets, where they would previously wait for long periods in front of houses and businesses. Our new interchange includes pedestrian crossings, CCTV, lighting, shelters and seating, improving comfort and safety for our station users. The opening coincides with improvements to Ballarat's bus network, with more than 70 extra trips per week and a new improved timetable. There is so much more to come for Ballarat and the Wendouree electorate, making it an even better— *(Time expired)*

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (15:57): Today I would like to speak about the Andrews government's commitment and investment to make Victoria the digital and innovation capital of Australia. Last week I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Higher Education and colleagues in the other place for the announcement of Victoria's largest supercomputer at the Hawthorn campus of Swinburne University. As a former educator I am so grateful for and impressed by the work that is undertaken at Swinburne. It is a great asset to Hawthorn, Melbourne and Victoria. This new supercomputer has the capacity to analyse and process data a million times faster than a standard computer. For lay men and women like me, this means that complex datasets that would have taken a year to process can now be done in a week. Incredible. It can use information generated from satellites, allowing our astronomers and researchers unprecedented access to outer space. This is yet another fantastic project from the Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund. Our \$5.2 million investment shows that we are a government that backs our universities, backs Hawthorn jobs and backs Hawthorn students. Swinburne University is just a great institution.

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:59): Australia Day in Nillumbik was one really to be remembered, and I was so rapt that it was the last that I will undertake and the best in the 20 years that I have served the electorate of Yan Yean. I want to commend the mayor, Frances Eyre, all councillors in Nillumbik and the event staff in Nillumbik for a truly fantastic Australia Day, particularly the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group, the choice of music and the stories from Indigenous community leaders and musicians. It really did bring Australia together, whether you support this date or not.

I want to congratulate the Australia Day awardees. The Young Citizen of the Year awardees and the Community Group of the Year are Hayden and Stephanie Rujak and Hayden's Helping Hands. They are brother and sister and they are teenagers. They were concerned about the issue of homelessness and were too young to volunteer, being under 16, so they set up their own charity so that they could help young people. Lorraine Hudson is the Senior Citizen of the Year, and she has cooked hundreds of meals for people during COVID together with the fruit and veggie operator in Diamond Creek and also her son the butcher. I also want to congratulate the two Citizen of the Year awardees, and they are Miranda Armstrong and Marlis Dopheide. *(Time expired)*

ARTHURS SEAT QUARRY

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (16:00): A short time before Christmas I was so pleased to inform my community that the RE Ross Trust's proposed quarry had been defeated. This followed a long, hard-fought campaign against the proposed quarry for Arthurs Seat, spanning multiple years and huge efforts by not just committed environmentalists but also many concerned residents and long-time locals on the Mornington Peninsula. On 27 April I did a poll on my Facebook page which asked for the community's views on the Hillview quarry proposed at Arthurs Seat. The results were emphatic. Over 4000 people voted in it and 97 per cent voted no. The Save Arthurs Seat team of Mark and Michelle, alongside many other locals, dedicated innumerable hours and resources and a tireless energy to fight this proposal. The 'Quarry Off!' bumper stickers were the most frequent and visual example of this fight.

Thank you to the community, who made their views clear. It is understandable how this issue, this proposed quarry, would bring people from completely different backgrounds together, and that is exactly what happened. So many people who perhaps had never had any real political views came to me to talk about their frustration with the proposed quarry. Through this fight I really met the many sections of our community. As I said last year in this place, the time is now here when we must say no to development on the peninsula in an unsustainable way. We have to protect our Mornington Peninsula for the long term. Otherwise what will our future generations say? What type of peninsula will they be raised on? A peninsula I hope that is similar to the one I grew up on.

Business of the house**NOTICES OF MOTION**

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (16:02): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with the notice of motion today, and I ask that it remain on the notice paper.

Bills**LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ANIMAL ACTIVISM) BILL 2021***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms THOMAS:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:03): Thank you very much, Acting Speaker Blackwood. Can I congratulate you on your elevation to the roster for chairs. I look forward to some more balanced rulings from the Chair with your inclusion on the list.

The Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021: at the start of this debate can I put on the public record the Liberal and National parties' tribute to the men and women of this state who produce the food that we eat, who produce the fibre that clothes us and who produce the fibre that we live in—

Ms Britnell: Shelter.

Mr WALSH: and receive shelter from. They deserve the support of every member of this house for what they do, for those things that I said. I was very disappointed to hear in the debate about the government's business program that the Greens say they are going to oppose this legislation because they believe people have a right to demonstrate, irrespective of how much harm that may cause to other people. I would remind the Greens members of this house: how would they feel if 70 activists at 6.30 in the morning, before they were out of bed, stormed into their house and actually demonstrated about something that they were doing that the demonstrators felt was wrong, even though they were living in their own home and they were not breaking any laws, they were just going about their business. What is good for one is good for the other. You cannot say people can invade properties, can cause chaos, can cause a biosecurity risk and can cause mental anguish to a family but on the other hand say, 'Don't come to Melbourne and do it to our particular house'. I would like the Greens members to reflect on those points before they get up and make a contribution and particularly before they vote on this legislation, because as I said, the men and women of this state who produce the food that we eat, the fibre we clothe ourselves with, the housing we have and the shelter that we have, deserve the support of every member of this Parliament to go about their lawful business and do those things that they do so well for this particular state.

Can I also put on the record a thankyou from our side of politics to Melina Bath. Melina Bath, in the other place, in response to the situation that happened at Gippy Goat, to John Gommans and his family, when they were invaded by about 70 activists at 6.30 in the morning and had some animals stolen—I will come back to some of John's comments to the committee's inquiry shortly—took up the challenge, took up the cause on behalf of John Gommans and on behalf of farmers in this state, particularly animal farmers in this state, and fought very, very hard to have an upper house inquiry into this particular issue, which is where we are at today with this legislation coming before the house.

Melina deserves the thanks of us as her colleagues, but I think more importantly she deserves thanks from all of those men and women who go about their daily business in Victoria of producing the food that we eat and the clothes that we wear and the houses that we live in that she was able to take up this cause and persevere all the way to get a motion through the upper house to have the inquiry, to organise people to come and give evidence and to then produce a minority report, because that committee is

dominated by the government and independents up there and some of the recommendations were not supportive of the industries and the people that I have just talked about. Well done to Mel for the work that she did in getting that inquiry up and getting the recommendations up that came out of that inquiry that have led in part to this particular legislation before the house.

I think it is instructive to look at what some of the people that gave evidence to that inquiry said and particularly for the farmers of this state what some people think about them. Chris Delforce said:

As my personal ideal world, we would not be breeding and killing animals when we can live perfectly happily and healthily without doing so.

I think most people would argue that the protein that we get from animals, whether it be meat, whether it be milk, whether it be cheese, whether it be any of the other products, is actually a core part of our diet. It is a core part of human existence in this state. Particularly younger children, if they do not have a sufficient diet, we are finding now there are reports about vegetarians and veganism and they get serious health issues longer term. David Leyden said:

I think that the Government should impose a tax on meat products, particularly because animal agriculture is the leading cause of deforestation and the number one driver of climate change, and climate change is going to impact us all sooner rather than later.

I would like to see the Government assist farmers' transition to more ethical systems of food production and for the Government to invest in R and D for plant-based meat substitutes and things that people would like to eat in place of animals.

That is again from someone that is so opposed to what our farmers do here. And Patricia Mark, the founder of Animal Liberation Victoria, said:

... with all our taxes, I know that is how I want my taxes to be used—to help these farmers to transition ...

out of animal agriculture. These are the forces that were giving evidence at this inquiry. They are the forces that are behind the animal activists that invade these farms and cause so much angst to our primary producers in this state. One of the things that the farmers that then came along and gave evidence to this inquiry—I am going to talk about one of the chicken farmers that gave evidence to this inquiry—said was:

We manage our farm under strict biosecurity ... with locks on all gates and appropriate legal signage. We have footbaths to sanitise all footwear. We have a visitor's declaration for contact with any avian species or pigs before they are allowed to enter our farm, and that is for disease control, particularly the H5N1 bird virus and ILT, which is rife in the industry and easily spread on people's bodies.

This farm had been invaded by farm protesters, and the police were there. The chicken farmer said:

On approaching one of the protesters before the police asked us to return to the house, I asked them why they were there and what they hoped to achieve, and I said to the policeman who was beside me, 'I hope you're going to arrest these people'. And this gentleman—

the protestor—

said to me, 'I've been arrested 17 times. I've never been charged'—and—

the farmer said—

excuse my language—

but this protestor said to him, 'You can go and ... yourself'.

And that was the attitude. We manage our farm under strict biosecurity. Our farm is biosecure, with locks on all gates and appropriate legal signage. We have footbaths to sanitise all footwear. We have a visitor's declaration for contact with any avian species or pigs before they are allowed to enter our farm—

et cetera, et cetera—

So to have 70 people in our sheds was an enormous risk to the biosecurity of our farm. We also have hand sanitiser at each entry point to the shed and—even my wife and myself—every time we enter the shed we wash our boots and we wash our hands in sanitiser. However, these people walked through mud to get into

our sheds—through cow paddocks and sheep paddocks, through a back entry into our farm—and that, again, posed a risk to biosecurity.

This is the issue that we are talking about with this particular legislation—that it is actually about protecting the ability of people to farm and protecting the biosecurity of that farm. The committee did recommend on-the-spot fines, and John Gommans stated in some of his evidence:

So, my recommendations to the Committee are that, because the courts appear reluctant to provide punishment, we should have on-the-spot substantive fines for trespass and breach of biosecurity. Activists are confident in their ability to ignore the police when it suits them. Drawing you to the New South Wales example, you can have an on-the-spot fine of \$1000, \$220 000 if you are an organiser, or \$440 000 if you are a corporation. A similar process in Victoria would be helpful. I also would like to see minimum fines of 50 per cent of the maximum total levied.

I support John in that view that having a maximum fine is one thing; the more important thing is to have minimum fines, so that the courts actually make sure there is a severe penalty there into the future.

You then go on to the mental health and the stress that it causes to farmers around this. From the evidence the committee learned that the mental health of employers and their workers is greatly compromised when a business is targeted by protesters, and Daryl Bussell, the CEO of Luv-a-Duck, said:

I think the most disturbing thing is the mental state of the people that witnessed it and that have this ongoing fear that it is going to come back again ...

into the future. A Mornington Peninsula chicken farmer gave evidence and said:

So, these people invaded our home, and when I got dressed and walked down with the police I was absolutely confronted. I was fearful.

These people had dark clothes. They had hoodies on. They did not want to be easily recognised. I did not know who they were. To all intents and purposes, they were terrorists. They presented like terrorists. They could have had baseball bats, they could have had knives, they could have had guns. I do not know. All I know is that there were 70 people in one of our sheds, which is a horrifying thing to confront. In their manner they are confrontational, they are abusive, and they wanted us to engage them to cause a scene, which we did not. So, we were frightened. The image was one of terrorism, and we were very fearful for our safety. They called us killers, they called us animal abusers and they called us criminals. They said that they would return, and they did, one week later. That is when they spray-painted the side of one of our sheds with the graffiti.

The ongoing anguish that these farmers have once they have been invaded is the fear that they will come back again. John Gommans, who I spoke about earlier, gave evidence about the harassment of his staff and the social media targeting his customers. He was forced to actually close the Gippy Goat Cafe. That had a turnover of \$800 000 a year. I had been to John Gommans's Gippy Goat before this issue arose and after that issue, a great cafe outlet, also with some areas where adults or particularly children could interact with the animals there. You could buy a bag of pellets and feed the goats and feed the sheep, and kids loved doing that. If you were not careful, they were that hungry they actually ate the bag you had it in as well. So you had to be very, very careful when you were doing it. But people loved going there, and that facility is now closed because of those animal activists and the invasion.

Brian Ahmed, an egg farmer, said about the economic cost to his business:

... on our occasion we suffered probably close to \$10 000 in damages. That was to the doors that were broken into, disruption to our grading facilities and things like that.

Mr Ahmed said he received no compensation from the activists. There was a \$750 fine ordered to be paid by the perpetrators to the animal welfare organisation of their choice.

So it was not even to the Consolidated Fund; it was not a significant fine at all.

We went to court, and they were given a \$750 fine ...

and that was then sent to the RSPCA, and they had no criminal record recorded against them. So again, no history into the future. That is where we come to some of the issues around what I think should be an increase in the amount of the fines in this particular piece of legislation. To the inquiry again, Cr Daniel Meade of Moyne shire said:

Agriculture is vital to our country's food production—a huge role in the economy and a major employer for the Moyne shire. The annual output from the agricultural sector in Moyne shire alone is \$618 million, and the sector supports nearly 3500 full-time jobs.

I am sure the member for South-West Coast, who represents that particular area, could reinforce the value of agriculture to that particular area. He went on to say:

Threats to the sustainability and security of this sector cannot be tolerated, and voluntary acts that create such threats should be penalised strongly by law.

Katherine Cain gave evidence as well to the inquiry, and she said:

Apart from the direct threat that activists pose to the welfare of livestock, themselves and other people, the indirect impact they pose is a threat to not only animal and personal welfare but to our state's economy. To quote the *Agriculture Victoria Strategy*:

Victoria is the powerhouse of Australian food and fibre exports.

Our state is the biggest exporter by value nationally, and with over half the gross value of Victoria's agricultural industry derived from livestock and a projected ... increase in demand for Victoria's animal-derived proteins, the future is exciting.

I cast those comments in light of the ones I started with, where the animal activists are saying we should close down all animal production agriculture in this state. And the contrast there, between them and Daniel Meade from the Moyne shire and Katherine Cain, could not be at two bigger extremes, the activists saying, 'Shut this whole industry down', and both of those people saying how valuable it is to the sector into the future.

It is just so important that with this legislation, with the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill, a strong message is sent to animal activists: it is not all right to actually invade someone's farm, it is not all right to steal someone's animals, it is not all right to cause mental anguish to people just going around their lawful business into the future.

After that inquiry the majority report made some recommendations, but I would like to put on the record the opposition members, the Liberal and National Party opposition members on that upper house committee—the key issues out of their minority report as they saw them:

This Minority Report represents the position of the—
opposition members—

... of the *Inquiry into the Impact of Animal Rights Activism on Victorian Agriculture*.

Opposition members were:

... unable to support the final report of the Inquiry for the following reasons:

The ... Report is biased in that it gives undue attention to the motivations of animal activists, conveying an impression of support towards the illegal actions of animal activists ...

I put it to you that if the intent of someone robbing a bank is honourable because they need the money, does that mean it is not an illegal activity? Does that mean they should not go to jail or be fined? I think the equal thing applies. If there is a law, if someone believes the law is wrong, they should lobby their local MP to change the law. They should not take the law into their own hands to actually invade a farm and cause the grief they have over that.

Two:

The ... Report gives credence to the claims of animal activists in regard to legal farming practices being cruel ...

I think that again there is a lot of information out there. Farmers do an outstanding job in how they look after their animals. If you do not look after your animals, you do not get the best production out of them, and any farmer will tell you that. The animal activists I think do not understand agriculture and would do well to have a lesson in how agriculture actually works and how farmers do care for their animals and look after them.

Three, the report does not adequately discuss or acknowledge the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture. Again, as I said of some of the evidence that was given, I do not think the majority report gave credence to the value of animal agriculture to this state and the importance that it has.

Four, the report strayed from the terms of reference and failed to respect the intentions of the Parliament in establishing the inquiry. Because there were some independent animal activist MPs from the upper house, I think they gave more weight to the animal activists than they did to the facts in the inquiry.

Five, recommendation 1 provides additional legal protection for animal activists that illegally trespass on farming land. Animal activists should not have any legal rights if they are illegally trespassing on land into the future. So I condemn them for that particular recommendation.

Six, recommendations 10, 12, 13 and 14 are outside the terms of reference and were not adequately canvassed with industry representatives throughout the course of the inquiry. They do not respect the voice of industry. Some of the Labor Party or independent members of Parliament on that inquiry put their personal views forward and did not actually reflect the views of industry in those recommendations.

Seven, the report does not propose recommendations that adequately ensure animal activists are appropriately punished for wrongdoing, nor do they protect farmers from illegal animal activist activity. Again our side of politics, the Liberal-National members of that committee with their minority report, were very strong on the fact that there needed to be protections for farmers from illegal animal activist activity.

Eight, the report does not acknowledge Australia's strong animal welfare laws and our international reputation as leaders in animal welfare. I think the member for South-West Coast, who is sitting at the table with me, as a former dairy farmer, former member of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria and leader in the dairy industry, could attest to the fact that we do have some of the strongest animal welfare laws anywhere in the world. As I said earlier, farmers know that if they look after their animals, they get better production out of their animals and their animals are healthier and happier. They do not deliberately mistreat their animals at all, and if they do, there are laws there that can deal with those particular issues.

The last point that our minority report makes is that the report does not acknowledge that most farmers do the right thing and only a small minority of farmers engage in illegal practices. No-one supports farmers who engage in illegal practices. If they do something wrong with animal welfare, they should feel the full force of the law, the same as animal activists do if they break the law, because no measure should be spared in making sure that farmers do the right thing. As I said, the majority of farmers do do the right thing.

It has been just on two years since that report was tabled and recommendations came forward from that committee to have on-the-spot fines implemented. It is just on two years since that report was handed down. I know the wheels of Parliament turn slowly, I know the wheels of government turn slowly, but taking two years to bring a small piece of legislation forward to have on-the-spot fines for animal activists invading a farm I think is far too long. It could have been done a lot sooner if the minister had rolled her sleeves up and got on to it.

As the Manager of Opposition Business said in the debate on the government business program, it was only the fact that I asked the Minister for Agriculture a question in Parliament near the end of last year about where this legislation was that was supposed to have been done last year that we actually got some action. It was tabled in the last sitting week and obviously could not be debated until we came back here this week. I would hope that the government actually moves it to the upper house quickly after the debate here this week, gets it through, makes sure it gets royal assent and has it implemented as soon as possible.

Concurrently to that happening, the department is currently drafting the regulations that sit behind the bill, and I was assured in the bill briefing that they will be working diligently to make sure the regulations are ready when the bill receives royal assent. I hope that happens, particularly some of the regulations around signage. As part of the biosecurity plan that a farmer has, they will implement as part of their protection the clauses in this bill about an animal activist invading their farm, and the size of those signs, the design of those signs and the number of times and places those signs will need to be put up will come in the regulations, so we need those regulations as soon as possible. I propose on behalf of the Liberal and National parties two amendments to this bill, and I would ask that those amendments in my name be circulated to the house, please.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr WALSH under standing orders.

Mr WALSH: The first amendment deals with page 7, clause 6, that lines 3 to 13 be omitted from the legislation. The way we read this legislation when we got it—and it was confirmed in the bill brief—for a farmer to have protection under this legislation from extreme animal activists invading their farm they need a biosecurity plan to show that they are doing the right thing and an animal activist invading the farm is breaching that biosecurity plan by going in there. This clause, if it stays in the bill, actually means that if it is a farm that has riverfrontage to lease, that riverfrontage lease land is excluded from the biosecurity plan and animal activists could come in along the riverfrontage and be right there on the farm. Now, because a farm is contiguous with the frontage—there is not necessarily a fence between the actual freehold farm and the riverfrontage—we believe there is no need for this clause in there. It does not matter what the tenure of the land is that the farmer farms, whether it is freehold land, whether it is Crown land lease or whether it is riverfrontage lease, it should all be treated the same from a biosecurity plan point of view so that they have the protection of this legislation from extreme animal activists invading their farm on their whole farm, irrespective. It effectively should be tenure blind for their particular farm. So I would move in my name that we have lines 3 to 13 omitted from the bill to achieve what I have just said, where the whole farm is part of that plan and part of that plan is not excluded.

The second amendment is to page 9, clause 10, where we would omit ‘60 penalty units’ for a natural person and insert ‘120 penalty units’. The logic behind this is that if you actually look at New South Wales and Queensland, they have more substantive fines against individuals than this legislation proposes. So if you go back to the quotes I took out of the parliamentary inquiry around all the farms that have been invaded and the threats that they had, they were all very strong in their evidence that they wanted to see substantial fines that were a real impediment. You would know yourself, Acting Speaker Blackwood, from a long-term involvement with the timber industry, that once you take away the personal cost to a protestor they believe they can do anything with impunity, because they actually do not have to pay anything. They just get a slap on the wrist, as the people who invaded Gippy Goat did, and there is no impediment to them coming back again. In Gippy Goat’s case the magistrate was almost, you could say, supportive of the animal activist, saying that he imposed a \$1 fine because he had some sympathy for what she was doing, even though she broke the law. I would propose, on behalf of the Liberal and National parties, that we double the penalty units for natural persons so that if an animal activist invades a farm, they have a substantial penalty put against them that is a severe deterrent to them doing it into the future.

We have asked to go into consideration in detail on this particular bill. I think there was a very good debate on the government business program motion around the fact that we have not had a consideration-in-detail stage for any bill in the life of this Parliament so far. This is a very simple bill. We will not be opposing the legislation because it is something we fought very, very hard to get, with on-the-spot fines implemented. I believe the two amendments we have put forward are reasonable and sensible to improve the functionality of the bill in making sure that a farmer has a biosecurity plan across all the land that they farm and making sure that there is a severe enough penalty to discourage animal activists from breaking the law and entering farms. I would urge the minister to give some serious consideration to having a consideration-in-detail stage for this legislation.

I would, as I started, urge the Greens party to look into their conscience and think about their opposition to this legislation, think about the position that was articulated by the member for Melbourne in the debate on the government business program about opposing this legislation because people just have a right to protest no matter what harm they do to anyone else. I ask the Greens to seriously look at that position and support this legislation, because it is about people's rights. It is about people's rights to go about their normal business within the law. It is not about any farmer breaking the law; it is about their right to carry out their farming business within the law without extreme animal activists disrupting it, causing biosecurity risks, causing mental anguish, stealing animals and causing stress to animals. I seek the support of the Labor Party, the Greens and the independents for these amendments so farmers can have more protection into the future.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood): The member for Yan Yean.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (16:32): Thank you, Acting Speaker, and it is good to see you back in the chair. I take great delight in joining the debate on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, and it is with great pleasure that I stand after the Leader of the National Party. He asked all members in this chamber to support his amendments, and I think what he was saying was that everyone should support this legislation including his amendments.

This is commonsense legislation that will benefit farmers. The question is: will The Nationals support it, or will they obstruct it so they can play political games? On the one hand the member for Murray Plains is trying to claim credit for these changes, but on the other hand he is trying to delay them in the Parliament. On the one hand he gave credit to Ms Bath in the other place for her work, but he is trying to frustrate the implementation of it. They opposed the government business program and now they are trying to frivolously slow down the passage of this important bill with amendments. The opposition needs to get out of the way.

There was an inquiry, and the government is supporting 13 of the 15 recommendations from that inquiry. You would have thought from the Leader of the National Party that the government was not supporting it. We are supporting it, and that is why have brought legislation before the house. The Leader of the National Party is playing politics with this, because he selectively quoted some of the most extreme citizens that presented to the inquiry. I would say every citizen in Victoria has the right to be heard before a parliamentary inquiry. That does not mean that people in this place have to agree with every submission. I think what he was trying to do was to say that maybe we as a government would support those extreme submissions that were put forward by people who have been targeting farmers, who have been risking biosecurity and who have been scaring the living daylights out of farmers and their families. But the Leader of the National Party is deliberately playing politics with this. He is telling untruths about it. He is implying that there are not on-the-spot fines.

Mr T Bull interjected.

Ms GREEN: You will get your chance. You hear what I have got to say. We listened to what he said, now you can listen to what I have got to say. And what I have got to say is that this press release from the Leader of the National Party says that farmers will not be better protected against illegal and traumatic farm trespass crime unless amendments to on-the-spot fine laws are passed in the Victorian Parliament—wrong.

Deliberately in the second paragraph of this, which actually shows what they are really up to, they are trying to conflate an issue with a small number of farmers that are probably his mates that have always liked to use Crown land for their own purposes. He is trying to sneak through an amendment under the guise of saying this is against animal activists, when in fact it is trying to break down conventions and common law forever. Crown land is for Crown land purposes. He did not provide any evidence about waterfronts that are Crown land that about farms. He did not provide one scrap or scintilla of evidence to say that animal activists have been targeting Crown land and Crown land waterways. All the evidence that came before the inquiry and all the media around this and all the problems where

animal activists have invaded farms have been on private land—not on public land, not on Crown land—and in places where those trespassers should not be. He is trying to conflate two issues where he has got a small number of mates who would like to keep their Crown land frontages on riverfronts just for themselves, and then he is trying to say that we are not targeting and introducing fines. Well, this bill contains the highest on-the-spot fines in Australia and significant penalties through the courts.

Mr T Bull interjected.

Ms GREEN: I should not respond to interjections, but the member for Gippsland East has said Queensland and New South Wales. Well, in this bill individuals will be able to be fined \$1272 on the spot. In Queensland, member for Gippsland East, that figure is \$689. In New South Wales the on-the-spot fine is \$1000. And in Victoria we are actually saying that this will bring in the ability to fine corporations. Organisations, where they have specifically targeted farms and breached biosecurity, will be able to be fined \$8178. Those on-the-spot fines do not exist in any other jurisdiction in the country, so just because the Leader of the National Party, the member for Murray Plains, says it and says it on the *Country Hour* does not make it the truth. It is not the truth.

Unlike when he was the minister, when there was not one strategic thing done in agriculture, we actually have an agriculture strategy—something that he never, ever had. And the previous minister, the minister in the other place, Minister Pulford, introduced world-best animal welfare legislation. The minister that we have now is carrying forward a strategy that will deliver and improve support for our farmers in this state, and I will not listen to the nonsense that comes from the National Party and some on this side that seem to say that they can be the only voice for farmers and that our government does not stand up for farmers. Well, we absolutely do.

My family comes from a primary production background. The Minister for Agriculture's family is a primary production family, as is the Premier's, and we have more regional members in our caucus than the other side have. The member for Buninyong, the chair of our country caucus, is another one with a primary production background. So do not compare us to those extremists. We are a government that is supporting 13 out of the 15 recommendations, and we are seeking speedy passage of this bill to protect biosecurity on our farms. We are not being disingenuous, like the member for Murray Plains, trying to conflate two issues. The issue around access to Crown land is not what is at issue in this bill, so I would urge all crossbenchers and the Greens to oppose those amendments, and I would urge everyone to support the bill.

The one area where I would agree with the member for Murray Plains is that the Greens party has it wrong. I do not understand the member for Melbourne, having grown up, like I did, in Mildura, not supporting farmers and thinking it is okay that trespassers go around willy-nilly. We are a government that does support the introduction of on-the-spot fines and treating this issue seriously. We are out talking to farmers all the time and we are looking at things that we can do. Unlike the member for Murray Plains, who, on his watch as the Minister for Agriculture, closed numerous worksites across this state, we are expanding the work that is being done to support our farmers. Only yesterday I was in Tatura at the SmartFarm and opening a new centre for horticultural study where students will be able to study AgSTEM. We are attracting our young people, whether they live on farms, in regions or in our cities, to say that you can study AgSTEM because there are great jobs in food and fibre. We back those jobs up by having good legislation, having a good economy and having the lowest unemployment anywhere in the country in our regions and the lowest on record. We are supporting jobs in the private sector and we are supporting jobs in the public sector. To see the work of those scientists in our SmartFarms, whether it is in Hamilton, whether it is in Tatura or whether it is in Cohuna in the member for Murray Plains's electorate—we are supporting those scientists and the work that they are doing because they believe in climate change and responding to climate change, as do our farmers. I support this bill and I decry the opposition, who are trying to delay it and not support our farmers and play politics.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (16:43): It is a pleasure to rise to talk on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. It is an interesting speaker to follow. I did not know that moving amendments was going to delay the bill. I think they either get adopted or they do not, and the bill will pass this house on Thursday due to the government having the numbers. So it is not a delaying tactic at all, it is a suggestion to improve protections for farmers.

Ms Green interjected.

Mr T BULL: The other matter is—the member for Yan Yean was telling me to be quiet when she was talking, so I will reciprocate there—that we were talking about the fines in this bill as compared to in other jurisdictions. Yes, the trespassing fines are comparable to the other jurisdictions, but the fines around biosecurity breaches are not. They are lower in Victoria. The trespass fines are comparable. The member for Murray Plains's amendments relate to toughening up the fines that relate to biosecurity.

I want to say up-front that I support the amendments moved by the member for Murray Plains because they do further strengthen the penalties relating to biosecurity and the issue around riverfrontages is real. We have a situation where the government introduced camping on riverfronts and the ability to access riverfronts, but those farmers who have riverfront access should not be disadvantaged in relation to biosecurity levels, and that is what this amendment goes to the heart of. I will talk more about that later, but it is worth recapping how we arrived at this bill. We know that in 2019 Aussie Farms went out and created their website and created their Facebook page that included publications of maps that highlighted farming practices. It included in that data the nature of those farming operations, and it was all presented like this was some horrible thing, that these people were doing the wrong thing, that they were illegal practices. This is not the case, and that data and that map were subsequently used by animal activists to invade farms with no notice and cause much distress and much trauma. It really was disgraceful behaviour. Pleasingly, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission investigated and revoked the charity status of Aussie Farms in late 2019, but appallingly it was revealed that one of these activists that had been charged and had fronted up to court—can you believe it?—got a \$1 fine. Scaring the living daylights out of a farming family and a \$1 fine for breaking biosecurity laws at a farm in Gippsland.

Following this a parliamentary inquiry was set up to investigate these matters, and my colleague Ms Bath in the other house did play a leading role in that and then played a leading role in the inquiry itself, and we got the outcomes that we arrived at. But then, I guess in true Labor fashion, they sat on it, and it was not until November last year, when questioned on the progress, that we saw a little bit of action. This is in stark contrast to Queensland and New South Wales. When this issue arose around Aussie Farms and these farm invasions they introduced stronger actions and stronger on-the-spot fines by the end of 2019. They were serious about it and more than two years ahead of when we are arriving at this same point.

Now, these changes are welcome news, and they will hopefully stop these activists from being a law unto themselves, waltzing onto farms and causing significant stress and significant trauma to law-abiding farmers. But what we need when we have new laws passed by any Parliament is a thirst to enact them. These new laws will come into play, and I would hope that the authorities that can enact these do so with the full force of law and do so to hold these people accountable to the strongest degree for their actions. The member for Murray Plains has moved one of the amendments that goes to the heart of increasing fines for trespassing—absolutely fantastic, I say. Let us be able to throw the book at these people and let them think twice before they go and invade farms and put at risk the biosecurity of those farms and terrorise these farming families. Now, in relation to the biosecurity matters, this will put the fines more in line with those in other states. We should not be more lenient here.

The other amendment is related to waterfrontages, and this bill has excluded these. It was seemingly to not conflict with the riverfront camping scheme, and I can understand that, but it is not right. Just because you have a farm that abuts a riverfrontage does not mean that you should have lower

biosecurity protection put in place. You should be afforded the same level of protection as all other farmers. This riverfront camping was going to be all over the state—we will not go into the train wreck that it has turned out to be—but riverfront properties must be included and must be afforded the same level of protection as all farms.

I want to talk for a few moments to reference some comments from Mr Meddick from the Animal Justice Party in the other place. These are some comments that Mr Meddick made in relation to these activists that are at the heart of this legislation. Now, Mr Meddick defended these farm invaders as whistleblowers who were somehow doing this great service for our communities. He seemed to think that them invading farms unannounced and causing great trauma to our farming families was in some way okay because they were justifying it in relation to animal protectionism. Invading farms and invading people's private homes and properties is not acceptable under any circumstance. There is some irony in the comments from Mr Meddick, because when activists targeted his home some months later due to his stance on the pandemic bill, Mr Meddick came out and said:

I understand why people disagree. People disagree in a vibrant democracy. But you don't have the right to come to someone's house and make their family feel physically in danger.

That was his comment when activists targeted his home and I agree with him. I agree with Mr Meddick 100 per cent: you do not have the right to come to somebody's home and you do not have the right to make them feel in danger. We are 100 per cent in agreement. But I point out to Mr Meddick that you cannot run with the foxes and hunt with the hounds. You just cannot do that.

These farms are the farmers' homes and these activists had these farming families feeling in danger and under threat in their homes, the very same feeling that Mr Meddick and his family experienced when they were targeted, and it is not on. It is not appropriate. These farming families, as the previous speaker on my side referred to, were yelled at, they were called killers and they were called murderers. They were told that these animal activists would return. But when Mr Meddick was exposed to this abhorrent behaviour himself—and, as I said, I am fully on the same page as him—he somehow justifies the animal activists but is outraged when he is the target. It is no different. They both felt very vulnerable. They both felt very, very scared. I am suggesting that it took that terrible experience that Mr Meddick had to have in his own home to realise that it is not a lot of fun when you are targeted in your own home like these animal activists were doing. It was okay when it suited his cause, but it was not okay when it was targeted at him. I would hope that that experience that he endured would now have him realising a little bit more that the actions of these people involved in these farm invasions were not appropriate at all and need much, much, much stronger action.

In concluding, I do support the amendments proposed by the member for Murray Plains, and I do support the changes that this bill presents in its entirety. It is a step in the right direction to afford farmers and farming families a much higher level of protection, and I do wish the bill a speedy package and enactment through the parliamentary system.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (16:53): I am delighted to rise and speak on this bill. First of all, I would like to acknowledge my colleague the member for Yan Yean, who made a really impassioned contribution, and what really struck me about it is how committed this government is to regional and rural issues. As the member for Yan Yean pointed out, many of us represent regional seats—I think 18 seats overall, which is many, many more than the National Party—and I know that to some of us it is a whole lifetime's worth of commitment. As the member for Yan Yean pointed out, she grew up in a farming community, our Premier grew up amongst farming communities and certainly I spent a good deal of my life on our family farm in the Western District. I was very, very proud to raise my young sons there. This government's commitment to regional and rural Victoria is clear in the many bills that we have brought to Parliament to protect our farming community. Little was done by those on the other side about anything in their one and only time in recent years in government. There was no action anywhere. But of course this government continues to provide legislation that will make a real difference to regional and rural people.

I recently had the absolute honour of chairing a review into agricultural training for the minister in the other place. It was a fantastic opportunity because it brought together two of my loves, which are TAFE, as a TAFE alumni, and also really delving into the agricultural industry and its future needs to make sure that our wonderful TAFEs are meeting the needs of the workforce into the future. It was a fantastic opportunity to really sit down and talk to primary producers all across Victoria. I think that is something that this government continues to do very well. I see our wonderful Minister for Agriculture, the member for Macedon, every day out and about talking to our farming communities. That gives us a real insight into what it is that they need us as a government to provide. Of course this bill goes a long way to doing that. It is an incredibly important bill.

Victoria is Australia's largest agricultural producer, with 29 per cent of Australia's gross value of agricultural production at \$17.8 billion in 2019–20. That was an increase of 12 per cent from 2018–19. The biggest contributors are the dairy industry, beef and sheep meat, grains, wool and other products. Our family farm was originally a fine merino farm, but we did go into lamb production and cropping. I remember very distinctly the stress that spring brought to farming families. I am sorry to say that sheep are not going to win any maternal awards because, sadly, they do not have a strong maternal instinct. That is difficult because when we are in lambing what can happen is that any kind of trespass into a paddock where your ewes are lambing can really cause an issue. What you can find is that ewes will desert their lambs. That was something we used to watch every spring with fear and concern about people going into the paddock. So it is a very, very real issue in my mind. But of course this inquiry came about after some very drastic actions taken against other farming families in different industries. This government has accepted virtually all of the inquiry's recommendations, and I am very pleased that that has happened.

In my own electorate of Buninyong we have an enormous array of egg producers. Twenty-one per cent of Victorian eggs are produced in the Golden Plains shire, which is part of my electorate. In 2020 we did experience a pretty devastating avian flu outbreak. It was amidst the COVID pandemic. I do not know how many people really saw the devastation that went on during this outbreak of the avian flu in the Golden Plains shire. Wild birds can carry the virus without symptoms and, as I said, in 2020 there was an outbreak, and across six different farms in my electorate the avian flu was detected. It is a really serious disease for poultry that can cause very high death rates. The farmers, the businesses, local communities, the vets and this government acted very quickly to bring that outbreak under control, but it still had some pretty incredibly devastating impacts on some farms. One small farm alone, for example, lost 5100 of their birds, and for a small producer that would have had devastating impacts.

The biosecurity protection to farmers is incredibly important. Those on the other side have talked about farmers' homes being invaded, and I absolutely agree that that should not happen, but it is also their businesses. I am not suggesting that those opposite do not agree with this, but it is also their businesses that are going to be really brutally impacted by any sort of breach of biosecurity. The avian flu was really a stark reminder to me about how important biosecurity is on a farm. We have seen some recent pretty drastic actions taken by animal activists. Look, I understand that people have a right to express their opinions, but I would agree with the Leader of The Nationals that that does not give someone a right to enter people's homes and their farms, and that is why I completely support this bill.

Like those on the other side, I would ask that the Greens consider perhaps their objection to this bill. I know that animal activists talk about protecting animals, but really this bill in many cases is about protecting animals. What we found when activists, for example, stole 20 ducks and removed them from a facility was that we do not know what happened to those ducks going forward. They have been taken out of their environment. Some pretty gruesome things have happened to animals when farms have been invaded, and I talked earlier about spring lambing and what dreadful impacts that can have. So I would concur that farmers keep very close to their heart the welfare of their animals. I know certainly from my farming days the health of your flock is incredibly important to you—and not just for business reasons—because really that is who you spend your life with on the farm. So farmers really do have at their heart consideration of their livestock, and they work very hard to protect it. So,

look, this government has shown a really strong record on animal welfare. We have taken many actions to increase animal welfare, and in some ways I can see this bill as being part of that.

As I say, as a farmer I would really like to see this bill go through and go through quickly. It is something that this government has stood by, bringing this bill to the house, and we would all like to see these protections in place. I think it is important for farmers, and I know looking at the amount of representatives that this government now has in regional Victoria that many farmers do see that this government continues to have their best interests at heart in creating legislation, and this bill speaks well to that. I commend it to the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (17:03): I rise to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, and I do so because this is a very important bill for many reasons. Agriculture is an incredibly important part of my electorate of South-West Coast, and when the incident occurred in Gippsland on the Gippy Goat farm it was the culmination, really, of the activities that had been going on for too long. People who think they understand farming and claim that it is violating or destroying or harming animals are so out of line. This resulted in a court case because activists had gone onto a farm, had invaded a person's home where they farm and live, and they actually received a penalty of \$1. Now, I think that is the most insulting act for the farmers to read about when they expect the law to look after them.

Farming is well regulated, and anybody who has any animal cruelty conviction feels, and should feel, the full force of the law. So we have farmers seeing that activists have a very different law applied to their actions of criminal offending and that they end up with a fine of \$1, with no criminal record, yet when you are a farmer—and rightfully so—if you are not looking after your animals properly under the law you actually get such severe penalties you often cannot have anything to do with animals for several years. And that is absolutely as it should be. So there are such double standards. This bill has come two years after this incident, and it took the opposition to call out the minister late last year and say, 'Where is this very important legislation that was recommended at the inquiry?'. And it was no surprise that after shaming them they actually put something on the table.

In my view this bill does not go far enough. One of the amendments the member for Murray Plains has put forward would double the penalty units currently proposed so that a natural person who was convicted would be given a penalty that really would make people think about doing this. I mean, having a \$1 fine was no deterrent. This has to have a deterrent that makes people not want to do it. There are several people being funded to do these things by people who do not understand, who think farming is raping and pillaging the landscape and destroying animals' welfare, and it is just so not true.

I am sure a member of the Greens will get up soon and speak and say they are against this bill, because I heard them say that in the government business program debate. You know, I look to the member for Brunswick and I really admire his brain. He comes from a medical background, and it is great to hear him speak on medical issues, but when I hear him speak on environmental issues I am absolutely mortified at his lack of understanding. I am not being disrespectful to him; I am just saying, 'Please have a think and look at what really goes on'. I extend an invitation to the member for Brunswick, the member for Melbourne and the member for Prahran to come out and I happily will respectfully show you around some farms to meet the people. They are in the hardest working profession that I have ever seen. I have nursed and I have farmed and I have done a few other things—not too much more—but I really do think these are hardworking people who want to look after their animals and protect them and care for them.

I mean, I farmed for 20-something years. I never, ever thought of it as my workplace; I thought of it as my home. My kids—we all had our animals, our pets, our environments. The kids would get up and go and feed the calves before school if need be, you know, if someone was not able to come to work and we needed to all pull together. There was never a thought that you would not actually look after the animals. You know, if things were really tough financially, the animals came first. I used to say I would spend more on the animals than I did on my children. That was a true statement, because

you really had to look after them to the best of your ability or they would not perform and not be happy. I really struggle when people do not understand just how much work and effort we put into making sure everything is going well—even research and environmental management. I really do put out an invitation: let me show you.

I do not like to just refer to the economic impact, but I will quote from Cr Meade, who was the Moyne shire mayor when the inquiry took place. He said at the animal inquiry:

Agriculture is vital to our country's food production—a huge role in the economy and a major employer for the Moyne shire.

This is the shire in my electorate of South-West Coast.

The annual output from the agricultural sector in Moyne shire alone is \$618 million, and the sector supports nearly 3500 full-time jobs. Threats to the sustainability and security of this sector cannot be tolerated, and voluntary acts that create such threats should be penalised strongly by law.

I am continually shocked at how people do not understand the food and fibre sector. It provides us with our nutrition, it provides us with food, it provides us with the clothes we wear, it provides us with shelter—the timber that builds our homes and this building itself, with the timber around.

Can you imagine if we stopped farming? Because that is what these ideological people think we should do. If we stopped farming, who would manage the landscape? We have been on this planet as humans for a very long time, and you cannot actually just get rid of animals and farm only plants. I do not know if you have been to Scotland, but you cannot really plant on the moors, and I do not know if you have been to South-West Coast, to the volcanic country, but you cannot grow crops on the stony country areas—but you can grow cattle and you can produce milk. We do need a balance of the ecosystem, and this provides it as long as we are doing it and researching and continually managing the environment. We have got 7 per cent of the earth's crust left to be able to farm on.

We have got an increasing population, and by the time we get to 2050 we will struggle to have enough supply to meet the demand, so what we should be doing is supporting farmers who provide the actual sustenance that we need. We have gone so far away from an understanding of that in western society that sometimes I think it is good to just reflect on the challenge that is in front of us. Particularly in Australia and particularly in Victoria where we have beautiful countryside, we should be respecting that and doing everything we can.

On that note I would like to thank all the farmers, particularly in South-West Coast, who work so very hard every day and take that responsibility so very seriously. I would also like to thank the people who stood up in the inquiry from my part of the world—Ian Smith, Jim Doukas, Daniel Meade, Georgina Gubbins, Lisa Dwyer, Chris O'Keefe, Bernie Free and Oonagh Kilpatrick—and I would also like to mention Natalie Collard, who heads up Food and Fibre Great South Coast and who struggles to get the funds that they need to do the job that they are trying to do, which is to get people to get that understanding of how we should be growing agriculture, not harbouring its ability but harnessing the opportunity.

I do endorse this piece of legislation, but it does not go far enough. We do need real penalty points that will deter people from breaking the law. It makes no sense that the people who break the law are rewarded with a \$1 fine; it should be double the penalty points it currently is now. And it makes no sense that there is no criminal record, yet that is completely different for other people who break the law. Let us remember that when activists go into people's homes—into the environments where they live and where their children play—it is an illegal activity. It should never ever be endorsed or rewarded. It makes me angry and amazed that a member for Western Victoria in the upper house, Andy Meddick, the Animal Justice Party representative, cannot understand that in his electorate we rely on farming and we work hard to be good farmers. How can he actually be the representative who is against farming and encouraging animal activists? These animal activists risk biosecurity. They risk people having safe workplaces. This is not acceptable in today's world. It is not acceptable in any

workplace, let alone any home, so let us apply the same standard. My offer does go again to the Greens to come out to the farm—I will happily show you around.

Our farmers deserve the respect that they have not been given. We should be absolutely thanking them for the work they do. Not too many of us will get up at 2 o'clock tonight and go and check the cows that are calving. Not too many of us will get back up again at 6.00 am and go and get the cows and feed the calves and make sure they have got the immunoglobulin they need, but they do—the farmers do.

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (17:13): I rise to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. I too would like to thank our farmers. They feed us, they clothe us and they work all hours. Most of us are still asleep when they are up working, as the member for South-West Coast was saying. They work incredibly hard, and we are absolutely thankful, more so in the last couple of years as well. They have kept going through this time.

I would also like to thank the former Minister for Agriculture, the Honourable Jaala Pulford, who delivered Victoria's first animal welfare action plan alongside my colleague in the chamber the member for Pascoe Vale, and also the current Minister for Agriculture, the member for Macedon, for her tireless work in making our agricultural industry safer and more supported. As the member for Macedon she knows and understands the needs and concerns of farmers.

To cut to the chase with the need for this legislation, it has come to light because of an increase in instances of animal activists trespassing onto livestock properties, threatening legitimate livestock production, producers and their families and employees and causing potential biosecurity risks through the introduction and spread of pests and diseases. We all remember in 2018 and 2019 our Victorian ag community was subjected to a series of events involving animal activists intimidating farmers, stealing livestock and disrupting businesses, and it has been mentioned in the chamber today as well. The Gippy Goat Cafe and farm in Yarragon had 50 activists on site. Six were charged with theft. One offender was charged with a second offence under the Crimes Act 1958 and two further offences under the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, and after this incident the activist was ordered to pay \$250 compensation for the charge of theft and \$1 on each of the three charges of stolen animals.

Through the inquiry they reported that this outcome would not provide a deterrent for similar illegal activities, and the farm has since closed to the public. During this time too in my electorate of Bass, which has quite a swathe of agribusinesses in it, many of my local farmers did contact me saying, 'We don't want this to happen to us, and we need to change how we do things'. In response to this, the Victorian Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee initiated a public inquiry into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture, with a report tabled in 2020 outlining key findings and recommendations.

Firstly, the report expressed support for the animal agriculture industry and criticised the illegal actions of the activists. A total of 15 recommendations were made, which focused on building confidence in existing animal agricultural standards, modernising the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and ensuring reports of animal cruelty are addressed appropriately. In the report the committee also expressed concern about the level of misinformation spread by activists regarding animal agriculture practices. Our government's response supported 13 of the 15 recommendations in full, one was supported in principle, being:

That the Victorian Government instruct relevant regulatory bodies to collect data that distinguishes between livestock theft committed by animal rights activists and livestock theft committed by non-activists.

One we did not support:

That in the context of the review of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, the Victorian Government consider the need to codify public interest exemptions in the *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*.

Deciding whether the public interest exemption applies is a matter for the courts to determine on the merits of an individual case.

The report also recommended strengthening our biosecurity laws to address the risk of animal rights activists spreading pests and diseases at agriculture businesses. It recommended the creation of a new biosecurity offence requiring any person entering an animal agriculture business to adhere to the property's biosecurity management plan, which farmers can opt in and out of, with those who fail to comply receiving an on-the-spot fine.

Agriculture Victoria continues to progress implementation and engagement on all 14 recommendations supported in full or in principle. This legislation seeks to give effect to recommendation 4 and recommendation 5. These recommendations deal with trespassers and a fine for this behaviour, because trespassing has become quite sinister. Our existing laws work to protect farmers against protesters unlawfully entering their property and damaging it. They are not sufficient for the biosecurity risks, which are potentially becoming worse, and they do not allow for tampering with fodder—in other words, poisoning animals to make a point or cast blame on innocent farmers. Our current laws are not sufficient for those who seek to leave gates open to euphemistically release animals into the natural environment. 'Releasing' is a word which seeks to bring a picture of freedom and liberty. The reality is that allowing animals to wander at night onto a road at the mercy of vehicles is not freedom, it is cruelty at best for the animal and the innocent vehicle driver as well. Our current laws are not sufficient to deter activists raiding multiple farms in a short time frame. Again, I come back to the point that these people do not actually care about the animals; they care about disruption and have an altogether different purpose.

This bill is consistent with the theme of protection in our Labor government's strategy for agriculture in Victoria. Inherent in this is protection of biosecurity measures. We encourage agricultural business owners and managers to consider the biosecurity risks associated with their livestock operations and to develop a plan to mitigate these risks. Simply put, biosecurity is a set of measures to protect a farm from the spread of disease and pests, and we encourage agriculture businesses to develop biosecurity management plans for their businesses. Recommendation 4 will require visitors or trespassers to comply with this plan. This is about protection—protection of farmers and their animals.

The penalties for breaking these laws, for harming our farmers and their livestock, will be among the heaviest in Australia. We are serious about protecting the biosecurity of our vital agricultural business here in Victoria. We are serious because the consequences of disease being introduced can be disastrous. We have seen the effect of the contagious avian influenza: the devastation caused by the necessary humane killing of thousands of animals, the mental health and financial impact this has had on farmers and the fantastic effort by local communities, vets, farmers and businesses, which saw the containment of the outbreak and the eradication of the virus in Victoria.

As I was saying earlier, much of my electorate in Bass is rural. We have super rich soil in the swamplands around Koo Wee Rup, where we see over 90 per cent of our country's asparagus grown and harvested. The Bass hills through to Gippsland is renowned dairy and beef country, producing such wonderful products as Bassine milk and Macca's meats, local producers who have dedicated their working lives to good animal husbandry. Just imagine what could have happened if a trespasser had broken into a farm impacted by this virus and then spread it to other farms, all in the misguided belief that they were protecting animals.

This legislation also speaks to the heart of what we have learned over the past two years: we must prepare for outcomes we never thought imaginable. We have learned that we must plan and be realistic about pandemics, in both people and agriculture. Victoria is a leader in strengthening agricultural biosecurity—the first jurisdiction to roll out electronic identification tags for sheep and goats, and evaluation showed that just under 100 per cent of sheep were traceable with the new technology. We have learned the importance of tracing in a disease outbreak—the benefits of rapid, reliable contact tracing. Our Andrews government has backed up the transition to this technology by subsidising the cost of electronic tags to farmers through our livestock biosecurity fund: 51 million tags bought since 2017 and 35 million sheep and goat movements recorded on the national livestock identification system database. That is biosecurity at work, making our animals' lives safer.

Lastly the largest overhaul of Victoria's animal welfare legislation in decades is well underway. The new animal welfare act will be introduced to Parliament. Like all these measures, this amendment reflects how farming is changing. It speaks to our society's expectations around the treatment of animals and biosecurity risks. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (17:22): I am pleased to be able to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, and I will comment certainly that it is long overdue. We are way behind the eight ball compared to other states, and I think that is disappointing for farmers. One of the things that is so important in Victoria is our agricultural sector, and the strength of it needs to be protected. We rely on it very heavily for our own food and we also export significantly to other countries. We have such great product and it needs to be protected.

There is a significant backstory to this bill, but I will start with its purposes: to amend the Livestock Management Act 2010 to provide for biosecurity management plans and to provide for offences relating to the contravening of a prescribed biosecurity measure and other matters in response to growing animal activism. There are some other consequential and miscellaneous amendments.

I want to just outline the importance of agricultural production in Victoria. The gross value of agricultural production in 2019–20 was \$17.8 billion, so that is very significant. Of that—I am going to confine myself to animals—dairy is \$3 billion, beef \$2.91 billion, sheep meat \$2.21 billion and wool \$770 million. Each of these sectors is very significant in its own right, and I think it is so important that farmers are able to continue to do their work without threats and without the invasions that have happened to date. One of the things that is also important to recognise is that 39 per cent of people in Australia working in agriculture are actually farm owners, so this really hits at the core of people who live on their farms and who own their farms and work in that field.

We have had increased animal activism not just in Victoria and Australia but also worldwide. It is becoming a little bit of a thing, and we certainly had an incident I guess that really sparked all of this. In January 2019 Aussie Farms, which was a registered charity, put out an interactive map directing activists to farms where there was supposed illegal activity, and this was distressing to many, many farmers who have great operations and do everything by the book.

Ms Britnell interjected.

Ms McLEISH: The member for South-West Coast was one of those. It is exceptionally stressful for not just those who own the farms but those who work on the farms and all of those people who are there to have their farms listed and to think, 'I could be invaded. I could have 50 activists turn up to my farm to stress the animals, to seize animals and create a lot of anxiety for the families and the children that live there'. Now, after this happened—there was a bit of an outrage and the farmers fought back—there was a call for the ACNC, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission, to actually have a look at this, and they investigated and revoked the charity status of Aussie Farms. I will note that Aussie Farms has not gone away. It has been renamed now as the Farm Transparency Project, so we do know that they are out there.

In May 2019 there was a Legislative Council inquiry into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture. They had some 500-plus submissions, many of which were from farmers, but I note that the activists were also submitters here. I think it was very disappointing to hear the response from the Greens senator Janet Rice in July 2019. She defended the rights of these vigilantes to invade farms, and those comments were made on the back of the New South Wales introduction of new laws to target farm trespassing. We knew straight up that the Greens actually endorsed this illegal behaviour, this threatening behaviour, and it was just appalling to see those comments. The report was tabled in February 2020, with the government response in June 2020. So it has taken quite some time to have the inquiry. Other states got on with it and introduced on-the-spot fines straightaway. Once the government put their response out and said they were going to do something, it took them a while to

actually do something. I want to quote the Victorian Farmers Federation president, Emma Germano, who is well known to many people here:

They were a long time coming to the point we thought perhaps they weren't going to put them into place ...

They are meaningful fines and not only a deterrent, but they demonstrate we value farmers ...

in Victoria. That was my bit, and:

... it's not an appropriate form of protest to trespass onto farmers' property.

I think that is important. It is not appropriate to trespass onto people's properties. Now, we did have incidents; we had the Gippy Goat in Gippsland with the activists. And when it went to court, what an insult—to be given a \$1 fine. Anybody and everybody who was involved in the agriculture sector was outraged by that. It is so important. They need to be protected. Poultry farmers were impacted. They packed up and left because it was too stressful. It is too stressful for the farmers and the families of the farmers. And, I will say, it is also very stressful for the animals. For those activists to think that they are looking after animals when they go in there and create a bit of an uproar and the animals do get stressed—chickens get stressed, goats get stressed, sheep get stressed; these animals do get stressed—I wonder if they do actually have their best interests at heart, because what they do is certainly very stressful.

What this bill does is introduce on-the-spot fines for individuals or organisations—\$1272 for an individual, \$8178 for an organisation—and there are greater penalties for some of the more serious things. I note that the Shadow Minister for Agriculture, the member for Murray Plains, has put an amendment, which I will endorse, to increase some of these fines. And certainly for an offence to contravene a prescribed biosecurity measure, we are proposing the penalty be increased from 60 penalty units to 120 to make sure that the message is heard well and clear.

Now, the other area that I am concerned about is the exclusion if you have licensed riverfrontages, and that you must have a biosecurity plan. Now, you could have property that is unfenced, and I know my family have them, and we also have places where we own to the river as well, and people do not know that our boundary is to the river and there are no licensed frontages there. Many farms do have that in place, but they are not always fenced off, and when you do not have them fenced off and you have a biosecurity plan for a farm that may be 500 hectares, may be 300 hectares, you expect that to be for the entire farm. Now, if that is part of the lease that you have, you expect that. Some issues here around section 401A of the Land Act 1958 and where the biosecurity management plan is inoperative in these instances do need to be looked at, and I think what we have put forward is actually sensible, because it is all of that farm that needs to be protected.

You can have a look at it. When people do come onto properties, if they come via the rivers, they can bring all sorts of diseases. This is a problem with the camping and licensed riverfrontages legislation. They can bring all sorts of diseases which are detrimental to cattle. Human faeces are very detrimental. You can get beef measles. You can have animals condemned at abattoirs because of these things. If you have got your biosecurity management plans in place, you think you are going to be protected from that, but if you are able to have people come from the rivers over that licensed frontage, I think it is very much a concern.

Ms Britnell: It makes it worthless.

Ms McLEISH: It absolutely does make it worthless. So whilst on one hand I am very pleased that the government has finally introduced long-overdue penalties for animal activists that really do so much damage for the farms, for the farmers and for the animals, on the other hand it has not quite gone far enough. I am very pleased, though, to see that these have been legislated, because it is long overdue. Queensland and New South Wales managed to get on with it a lot quicker than we did. We are behind the eight ball on that, and we have not had that protection for the last couple of years, but going forward farmers will know that we have that degree of protection.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bendigo West, who recently celebrated a milestone birthday—

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (17:32): Oh, stop it!

The SPEAKER: Happy birthday to the Deputy Speaker.

Ms EDWARDS: Well, thank you. As I remind people, you are only as young as you feel.

I also am pleased to rise to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, and I thank the Minister for Agriculture for bringing this bill before the house, a very important bill for the agriculture sector across Victoria, which, as has been mentioned by many other members, is of importance to our economy and particularly to our export economy. The majority of people who work in our agricultural sector are mostly in Victoria. Across Australia Victoria has the largest number of food and fibre manufacturing outlets. You have got the farmers, many of whom are on family-owned farms, and I have heard a few members mention their family farms. Of course I have a daughter and a son-in-law who run a sheep and crop farm out at Woodstock, I have a sister and a brother-in-law who run a sheep and cropping farm over at Newstead and I have a cousin who runs a beef cattle farm just on the other side of Castlemaine. I could start my own farm, but apparently I am too old for that.

This bill is really important, and I think some members have already elaborated on why it is important and the history behind why this bill is before the house. I have heard many members refer to the animal activists that have prompted this bill to come before the house, but I also think that the language is a little bit misleading, because they are not activists, they are extremists. The extreme actions of those people when they have invaded people's private homes and private properties cannot be condoned at all. It is really sad when people who are living and working and making a living and doing the right thing are then approached and attacked by extremists who have a single agenda, and that agenda really is not about protecting the animals or supporting the animals; it is actually about raising their own profile and why they are doing it. So they do not care about the families that they are invading or attacking, they just care about their own publicity. And I find that really sad.

I also support other members' comments in relation to the Greens political party and also the Animal Justice Party. I have worked really closely with the member in the upper house from the Animal Justice Party, Andy Meddick, on the task force on rehoming pets just recently, and he is a decent guy. He understands that you have to sometimes have compromise, and I respect that he has come to those positions. But, at the same time, you cannot get your messages across by extreme measures that really impact people's lives and livelihoods. It is just not on. It should be illegal, and this bill will make it illegal.

I also heard the member for Murray Plains referring to the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquiry. He said that the committee focused a lot on the motives behind the activists or extremists, but what he failed to mention was that that inquiry actually really did highlight that animal rights activists caused physical and mental distress to many people in the agricultural industry, including farmers, their families and employees and that intimidating farmers, stealing livestock and disrupting business is not on. It really is extremism. It also highlighted of course that animal rights activists who trespass onto agricultural facilities pose a biosecurity risk. This is the main reason for the introduction of this bill, because biosecurity is so vital to the ongoing success of our agricultural industries. You cannot risk any breaches of biosecurity, particularly when you know that there are diseases out there that will impact significantly on your livestock or your crops. A strong biosecurity system across Victoria is not just about the farmers, it is about prosperity. It is about health and it is also about a way of life, so ensuring that we have those safeguards in place. It also underpins jobs and economic growth across the state, and it supports our trade and market access just as it protects our public health and our beautiful unique environment. We as a government really want to continue to work—and this has already been happening with the Minister for Agriculture—with industry and with the community, because it is through that partnership that we can get better outcomes.

The bill refers to a number of fines that are being put in place through this legislation for those who would choose to invade other people's property and cause problems. I note that the member for Murray

Plains also referred to the fact that he believed the fines were lower than in other jurisdictions, but I think the member was comparing the maximum penalty, which would require a court outcome. But the focus of this bill, which the member for Murray Plains did not mention, is the on-the-spot fines or the infringement offences, and this bill has a higher penalty. Also Victoria will be the only jurisdiction to have an on-the-spot fine for what is referred to as a body corporate but is in fact any activist organisation. That is an important point that the member for Murray Plains did not mention.

The government has been extremely supportive of the inquiry and 13 of the 15 recommendations will be implemented. Those fines are indeed amongst the heaviest in Australia, and they are really necessary to protect the biosecurity of our farms, our farming community and our agricultural sector. Without them, we would again go back to where we would see the courts putting in place \$1 fines, which absolutely was inappropriate.

Our farmers work so jolly hard. I watch my son-in-law and my daughter rotating through the seasons and the different activities that are required on a farm, from shearing to crutching to planting and then harvesting. Month after month there is a cycle of activity, and it is jolly hard work. It is really hard work, and they work so hard 24/7. It is a big commitment to be a farmer—huge—and I want to give a big shout-out to all in our agricultural sector across Victoria. The last two years have been really challenging with COVID for a whole range of reasons, but even in light of that we rely on them so much and we should be thankful and grateful for everything that they do.

When the control orders provided for by this bill are put in place to restrict the movement of activists and extremists across the agricultural sector I think it will be a stark reminder of how extremism can really damage not just livelihoods but also our society. I will just give an example of extremism that has gone too far: a butterfly research facility on the border in Texas has had to close because of QAnon conspiracy theorists who are threatening that research facility. It is no different really in the sense that when any extremism takes activity too far, when it impacts on other people's lives and their livelihoods and it is more than just trespass, it is actually an attack on a person's life and livability, then we have to put these measures in place. That is why this bill is so important. I am really proud to support this bill, and I look forward to its passage through the house.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:42): As I foreshadowed in my speech on the government business program, it is difficult for the Greens to support this bill, and I want to talk a little bit about why. It is a bill that is supposedly about biosecurity, but when you actually look at the detail, really using that term biosecurity is just a bit of a smokescreen for the government to introduce new laws to crack down on animal activists who are trying to put a spotlight on the horrible way that we often do treat the animals that we kill and eat. I know I will probably get quite a few howls and heckles from the Liberals, Nationals and Labor; I think we are the only party opposing this bill in this place. It is a bit disappointing that we see those three parties, Labor, Liberal and The Nationals, in lockstep on this and supporting big industry and big business over animal welfare, but that is where we are at.

In terms of a bit of history, this bill is part of the response to a parliamentary inquiry which was held into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture. There was a study into it, an inquiry. Unfortunately the inquiry did have quite loaded terms of reference courtesy of the National Party, who brought it forward, and it was clearly designed from the outset to attack those community members who are trying to stand up against animal cruelty. You listen to the speeches in this place about it and it is pretty clear that the bill is brought before the house by Labor because for some reason they are scared of the National Party on this issue. I do not know if they are trying to bolster seats in regional Victoria; I am not really sure.

The inquiry happened, even though it had these quite questionable terms of reference and perhaps the place it was coming from was not quite genuine. It did actually make some pretty good recommendations about improving animal welfare standards across the industry, but what we are seeing today is that the government has brought in a bill that is just responding to those bits of the inquiry that recommended further penalising animal activists and not the other recommendations of

the inquiry that are actually about animal welfare. A lot of people have stood up and said, 'This is about animal welfare', and, 'We support animal welfare', but I think you just need to look at the contents of the bill to see that it is very selective in which parts of the inquiry, which recommendations, have made their way into the bill, and they are those parts that penalise those community members.

In fact Labor has been out there bragging about introducing some of the heaviest fines in the country for animal activists. So we do have a government that on the one hand talks about how much it cares about animals but on the other hand comes down with a sledgehammer on people trying to protect animals from cruelty. The Greens absolutely understand that trespass is illegal and it causes significant distress to farmers and their families. There are many, many farmers out there who are absolutely doing the right thing, and there is also a real anxiety about the potential biosecurity risk that trespassers could pose. We also know there have been some isolated incidents of really poor behaviour on the part of animal activists, and some on the part of farmers as well, and we absolutely do not condone intimidation or harassment as part of any campaign or protest.

Ms Britnell interjected.

Ms SANDELL: Exactly. As the member for South-West Coast said, there are actually already laws to prevent that. It is not something that I have personally ever been involved in or have a desire to be involved in, but it is also important to remember—let us not forget—that it is through the work of community members and activists that we have learned about some of the truly horrific practices of cruelty within the agricultural industry, work that has led to change and practices that industry and big business have tried very, very hard to cover up. The community was outraged by them, and it has actually led to better standards. So there is a role for community members to stand up when they see that something is wrong and something is cruel.

In looking at this bill I also think there have been quite a lot of emotive speeches, but it is important to look at some of the facts rather than just the emotive stories about people being afraid, for example, of being invaded. The inquiry actually spent quite a bit of time discussing the threat of biosecurity breaches on farms. It did a lot of work on this, and it found there have been no reported outbreaks of disease caused by animal rights activists, there have been no biosecurity breaches or incidents as a result of activist activity, and that was through the parliamentary inquiry—that is not just me saying that. Yet now we have a bill that is creating a new offence to penalise activism that tries to stop cruelty to animals.

The bill allows a farmer or someone who manages livestock activity to develop a biosecurity management plan for their property, and that can include mandatory measures. Then if there is prescribed biosecurity signage around the property and someone breaches a measure in their biosecurity management plan—in other words, if they trespass on the property—they can be hit with fines of up to \$10 904 for a person or over \$54 000 for organisations and on-the-spot fines of over \$1200.

I want to talk about why there are a few problems with this. Firstly, I believe it actually really devalues biosecurity protocols and the signage that comes with them. Personally I and the Greens believe that we should take biosecurity very, very seriously. It is an incredibly important issue. It is one which the Greens absolutely support strengthening. But this new law means that the public will not know if a biosecurity sign has been put up outside a farm because there is a very real and important biosecurity risk for entering that property, one that we should take very, very seriously and not contravene, or whether the sign has just been put up so that animal activists can be punished extra for entering that property. So it is a bit, in my mind, like the boy who cried wolf: if we devalue biosecurity warnings, if we undermine them like this, they will be taken less seriously. That is quite a dangerous thing and one that I think farmers and industry who genuinely care about biosecurity, which I know they do, should be quite worried about. It is like if every single beach in the country had a warning sign about crocodiles, you would not know which ones actually had crocodiles and which ones did not have crocodiles, and you would not know which ones were the very, very dangerous beaches and which ones were not the very dangerous beaches. I think it is a similar concept.

Strangely, I do not see The Nationals or the Liberal Party speaking up much about this. I personally think biosecurity is a very serious matter and it should not be used as an excuse or a smokescreen in other proxy battles because that undermines it, undervalues it and could lead to quite dangerous outcomes. That is a real concern.

But the second problem with these new offences is that offences already exist which cover what we are talking about here. The parliamentary inquiry actually spent quite a lot of time going through the existing offences that already apply to animal activists. Trespass is one of them, and wilful damage of property, use of listening or surveillance devices and potential privacy breaches. There are also offences under the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 for entering or exiting declared areas and moving livestock in and out of those areas.

These offences can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. They can even result in imprisonment. They already exist, so it is a bit hard to see why extra offences in the bill are needed and whether this is actually just a political move—I do not know why, maybe by Labor to bolster some regional seats or throw a bone to a certain constituency or show that they are not as beholden to the Animal Justice Party as some people may think they are. I do not know why, but it is hard to justify extra offences when offences already exist and particularly when it has been shown through the inquiry there has never been a biosecurity breach on a farm due to activist activity. It just does not really make sense as to why this is needed. We cannot go around making laws for things that do not happen and that do not exist, especially when, actually, the behaviour is already criminalised.

A number of submissions to the inquiry, including from the Law Institute of Victoria, pointed out that the current penalties were already sufficient and that increasing them would do little to deter activists from trying to blow the whistle on disturbing activity in the agricultural industry. They did say through the inquiry that what would actually deter this behaviour—and if people in this chamber are genuine about wanting to deter this behaviour, maybe let us look at what we know will deter the behaviour—is increasing regulation and oversight in the industry to stamp out the worst animal cruelty practices in the first place, encourage better behaviour and reward farmers who are doing the right thing. So increasing oversight in the agricultural industry, improving animal welfare standards, increasing confidence that farm animals are actually being treated humanely and with care—all of these things would make a big difference.

The government, to their credit, did commit to a lot of the inquiry's recommendations that related to improving animal welfare standards—things like introducing CCTV in abattoirs, updating codes of practice for the industry and modernising the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986—so hopefully those things come to fruition. We have also seen this government do a few things that are quite contrary to animal welfare: supporting a very low standard of free-range eggs, for example, which means what are essentially battery chicken farms can be classed as free range, and supporting and in fact giving public money to practices like duck shooting. I think these things kind of undermine that agenda of trying to protect animal welfare.

The government, I know, is currently in the process of developing new animal welfare legislation. I hope we see that before this house quite soon. It would have been nice to see that alongside this bill or before this bill. It says a bit about the priorities, but hopefully it comes to us soon. Those are the kinds of things—those are the kinds of reforms—that will actually deter protest activity, not the bill that we have before us.

I think also one of the concerns that we have is that it could be a step down a pretty slippery slope towards criminalising very specific forms of activism. So if we say that it is okay to single out animal activists for a new offence, who is to say that we will not then later say it is okay to single out other activist groups for very specific and additional punishment? We already have laws against trespass, harassment and things like that, but are we going to see a very specific offence for blockading a mining conference, for example? Are we going to see a special fine that is just for people who are sitting in a tree to stop our forests being destroyed? I think that if we are starting down that path it is a pretty

dangerous precedent for how activists and campaigners will be treated in this state. We have already seen the government introduce laws that overly criminalise and penalise people trying to protect our forests just to protect this one specific industry, which does not make a lot of sense. It is just trying to protect the status quo in an industry that we know is very, very unpopular.

At the end of the day it is important to remember that activists are just community members who are concerned enough to go and take action, at personal risk, when they see something that they believe is gravely wrong. People do not really just do this for kicks. They do it because they see something that they believe is so fundamentally wrong that they want to do everything in their power to try and stop that, whether that is cruelty to humans or cruelty to animals. These community members are not the enemy; they are just community members who feel very strongly about something and stand up against it.

That is how change has been made throughout history, and a lot of us in this place stand up and commend a lot of the change that has been made in history because of activists. Let us not lose sight of that. It is the foundation of many of the most important reforms in our country and in our state. It is our whistleblowers who shine a light on unethical and immoral behaviour in various industries. It is our campaigners that push for change, and personally I am really proud to be a member of a party that has its own foundations in activism and community campaigning. I am proud to support a lot of what activists do, provided that it is not violent, provided that it is not harassment. I think that activism plays a very important role in our society. I am proud to support activists in the face of governments bragging about introducing some of the heaviest fines in the country.

It is not really surprising, unfortunately, to me that the government has introduced these new penalties. I know that a law and order approach is often the first go-to of this government where it can, but having the heaviest fines in the nation targeting activists, targeting whistleblowers, targeting community members for standing up for what they believe is right—I do not personally think that is something that Victoria should be proud of or that this Labor government should be proud of. In a democracy when we see something that we believe is cruel, that we believe is clearly and obviously wrong, that is hurting people or animals, we actually do have the right to protest and to campaign for change. It is only dictators and authoritarian regimes that try and squash that right. Where the protest is done illegally, such as trespassing on private property, our existing privacy and trespass laws can be and are used in those circumstances. Anything further really is just a blatant attack on community members' rights to protest and on activists standing up for what they believe is right. We do not support any proposal to single out specific forms of activism or activists for additional very strong penalties, the strongest in the country, and really that is the justification for why we cannot support this bill.

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (17:58): I also rise today to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. The Victorian government is committed to supporting our agricultural producers, and this means supporting farmers and agricultural businesses when their livelihoods come under attack from activists who put hardworking farming families and their animals at risk. Unfortunately instances of activists trespassing onto livestock farms have increased in recent years, with several agricultural producers being subject to trespasses by animal activists who have intimidated farmers, stolen livestock and disrupted businesses.

I can understand some of the passion behind some of these activists, and the overwhelming majority of activists do the right thing, often fighting for their beliefs through the courts. Additionally, this government has a good record of fighting for animal welfare issues. Our government's consultation has shown Victorians support modernising the animal welfare act and support proposals that will further strengthen animal welfare provisions. Animal sentience will be recognised for the first time in Victoria's animal welfare laws. The consultation that the government undertook there allowed a range of stakeholders to be involved, including allowing agricultural, animal welfare, recreational and other organisations to provide their views on this reform, with overwhelming support for modernising it. We banned puppy farms.

Our government's record is clear, but farmers and agricultural businesses should also be free to do their work without fear of being targeted by these activists who put not only farmers and animals at risk but also Victoria's biosecurity. The biosecurity risk created by animal rights activists trespassing onto livestock farms can have significant impacts on the health of animals. Furthermore, with Victoria having a reputation as a producer of high-quality produce, these biosecurity risks can impact market access for our farmers and agricultural businesses. Most Victorians understand these risks and are shocked by the actions of a minority of these activists who engage in this reckless behaviour.

While difference of opinion is of course always healthy in a democracy, it is never okay to resort to trespass and disruption that intimidates fellow Victorians and risks the health and safety of our livestock. That is why the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public inquiry into these matters was so important. This inquiry considered the effectiveness of legislation and other measures in preventing and deterring disruptive activities by animal rights activists on agricultural industries. The report that the committee produced expressed support for our farmers and agricultural businesses and criticised the illegal actions of animal rights activists. It also found that acts of trespass by activists have caused physical and mental distress to many in the agricultural industry. The inquiry found that animal rights activists who trespassed onto livestock farms posed a biosecurity risk. The inquiry also found that the penalties given in certain incidents of trespass did not necessarily meet the expectations of stakeholders and some sections of the community.

Ultimately the report made 15 recommendations to address these issues, with these recommendations focusing on building confidence in existing agricultural standards as well as strengthening Victoria's biosecurity laws. As I said, this government is committed to supporting our agricultural producers and our rural and regional communities. The government is also committed to protecting Victorians from the biosecurity risks that result from trespass onto livestock farms. That is why this government supported 13 of the 15 recommendations of the committee's report in full, including recommendations to incorporate on-the-spot fines for biosecurity breaches caused by trespassers. Two of the recommendations from the committee are being given full effect in this bill, with this being another example of the government's continued commitment to our farmers, their families and their livestock.

I will turn to the specifics of this legislation. The bill will give full effect to recommendations 4 and 5 of the report. This will reduce the biosecurity risk caused by illegal entry onto livestock premises and provide additional means of prosecuting trespassers. On-the-spot fines will now be issued to people who trespass onto a livestock farm, with a fine of up to \$1272 per person or \$8178 for a corporation. Where the trespass is of a serious nature and this matter goes to the Magistrates Court a fine of up to \$10 904 per person or up to \$54 222 for a corporation can be issued. These fines are among the most severe in Australia and will go a long way to deterring the disruptive actions that led to farmers and their families being intimidated as well as the biosecurity of Victoria being threatened. These are necessary measures to protect the biosecurity of our farms and agricultural businesses.

The introduction of diseases to farms can have a terrible impact on animal welfare and Victoria's market access. For example, if a disease has infected a farm's livestock, farmers may need to depopulate their stock, which can have tremendously adverse financial and animal welfare impacts. It is for this reason that farmers work so hard to protect their livestock from biosecurity risks. Not long ago we saw how disease outbreaks can affect livestock populations, with the outbreak of avian influenza in 2020 having a severe impact on the poultry populations of several farms. One farm alone lost 5100 birds to this disease, and had the virus spread to more farms the entire industry could have been devastated by this biosecurity risk. Thankfully the outbreak was contained and the virus has been eradicated from Victoria, and this was because of the hard work of farmers, businesses, local communities and vets who came together to address the crisis. However, this outbreak was a stark reminder of how vital biosecurity is to our farms and highlights the need for legislation like this.

Trespassing onto a farm in the middle of an outbreak can lead to dire consequences. That is why it is so important that the penalties for this illegal behaviour reflect the severity of endangering Victoria's biosecurity. This government recognises this. It is committed to strengthening the biosecurity of farms

and the agricultural industry at large. As it did with the rollout of electronic identification tags for sheep and goats, Victoria is leading the way on critical biosecurity reform. These reforms often set an example for the rest of the country on how to enhance biosecurity defences.

As I said earlier, Victoria is also leading the way on animal welfare. This government recognises that animal welfare is becoming increasingly important to both consumers and trade partners. Despite the claims of some of the animal rights activists, many farmers do take great care in the welfare of their animals. That is why this government is, as I said earlier, committed to strengthening and supporting animal welfare in Victoria. The government has already delivered Victoria's first animal welfare action plan as well as establishing Animal Welfare Victoria. This government has also been actively developing new national animal welfare standards, with the development of the animal welfare standards and guidelines for poultry currently underway. Finally, this government has also reformed the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee to ensure that it is receiving the best advice to support our animal welfare agenda.

All Victorians love animals and want to do what is best for their welfare, and these initiatives reflect this concern for the health and safety of our animals. As such, animal welfare will continue to be a priority of the Victorian government, particularly as a new animal welfare act to replace the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 is underway. This bill and the initiatives I mention all reflect the needs of our modern world and contemporary attitudes around the treatment of animals.

When taken alongside the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, these schemes reflect a government that is committed to both animal welfare and the welfare of our farmers and agricultural businesses. While balancing these interests can of course sometimes be difficult, it is important that we strive to enhance animal welfare while protecting our agricultural industry. Most of all it is important that we send a clear message to those who seek to disrupt, threaten and intimidate our farmers that this behaviour will not be tolerated. Consequences for this behaviour will be tough but fair. The changes made in this bill will go a long way towards deterring this behaviour and protecting Victoria's farmers, livestock and biosecurity.

This government will always be committed to Victoria's agricultural producers and our communities who participate in this sector. This bill upholds this commitment and puts our farmers, agricultural businesses and livestock first. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (18:07): I rise to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, and as other speakers on this side of the house have noted, we will not be opposing this bill. We have a couple of amendments that we would of course like to put, and we will have that opportunity if the government allows this bill to go into consideration in detail.

I suppose I will start with one of those amendments, because overall I absolutely support the intent of this bill and most of the provisions. Really my only complaint would be that the government has been so tardy in bringing it here. But in relation to the penalties for the biosecurity offences—not the on-the-spot fines, but the other penalties—they are inadequate compared to other jurisdictions and we do think that they could well be increased, in fact doubled. With those words though I want to address the actual purpose of the bill and how we got to where we are today.

I did hear the end of the member for Melbourne's speech. She seemed to be putting forward the argument that existing laws were okay to deal with people going onto private property. But it is absolutely clear that in relation to animal activists invading people's farms that is not the case, because we have had, over and over again, people either fined a dollar or not fined at all because somehow it is okay if you break this law—it is okay if you go along to somebody's home or somebody's farm if you are an animal activist—and I do not think that we can say that that is in any way adequate. The courts have consistently failed to uphold the right of people to have quiet enjoyment of their homes and their private property when the opposing person is an animal activist. The animal activists have at every chance got the lawyers there to say, 'Oh look, this poor person is actually some sort of law

student or is a young person who has a bright future in front of them. You shouldn't convict them', and they go and do it again.

Ms Britnell: With no criminal record.

Ms STALEY: With no criminal record. Thank you, member for South-West Coast. That is why this bill is needed. That is why we have agreed with the government that they needed to bring this forward, and it is why we do not oppose it.

It is very disappointing that the Greens in this place have said they will oppose it. I in some way dread what Mr Meddick in the other place is going to say about this bill when it comes up. I cannot imagine he is going to support it, given that he and his fellow travellers are in fact many of the people who support these actions and support people going onto people's farms.

Now, of course, I represent the electorate of Ripon, and we have a large amount of intensive agriculture in Ripon, particularly chicken farms in Central Goldfields. There are a lot of—

Mr Riordan: Golden Plains.

Ms STALEY: Well, indeed, Golden Plains is coming into Ripon, and that has 20-something per cent of Victoria's intensive chicken industry in that electorate. So it is going to be very much my people that this affects, but it also affects every Victorian's food supply, because if you have someone going into one of these highly intensive chook sheds—let us not be clever about this—the result is that all of those chickens usually have to be slaughtered because the biosecurity has been breached. I mean, I do not see how the animal activists think that is a good outcome.

So here we have a situation where the current law is inadequate and the government is acting. And, as I say, we are not opposing that. But I remain extremely concerned about the attitude of the Greens, the attitude of Animal Justice, when they come here and they seem to—well, not even seem to but out and out—support people's livelihoods and their personal enjoyment of their private property being invaded. We would not accept that in any other circumstance, yet the Animal Justice people, one of whom has the great privilege to represent the upper house region where my seat is, really should get out and meet a few people in his electorate, and they might put a different view.

I would also note that person thinks this week is the week to launch a petition against the fox bounty, and he went into Facebook and to other places saying that the fox bounty should be removed because foxes are playful and curious. Well, I would say to Mr Meddick of the other place that he really needs to see a lamb and how playful and curious it is when it has been mauled by a fox. So these are people completely out of touch with the needs of their constituents—if Mr Meddick, who is a member for Western Victoria, thinks that western Victorian people think that is a good idea. They clearly do not.

It is not in the interests of our region to have animal activists disrupting our farms. Our whole region just absolutely depends on the agricultural output and the broader economic benefits that that brings. So this bill is a really important bill. It is one of those marker bills in a sense. For quite a short bill it actually says that the Parliament is saying that we are going to stand up for farmers. We are going to say that their biosecurity, their ability to farm and to live on their farms in peace and security matter. So, as I say, we do think that this bill is on the right track. We think that the offences are not high enough. They are just not commensurate with other states. The on-the-spot fines are but not the other offences, and we do think putting an amendment to improve that, as we see it, would be advantageous to the whole bill. We think that would make it a more robust piece of legislation.

I see the Minister for Agriculture is at the table. I would very, very much enjoin her to step up and take the bill into consideration in detail. She would in fact be a heroine of the Parliament if she did that, because she would be the first minister this term to do so. All those Labor MPs that were elected in the 2018 election have never seen consideration in detail in that sense in this chamber. They do not know what one looks like, and perhaps the Minister for Agriculture could lead the way on going into consideration in detail.

We promise it will not be very, very long—an hour, that is all. We are not going to take up too much of the time of the Parliament—we understand that there are other bills on the agenda this week—but we do think that this is an ideal opportunity to have a more detailed look at some of the provisions of this bill. But as I say, the opposition does not oppose this bill. With those brief remarks I will stand aside for whoever is next, which I think is the member for Tarneit.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (18:15): Well, I will not say it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to speak on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021, but what I am going to say is that I am really happy to be able to stand and speak on something and shed what I think is going to be some common sense to add to this debate.

The member for Melbourne—I feel like it is a theme when you listen to contributions from the Greens party that you can only have it one way or the other. There is no in-between. There is no common sense. There is no rationale behind taking what can be really extreme approaches on different issues. I feel like the member for Melbourne in her contribution to this bill talked about activists—people that believe in animal rights and want to see the end to animal cruelty and all those things—as if they are the activists; they are the people on the ground fighting the good fight. I always feel like it is just taking such an extreme view of what is a really complicated issue.

I would say that no-one in this house believes in animal cruelty. The things that we read in the news and that we might watch on TV, and we get that warning of censorship before we watch it—those things that we see are very, very upsetting, and no-one in this house wants to see animals be treated like that. That does not mean that somehow we are not activists. Over the summer, while I was camping, I got some beef sausages, and I also tried for the very first time some vegan vegetable ones—I am not sure if that then makes me an activist—and popped them in the air fryer and tried them. They were great, and my kids ate them alongside the beef, pork and chicken sausages. But what I am saying is that does not pigeonhole me to believe in one thing or another.

In reading about this bill and what it means, one of the things that struck me, and I actually did not realise how bad it was and the extreme nature of it—I think the member for Ripon briefly touched on it—was that in mid-2020 outbreaks of avian influenza were indeed detected across six different farms in what happened to be the largest outbreak of the disease that we have ever seen in Australia. Avian influenza—which I did not realise—is a very serious disease of poultry that can cause very high death rates and impact on international trade, and for this reason eradication is the nationally agreed strategy when outbreaks occur. But it was, as always, thanks to the efforts of farmers—mums and dads out there getting up at all times of the day to look after their livestock—businesses, local communities and vets that the outbreak was indeed successfully contained and that the virus was eradicated from Victoria.

We talked about the impacts of the outbreak on individual farms. I was pretty upset to read about how devastating it was. One small farm alone, for example, lost 5100 birds. In total hundreds of thousands of birds were lost due to the outbreak. And then I went on to read that if the disease had in fact spread to more farms, the impact across the industry could have been more disastrous. Now, what does this mean, and why am I talking about it this? Farms introduced enhanced biosecurity measures—things like footbaths, which someone like me, who lives in metropolitan Melbourne, would not have actually thought about because I do not have a farming background. But I read about the footbaths when entering and exiting paddocks and sheds and the importance of them and the importance of maintaining separate vehicles for different paddocks to prevent cross-contamination and how important that was, remember, not just to reduce the numbers but to actually eradicate the disease from here in Victoria.

Now, if a trespasser were to go ahead and break into a farm affected by an avian influenza outbreak, the consequences could be dire, probably because they do not understand the disease or know what they are actually stepping into or stepping onto on that person's property—because it is not their own, they are trespassing. This is why this bill is so important, because it gives the farmer the option of implementing biosecurity plans which can be enforced—and, yes, with harsh penalties. I have spoken

in this house before about how important it is to have appropriate, satisfactory penalties—some might call them harsh—because they are a deterrent. We need them to be a deterrent. In the case of avian influenza you want it to deter people from stepping into those paddocks, onto that property, in the first place, because as I just said, it is a disaster at the end of the day for the livestock—for the birds in this particular case. I just talked about that one small farm alone: that was 5100 birds that had to be culled.

The main objective, as a lot of members in this house have talked about, in relation to this bill is to go ahead and build upon the recent inquiry into the impact of animal rights activism on Victorian agriculture—a really important inquiry. It aims to curb some of the rather excessive practices conducted by animal rights activists on the properties of farmers. So when the member for Melbourne got up here and started talking about activists and everybody having the right to protest, yes, they do, but stepping onto private property, putting at harm not only a family business but also the livestock—the animals, whether you are talking about sheep, cows, birds—that sort of stuff matters. This bill is not just about protecting our wonderful farmers and those family-run businesses and hardworking Victorians, it is also the animals as well.

Now, we are not saying with this bill that you cannot go ahead and protest for animal rights or that we are banning—and I know that the member for South Gippsland liked to laugh about my little veganism comment, but I will stand by that the sausages were actually quite lovely—that kind of thing. What we are saying is that you can still be an activist, you can still protest, but without trespassing onto other people's property, committing thefts and causing widespread disruption to farmers and the businesses that work with them, because remember: it is not just about the farmer, it is the entire supply chain and those who work within that supply chain.

Now, there is a number of reasons why we are saying this, and that was outlined in the final report that was tabled in Parliament. The biggest one that stuck out to me was that the trespass of animal rights activists actually poses that biosecurity risk. Earlier I mentioned avian influenza and what that means, and I think that was a really good example of the damage that trespassers can actually do to properties and farms—that biosecurity risk. I would like to think that everyone here in this chamber today can understand and also appreciate the importance of biosecurity. We have been, I would say, pretty much practising it for the last two years with respect to the COVID-19 global pandemic as a risk to human biosecurity.

Now, in the time that I have got left I will just quickly talk about the story of a constituent who once told me they had a similar story about animal activism with a very unfortunate outcome: spray-painting numbers on the goats and sneaking them into school grounds to play a ridiculous muck-up day prank. It upset my staff actually quite a bit to hear this. They thought this would be funny and had taken the animal from a property. To cut a very long story short, what they thought was a very funny prank—removing the animal from the paddocks and the farm that it was from—presented a biosecurity risk, and that animal had to be put down.

This bill is really going to the heart of protecting our farmers, protecting local jobs and protecting the animals that are indeed there on farms and properties across Victoria.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (18:25): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. As you have heard from other speakers, we are not opposing this bill, and can I commend the member for Tarneit on her very, very good contribution then. But I also want to put on record that over the summer break I did not have any vegan sausages. I clearly want to put that on the record early in my contribution. The bill will amend the Livestock Management Act 2010 and provide biosecurity management plans for offences of contravening biosecurity measures and certain other matters of animal activism, which is growing, and which we have seen and heard about tonight.

A bit of background: as we have heard, in January 2019 Aussie Farms—a registered charity, of all things—created a website and a Facebook page to target producers across Australia, with the

publication of a map and farm locations. Hundreds of farmers were listed on the interactive map, which included details on the nature of their farming operation—including pigs, dairy, beef, some abattoirs, greyhound tracks et cetera—and they were targeted. This resource was subsequently used by animal activists to target primary producers to expose supposed animal cruelty. This was the basis for those disgraceful attacks on Victorian farmers. Can I say the member for Bendigo West said it best when she said, ‘They’re not activists, they are actually extremists’, and I clearly support that view. These extremists must be stopped.

Then once the Aussie Farms website went live, a Protect Our Farms campaign was launched, calling on stronger protections for primary producers and for the charity status of the group to be revoked, and thankfully it was by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. At the same time, Scott Morrison said that Aussie Farms encouraged the invasion of farmers’ homes and properties and the sabotaging of businesses. The ACNC commissioner also noted that revocation of charity status was reserved for the most serious of cases. So it was acknowledged nationally that Aussie Farms was a serious offender.

Then the *Weekly Times* revealed to us that an activist was fined just \$1 for breaking biosecurity laws after stealing livestock from Gippy Goat Cafe in Gippsland. Gippy Goat is—was—a legitimate, caring business that was invaded by trespassers who threatened the biosecurity of their property. This set a precedent that they could trespass other properties and get fined \$1—a slap on the wrist with a wet lettuce. After much kicking and screaming, the Victorian government felt compelled to be seen to be doing something about this pitiful \$1 fine for the activist concerned and set up a parliamentary inquiry into the impact of animal activism on Victorian agriculture. The inquiry went on to make multiple recommendations, in February 2020.

Again, it took some time for the government to get this to where we are today but, gladly, we are here, although somewhat later than we would have thought. But anyway, we are here now, and we are pleased that we are. This action is in direct contrast to Queensland and New South Wales, who immediately introduced stronger on-the-spot fines by the end of 2019. Other states have also implemented stronger protections, while Victoria delayed the action with an inquiry. The Nationals and Liberals were tenacious, particularly through Melina Bath in the other place, in ensuring that the government for Melbourne would finally have to face up to this wilful trespassing.

This legislation has been welcomed by many stakeholders, including the Victorian Farmers Federation’s Emma Germano. She said the legislation and the introduction of these fines was:

... a long time coming to the point we thought perhaps they weren’t going to put them into place.

They are meaningful fines and not only a deterrent, but they demonstrate we value farmers and it’s not an appropriate form of protest to trespass onto farmers’ property.

We always find groups that are opposed to this legislation. I shook my head in disbelief when I listened to the member for Melbourne. Only the Greens can defend illegal trespass and then go on to blame The Nationals and the Liberals for the terms of reference. Most of all what surprised me was when she said that this bill should be including animal welfare measures. Well, no. This bill should not include animal welfare measures. This bill is about stopping people from trespassing and putting in deterrents so that they do not trespass. Nobody likes it if somebody trespasses into their home because they do not believe they are bringing up their family the right way or they are not making their bed in the right direction. If an activist can come in and invade your private space—this is exactly what happened with trespassers at the Gippy Goat Cafe, which was the precedent that was set.

The member for Melbourne went on to say that she supports biosecurity but was concerned about the confusion that might come with the signage. Let me tell the member for Melbourne and any other activist or extremist: if it is not your property, get off it. Do not get on it in the first place. Stay away. It is as simple as that. It is not that hard to understand. She also said that they are proud to support activists—well, they are extremists, as we said earlier. Finally, she went on to say that this bill threatens the right to protest. No, it does not. It threatens activists’ right to invade property. That is what it really does.

Ultimately, the livestock management amendment bill will introduce some of Australia's heaviest fines—on-the-spot fines of \$1272 for individuals and a bit over \$8000 for businesses. As you have heard from the member for Murray Plains, we would like to see those doubled. We just need to send a really clear message to these people that you cannot trespass, you cannot invade people's property. Whether you are a farmer or a family or whatever, trespassing is just not on. I know the member for Gippsland South wants to make a contribution, so I am going to finish my contribution there because it will give him a couple of minutes at the end of the night. But we really need to send that signal that trespassing is not on, theft is not on and the penalty must reflect the crime.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (18:32): Throughout 2018 and 2019 the agricultural community in Victoria was subjected to a series of incidents that involved so-called animal rights activists who were intimidating people, stealing livestock and disrupting businesses. I could not agree more with the member for Ovens Valley that people invading people's property, people breaking the law to get their point across, is just not acceptable.

It was brought to our attention through the inquiry that there were improvements we could make, and this bill includes 13 out of the 15 recommendations that were made by the inquiry. We have heard today about the serious impacts of trespassing on agricultural communities, including acts of trespass, threats and the kidnapping of animals, and the mental and physical distress that that has caused animals and the people who own them, including farmers, families and employees. Also we have heard about the biosecurity risk as well, which is huge. This can flatten whole industries, let alone just one farmer or one business. We have heard also that all people who enter these farms must consult with property owners or managers and comply with their biosecurity protocols.

I would like to put on the record, as I think I have heard from most people in this house this evening, that we all love animals. Obviously there are different perceptions of what an animal activist is and for me one of the examples that is most recent about people's perception of farming and agriculture and how it is different to, say, mine or members on the other side would be the series *Muster Dogs* on the ABC. It is the best reality TV you will ever see. It is not *Married at First Sight*, it is not the *Bachelor* or anything like that. But for those who follow the wagging tails of little Annie, Spice, Gossip, Lucifer and Chet it is not just about the dogs. It is about the people who own the properties. They have got livestock and they are farmers, sometimes doing it very tough in some of these areas of Australia.

What came to the fore for me and certainly for some other people I spoke to with regard to this series, *Muster Dogs*, was how much care some of these pastoralists, agriculturalists, farmers put into their stock. They are actually bringing these kelpies onto their farm because they no longer want to stress their cattle with helicopters. They no longer want to stress their cattle, sheep, cows, whatever, with motorbikes and machinery. They want to use dogs to keep the cattle calm so they obviously can bring a better product to market, but also because it makes it easier on the livestock and it makes it easier on them as well.

One of the things that hit me a little bit was that a friend that is very much in that, I would say, lean animal activist area—our discussions have revealed that anyway—was kind of shocked at how these people cared so much for their animals, and I think those people who have grown up on farms or been exposed to farms know that. The whole deal with being an animal activist is that it can be done in a legal way. It can be done in a way that actually achieves change in places like this. I would challenge anyone in an argument who would say that trespassing on someone's land, their house or their property or stealing their animals does anything for that cause, anything at all.

We put in place this inquiry to make sure that those people who work on the land for a living with cattle and other animals can feel safe and can actually do their job without fear of this kind of thing happening. We have heard a few examples this afternoon, and I will not go into them.

One thing I would like to clear up is that there have been some claims from members that the fines in the bill are lower than in other jurisdictions, and there is a bit of confusion there. I think some of the

members that have said this are comparing them with the maximum penalty, which obviously would go through a court and require a judicial outcome. However, the focus of this bill is on on-the-spot fines, which are infringement offences which are issued by a police officer or an authorised officer, and in that case this bill, once it is enacted, would bring higher penalties than anywhere in the nation. Victoria will also be the only jurisdiction to have an on-the-spot fine for corporates or body corporates, and this covers activists' organisations as well so that no-one can hide behind that.

An example of this would be that in New South Wales the infringement offence amount for this financial year, because we are looking at penalty units, would be around \$1000. In Queensland it would be around \$689, and this is under their biosecurity acts. For Victoria, once this bill is enacted, under the Livestock Management Act 2010 an individual can be fined \$1272 and corporations can be fined \$8178, which are indeed the largest fines in Australia. That maximum penalty blows out, and this would obviously have to go through the judicial system, to \$10 904 for an individual and \$54 522 for corporations.

I will wind up fairly quickly because I am aware there are some other people that want to make contributions.

A member interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: No? Oh, beautiful. So this show *Muster Dogs* is a must-see—the best reality TV.

In all seriousness, the reaction I see in my community when people read the paper and hear about these invasions of property is not, 'Oh, the poor animals'. It is, 'My goodness, what are these people doing?'. I do not think they are doing their cause justice, and I think it is an act like this that goes a long way to ensuring that we can prevent this. Much like the laws that this government has put through this house successfully, with the assistance of course of the opposition—workplace health and safety laws—for me individually and for many members of my community this is much the same path that we are treading. We are making the fines for these offences more than a slap on the wrist. We are making sure that people know that if they do choose to do this, their actions will invoke a reaction that they might have to live with, and I think it makes people just have a second thought.

I spoke before about the spectrum of animal activists and what they are actually acting on. Many of the things we have heard about today, the instances we have heard about today, are not cattle on a ship that are dying out in the bay. Many of the things we have heard about today are not about the issues around how our meat is produced. Many of these issues tend to be a little bit more nuanced than that. We have heard also today about the way that some of these industries have been focused on.

I, like many people in this house, would not like to think that there was any way that someone would be able to come into my house and because they do not like the way I, you know, make a four-course meal for my dog or whatever then take my dog or abuse me without there being some kind of penalty for that, and an adequate penalty as well. Many people in our community, it was found in the inquiry, agreed that the penalties did not fit what was actually happening and the offences that were occurring.

I think this bill goes a long way to ensuring that people that produce things for our markets, for our community and for overseas markets that we support as a government are able to do that safely, efficiently and effectively, because they are doing the legal thing. What they are doing is totally legal. But we have got some people who, and they are entitled to their opinion, do not think it is right and want to take illegal action against something that is legal. This bill goes a long way to preventing that and to sending that message to people that you just cannot rock up, that just because you are a bunch of people and you have got that herd mentality—no pun intended—it does not mean you can just rock up to someone's farm—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: You liked that?

Ms Ward: Yes.

Mr EDBROOKE: It does not mean you can just rock up to someone's farm and, instead of just protesting outside, go in and make a mockery of the law. This sends a clear message to those people that, yes, they can have their opinion—we have all got our opinions about how we treat animals and what is acceptable and what is not—but if someone is producing a legal product on a legal farm, they are protected by this legislation, and I wholeheartedly commend it to the house.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:41): I too wish to contribute to the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. As many of my colleagues have said this afternoon, this is a long-overdue bill. It is a long-overdue bill because increasingly over the last 20-odd years it has become common practice for many activist groups, predominantly city-based activists, to have very firm views on the way people in rural and regional Victoria live and the way rural and regional Victorians operate their businesses.

From rural Victorians' point of view, these longstanding traditional businesses and enterprises that carry on in agriculture—livestock raising, milk production, egg production, pork, beef, lamb, whatever it might be—are important elements to humankind. They are age-old foodstuffs, they are a part of the production system, they are incredibly important to the economy and to the way of life of so many thousands of people. Yet increasingly we are seeing in this industry, the agricultural industry—we have seen it in the timber industry, we have seen it in the fishing industry, we have seen it in a whole raft of valuable and important rural pursuits—that people who disagree with it just feel that they can go and invade a workplace, and as is so often the case in country Victoria it is also invading homes.

No-one else, no other industry, would tolerate that. I mean, imagine, for example, the Ford Motor Company or a major corporation that produced something that people did not agree with and people thinking it was okay to just go in and take over the managing director's home or invade the whole workplace and upend all manner of workplace safety and workplace protocols just to try and prove their point. And of course increasingly we have seen that these activist groups, which the Greens seem to be able to spend a fair bit of time justifying, are the same groups that spend a lot of time vilifying those farms and those people for something that is entirely 100 per cent legal and is important to the rest of the community, and it is really a bridge too far. We welcome the fact that the government has finally taken advice and sought to do something.

I make note also of the member for Frankston, who said that we should be very proud of the fines. Not that we have too much to criticise about this particular piece of legislation, but I will point out, having had a quick look through the fines that WorkSafe imposes for other workplace safety breaches, that a fine of \$1800 would be at the very, very, very extremely low end of any workplace fine handed out by WorkSafe. I also point out that the corporation maximum penalty of \$8000 too would barely rate a mention in WorkSafe's fines.

I was looking through some of those indiscretions, such as people just abusing each other verbally and a whole range of workplace practices that this government and its agencies view as far more litigious, far more worthy of much greater penalties than what a whole horde of people will be fined should they invade your home in the country or your workplace. So I think there is room definitely to up the ante on the importance that these industries have to rural and regional areas and to provide those protections.

The member for Gippsland South, I am sure, like me, had a number of farmers at the time—this is a couple of years back now with the Gippy Goat saga. It was quite a thing for activist groups to do. I had many, many farming families contact my office wondering what their rights were, wondering whether their wives and their children were safe to be left at home by themselves, which is a very common practice in the country. I mean, the worst we have to worry about usually is—well, I do not really know what the worst thing to worry about is, probably the neighbour's dog coming in.

A member: Snakes.

Mr RIORDAN: And snakes. And not the two-legged snakes with long hair and smelling of incense; that is not the type of snake that our farming families need to worry about. But people had a genuine concern. They were worried about whether it would be safe to leave those people behind. As the member for South Gippsland would also know, many in the dairy industry are very much mum-and-dad family operations. When they go away on holidays for the one or two weeks a year they get a break from the farm they will leave a farm manager or perhaps an elderly family member to hold the fort while they have a well-deserved break. And questions were quite valid: what would the instructions be? What safety would be in place for the people that they had left to essentially babysit the farm for a couple of weeks? These were real concerns that people were living with and worried about. The government has gone some way to addressing that, and we acknowledge that.

The other request that the opposition had—and this is a really important one—was to have this bill as one suitable for consideration in detail. And I guess from my point of view the reason this was so important is we had another crucial piece of legislation that sailed through this Parliament, as legislation so often does now with the government commanding both houses and really not putting the work in to getting the bills right to start with. We had the infamous legislation last year that was going to allow people all over farms with riverfrontages. And members like me and other country members made it very clear that having people roaming all over the—

Ms Thomas: You voted for it.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, the opportunity to properly interrogate the legislation was not there, and we tried to bring this to the government's account. Had they had proper debate at the time to discuss these issues, it would have become clear that it is just not possible to allow legislation to let people roam all over people's farms.

Ms Thomas: People are not allowed to roam over people's farms.

Mr RIORDAN: No, they are not now. So that was brought up, but this is another reason why this legislation is a prime opportunity to properly interrogate it, because once again the minister, despite her barking on the other side of this table, has—

Ms Ward: Oh, come on! Barking?

Mr RIORDAN: Well, it sounds like it. All I can hear is this muffle, muffle, muffle. But the point is—

Ms Ward interjected.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, she should not be interjecting. The minister should not be interjecting on my opportunity to state the case that this legislation again allows a loophole where people with riverfrontage land may in fact still be susceptible to people coming through on their property. And that is—

Ms Thomas: People have always been allowed on riverfrontages. Always.

Mr RIORDAN: No, not on leaseholds.

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr RIORDAN: Well, it is not good enough that people can use this as a loophole to this legislation. And we can see the trickery of the activist movement. We know of the trickery of the activist movement, and those farming enterprises and businesses that are going to be adjacent who may in fact have large sections of their property and their farm under Crown lease are still at real risk without the suitable amendments made to this. While the intent of the legislation is very important, we still in regional Victoria need to know that this government has the hardworking farming families' backs, that it is actually looking after them and is prepared to protect them.

And the advice from this side of the house, from the opposition, is there were some clear minor improvements that could still be made, and the penalties could still be such that they send a real deterrent—a deterrent much greater. The deterrence that this government put on people not wearing masks, for example, is nearly 100 times greater in financial terms than what this government is prepared to say, ‘You just can’t invade a workplace, you just can’t invade a farm, you can’t compromise a hardworking farming family’s biosecurity on a whim and for a lark on your university holidays’.

These are important issues. It is important that the integrity of the clean and green nature of Victorian agriculture is absolutely sacrosanct, that it in no way gets compromised and that in no way can groups just take it upon themselves to do enormous damage. They may only think it is damage or interference on one particular day or a certain point in time, but that damage can be quite long lasting and have a severe impact—not only financially to the farming family; we know of the mental consequences and the heartache that it causes. So we acknowledge the fact that this long overdue piece of legislation is now before us, and we look forward to supporting it.

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (18:51): I am pleased to rise just to say a few words, in the 9 or so minutes I have got before we adjourn, on the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021. I was not going to speak on this because many of my colleagues before me have covered the issues very well, but there are a couple of things I want to say about the debate, particularly the contribution of the member for Melbourne.

The background to this has been outlined by previous speakers and in particular comes from the Aussie Farms website in early 2019, where farms across the country were identified and activists encouraged to invade them and protest. It was not just to protest; that was not the whole issue. It was the invasion. It was the damage, the threat to property and the threat and fear of people on farms that were such a concern. I do not think I have seen many issues in my time that have generated such anger in my community, such outrage from people, as the invasion of farms by these activists—and with good reason, I might add. If you can pardon my French, farming is bloody hard. It is difficult in the seasons, whether there are droughts or the floods we are experiencing now. It is managing input costs. It is managing global commodity changes. It is dealing with animal health issues from day to day. It is dealing with so many things. And for farmers to have to put up with this sort of activism makes it even harder. We in this place should be doing our best to ensure that farmers are given assistance and that they are given every possible help to do the job of not only feeding us and clothing us but actually helping us to deliver capital, to grow capital, to grow income for this country. We send two-thirds of our farm produce overseas and it is a huge export earner for our country, so we have got to do what we can.

What really prompted much of the anger in my community was the Gippy Goat invasion that we have heard others speak about and that resulted in the infamous \$1 fine for the theft of a goat, which was a joke—and that was the common refrain from people. They were angry about that. It was at this point in particular I think when my colleague, a member for Eastern Victoria in the other place, Melina Bath really stepped up, because she has spent over the years a lot of time with John Gommans, who was the owner of Gippy Goat. Subsequently the cafe there has closed, which is a great shame. Melina’s work, through I think a mix of anger, compassion and determination actually got up the inquiry that has led to this legislation that we have here now. She pursued that. She pursued it through the whole inquiry that the upper house undertook and she did a fantastic job to get us where we have got to today.

I echo the comments of the member for Polwarth. I was getting comments from—at the time and subsequently—particularly dairy farmers and particularly women on farms who were really concerned, who were saying to me, ‘What do we do? What do we do if a group of 10 people just turn up to our farm?’. So it was absolutely correct that action needed to be taken, and great credit to Melina that she did so.

I said I would mention the Greens, and I was just astounded by the contribution from the member for Melbourne, shallow as it was. In particular the general tenor seemed to be that this legislation needs to be opposed because it is somehow stopping us from protesting, somehow taking away our right to

protest. That is the most fallacious argument on this legislation that I have heard. It is just absurd to suggest that you will not be able to protest because of this legislation. It is absolute rubbish. People come out to this Parliament and protest every day. There are people out the front. They do not invade the building. They do not invade the homes of MPs. They do not invade the homes of the people that they might be protesting about. And for the Greens to get up and say that this is somehow taking away our democratic rights is just astonishing and needs to be condemned.

If you do not like what is happening in the state, in the country, go to your local MP. Protest by all means. Start a petition. Stand for Parliament. Get elected yourself. But do not say you have the right to invade someone's home and property and do damage and take their property. That is just ridiculous, and the Greens and many on the left indeed are hypocrites on this, because when there have been protests out the front and through the streets of Melbourne over the recent restrictions in the last couple of years they get called neofascists and Nazis and all sorts of names, and yet when it is a protest that they like, an invasion of people's private property, somehow that is a democratic right that they should have.

I pick up the comment that the member for Gippsland East also made about Mr Meddick in the other place, whose home was targeted by those same activists over the pandemic bill. I agree that should not happen. He said:

I understand why people disagree. People disagree in a vibrant democracy. But you don't have the right to come to someone's house and make their family feel physically in danger.

Well, I agree with the member for Gippsland East, I agree with Mr Meddick on that point. He is a man though who has supported these activists, and he should be condemned because he is a hypocrite on that issue as well.

In the last couple of minutes I have got, we know, as people that deal with farmers all the time as country MPs, that farmers love their animals. I can tell you: have a look at social media at the time of lambing, and you will see the number of farms that have got lambs in the lounge room with them in front of the fire trying to keep them alive. They go to amazing lengths to look after their animals. Dairy farmers, likewise, love their cows and have names and their favourites of course. So I do not think there is a question that farmers love their animals, and sure, in farming, in modern farming and ancient farming, there will be animal welfare issues that need to be addressed, and that is always going to be the case. But 99.9 per cent of farmers do the right thing, and they should not be condemned for the actions of these activists. Let us be clear though, many of these extreme activists actually do not want us to farm or to eat animals. That is what it boils down to, and we cannot be continually trying to appease them, and this legislation goes a long way to ensuring that we actually are protecting our farmers.

Briefly on the amendments: I certainly support the amendments put forward by the Leader of The Nationals, in particular in relation to the maximum fine. We are talking just under \$11 000 for the maximum fine. I got an email today from a constituent who got a COVID fine of \$10 990 because when the inspectors came his COVID plan on the wall was not filled in correctly, and he did not have the density quotient for his premises on the door. I do not think it is unreasonable that these sorts of fines for people invading someone's property should be tougher, and so I support the amendment put up by the Leader of The Nationals.

I am trying to time this perfectly, Deputy Speaker. I think I have got about 20 seconds to go, so I will finish on the fact that I support the amendments moved by the Leader of The Nationals. I support the intent of this bill, because it is absolutely critical that this Parliament gives its support to our farmers every day, continues to support our farmers every day and makes sure that we stick with them and get behind them.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (19:00): (6186) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that he lifts all surgery bans in western Victoria at Ballarat, Bendigo and Barwon health services. I particularly raise this tonight because of an email I received from a constituent, who in her email to me said:

Our grandson-in-law went to Swan Hill today because he was so ill and had black stools.

The surgeon said that he wanted to do an endoscopy—examine esophagus, stomach, duodenum but cannot do this procedure because elective surgery is banned.

Our daughter-in-law needs a stent removed from her kidney. the surgeon is very anxious about this as it has been in too long. He explained if he did this op and was reported he would be fined heavily.

This is not the only tragic story, the only constituent who has family members in pain and is therefore deeply worried about the health of their family. In western Victoria the major hospitals of Bendigo, Ballarat and Barwon are not in the same position as some of the Melbourne hospitals might be. There is no reason that full elective surgery and private surgery lists cannot start again at these hospitals and at the private hospitals, such as St John of God in Ballarat.

Far too many Victorians are waiting on waiting lists. We now have over 80 000 Victorians on surgery waiting lists, and a thousand are being added each week. It is unacceptable for so many Victorians needing really serious surgery. We are not talking about someone having some sort of cosmetic surgery or a maybe surgery; these are serious, recommended surgeries by doctors that are not being held because the doctors are frightened that they will be fined or because the facilities are just shut in their area. It is way beyond time that this government got its act together when it comes to managing its health service and when it comes to getting surgery started in western Victoria. There is no reason not to. The surgeons are ready. Sure, there are workforce issues. I appreciate that like everywhere we have segments of the workforce that, as they get COVID, are not there and then they isolate, but the health services are saying that they can manage this, and it is time the government put it back to the health services to try and get as much surgery—this kind of needed surgery—done so that my constituents and those across western Victoria do not have to continue to suffer in pain and anxiousness because of this ban.

MCCRAE LIGHTHOUSE

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (19:03): (6187) The action I seek is for the Minister for Planning to come down to McCrae to visit the refurbished McCrae lighthouse when refurbishment is completed in a few months time. Ensuring that our heritage sites are protected and restored is so important. The lighthouse will be restored to its former glory and be given full, clean paint and repair works to guarantee its ongoing historical importance to our community. After consultation with key stakeholders the lighthouse will be painted from its current colour of greyish silver to its original colour of bright white. Whether it is for our local community or for tourists visiting our region, landmarks like the McCrae lighthouse are of historical significance and need to be preserved. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Mornington Peninsula Shire in this matter and thank them for working in conjunction with Heritage Victoria to preserve this important Mornington Peninsula landmark. So I invite the minister to come down and visit one of my community's most important landmarks.

CAIRNLEA DEVELOPMENT

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (19:04): (6188) Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Planning regarding the final stage of the Cairnlea estate development and Development Victoria's tone-deaf plan for the proposed land, and in raising these matters I would ask of the minister that he personally meet with local residents to discuss their concerns. Located 16 kilometres north-west of Melbourne, this development first started in 1997. Since then the estate now includes over 3100 homes and a town centre and boasts large open areas. The original estate had created a family-focused atmosphere, with residents enjoying the close proximity of local parks and natural surroundings. Development Victoria is now working through the final stages of developing 840 lots to create a 20-minute neighbourhood.

I recently met with local residents along with councillors from Brimbank City Council, who have raised significant concerns over the final plans from Development Victoria. Some of the concerns that have been aired include that despite a survey where an overwhelming amount of responses identified the preferred type of property to be houses, Development Victoria is proposing microlots with compact townhouses and some lot sizes that are only 75 square metres. Development Victoria is proposing to move all 300 of the adult sugar gum trees throughout the estate. These trees are clearly mature and were planted in a planned way at the outset of the Cairnlea development. Another concern is that the proposed soccer pitches will be privately run and will only be available for public use 25 per cent of the time. The proposed site is set far back with no direct access to public transport, and in addition the plans do not take into account the fact that there are a number of other sports and recreational activities which the community would like to see accommodated.

The proposal also states that Development Victoria in talks with the Department of Transport are advocating for new routes. For a project that has been in the works since mid-2020 the entire plan for public transport for the 840 lots is just to advocate for new routes. Surely accessible public transport would be a fundamental need for any new development, particularly one led by the state government. Within the site context of the development, the map itself shows that the main transportation and shopping hubs are at a distance which does not meet the government's own measure for a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Now, the community engagement findings report boasts that 64 per cent of residents were 'overall happy' or 'somewhat happy' with the vision. I would not call this overwhelming support for the project, particularly given the very limited number of people questioned. It is a privilege to be in a position to plan and implement a vision for new areas that people will call home. This project has the ability to be a great addition to the Cairnlea estate, but local voices need to be listened to. So the action I seek is that the Minister for Planning meets with local residents, listens to their concerns and works with them to revise the project and ensure that community concerns and expectations are met.

NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE REVITALISATION

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (19:07): (6189) My adjournment is for the Minister for Suburban Development, and the action I seek is that the minister meet with me to discuss opportunities for revitalisation in the inner north. The Northcote electorate is a diverse and dynamic community, home to thousands of small businesses and a vibrant arts and multicultural community as well as areas of significant need and disadvantage. If you walk down High Street, Northcote, or Station Street, Fairfield, you will see that our activity centres are major sources of employment, services and economic activity. We take pride in these precincts with their unique north-side character and charm, but if you speak to the traders, as I have, you will also hear many clever and creative ideas about how to make these precincts even better, from wider footpaths to more outdoor activation, better connections and wayfinding, more services that cater to our unique needs, sustainability projects, pop-ups and community activation, the opportunities are endless.

The suburban development portfolio has overseen significant initiatives that look to drive economic and social prosperity in Melbourne suburbs by taking a holistic view about what makes our

neighbourhoods thrive. There have been wonderful partnerships with local governments across the state to deliver targeted, community-designed and hyperlocal investments that make suburbs more livable, breathe life into our activity centres and generate local jobs. As we continue our economic and social recovery from the pandemic, we have a chance to think about our neighbourhoods in a way that acknowledges the unique challenges facing our inner-north communities. To me that means balancing significant population growth and increases in density with improvements to our infrastructure, services, transport and jobs. It means considering how we live and move around, what activities we love to do, what services and supports we need better access to and how we can build in equity, sustainability, creativity and wellbeing. The suburban development portfolio is already delivering immense benefits to communities and businesses across the state. I would love to discuss the opportunities for the inner north and share with the minister my community's aspirations for making our suburbs the best they can be.

WILD HORSE CONTROL

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (19:09): (6190) My adjournment is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action that I am seeking tonight is for the minister to provide the full details of the brumby culling program that is going on in Victoria. As the minister knows, this is a contentious program, but Victorians and particularly country communities where this activity is taking place deserve some basic details—details around how many brumbies have been culled to date, whether the program has finished or whether it is continuing and, if it has not concluded, how many more are intended to be culled.

The reason I raise this tonight is that communities deserve to know the detail. In my electorate I have got businesses that operate brumby sightseeing tours, and I have got a number of people in my constituency that are very, very interested in knowing the details of this program. Now, the minister has said that she does not want to reveal the locations of where the culling is taking place, to protect those that are doing the culling. Okay, I accept that. I am not asking for that. But we certainly deserve to know what stage this program is at, how many brumbies have been culled and what the future holds. I am not asking her to reveal the locations of future culls. We know where they have taken place, because so many locals have found the carcasses in the bush. But our communities deserve to know the details over and above what the minister has already released, which are extremely vague. Let us know how many you have culled, let us know how many you intend to cull and let us know if the program has finished or not. You can keep the rest of it secret, but our communities and those businesses that rely on brumby sightseeing tours deserve to know the basic details. I call on the minister to provide this information.

RIVERSDALE TRAIN STATION

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (19:11): (6191) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister join me for a visit to Riversdale train station in my electorate to examine how the quality and accessibility of the station can be improved. As the minister will know, I am a keen public transport advocate. I came here by train this morning, and I will be going home by train after this adjournment. I am also passionate about making the network accessible to all Victorians. People with a disability make up around 20 per cent of the population, and I myself have been in close contact with constituents whose experiences underline the accessibility issues that exist across our public transport network.

The Andrews government has a strong record when it comes to addressing accessibility issues, with the Victorian state disability plan currently being developed and the \$1.6 billion disability inclusion package enhancing the education of our disabled students. Additionally, the network-wide upgrades being undertaken, like the creation of 11 000 more train station car parks and the Suburban Rail Loop, exhibit our commitment to building a better transport system for all commuters. New stations, stops and train and tram carriages are being built to be accessible and friendly to everyone, and yet for many decades little or no consideration was given to making the world of transport accessible.

This government is taking the issue seriously, but it is an enormous undertaking to overturn and correct so much of our older and existing transport infrastructure. It is in that spirit that I invite the minister to come and inspect the various accessibility issues associated with Riversdale station. It is a station that my local constituents have raised with me on a number of occasions, but it is also a station that represents the broader needs across the network. I welcome how the government continues to improve our public transport system and realise a more accessible Victoria. I look forward to the minister's response and his visit to Hawthorn.

REGIONAL RATES REFORM

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (19:14): (6192) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is for him to write to his interstate counterparts to seek their support for the campaign to increase the quantum of the financial assistance grants and help address the economic injustice facing rural and regional ratepayers. Achieving fairer council rates in regional Victoria will require change at both state and federal levels. To the minister: you have so far been receptive to the RateGate campaign and agreed that work needs to be done to address the financial burdens placed upon our regional and rural councils, who have low sustainable capacities through no fault of their own. The current system has Canberra delivering annual untied grants to the state governments to distribute to councils, which is good, but the amount is increasingly inadequate.

The financial assistance grants have been declining as a percentage of GDP for decades and were subject to a debilitating indexation freeze by the federal coalition government between 2014 and 2017. These grants are badly in need of an uplift. The Australian Local Government Association is calling for the quantum to be restored to 1 per cent of commonwealth annual revenue, which I believe is entirely reasonable and appropriate. The inadequacy of the current funding pool is made worse by the requirement that 30 per cent must be allocated on the basis of population before any other consideration, such as need. The upshot is that ratepayers in my electorate are paying up to six times the rates that metropolitan ratepayers are paying for properties of the same value.

As we know, the federal election is coming up, and I have been pleading our case with both major parties. Unfortunately neither major party has committed to making any structural changes ahead of the federal election, so it is clear for our regional and rural ratepayers that more pressure and more voices are needed in this fight. A new independent candidate for the seat of Mallee, Sophie Baldwin, has committed to taking the RateGate campaign to Canberra if elected in May. I ask the minister if he can identify potential allies at the state ministerial level who agree that an increase to the financial assistance grant is a critical precursor to meaningful regional rate reform.

PARKDALE PRESCHOOL

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:16): (6193) It is great to rise on the adjournment debate and ask the Minister for Early Childhood to join me at the Parkdale Preschool to officially open their new building works upgrades and improvements to their wonderful facilities. It is quite humbling to consider that for generations Parkdale Preschool has supported so many in our local community. When you stand in these some 74-year-old premises and think of the community that has owned these buildings and the kids that have had their foundation in education there and gone on to challenge the world and their community and gone on to bigger and better things and think that it started right there in the heart of Parkdale, it is a wonderful contribution.

Recently the Victorian government invested close to \$500 000 in response to a grant that was put forward by the community, and it has just about reached its completion. We have seen the progress shots. The development that went on during December and January was amazing to see, and that transformation of these premises is going to benefit our students into the future. I want to give a big shout-out to an extraordinary parent in our local community, Katrina Kenah, who was part of the grants application writing program with the dedicated committee of Parkdale Preschool, and also to the efforts of our early childhood educators. They did an extraordinary job putting this together, and the application to the state government to secure this funding was for the benefit of all of our kids as well.

It goes with investments that are unprecedented in Victoria's history. Universal three-year-old kinder being rolled out across all 79 municipalities, the 5 hours that are being provided to metropolitan councils right across the City of Kingston community, are changing the lives and outcomes of our youngest Victorians. And we know the benefit—the true benefit—of those first two years of early childhood education. It is truly transformational in the development and growth of our young people.

And that investment has seen upgrades to facilities such as Eltona kindergarten, which was recently upgraded; Chelsea and Chelsea Heights kindergartens, which have been projects that we have been involved in in the past; and numerous partnerships with the private sector to meet those outcomes and to deliver a wonderful program and a nation-leading investment—\$5 billion over the decade, with the full 15-hour kinder program by 2029. We are really excited in the Parkdale community, indeed in the Kingston community, about this investment and the development that has happened at Parkdale Preschool.

I had the chance to turn the first sod with some of the little legends that have gone on to transition into primary school across our local community. I think most of them are going on to Parkdale Primary School, a wonderful school in our local community. I want to acknowledge everything that has been done by our early childhood educators. We thank them for their service to our community under challenging circumstances. We love and appreciate all the work and dedication that you have shown to support our youngest Victorians.

POLWARTH ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:19): (6194) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, which is a common one of course for the electorate of Polwarth. The action I seek from the minister is that I am inviting him down to come and see a couple of key roads in my electorate. One is the C151, which is the one I met with a variety of farmers and local community members about, and it is the road that connects Colac with Carlisle.

This road has been problematic for quite some time, and unfortunately this year it has seen already two very serious accidents, one of those being a fatality. It is a busy road. It carries a lot of agricultural freight. It carries tourists, it has bike riders and of course it is the only road in and out of that community for the hardworking farmers and farm workers that live in that region. The problem quite simply with this road, like the roads that connect Colac through to Forrest and roads that connect Cobden through to Warnambool, is that these are roads that go through very thick bush, particularly the C151 at Carlisle. It goes for quite some distance through thick state forest and Otway National Park country. The problem, and what the minister needs to see, is that for the last two decades there has been no regular maintenance and clearing of the roadside vegetation on that road—so much so that today to drive down that road your side mirrors touch brush. Large truck operators are often reporting having their side mirrors swiped from the vehicles. Tree branches are dangling. A bus driver who brings the kids up from there to school in Colac regularly carries a chainsaw in his truck in order to clear limbs from the road, and there are always tree limbs hanging in the branches ready to fall—ones that have already come adrift and are just hanging there waiting for the wind to make them fall.

The reason, Minister, I want you to come down to see this very poor maintenance—it makes life unsafe for the people in that area—is that, adjacent to that, the forestry roads that go off this road are cleared 6 metres each side of the road. It is exactly what the community want for their main roads. These roads that are being maintained for forestry workers, government employees, have 6-metre clearances and beautiful surfaces. You could literally land a 747—

Mr Fowles: Literally?

Mr RIORDAN: literally—on these roads and yet two large vehicles can barely pass side by side without having their mirrors swiped off on what is the main road. Minister, this is an important issue. It is one that needs to be brought under control and it needs your urgent attention.

LYREBIRD DRIVE–BALLARTO ROAD INTERSECTION, CARRUM DOWNS

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (19:22): (6195) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Prior to the last election I made a commitment to my local communities in Carrum Downs and Skye to upgrade the intersection at Lyrebird Drive and Ballarto Road in Carrum Downs to make it safer for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. This significant upgrade project will include traffic signals, road widening, slip lanes and dedicated bus bays as well as pedestrian infrastructure, all to improve safety and reduce congestion for thousands of my local residents. With funding for this project included in the 2021–22 Victorian budget, the action I now seek from the minister is for the minister to please provide an update on this really significant and important project for my local community.

RESPONSES

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (19:23): The member for Ripon raised a question to the Minister for Health in relation to elective surgery in western Victoria, and I will make sure that query gets passed on.

The very hardworking member for Nepean raised a question for the Minister for Planning in relation to a ministerial visit, and I will make sure that gets passed on to the minister.

The member for Warrandyte also asked a question of the Minister for Planning in relation to a development at Cairnlea, and I will ensure that gets passed on.

The very hardworking member for Northcote asked a question of the Minister for Suburban Development in relation to the revitalisation of the inner north, and isn't the local member quite passionate about revitalising her local community? I certainly can attest to that because I had the great privilege and pleasure of visiting the member at the Northcote Social Club in the last six months or so.

The member for Gippsland East asked a question of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in relation to brumbies, and I will pass that on to the minister.

The hardworking member for Hawthorn asked a question of the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety requesting that the minister visit the Riversdale station. I know I, like other members, am very pleased to have the member for Hawthorn in our midst, because he is a passionate user of public transport, as indeed was the former member for Morningside we heard earlier today.

The independent member for Mildura asked a question of the Minister for Local Government in relation to that minister writing to his counterparts interstate in relation to council rates for regional and rural councils. I will ensure that matter gets passed on. I do appreciate the member's advocacy on behalf of her community.

The hardworking member for Mordialloc asked a question of the Minister for Early Childhood in relation to visiting Parkdale Preschool, and it is fantastic to see the member for Mordialloc always being quite passionate about early childhood education, because this is indeed most important in the first 1000 days of a child's life.

The member for Polwarth asked a question of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, asking that the minister—

Mr Riordan interjected.

Mr PEARSON: The hour is getting late, I am afraid. Anyhow, the member for Polwarth asked a question of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety about visiting the C151 at Carlisle—how do you spell Carlisle? I was trying to figure that out.

Mr Riordan: C-a-r-l-i-s-l-e.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr PEARSON: There we go, right, for the benefit of Hansard—thank you, member. I will ensure that that request gets passed on to the minister.

The hardworking member for Carrum also asked a question of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, this time in relation to a request for information about an upgrade of Lyrebird Drive and Ballarto Road in Carrum Downs.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.26 pm.