

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 5 APRIL 2022

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

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

**OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION**

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

Mr Blackwood, Mr J Bull, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Connolly, Ms Sarah	Tarneit	ALP	Richards, Ms Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Crugnale, Ms Jordan Alessandra	Bass	ALP	Riordan, Mr Richard Vincent	Polwarth	LP
Cupper, Ms Ali	Mildura	Ind	Rowswell, Mr Brad	Sandringham	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Ryan, Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
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
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
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 Rowsell.

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 Rowsell, 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, 5 April 2022

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

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:04): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land upon 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.

SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

The SPEAKER (12:04): Before moving on, members will be aware that the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Mr Peter Lochert, will be retiring on Monday. It is not in order to refer to members that are in the gallery, but he is in the gallery. Following a process administered by the two clerks, Andrew Young and Bridget Noonan, the President and I have now appointed Ms Trish Burrows as the next secretary of the department. The recruitment process included a selection panel which included the Honourable Tony Smith MP, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ms Julia Griffith PSM, former deputy commissioner of the Victorian Public Sector Commission. I want to thank both of these highly respected individuals for their contribution to the process along with our two clerks.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Peter for his nearly two decades of service to the Parliament of Victoria, 12 years of which have been as secretary. Peter has passionately led a number of initiatives throughout his tenure, including several major refurbishment projects, which have helped to improve this building and to bring it up to contemporary safety and access standards while improving the amenity of the building for all visitors, members and staff. This beautiful building belongs to the Victorian people, and it has been enhanced and restored under Peter's leadership for future generations to enjoy. Peter has also led the Department of Parliamentary Services through significant change in response to evolving member requirements, community expectations, new legislation, increasing risks to security and the global pandemic. On behalf of members I want to wish Peter and his wife, Jenny, well for their retirement.

Members applauded.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Crimes at Sea Act 1999 to update references to Commonwealth legislation, to amend the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 in relation to secrecy provisions and an exemption relating to religious schools, to amend the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 to use gender-inclusive language, to make miscellaneous amendments to the Judicial College of Victoria Act 2001, to amend the Magistrates' Court Act 1989 in relation to rule-making powers, to amend the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 in relation to federal subject matter, to amend the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996 in relation to integrated birth certificates, to make miscellaneous amendments to the Adoption Act 1984 and to amend the Gender Equality Act 2020 to enable the commissioner and specified persons to use or disclose information obtained under division 3 of part 7 of that act in certain circumstances and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:07): I hesitate to ask the minister for a brief explanation of the content of that bill.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (12:07): Brief; okay. The bill includes several minor but important amendments to the legislation in the Attorney-General's portfolio as well as one act in the Minister for Women's portfolio, and it includes advancing recommendations from the forced adoptions inquiry of the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee. It also goes to updating the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 with gender-inclusive language. It also amends the secrecy provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act and the Gender Equality Act to better reflect operational needs.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

AGRICULTURE 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) (12:08): On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992, the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994, the Dairy Act 2000, the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981, the Farm Debt Mediation Act 2011, the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994, the Plant Biosecurity Act 2010, the Rural Assistance Schemes Act 2016, the Veterinary Practice Act 1997, the Wildlife Act 1975 and the Meat Industry Act 1993 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:09): Could I ask the minister for a brief explanation of each of the pieces of legislation that are going to be changed, please?

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:09): Certainly. I am very happy to. As the member for Murray Plains well knows as a former agriculture minister for a brief period of time in this place, from time to time agriculture ministers bring forward to the chamber a bill that covers a range of different acts—

Mr Walsh: On the bill, please.

Ms ALLAN: I am getting to it. He wanted a detailed explanation; I am only trying to please the member for Murray Plains.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! We need a brief explanation—brief.

Ms ALLAN: You cannot win, Speaker. You try and please the National Party, you try and meet what they want—goodness me, all they do is complain, complain. I know what the Liberal Party must feel like. This is what the Liberal Party must feel like. Anyway, Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister for an explanation.

Ms ALLAN: As from time to time ministers for agriculture will bring into this place one bill, one piece of legislation, that covers amendments to a range of other bills that intersect with the delivery of agricultural services in this state, I will resist the opportunity from the member to go through each of these acts that intersect with the bill I have just introduced to the place, because they do go to a range of different matters that have been identified by our terrific, hardworking agriculture minister, who is out and about talking to the local primary producing sector and has come back with a bill that addresses

a range of matters and priorities for the ag sector. I well remember as a shadow minister during that period of time having the opportunity to be briefed by the minister's office—

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister was asked for a brief explanation of the bill, and she is neither being brief nor explaining.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has been brief enough.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice given.

The SPEAKER (12:12): I wish to advise that general business, notices of motion 29 to 31, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 5.00 pm today.

Petitions

Following petition presented to house by Clerk:

SEXUAL OFFENCE REPORTING

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the prevalence of sexual violence which fails to be reflected in the available reporting systems. There is a gap, vast and unknown, between the number of sexual offences that occur and the number that are reported. This gap means that the government does not have accurate data and information on sexual offences, resulting in a lack of targeted and effective policy.

There is a reluctance to report because it is rarely successful. The 2021 Crime Statistic Agency update on the attrition of sexual offence incidents through the Victorian criminal justice system revealed that only 1 in 7 incidents that were reported to the police were proven in court. Women and children in particular do not report due to the perpetrator being a family member (Crime Statistic Agency states this makes up 38.4% of all sexual offences). There are often concerns regarding provoking the perpetrator, victim-blaming, damaging friendships and hindering one's career.

An online reporting tool that does not result in criminal proceedings addresses all of these concerns; it is a victim-informed alternative to traditional (and ineffective) avenues to justice regarding sexual violence.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly adopt an online tool akin to SARO [Sexual Assault Reporting Option] used in NSW.

This should be an online form that a victim can submit which has the effect of reporting to the police an instance of sexual violence without initiating any criminal proceedings.

There must be the option to submit the form anonymously. There must also be an option to consent to being reached out should the perpetrator prove to be a repeat offender and should they end up in court for related crimes.

The perpetrator must not be alerted as to the report. They must not face repercussions unless the victim decides to pursue a criminal investigation.

By Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (171 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield).

Committees**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Alert Digest No. 5*

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:13): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 5 of 2022, on the following bills:

Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022

Wildlife Amendment (Duck Hunting) Bill 2022

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE*Report on the 2020–21 Financial and Performance Outcomes**Inquiry into Auditor-General's Report no. 253: Managing School Infrastructure (2017)*

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (12:14): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the inquiry into the 2020–21 financial and performance outcomes, together with transcripts of evidence, and also an interim report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the inquiry into the Victorian Auditor-General's report no. 253, managing school infrastructure.

Ordered to be published.

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE*Person Referred to in the Legislative Assembly: Professor David Lindenmayer AO*

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:14): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Privileges Committee, on a person referred to in the Legislative Assembly, Professor David Lindenmayer AO, 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:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003—Amendment to Public Lottery Licence under s 5.3.19

Major Events Act 2009—Major Sporting Event Order for the ICC T20 Men's World Cup 2022

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

Ararat—C40

Bass Coast—C161

Benalla—GC157

Casey—GC192

Colac Otway—C113

Glen Eira—C228

Hepburn—C77

Manningham—GC192
Mansfield—C49
Maribyrnong—GC192
Maroondah—GC192
Melbourne—GC192
Mitchell—GC157
Monash—GC192
Moreland—GC192
Mornington—C288
Murrindindi—GC192
Stonnington—GC192
Strathbogie—GC157
Wangaratta—GC157
Warrnambool—C209
Whitehorse—GC192
Whittlesea—C260, GC157
Wodonga—GC157
Wyndham—GC192
Yarra—GC192

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—Documents under s 165AQ on the making of pandemic orders implemented on 18 March 2022.

Bills

CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS AMENDMENT BILL 2022

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (TRIAL BY JUDGE ALONE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (12:15): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Conservation, Forests and Lands Amendment Bill 2022 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Trial by Judge Alone and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

CONSERVATION, FORESTS AND LANDS AMENDMENT BILL 2022

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (TRIAL BY JUDGE ALONE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ANIMAL ACTIVISM) BILL 2021

REGULATORY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM) BILL 2021

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (12:16): I also inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Conservation, Forests and Lands Amendment Bill 2022, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Trial by Judge Alone and Other Matters) Bill 2022, the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill 2021 and the Regulatory Legislation Amendment (Reform) Bill 2021.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PORT REFORMS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022*Appropriation*

The SPEAKER (12:16): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

Committees**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Membership*

The SPEAKER (12:16): I advise the house that I have received the resignation of Ms Theophanous from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, effective from 24 March 2022.

Joint sitting of Parliament**SENATE VACANCY****VICTORIAN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING FOUNDATION**

The SPEAKER (12:16): I wish to advise the house that I have received a letter from the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation requesting a joint sitting to elect a member of Parliament to the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, due to the resignation of Mr Newbury, MP.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:17): I move, by leave:

That this house meets the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to:

- (1) choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the death of Senator Kimberley Kitching; and
- (2) elect a member of Parliament to the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation; and proposes that the time and place of such meeting be the Legislative Assembly chamber on Wednesday, 6 April 2022, at 6.00 pm.

Motion agreed to.

Ordered that message be sent to Council informing them accordingly.

Business of the house**STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS**

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:17): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 48, relating to the reintroduction of non-government business, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:18): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 48, under the name of the member for Shepparton, relating to the reintroduction of non-government business, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:18): 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, 7 April 2022:

Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

I will only speak briefly on this motion that I am moving to the house, because I have some level of optimism that it will receive unanimous and fulsome support from the chamber today, given some conversations I have been having with the Manager of Opposition Business, and whilst there are two bills on the program, I note that the opposition has requested that the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 be taken into consideration in detail. The government is considering that request and will make time available in the program towards the back end of the week to deal with that process in the usual way. I have advised the opposition accordingly, so we look forward to that taking place some time on Thursday.

I also note for completeness' sake we have just moved the motion for a joint sitting to be held tomorrow evening in this place to deal with the two matters of the Senate vacancy and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation vacancy, and we look forward to welcoming our friends from the Legislative Council into this place for that to take place.

I also note, as has been advised to colleagues, that on Thursday there will be an opportunity for members to make a contribution on the passing of Shane Warne. Following the memorial service that was held last Wednesday evening, it is now an appropriate opportunity for this house to consider the passing of the greatest cricketer in modern time. He was a fabulous sportsman, and as we have seen from many of the personal comments and tributes following his passing, he clearly had a level of generosity and community service that went, by many observations, unremarked and unreported on. It was that reaching out and talking to people of all walks of life that he touched that I think is as equally a great tribute to his service as both a sportsman and a member of our community. So it will be an appropriate opportunity on Thursday for a range of members to condole the passing of that great Australian cricketer. He was a brilliant cricketer, a great Victorian and, as I said, by all accounts a man who had a warmth and generosity of spirit in touching many, many people and groups not just here but around the world.

With those comments, as I said, I come with a level of optimism that this government business program will be supported. We have got a lot to do this week, as we do every week in this place, and I am looking forward to the support of all members of the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:21): I can confirm that on this occasion the Liberal-Nationals will not be opposing the government business program. We never oppose the government business program on a whim, we always do so because the government refuses to go into consideration in detail or does some other abomination to the standing orders of this place, but in this particular case the government has acceded to our request to take the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 into consideration in detail. I thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for agreeing to do that, and I note that this is the second time this term that we have been able to take a bill into a consideration-in-detail stage despite asking for it on many more occasions than that.

I do wonder whether the fact that we are now getting an opportunity to examine bills in detail is because we only have two bills on the government business program. The government has a very skinny legislative agenda and can only manage to bring two bills to this house. It would be, I think, particularly churlish of them to then refuse to go into consideration in detail when they only have two bills.

I note, as the Leader of the House has and for completeness, this week we will also be holding a joint sitting on Wednesday evening to choose a new senator for the Labor Party as a consequence of the

untimely death of Senator Kimberley Kitching, and we will also be holding a joint sitting to replace one of the members of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

I also note that we will have an opportunity to debate a condolence motion for Shane Warne. I was fortunate enough with my mother and one of my sisters to be at the final MCG test that Shane played in in Melbourne. He was a brilliant cricketer. He brought to the game a new series of fans and then, as the Leader of the House has said, he went on to become a great support to many people—and much of that was unheralded. I particularly note the number of comments that were made at his service at the MCG about what a fabulous father he was and the comments by his three children which paid incredible tribute to what a brilliant father Shane had been. With those brief remarks I also will conclude my comments for today and we can move on with this debate.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:24): I just want to say a couple of words about the government business program. I think the member for Ripon has highlighted pretty well what the situation is—that is, that it is getting a bit light on towards the end, and so we are suddenly getting the opportunity to actually interrogate legislation that we always should have done. There are two pieces of legislation this week: the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I look forward to speaking on both of those, actually; both have some pertinence to my electorate.

As the Leader of the House has indicated and the house has just resolved, we will meet on Wednesday night to select a replacement for the late Senator Kimberley Kitching. I would just like to take the opportunity now—I did not know the senator, although my wife did work with her in a previous life and said she enjoyed working with her—to extend my condolences to all those in the labour movement and the Labor party and to Senator Kitching's family as well. I know it has been a difficult time for all.

I note too the intention for there to be a condolence motion for the passing of Shane Warne, on Thursday. In the expectation that I may not get the opportunity to speak, I would also like to just comment on that. I extend my condolences to his family, in particular his children, and to the many people who were touched by Shane Warne's brilliance. I well remember that ball of the century to Mike Gatting, as does everyone, I am sure, who has even a passing interest in cricket. I still watch it today, and I still cannot comprehend the physics behind that delivery, just as Mike Gatting was dumbfounded at the time and bamboozled. In fact I go and look it up sometimes and just watch that delivery again, because it was very well described as the 'ball of the century'.

The joy that Shane Warne brought us continued for another decade or more afterwards in what was an extraordinary career. I think the Leader of the House had it right. He is certainly the greatest cricketer that I have seen in my time, bringing back leg spin bowling at a time when it had been completely unfashionable and when the Windies pacemen in particular had dominated world cricket for a decade or more. Shane Warne brought with him a larrikin attitude—I suspect he was not always a saint, and he never claimed to be one. Certainly I was very sad, as many Australians and Victorians in particular were, to hear of Shane Warne's passing, and I look forward to sitting in the Shane Warne Stand in the future.

The agenda this week is quite light, but it is good that the government is starting to see the light and we are getting the opportunity to actually interrogate some legislation through the consideration-in-detail process. So I look forward to that opportunity for my colleagues on Thursday afternoon.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (12:28): It is my pleasure too to join the debate on the government business program. Whilst some would characterise the agenda as light for this week, I could not disagree more fully, because in fact it is one of the most varied agendas I think we have seen in my time in this place. We have got a joint sitting in there, we have got a take-note motion in there, we have got a condolence motion. We have got a couple of bills, sure. There is plenty of colour, life and movement and there is plenty of meat for the punters, I am sure, who are following along closely at home—and may I say hello to the entirety of our audience.

It is very important of course that we continue to progress the good work of this government through the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and we do so cognisant of the other parliamentary obligations.

There is of course a government business program, but there is a parliamentary program as well, and that extends to that joint sitting. I am very pleased that we are going to have the opportunity, by means of the joint sitting, to pay our respects to the late Senator Kimberley Kitching and to spend some time perhaps thinking about our own mortality.

We will also spend some time thinking about the great contribution made by Shane Keith Warne. I had the great pleasure to be at the memorial service last week. It found that difficult balance between showbiz and memorial. I was a bit surprised when I saw certain groups of people taking group photographs at it. I did not necessarily think that that was the right place or time for group photos for political representatives, but nonetheless that was a matter for them. It was a very well thought through event. I think it found the right balance, that important mix, between remembrance and pathos as well as celebration. There is much to celebrate in the contribution that Shane made not just to cricket and to sport but to public life, and I certainly found it revealing, as others did, just how much work went on behind the scenes that he did with a whole range of charities—a much broader group than I had previously understood—and indeed with one of the organisations that sits within the United Nations, such is the breadth of the reach of a man who played a sport that is frankly not played to any great degree beyond the boundaries of the old British Empire. Nonetheless he had global reach and assembled over the course of his time an outstanding roster of friends and people of influence that allowed him to pursue a whole bunch of his interests outside cricket. I think it was a terrific event and well executed, and I thank the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as well as the Premier's private office, the Melbourne Cricket Club, the MCG Trust and Shane's family for putting together what was a terrific event.

We will get an opportunity this week too to consider a take-note motion. We have just seen handed down a federal budget that I am sure many of us have a range of views on, and it will be terrific to be able to share some of those views as part of the take-note motion. It is an important role of this Parliament to comment on not just the actions of members of this place and the government that is derived from this place but also actions of governments elsewhere that impact Victorians. This is a budget that impacts Victorians negatively in some respects, I would submit, and fails to impact Victorians through what it does not do, but I am sure there will be plenty to be said about that as we progress through the week. I am happy to commend this government business program to the house. I think it promises to be a week full of interest and variety, and I for one am looking forward to it.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (12:32): I promise no Mr Squiggle references this week in addressing the government business program motion; I know some will be disappointed by that. I am looking forward to the joint sitting of the house; very important business will be undertaken on Wednesday afternoon to replace in the Senate the late Senator Kimberley Kitching. My condolences to Andrew and to her family as well—a tragedy of great magnitude and the great loss of a warrior for truth and goodness in our federal Parliament.

We are pleased on this side of the chamber that the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 will go into consideration in detail. As the Manager of Opposition Business raised, it is the second time in this Parliament that that has taken place, and I would like to think that what we as a Parliament—clerks, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, acting speakers, members of the opposition, members of the government—saw during the course of the last sitting week, with the first time this Parliament went into consideration in detail, was not all bad. In fact it is a good opportunity to further interrogate and to investigate in detail complexities within legislation that this place considers.

The final point I would like to make is simply this: I note that there are two bills for consideration on the government business program this week. The two bills that have been introduced by the government for consideration this week are frankly fairly safe bills to introduce and to discuss in this

place, and I raise this as what I see as a legitimate question: is the government raising these two reasonably safe bills for consideration at this time in this Parliament because of the state of the government's hold, or lack thereof, in the Legislative Council? It is simply a question to raise—a valid question to raise, in my view. As the Manager of Opposition Business indicated, we will not be opposing the government business program.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (12:34): I too rise to join the debate on the government business program. I have to say we have a lot to get through this week: two great pieces of legislation, the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I am really looking forward to getting up and making a contribution on those two bills before the house, but most of all, I have to say, this week I am really looking forward to the joint sitting. You will have to indulge me here because it is my first week back after getting COVID—I am very excited to be here—and I am still suffering through the brain fog that is COVID. I am very much looking forward to the joint sitting in which we are going to welcome a brand new, amazing Victorian senator to fill the vacancy created by the very, very sad and tragic passing of Senator Kimberley Kitching. I pay my condolences to her husband and her family—indeed a very sad time for everyone. I am very much looking forward to seeing the smiling, happy face tomorrow of an incredible woman that I consider a good friend, Jana Stewart. I have no doubt she will fill that position and take to it like a duck to water. She will be the first Aboriginal woman and Victorian traditional owner to go ahead and represent Labor in the Senate, so making history. I am really looking forward to being part of that.

I am also looking forward to hearing the condolences in this place. How do we describe Shane Warne? He has been described as many things; just here in the house he was described as a true larrikin. I would say, yes, he was a larrikin, an incredible cricketer, an incredible Aussie and, by the sound of it, an amazing dad. I did not have the opportunity of attending the memorial service last week, but I did switch on the TV and listen to the beautiful contributions and words said about a man who passed away much too early, much before his time. Those speeches that his children made are something that will stay with me for some time—very beautiful speeches indeed. I have no doubt that their father, wherever he might be, will be looking down at his children and feeling very proud.

I am looking forward to pulling my weight this week and speaking on everything before the house. We have such a full agenda of lots of exciting things before the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:37): (*By leave*) While I do not oppose the government business program, I do rise to express my great disappointment at the fact that the motion that I seek to have debated before this house on the Tuesday of every sitting week does not succeed in being put before the house and debated. It is a really important piece of work that this house needs to do because the non-government business program is an essential part of ensuring a responsible and representative Parliament in any Westminster system. Victoria's Legislative Assembly is currently the only house in Australia that does not provide meaningful opportunities for non-government members to move motions, to progress bills and to utilise a number of other procedures in the house. It would certainly benefit this place if the non-government business program was returned and if notice of motion 48 on the notice paper, which details fully the amendments that are required to the sessional and standing orders to reinstate that opportunity, was debated and we came to be a house that was really in line with so many others.

There is a fairly light business program, although I see the government has been able to get its motions up and we will be able to debate in this house a number of other matters, including the condolence motion for Shane Warne and of course the impact of the federal budget handed down last week. I have to say in some of our regional areas there is extreme disappointment as a result of that budget. In my area alone I think we would have to express great disappointment that the Shepparton bypass did not receive the funding that many of us may have hoped for—a business case that is already prepared and ready to go from the Victorian government is languishing on the desk of the infrastructure minister in federal Parliament. If ever there was an opportunity in an election year to fund a major project in our

region—80 per cent to come from the federal government, 20 per cent from the state government—that was an opportunity. I am very much looking forward to participating in that debate if at all possible.

We are also seeing in this place a move to more consideration in detail, and that is just one small step that gives me some heart in this process of trying to return this place to a true democratic house—this Victorian Legislative Assembly—to create opportunities for members on this side to be able to hold the government to account, to hold ministers to account, to have them answer questions on bills before the house.

So there is some hope in that we are seeing some progress, but consider that on this side of the house we could move motions and debate them, we could seek specific outcomes, we could seek the production of documents, we could refer matters to inquiries, we could move disallowance motions and we could take the opportunity for bills—not only bills but also petitions—to be debated if we were able to frame our own non-government business program. All of these things would create a situation whereby minority voices in this place were provided with the opportunity to more fully represent their communities, their electorates, and really ensure a much better and smoother operation of this place.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

ELECTIVE SURGERY

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (12:41): Victorians know and understand just how important health care is in this state and of course that the pandemic has placed a great deal of stress on our health system. This is why on Sunday I was very pleased that the government was able to make a significant announcement: \$1.5 billion for our COVID catch-up plan to boost elective surgeries. Under the plan we will bring elective surgery waiting lists back to prepandemic levels and complete an additional 40 000 procedures per year. Only this government, the Andrews Labor government, will continue to invest in our health services right across the community to make sure that our wonderful team within health do an outstanding job and continue to support people as we navigate our way through the pandemic.

SUNBURY ELECTORATE MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Mr J BULL: Recently I was absolutely delighted to meet with representatives from the multicultural resources hub in my electorate. These terrific local representatives are working incredibly hard delivering food parcels to multicultural and faith communities across the Sunbury electorate. I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of them for their work and their advocacy for the local community. Of course this is part of the priority response to multicultural communities fund, an important fund that continues to work with local families to ensure they have the support they need.

ST MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, SUNBURY

Mr J BULL: I was also delighted to attend St Mary's church last week to have a look at a local infrastructure project, and I want to take the opportunity—*(Time expired)*

GLUTTONY ON TOUR

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (12:43): I rise to speak about the wonderful event coming to my electorate at Croydon Park this April, 6th to 10th, for its Victorian premiere, Gluttony on Tour. The event hosts a range of events celebrating music, circus, burlesque and the best food, wine and beer from the region. Karralyka presents an impressive line-up which showcases the best of the Adelaide Fringe festival. Food at Gluttony offers a variety of cuisines and features favourites from local Croydon businesses. It is fantastic to see the electorate coming back to life, and events like these are able to help support the artists and hospitality and event industry workers to recover and rebuild after the difficult past few years. Gluttony offers the community a chance to come together for a fantastic event.

ST PETER JULIAN EYMARD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr HODGETT: I also wish to speak about my recent visit to St Peter Julian Eymard Primary School, Mooroolbark, where I spoke with years 5 and 6 class students about Parliament, democracy and my role as a local MP. The classes have recently been studying a unit with a focus on democracy and the different levels of government. I was delighted to meet school captains Ariel and Claire, who greeted me and showed me around before taking me to the classrooms. Both Ariel and Claire showed an enthusiasm and excitement around the subject and gave me a warm welcome to their school. I enjoyed sharing my knowledge and experience with the class and fielding their many questions. As both the local MP and Shadow Minister for Education it was wonderful to be back out again visiting students and seeing the marvellous work our teachers are doing. I wish the students well. To Claire, who wants to be an engineer, and Ariel, who I think said she wants to be a vet and work with animals, thank you both for your time and warm welcome to SPJs.

ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (12:44): I would like to take this opportunity to wish Victoria's many, many Islamic communities, especially the countless wonderful families living in my electorate of Tarnait, a very warm and positive start to Ramadan. For our Muslim community Ramadan is a special time of reflection and solidarity. It is a time where families come together to think on and consider their faith. It is also a time to remember those who are less fortunate than others and less fortunate than ourselves, as demonstrated by the daily fast from sun-up to sundown.

In my electorate we are an incredibly diverse community of many faiths, and we are fortunate today to have not one but four vibrant mosques and two very awesome Islamic schools servicing the many young families that have moved out west to call Melbourne's outer western suburbs home. The newest of these mosques is the recently completed Melbourne Grand Mosque, which just opened its doors to the community last year. I watched the construction of this mosque take place from start to finish in the time since I was first elected, and I can tell you I am very excited to get down and join in the community festivities there this Ramadan.

Our Islamic brothers and sisters repeatedly showed us that they were able to pull our community together during the health pandemic that we have just been through, whether it was through pop-up clinics, by providing meals or by highlighting the importance of getting vaccinated. The charity and generosity of so many has been on constant display year round, year upon year, not just limited to the time of Ramadan, so I say to Victoria's Muslim community 'Have a very happy Ramadan'.

WAUBRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:46): Waubra Primary School is crumbling. It is in a shocking state. It has got windows that do not shut; they are permanently open—Waubra, for those who do not know, is near Ballarat and therefore gets pretty cold. It is prone to flooding as the spouting has disintegrated. Its windows rattle because the stuff holding them in is not there. This government has entirely neglected this school. I visited the school last week. It has a fabulous community, a very active school council, great teachers, a great principal, and the kids and staff should not have to put up with the kind of facilities they are forced to learn in day in, day out. The school has been asking for a full refurbishment for some years. The project was about \$1.3 million, but because costs have gone up and the school has deteriorated, that project would be now worth a \$2 million refurb. The government should deliver that in this upcoming budget. This school deserves it. They deserve better than they have got from this government for the past eight years, and it is about time the government stepped up, noticed that small rural schools are not in great condition in many parts of Victoria and did the basic maintenance at least, let alone the full refurb that this one needs.

WORLD AUTISM MONTH

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:47): I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge World Autism Month, which happens throughout the month of April, and also to give a big shout-out to the legends at Amaze for their #HoodieUp campaign, an extraordinary show of support, raising recognition for autistic people across our local community. It was great to join many across that community yesterday for the day of action to #HoodieUp. A lot of people asked, 'Why hoodies?'. Hoodies are really important for autistic people experiencing sensory sensitivities and who become overloaded by stimuli in their environment. Wearing a hoodie is a safe way to block out some of those bright lights and busy environments and can help them to feel calm and less overwhelmed.

We see this with all of the sensory work that goes on in our local communities across our schools. It goes with the Victorian government's massive support of inclusion across our schools—a \$1.6 billion disability inclusion package that is being rolled out over the next five years to change the outcomes of our kids and make sure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, gets the very best education. It goes hand in glove with our amazing autism strategy, our education plan to make sure we celebrate, we enhance and we support our autistic kids across our communities as well. Amaze are champions of advocacy across our schools and across our communities for our kids and our educators, for inclusion and for our families, and we give them a big shout-out and thank them for their advocacy and support of our communities at this time.

DEAN WOODS

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:49): I would like to convey my condolences to the family of Dean Woods, who passed away last month. Dean Woods put Wangaratta and the north-east of Victoria on the map as an 18-year-old who won gold at the Los Angeles Olympics. His funeral was well attended by his former teammates, and Dean in his own way delivered his own eulogy. Dean's coach spoke about the uneven playing field of the 1980s, the carbon fibre wheels, the aerodynamic helmets and the substances that were used by competitors. All of these factors made gold even more special to the boys from Down Under. Dean, you were a credit both on and off the velodrome, and cycling in the north-east has blossomed since you took the world by storm. Cyclists young and old hold you in very high esteem as a mentor and inspiration. Vale, Dean Woods.

LIONS CLUB OF WANGARATTA

Mr McCURDY: I want to congratulate the Wangaratta Lions Club on the celebration of the 66th anniversary of their charter. I thoroughly enjoyed the night and the fellowship. All of the communities within the Ovens Valley electorate are very fortunate to have the service clubs that support us: Lions, Rotary, Probus, Apex, just to name a few. Our towns are richer for their contribution and their reliable service.

MOYHU PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr McCURDY: Thanks to the Moyhu Primary School for hosting the community barbecue last week. As we open up from the last two years of COVID, it was a delight to have a chat with the locals and promote all of the features that the Moyhu Primary School has to offer. With the growth of this rural community, I hope to see their student numbers rise back up in the near future. In regional Victoria we can offer so much for students. It really is fantastic and a great place to raise a family.

BALLARAT CLARENDON COLLEGE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:50): I would like to congratulate the Ballarat Clarendon College girls first on winning the schoolgirls coxed four national title at the Australian Rowing Championships. The winning crew of Katie Jackson, Ruby Lovel, Elli McClure, Lucy Richardson and cox Baeley Tucker coached by Nicki Plucinski achieved an emphatic victory in the final. The Clarendon girls first have also won the Ballarat Associated Schools Head of the Lake as well as the Head of the Schoolgirls Regatta and the national under-19 women's coxed four. Well done to the school rowing program, the

coaches, supporters and their families. I am very proud to have taught four of the five extraordinary rowers—amazing girls on and off the water.

BALLARAT COMBINED CHARITIES CHRISTMAS CARD SHOP

Ms ADDISON: I wish to pay tribute to the Ballarat Combined Charities Christmas Card Shop founder, Connie Sadler, Denise Boyko and the 150 tireless volunteers who have contributed to the success of the organisation since its inception 37 years ago. The shop was opened each festive season and was a place to buy Christmas cards, crafts and tea towels. All profits supported local, national and international charities. I was impressed to hear that more than \$700 000 had been distributed to almost 100 organisations. The Ballarat Christmas card shop made the difficult decision to close in 2021. I wish to thank everyone who volunteered and supported the shop.

ALFREDTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms ADDISON: All the best to Luca Fields and the students at Alfredton Primary School taking part in a mock Parliament this week. I am so pleased to hear you are enjoying learning about government. Perhaps there is a future MP for Wendouree in your class.

MCMAHONS ROAD–BURWOOD HIGHWAY, FERNTREE GULLY

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:52): The intersection of McMahon's Road and the Burwood Highway continues to be a dangerous intersection for Knox road users. Recently the Liberal Party committed to upgrading this intersection, with the installation of traffic lights. I have continually raised this issue with the government, and I call on the government to match this commitment in this year's budget. Knox families should not have to wait for this intersection to be upgraded. The government needs to listen to the concerns of Knox residents and commit to upgrading this intersection in this year's budget.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr WAKELING: After two years of lockdowns, the Liberal-Nationals have a clear plan to make Victoria number one again. We will ensure that there are no more lockdowns, and we have a very clear plan to ensure that we can get on with our lives and allow businesses to comfortably recover. We will fix Victoria's health crisis created by years of mismanagement by this government. With over 100 000 Victorians waiting on urgent surgery, we will focus on slashing hospital waiting lists. We will fix the mental health crisis, which has affected so many Victorians, through the commitment of an additional 2000 mental health workers in our schools and across the community and also launch Australia's largest mental health worker recruitment drive. We will keep kids back in the classroom, and that is our focus after the two years of suffering that our kids have had to put up with. We will relieve the cost-of-living pressures, where we have seen 42 new taxes and charges, and we will provide support for businesses to help them recover and to rebuild.

MOUNT WAVERLEY ELECTORATE SPORTING CLUBS

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (12:53): I rise to update the house on all things sport in Mount Waverley district and the people behind the scenes that make it possible. 26 March marked Women's Super Saturday for the women's Victorian state baseball league grand finals, and This Girl Can was never more fitting as Monash council deputy mayor Tina Samardzija stepped up to the plate to throw an impressive ceremonial first pitch, making mine look somewhat quite ordinary. Women's baseball participation, skill level and competition have never been better, as was showcased on the day by some of our top women's talent in the league.

Over at Mount Waverley Reserve I was joined by our Labor candidate for Chisholm, Carina Garland, to recognise Mount Waverley Cricket Club's longstanding Cricket Blast coordinator and club stalwart Chris Houghton's outstanding contribution of 30-odd years in our community. It is volunteers like Chris who make grassroots programs like Cricket Blast possible and help our kids develop their love for sport in a fun, safe and supportive environment.

BRUCE REYNOLDS OAM

Mr FREGON: Finally, I would like to mark the passing and send my condolences to the family and friends of a remarkable member of our sporting community, Mr Bruce Reynolds OAM. Bruce was a devoted Little Athletics volunteer. He was involved with the association for 50 years, making him one of the longest serving volunteers in Little Athletics history. For his service to Little Aths, Bruce was awarded Victorian Little Athletics Association life governor in 1985 and Waverley life member in 1997, and he was the proud recipient of a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2021. Bruce's contribution to Little Athletics and our local community was enormous. Vale, Mr Bruce Reynolds.

GARY NASH

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:55): Congratulations to Hampton Rovers president Gary Nash, who was recently awarded a Victorian Amateur Football Association Certificate of Merit. The award recognised Gary's significant contribution to the Hampton Rovers Football Club. His contribution includes playing 193 games, being a former senior captain and being both a club life member and an inductee into its hall of fame. Congratulations to Gary on the well-deserved award.

WOMEN AND MENTORING

Mr NEWBURY: Women and Mentoring, known as WAM, is an early intervention program that supports women charged with a criminal offence by matching them with one of the organisation's 60 mentors. The organisation helps 45 women per year, and their client recidivism rate sits at around 13 per cent—far below the higher community average. State funding has run out, and WAM deserve future funding certainty from Labor.

ROTARY CLUB OF BRIGHTON

Mr NEWBURY: Each year Rotary Club of Brighton volunteers conduct mock employment interviews with year 10 students from Brighton Secondary College. The interviews are an opportunity for the students to present a résumé, hone their presentation and receive constructive feedback. The interviews are a wonderful initiative, and Rotary's director of youth and vocational services, Jo Kwok, deserves congratulations for her work.

RAILWAY CRESCENT, HAMPTON, CAR PARK EXTENSION

Mr NEWBURY: Local residents are right to be concerned about light pollution in the extended car park on Railway Crescent in Hampton. State Labor has already forced a cruise ship sized development into the Hampton village, and residents are being told to simply put up with the dust, destruction, noise and now beaming lights. What is clear is that the government does not care about local residents or their amenity.

ST ALBANS ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:56): I rise today to acknowledge the new Sunshine private hospital in the heart of St Albans. I had the pleasure of visiting and officially acknowledging the milestone building and the construction work on behalf of the Minister for Health. It was great to see the progress, and let me say just in the last 12 months we have seen the infrastructure and the building constructed. This means that the west will have choices and quality health care for local residents in the west and also in the heart of St Albans. The new private hospital will be a complement to the strong team at Western Health, which is across the road and is led by CEO Russell Harrison.

What an amazing job our healthcare professionals have been doing—not only during the pandemic but afterwards as well. I am really passionate about seeing my residents in particular having choices but also having jobs at the doorstep of St Albans. This particular infrastructure—the Sunshine private hospital and Western Health hospital—form a triangle, as I call it, where we see the appropriate health and wellbeing services together with educational facilities, such as the Victoria University St Albans

campus, coming together, providing those choices and providing the best healthcare choices right there in St Albans.

TRARALGON SWIMMING CLUB

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:58): I rise today to pass on my congratulations and best wishes to a number of local swimmers who are heading to Adelaide to compete in the 2022 Australian Age Swimming Championships that commence on 11 April. There are 12 swimmers from the Traralgon Swimming Club who will be partaking, including Kayla Wilson and Lockie Bellion, who are participating in a number of multiclass events, with Kayla entered in a staggering 11 events and Lockie competing in eight races. In addition Jordyn Cargill, Molly Cargill, Ashley Nicholes, Kayla Pratt, Josh Dwyer, Joel Baillie, Olivia Baillie, Eliza Watts, Abby Warner, Emily Auteri and Will Pendergast will all be doing our community proud at this prestigious event. These swimmers have worked so hard under the tutelage of legendary senior head coach Brian Ford, ably supported by Dean Gooch, Cameron Juha, Renee Cargill, Sam Fenton and their coaching team, who have done an incredible job in helping these young people achieve their very best. The Traralgon Swimming Club motto is ‘Strong bodies, strong minds, one team’. I know all representatives of the club will uphold these apt values as they always do.

CASEY SHERIFF

Mr NORTHE: Continuing on the sporting theme, I also wish our very own Casey Sherriff the very best as she prepares to play for the Melbourne Demons in the AFLW Grand Final against the Adelaide Crows this weekend. Casey has been a wonderful contributor to the Melbourne team since making her debut in the 2020 season. Casey comes from a very sporting family, who are all very proud of her—and rightly so. It is terrific to see local players like Casey playing on the big stage, and I know she is an inspiration to many junior female footballers coming through the ranks. Well done, Casey, and best of luck.

LANG LANG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (12:59): A special assembly—a special celebration. In March I joined Lang Lang Primary School principal Sharon Mitchell, her wonderful dedicated and professional team, school captains, their entire school community and local representatives to celebrate the completion of a well-deserved major upgrade—our election commitment delivered. I was met by the delightful, engaged and energetic school captains—Emma, Lelaina, Bree and Harry—who were proud as to take me on a tour, chatting all the way.

This \$1.5 million investment has transformed the school’s classrooms, giving students and staff a new learning environment, flexibility of spaces, breakout areas, plenty of natural light and kitchen facilities, and all with an aspect onto beautifully landscaped areas so students can achieve their best. This school is at the heart of the Lang Lang community. We were joined by representatives from the local community bank, Rotary and Lions clubs, the community op shop and Western Port Landcare, who support and contribute at every turn, as do many more local groups, clubs and businesses. What does this upgrade mean to the grade 2 students? Mahana said:

My favourite part of the new areas is the kitchen. We have done science and made pancakes already!

Evie loves all the bright colours—orange, blue and green. They are her favourite colours. Archie is super impressed with the new decks. He said:

They are awesome, we go out there a lot ... Today we made grass heads as part of science.

Great work, Ardent Architects and builders Roubaix Projects. Next on— (*Time expired*)

GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE WIND FARMS

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:01): The Andrews Labor government has serious questions to answer after the Supreme Court case involving the Bald Hills wind farm was won by neighbours John Zakula and Noel Uren. The court found that the wind farm caused a substantial

interference with the use and enjoyment of the neighbours' land due to noise, especially at night. This was in a situation where the Minister for Planning had written to Bald Hills in 2019 indicating he was 'satisfied' that the wind farm was compliant with its permit conditions in relation to noise.

It seems the Labor government has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to wind farm compliance with permit conditions, and one wonders how many more circumstances there may be where this has occurred across Victoria. Sadly, it is the neighbours in quiet rural areas that suffer the consequences of Labor's incompetence. It seems incredible to me that just days after this significant Supreme Court decision the minister could sign off on a permit for the proposed Delburn project in the Strzelecki Ranges. Clearly the government did not have time to consider the Bald Hills decision, or it has completely ignored the concerns of local residents. The government's planning panel acknowledged that the Delburn proposal is different to many other wind farms. It is the first in a bushfire-prone plantation environment, with a relatively dense population of 1267 homes within 5 kilometres of the nearest turbine and a significant scale at 250 metres tall to blade tip. For context, the light towers of the MCG are about 80 metres high. That scale is enormous in an area with many lifestyle properties and close to small towns like Yinnar and Boolarra.

I think there is a strong role for renewable energy in our future, but wind farms onshore in relatively densely populated areas of Gippsland are not appropriate.

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, SEBASTOPOL

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (13:02): Yesterday I had the absolute honour of attending a very special birthday. It was the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Sebastopol Country Women's Association. It was a genuinely joyous affair. They had fabulous performances, songs from the choir, lovely sandwiches and of course amazing sponge. The strong sense of togetherness and support for each other and their community is what has united the Sebastopol branch for 70 years. That was so clear yesterday when so many women laughed and supported each other. It was wonderful to be there.

CWA state deputy president, Jennifer Nola, travelled to Ballarat for the event on Monday afternoon, and she was keen to meet the women who are following in her mother's footsteps in Sebastopol. She described a childhood surrounded by these loving and caring women in the warm embrace of the Sebastopol RSL Memorial Hall. The Sebastopol CWA has been a strong supporter of several really important organisations in our area, like Berry Street, the Eureka Mums and the Ballarat SoupBus, in their mission to support women and children. Ms Pitman said the CWA as a whole had played some vital roles in establishing maternal and child health services. As their motto says, it is 'Through countrywomen, for countrywomen, by countrywomen'. Happy birthday, Sebastopol CWA.

HOMELESS TO HOMEMAKER

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (13:04): I recently had the pleasure of visiting Charlie, Rob and the team at the 3PE Build in Yarraville with the member for Melton, secretaries from the AMWU and the Health and Community Services Union and also reps from the Youth Support and Advocacy Service to check out a great project called 'Homeless to Homemaker'.

Whilst it is this government proudly rolling out the Big Housing Build, we are also exploring every option to put a roof over every Victorian's head. Charlie, who runs 3PE, is a successful businessman. He could just sit back and relax, I think, and watch life go by, but he is not your average person, and he is really passionate about his community. He is passionate about housing as well. He wants to make a difference, and he will in a big way. It is so inspiring to hear Charlie talk about the work that his experienced team have put into making unique, well-designed, quality modular housing. You cannot help but be impressed.

This is a forward-thinking solution to assist vulnerable community members and also supports recommendations made by the Victorian inquiry into homelessness. The Homeless to Homemaker initiative is a tangible solution to a complex problem. It is people like Charlie and these unions that

have more community spirit and are showing more leadership in their little finger than some of the opposition MPs preaching that discriminatory, condescending, white privilege rubbish that we have heard recently. Let us face it—it only divides our communities, it does not bring us together, and it compounds intergenerational disadvantage in our communities as well, unlike solutions like Homeless to Homemaker. Congratulations to everyone involved. I support this project 100 per cent and would like to see it flourish.

QSPACE

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (13:06): I was pleased to officially launch QSpace Geelong, a free specialist counselling service for LGBTIQ+ people and their families. QSpace Geelong is being delivered by Drummond Street Services and its community partners. I want to acknowledge and thank Karen Field, the CEO of Drummond Street Services, for her passion and commitment, and give a huge thanks to Jo Bangles for hosting the launch at Splatters, the first Australian cheese train and a venue that is well known as being a safe space for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Geelong QSpace is part of the \$2.5 million investment by the Andrews government to make sure LGBTIQ+ Victorians feel safe and valued. QSpace Geelong began operating in August last year, and so far many LGBTIQ people have received support through one-on-one sessions, family counselling support and group programs. We know that LGBTIQ+ Victorians are more likely to experience mental health issues, and the added stress of the pandemic has made support and connection with family and friends more important than ever. We also know that in regional locations, especially within smaller communities, it has been increasingly difficult for LGBTIQ+ Victorians to access the right support from qualified and experienced workers. We want to make sure that everyone, regardless of where they live, has access to mental health and wellbeing support.

MACKIE CRICKET CLUB

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (13:07): It was my pleasure to visit Mackie Cricket Club for Pink Stumps Day in February. Pink Stumps Day is a great cause, with all proceeds going to McGrath breast care nurses and supporting Australian families going through breast cancer. Thank you to everyone for their generous donations, including the member for Bentleigh, and congratulations to the women's team, committee members and everyone involved in the successful fundraiser.

It was a difficult 2021 for the club, and it was nice to catch up with everyone, including the club's secretary, Michael Pahoff. Michael is also an author, and I am enjoying his new book, *Australia: A New More Inclusive History*. It is an acknowledgement of the many contributions of multicultural Australia to our society and history. Clarinda is one of our most diverse electorates, so this is a welcome addition to our history books.

KAREN NATIONAL DAY

Mr TAK: I was proud to join the Karen community for the 74th Karen National Day celebration. The event was an amazing and proud demonstration of the Karen cultural tradition. Congratulations and thank you to all organisers and participants for a wonderful showcase of Karen culture, music, dance and food. It is also a testament to our community that they continue to ensure that no matter where the Karen community may live, important traditions are celebrated, shared and upheld for future generations.

BROADMEADOWS HEALTH SERVICES

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (13:09): Broadmeadows Hospital is a priority in the \$1.5 billion investment to cut patient waiting lists. This \$1.5 billion investment will boost hospital surgery across Victoria to record levels, providing the care deferred because of the global pandemic. The good news for the people I represent is Broadmeadows Hospital is one of the top eight priorities and hubs. This strategy will deliver a \$475 million investment for more same-day surgeries, increased twilight and

after-hours work and theatre improvements to increase efficiency and fast-track patients through the system.

Victoria's healthcare workforce will be supported by a package worth more than \$80 million to upskill more than 1000 nurses and allied health workers, train another 400 nurses and recruit a further 2000 highly skilled healthcare workers from overseas. Importantly this adds value to the centre for health excellence in Broadmeadows, founded with a \$60 million investment into Kangan Institute in the last state budget, and in collaboration with Northern Hospital, which has the highest numbers in its emergency department and the highest hospital ramping. So this is vital and urgent, it will go where it is needed most and will help train the next generation of nurses because we know that the pandemic stalks inequality.

ADVANCE AUSTRALIA

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (13:10): It is my sad duty today to talk a bit about a movement, or a political party, that has recently reared its ugly head in my community and in communities in the southern and eastern suburbs. This mob are known as Advance: Front and Centre, and they are a rabble with an interesting collection of policy positions, including being pro nuclear, anti-vax—

A member interjected.

Mr FOWLES: A terrific combination. They want to double Australia's defence spending, and they seem to have a particular difficulty with anyone who could be characterised as left, centre-left, woke, inner city or anything of that vein. They are anti electric cars, they are anti the Communist Party and they have been putting out the most offensive and racist billboards in my part of the world, and I just wanted to draw the Parliament's attention to them because these people are just awful.

Joint sitting of Parliament

SENATE VACANCY

VICTORIAN RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING FOUNDATION

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (13:11): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Assembly's proposal to hold a joint sitting on Wednesday, 6 April 2022, at 6.00 pm in the Assembly chamber to:

- (1) choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the death of Senator Kimberley Kitching; and
- (2) elect a member of Parliament to the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (13:11): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with the notice of motion, government business, today and ask that it remain on the notice paper.

Bills

ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of **Ms ALLAN**:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (13:12): It is an honour today to rise to contribute on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is the first bill on roads that I have had the privilege of leading for the Liberals and Nationals since being appointed the Shadow Minister for Public Transport and

Roads, and at the outset I just want to put my view that road safety is certainly not one dimensional. I do not think it should just involve fining people or indeed hitting them with demerit points; it should also be about making roads safer, including of course road surfaces, and that is a very big point for many of us in this place but particularly for those of us who live in rural and regional Victoria. The three main things that this bill seeks to achieve are to enable new cameras to fine people for not wearing seat belts or for using their mobile phones while driving; to add to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986; and to make changes to the state's transport accident scheme, which largely are about addressing a series of anomalies—at least that is certainly what the government is suggesting.

In terms of the introduction of cameras, the government is introducing new cameras to detect people who are using their mobile phones while driving or indeed who are failing to wear a seatbelt. Clauses 3 to 5 of the bill allow for new camera technology to receive evidentiary status, and that follows a trial of new artificial intelligence technology which I understand ran for three months using a commercial trailer-mounted camera system. That scanned 679 438 vehicles, with an average mobile phone offence rate of 2.4 per cent, which is one in 42 drivers, or 16 177 drivers in total, over that three-month window. The government has advised me that those offences ranged from someone resting a mobile phone on their lap to texting with both hands, which is clearly incredibly dangerous.

The penalty for using a mobile phone is four demerit points and a \$545 fine. However, it can also result in a court-ordered penalty of up to \$29 400, so it is quite a large infringement, I suppose. It carries quite a financial penalty. It is worth noting that if all of the penalty notices that were issued over that three-month period were upheld, the revenue from those three months would be about \$9 million to the state. I think it is incumbent on us to put on the record the fact that the government stands to make a significant amount of money from the installation of these new cameras. That is the simple reality of it.

In terms of the issues around failure to wear a seatbelt, that offence was detected at a rate of 0.15 per cent, or one in 667 drivers. I have to say I find it really extraordinary that in this day and age—campaigns around wearing seatbelts have been run over many years by the TAC, and most Victorians would certainly acknowledge the importance of doing that—there are that many people who are still not wearing a seatbelt when they are driving. Indeed, I understand there were 31 fatalities last year where someone was not wearing a seatbelt; 27 were drivers, four were passengers. I think in this day and age they are quite extraordinary figures. Someone who receives an infringement for failing to wear or improperly wearing a seatbelt faces a fine of \$364 and three demerit points, so there is quite a difference there between failing to wear a seatbelt—again I think it is just extraordinary that so many people are still doing that—and using a mobile phone whilst driving.

There were a number of concerns raised by opposition members about privacy surrounding the use of images that are taken by these cameras. I understand that three images will be taken of every vehicle. The software that is used captures both the exterior and the front cabin of every vehicle in high resolution. Those images are analysed using a pattern recognition algorithm, with the ones that show where there has been likely offending behaviour then reviewed by an actual person. The government has advised that the processes around that and the timing and retention of those images are subject to discussions that they are still having with the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, Victoria Police and the Department of Transport, and I would urge the government to be transparent when this policy is implemented so people understand what that process is, because I do not think we want to see an erosion of faith in the system. I have no doubt that the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner will have strong views around this, but I think it is important that the Victorian public understand what that process is.

I did want to make some broad observations about the government's approach to road safety. I do feel—and I think many of my colleagues feel, though I will leave it to them to articulate their thoughts—that the government is quite selective about which aspects of road safety it wants to address.

Those of us in this chamber know the debate around the joint parliamentary committee, the Road Safety Committee, and I think given the importance of road safety to both sides of the house, you have to seriously question why Labor, on coming to office in 2014, decided to abolish that joint committee on road safety. That committee has a very long history in Victoria. It was first established in 1967. Coincidentally, when the Andrews government decided to abolish it, it was history repeating itself, because Labor abolished it when it first came to government in 1982 and rolled it into something called the Social Development Committee. Liberal and Nationals MPs at the time pushed for it to be reinstated, which it then was by the Kennett government in 1992, and then of course again when Labor was elected in 2014 they decided to strip that back and abolish it. That committee had been lauded for its work, including by very respected entities like the Monash University Accident Research Centre.

That committee's work has led to really transformational initiatives around road safety and measures which have led to a significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries on Victorian roads. It was that committee which drove the introduction of mandatory seatbelts in Victoria, and as we know, Victoria was the first jurisdiction in the world to do that. It drove the introduction of the demerit point system as a deterrent for repeat offenders. It was responsible for random breath testing, alcohol prohibition for probationary drivers, power capacity limits for motorcyclists who are on their L-plates or P-plates, compulsory child restraints in cars, mandatory helmets for cyclists and 40-kilometre zones outside schools. The work of that committee is really, really significant. You could almost argue that it has been one of the most significant and most reforming committees in modern times in this Parliament, so I think it is a great shame that the government has decided to abolish that committee and does not see a need for it, and I would question why that is.

I was interested to note that the committee in 2006 also completed an inquiry into driver distraction, which is the subject of the bill that is before us, or a good part of the bill, and they looked at the prevalence of mobile phone use by drivers, its impact on crash causes, the suitability and enforcement of existing laws concerning the use of mobile telephones and other electronic devices by drivers and the possible need to change legislation or statutory requirements to implement their recommendations.

So, again, we have had a vehicle—pardon the pun—to examine some of these really serious issues around road safety, but the government is refusing to use that. We have, as I said, sought to re-establish that committee on a number of occasions. To me what it really speaks to is a pattern where the Andrews government has sought on multiple fronts to dumb down the Parliament and to concentrate power in the hands of the executive government, and quite frankly I think that this is a case in point and it is a disappointing case given the importance of road safety to both sides of this chamber.

In 2019, because we do not have that committee the Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee was asked to inquire into the increase in Victoria's road toll, which was quite significant at the time. Recommendation 14 from that inquiry was that the Victorian government review speed limits on all rural and regional roads as a matter of priority to, and I quote from the recommendation:

Identify unsafe roads with low traffic volumes where speed limits should be reduced and reduce them accordingly.

The government supported that recommendation in full, and they have since flagged that they are looking at lowering the speed limit to 80 kilometres an hour on local government roads and on major roads if safety works like wire rope barriers cannot be installed. The government said this in its response to that report:

Where investment in barrier systems and other infrastructure is not a feasible solution, due to lower traffic volumes and other geometric constraints, the Victorian Government will look at 80km/h speed limits to manage roads with high crash risks.

They conclude by saying that they understand the community is concerned that reduced speed limits in rural and regional areas will lead to increased travel times but they will support any changes with community education. Well, Deputy Speaker, you are a representative of regional Victoria, but certainly from where I stand there is nothing that rural and regional Victorians hate more than being

told they will be educated about what is good for them, and quite frankly I think that is very lazy policy. It is arrogant policy. Everywhere I travel across Victoria, but particularly in regional Victoria, our road surfaces are crumbling, they are deteriorating. Road safety should not be used as a guise to hide the problems that have been created by years of chronic underinvestment in our road network. Since 2014 we know that Labor has lost more than \$24 billion to waste and cost overruns on major projects, including major road projects like the North East Link and the West Gate Tunnel. And of course we also had that \$1.3 billion to not build the east–west link. So it seems that there is no end of money when it comes to plugging the Minister for Transport Infrastructure’s leaky buckets but not for the unglamorous work of actually making sure that our roads are up to scratch, that potholes are repaired properly and that road surfaces are safe.

I think it speaks to the fact that the government would rather decrease speed limits on country roads than invest in them. We have an old saying, ‘If you invest in country roads, you’ll save country lives’. One of the government’s first decisions on coming to office in 2014 was to cut the country roads and bridges program, which put money directly into the hands of local government to help maintain local road networks. I know across my own patch that money was used very effectively and went a very long way to improving the safety issues in my region. While the government actively examined lowering speed limits in regional Victoria, it also cut the road asset maintenance budget by 25 per cent last year. We had a budget of \$807 million in 2021 and this year it is just \$616 million. The government and a number of agencies frequently claim that there is not a great link between road surfaces and serious injuries or fatalities. But there is research which suggests that fatalities and serious injuries are halved for each incremental improvement in the star rating system—that is, if you go from 1 star to 2 stars, or from 3 stars to 4 stars, you will significantly reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

Victoria actually has no legislated obligation for our roads to be built or maintained to a certain standard to increase safety for road users. That same committee which recommended lowering speed limits in fact also recommended that the government review its road maintenance priorities to ensure that standards like line marking, safe shoulders and resurfacing are adequately maintained on high-speed minor roads. It also recommended that the government undertake research to determine the cost and time frame of ensuring that all highways, arterial roads and other roads of significance in Victoria are a minimum 3-star rating. Shock, horror! Those recommendations did not in fact receive the government’s full support, and I have had many people who have asked me, ‘The government requires us to have roadworthy cars; why doesn’t the government require our roads to be car worthy?’. I actually think that that is quite a compelling point.

The Minister for Roads and Road Safety—I am pleased he is at the table—has previously said that he is making roads smoother and safer, but that quite frankly is not the lived experience for many people in Victoria, particularly in regional Victoria. The Hume Freeway at the moment, our national road—the main road that links our two major capital cities in this country—has been subject to 80-kilometre speed limits for weeks and rough surface signs right through my stretch. We have rough surface signs warning motorists that that road quite frankly is not up to scratch—our nation’s main road. Now, the impact that has on productivity for particularly the freight task that uses that road or the thousands of people who use it to commute into Melbourne each day is extraordinary, to say nothing of the safety impact. And we have seen that the quality of work around the state is very, very poor. The Auditor-General warned the government about this back in 2017, but all Labor has done is reduce spending further, and I have not really seen any material change as a consequence of the recommendations that the Auditor-General made. Perhaps they have not been implemented, but certainly the Auditor-General pointed to the need for longer term funding cycles to ensure that roads were maintained to a higher standard, and we quite simply just have not seen that happen.

Persistent safety concerns are also routinely ignored, and I want to mention a couple in my own electorate of Euroa. We have a stretch of road between Violet Town and Murchison. In 2014 we had a fatality on that road at Miepoll as well as four serious injury crashes. There was another fatality near the Goulburn Valley Freeway in October 2015 and another serious injury crash a few days later. In

2019 there was another fatality at Gillam Road, and last year a minibus rolled, which killed one person and saw a number of others airlifted to hospital.

That road is a key freight route as well as being a main east–west corridor through that region. Lowering the speed limit to 80 kilometres an hour, as the government wants to do on such roads, would have really major ramifications for the community. It would have major ramifications on productivity but also just on the daily life of people who need to travel long distances to get where they need to go. The issue here is that the community’s concerns about the safety of the road—about narrow shoulders, sharp run-offs and the camber of the road—have not been addressed by the government. They just are routinely ignored.

Similarly, at the Colbinabbin Primary School we have been pushing for variable speed signs to be introduced around that school, which has B-doubles travelling within a metre of where kids have to get into their cars—where you have got kids walking along the road to get to the recreation reserve, where you have got kinder kids walking that same path and where the principal is so concerned about the safety of his kids he has resorted to borrowing the line marker from the rec reserve to try and mark a safe route for the children under his care. When that issue was raised with the government, again we were told that it was not a priority. Now, again, I use these examples to highlight the fact that I think Labor’s approach to road safety is one-dimensional. It is about taking a stick to people as opposed to making the investment to ensure that our roads are properly maintained—that we make the investment in places to actually improve the safety of communities.

The second part of this bill deals with licence suspensions, and clauses 6 to 17 prescribe changes to offences for which a senior member of Victoria Police can suspend someone’s licence on the spot. It adds a number of offences including for someone who commits the following offences with a motor vehicle: manslaughter; negligently causing serious injury; culpable driving; dangerous driving causing death; dangerous driving causing serious injury; intentionally exposing an emergency worker, a custodial officer or a youth justice custodial worker to risk; failing to immediately stop and render assistance if an accident occurs; and dangerous or negligent driving while being pursued by police.

Most recently of course we had the report of a hit-and-run—on 22 March in Armadale at 6.30 in the morning—where a 23-year-old P-plater allegedly hit a pedestrian who was attempting, I believe, to get on a tram. The allegation is that she fled the scene and came back several hours later. I raise that, I suppose, as perhaps the freshest example I can think of where this immediate on-the-spot disqualification of someone’s licence might take effect. Under these changes the police would have had the power to suspend her licence then and there. When you look at the seriousness of some of those offences that I have just named, I think this is a sensible decision by the government to include a broader list of offences. The community test by any measure would be well passed here; most people in the community would certainly agree.

Part 3 of the bill makes changes to the compensation scheme that is administered by the Transport Accident Commission. Most of those changes are to address anomalies in the scheme, and the government has advised me that it estimates the total cost of these amendments to the scheme will be between \$5.7 million and \$8.5 million annually. Clauses 21 to 23 and clauses 25 to 29 change the way a client’s preaccident weekly earnings are calculated if they are in the very unfortunate circumstance where they have another transport accident and they are already in receipt of TAC loss-of-earnings benefits. I understand that the TAC believes that this change is going to impact about five to 12 people a year, so it is not huge by any measure, but it is certainly important to those few who very unfortunately find themselves in that circumstance.

Clause 24 strips someone who is convicted of murder or manslaughter of benefits. I understand that is already the case for benefits under their own claim if someone is injured, but it does not currently extend to dependency benefits. Clauses 30 to 32 alter death benefits so that the commission is not actually liable to pay someone’s partner or their dependent child if that partner or child is convicted of murder, manslaughter or culpable driving.

I certainly do not think that anyone would disagree with the government's decision to strip death benefits from individuals who are charged with murder and manslaughter. In the case of culpable driving charges, it is likely that the person who has been the subject of that offence is already grieving the loss of their partner or their parent and is, I would imagine, suffering intense guilt over the consequences of their actions. I think if you take this to the extreme, this could be a 16-year-old L-plater who made a poor—illegal, but poor—choice to pick up their mobile phone whilst they were driving; they might have run off the road and they might have killed their parent. The death of a person in those circumstances is absolutely tragic for a family, but it is also really tragic for a child who may be involved and who will pay for that mistake for the rest of their life. I think this has the potential to be a bit of a grey area, and it should be monitored to make sure it does not have perverse outcomes, accepting of course that culpable driving is a very serious offence. One possibility could be to tie this to those cases where someone is convicted of culpable driving and is sentenced to a custodial sentence. That would perhaps give some discretion to the judicial system and to the TAC, particularly in instances where a judge feels that an offence has been committed but there are, I suppose, some extenuating circumstances.

The final change to the scheme is to include people who are involved in car-dooring accidents. The TAC have advised that there are about 70 car-dooring claims per year, but in about 75 per cent of those the cyclist is already covered for lump sum damages because the door was opened by a driver. At the moment, as I understand it, the scheme includes cases where a driver has opened the door but not where a passenger has opened the door. That is a sensible change, that in those 25 per cent of claims that are currently received where a passenger has opened the door this will be covered under the scheme.

In concluding, I do want to put on the record my thanks to Emma Henderson, the minister's adviser, who worked pretty hard in obtaining some details from the department and the TAC for me on a number of questions that we posed during the bill briefing. I am pleased that the government has agreed to go into consideration in detail on this bill. I am somewhat amazed they have, considering it is only the second time in this term of Parliament, but I very much welcome the opportunity, as I am sure the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who is at the table, does. I really look forward to interrogating some of the details of this bill in greater detail at that time.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (13:38): I rise to make a contribution on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I thank the shadow minister and congratulate her on becoming the Shadow Minister for Public Transport and Roads. I hope that that expands to her also becoming the shadow minister for road safety. I notice the member for Kew was the last shadow minister for road safety. Road safety has been bipartisan for so many years, and I think the member for Euroa should have that extension too.

We regard road safety very proudly in this state. Indeed, in the United Nations and worldwide, Victoria is a place that is looked to. It is really because of ministers that have come before me, whether you go back to the 1970s and Victoria being the first jurisdiction in the world to mandate the wearing of seatbelts, whether you look at this being the first jurisdiction to introduce legislation concerning random breathalyser testing in the mid-1970s or whether you look at one of the greatest legacies of the John Cain government, setting up the Transport Accident Commission in 1986. Coincidentally I met today one of the very first clients of the Transport Accident Commission. He is a young man now, but he was only six years of age back in the 1980s. He is in a wheelchair because he was hit by a car on his way home from school. I basically got the picture today of what reforms like the TAC can do to give independence to someone that has had a life-changing incident occur and how that has helped him so much.

We have also, though, introduced speed cameras and are putting record investment into infrastructure. One of the first things I wanted to do when I became Minister for Roads and Road Safety was really focus on people, and I do take a bit of exception to the argument that we have been one dimensional, because we have had record investment in infrastructure. But at the end of the day road safety is about people, particularly vulnerable people, and at the moment obviously we have got an issue supporting motorcyclists and cyclists. Coming out of the pandemic we are very focused on how people have

changed a lot of their behaviours, perhaps shunning public transport or having a public transport hesitancy and getting back to the vehicle. That is why we are rolling out our Smarter Roads initiative, and it is why we are, under the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, through the Big Build, adding more lanes than ever before, removing level crossings and building the infrastructure that is needed.

So we know we have got more work to do, small things. This might not be the biggest piece of legislation coming through the chamber, but it is important legislation that will continue to reform the Transport Accident Commission but then take best practice that has been instituted in New South Wales to really do everything we can to target mobile phone use, particularly in motor vehicles. We know with distracted driving, if it is just for 1 second you go to your mobile phone, it is the equivalent of travelling essentially blind for almost 50 metres, and the data does not lie. More people are attached to their mobile phones. More people are looking at their mobile phones. We see every day ourselves when we go out in the community what a distraction mobile phones are, and our message is very clear: put it in the glove box, put it on the back seat, take it away from you, because mobile phones do not belong near the steering wheel or in your lap or in your hand.

That is what we are trying to do here with this legislation. Look at what New South Wales did—and it has been a big success—bringing new camera technology and enforcement to capturing mobile phone use. The shadow minister is right to raise questions around privacy safeguards. The truth is we have been doing this work as a trial, and then through some of our tertiary institutions and partners we are already using cameras to monitor the road network to get more information back to traffic operations that can then get more information to people that are in their cars to make the best choice of route to work or to school or to wherever they are going. But no doubt this matter will continue to be raised and discussed.

We have had the legal community very supportive of this legislation, particularly some of the reforms we have been doing around the Transport Accident Commission. I think the Transport Accident Commission, as I said at the very beginning of my contribution, is an enormous legacy of the Cain Labor government. But more than that too, I want to pay tribute, if I can, to Ms Maxwell in the other place, because she has been someone who consistently has raised addressing gaps in legislation, particularly around the issue of strengthening licence suspension powers. This legislation will address that gap by ensuring that hit-and-run and other serious offences are listed in that category of offences that may trigger immediate licence suspension or disqualification, and the shadow minister highlighted a potential case in point that we are well aware of.

Further though, this legislation, in addition to the reforms to the Transport Accident Commission, in addition to the work around cameras, addresses the issue around seatbelts, and we are in agreement on that. It is incredible that 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt last year, a 13 per cent increase. We know seatbelts save lives, and that is just the data on the lives lost—when you meet with clients of the Transport Accident Commission you see how not wearing a seatbelt can leave you with life-changing consequences for the rest of your life; whether it is scars, whether it is other incapacities, wearing a seatbelt reduces road trauma incredibly. At the end of the day, whether it is not wearing a seatbelt, whether it is lives lost, we have to remember that every single life lost on our roads is preventable. And, yes, the trend has been coming down, but it has had some peaks and troughs as well. To think as I am standing here today, on 5 April, that 69 people have already lost their lives on Victoria's roads—that is up on last year by about 11—and every one of those 69 individual lives lost was preventable. Every life lost is preventable, and that is why we are working to have zero lives lost by 2050—essentially an agreement right across Australia and indeed most parts of the world—and to also halve lives lost by 2030 and do everything we can to reduce trauma.

I have made some notes on the shadow minister's contribution, and she did raise the issue of standards. We are putting record investment into our roads. She would also appreciate—and this is something I have discussed with Minister Joyce in Canberra—that when it comes to road funding you have got federal, state and local government; it is not as simple as just introducing it, it requires some consultation. Hopefully it is something we can work towards, but it is certainly something that we

have to do together at the ministerial meetings of ministers and introduce as something Australia wide, because we know we want as much as possible, wherever you are going—whether you are going over the South Australia border or the New South Wales border—all roads to be at the standard we want. That work will continue to be ongoing.

I want to give a shout-out to the Department of Transport for all their work and to the Transport Accident Commission. I also want to acknowledge the work of the Monash University Accident Research Centre, because they are almost one of the jewels in the crown in Victoria, particularly when it comes to innovation. The way you reduce road deaths and road trauma is through innovation, and the work they are doing on alcohol detection and the work they are doing on fatigue is stuff that will be talked about in the future. The work of the Monash University Accident Research Centre, like I highlighted at the beginning—the reforms that will come from their work and their support by the government—will ensure in decades to come that we will look back on their work and say, ‘That alcohol detection device’ or that fatigue management device that is fitted to that vehicle ‘saved lives and reduced trauma’. On that note, I do commend the bill to the house and look forward to discussing it later this week.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (13:48): I rise to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Like every other speaker who has spoken so far on this bill, I am mystified, outraged—I cannot understand how in this day and age there are so many people not wearing a seatbelt. I remember my father was obsessive about this sort of stuff. I remember him installing seatbelts in the back of the old Wolseley that we had, which had not been provided with them. I am showing my age, I believe. But Victoria did lead the world in 1970 in making seatbelts compulsory under the Hamer government, and to be here so many decades later still having to create further legislation around the wearing of seatbelts because people are not wearing them strikes me as almost unbelievable. How could people be so stupid, really?

As the lead speaker, the member for Euroa and Shadow Minister for Public Transport and Roads, has noted, we will not be opposing this bill, and in the tradition of road safety bills in this place, we do have a high degree of bipartisanship in this area and have had for decades. That is not to say that we think everything is perfect in this bill. We certainly do not think that the government’s approach overall to road safety is encyclopedic or comprehensive.

As the lead speaker noted—and in fact as the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who was previously at the table, just confirmed when he spoke—the government has a strong focus on driver behaviour. That is certainly a major feature of road safety. How we behave on the roads—wearing seatbelts and not being on the phone—does drive behaviour, but so does the condition of the roads. It is true to say that this government has not been as focused on the condition of the roads as it has been on individual driver behaviour to drive down the road toll and road trauma. We note that the road asset maintenance budget was cut by 25 per cent last year, and there would not be a single country member, at least on this side of the house, who does not get repeated requests from our local governments to bring back the country roads and bridges program—a program that enabled so many of our country local government areas to at least keep up with the maintenance on their roads.

I do note that there have been a number of inquiries—recent inquiries; there have been inquiries over many years—but in recent times we have seen the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee do an inquiry into the increase in Victoria’s road toll. That is a government-dominated committee. It made a number of recommendations, of which I wish to talk about a few, and what these recommendations go to is the state of the roads. They asked the government to publish an annual report on road standards that would state the road status for each of the highways and arterial roads. They also asked them to undertake and publish research to determine the cost and time frame of ensuring that all of the VicRoads roads of significance are of a minimum 3-star rating. They also asked the government to review its current road maintenance priorities to ensure standards such as line marking, safe shoulders and resurfacing are adequately maintained.

The government has responded to this report—and remember that it is a government-dominated committee. I have to say I support all of those recommendations. I think they are all very sound recommendations from the Legislative Council's committee. But in each of the cases the government has failed to support those recommendations. We have got a couple of them that are supported in principle, but when you read the government's actual response—

Ms Ryan: Weasel words.

Ms STALEY: They are weasel words, member for Euroa. They actually are not doing anything about creating reports to tell Victorians about the state of their roads. There are a couple that are supported in part, but again it is, could I say, the easy part, and at every point they have ducked delivering the kind of data that their own committee has asked for.

I note that the minister for roads in his contribution on this bill mentioned the Monash University Accident Research Centre. He described it as the jewel in the crown of road safety research. That is true—absolutely; I agree with the minister. But I want to now turn to the Auditor-General's report, *Safety on Victoria's Roads*. He particularly talked about regional road barriers, but it makes some broader points. In particular the Auditor-General went and looked at some of the research from the Monash University Accident Research Centre. They noted that VicRoads has a history of overestimating crash reduction factors. In their evaluation the Monash University Accident Research Centre compared what VicRoads said about various reduction factors, whether that be safety barriers or whether it be run-off-road treatments. They were all between 52 and 65 per cent, according to VicRoads, in how much they had reduced crashes. When they looked at what they did do after the fact, it was more like 22 per cent or 24 per cent. What we are seeing is that where the government is doing road changes for road safety, they are overestimating what they need to do and at the same time they are underfunding the basic maintenance. That combination of spending a lot of money on wire rope barriers, spending money in Melbourne on projects that have big cost overruns and at the same time underfunding country roads in particular—and I say that as a country member who drives on those roads and regularly has constituents raise the state of the roads with me—the priorities are not right and they are not congruent with a comprehensive approach to road safety.

What we all want to see is a reduction in the road toll and road trauma—not just deaths on the roads but also road trauma—and increasingly year after year we see that we are still seeing significant road trauma and a significant road toll on country roads. The cars are getting safer, the penalties for poor behaviour or poor driving are getting higher. The thing that is not improving is the state of the roads, and there just comes a point where the roads are not safe. The government has in many ways admitted that, because their response to that is to seek to cut the speed limit on many country roads. Rather than fixing the roads, they want to take them down to 80 kilometres an hour.

All of this comes to a pattern that says the government needs to rethink how it is doing road safety. We all in this place want to cut the road toll, cut the trauma from road accidents, but until we have safer roads, until we have the shoulders on our roads fixed, until we have proper line markings on the edges so that drivers can see the lines on the road that keep you within those lanes and can see the line marking on the left-hand side—all of that basic maintenance is not being done under this government, and it needs to be done. It is all very well—we do not oppose this bill—to bring this sort of bill to the Parliament, but they need to do more. They need to get the roads up to scratch, particularly country roads, so that country drivers do not continue to die in numbers far too high and so that we can push towards a zero road toll, because we are not going to get there with the state of the roads in the current state.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (13:58): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on this bill and to be able to congratulate the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for bringing this bill before the house, because obviously tackling the road toll is critical, and it is great to see such a bipartisan approach to this. It is a bill that really resonates with me both as the Minister for Ports and Freight and being so aware of the issues that are associated with the impact of trucks on

roads along with the way that people move around on our road network as well as being the member for Williamstown and so close to that port precinct, where of course we have got that truck traffic and that intersection between the local community and that important economic driver. Being able to have a bill that emphasises road safety to keep my local community safe is of paramount importance. On top of that we will also see significant road safety benefits come on board, and it has been great to be able to work with groups like the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group over the course of the last three years to be able to really improve community safety on and around roads.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

ASSISTANT TREASURER

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

MINISTER FOR PLANNING

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): I rise to inform the house that today the Minister for Multicultural Affairs will answer questions for the portfolios of industry support and recovery; trade; business precincts; tourism, sport and major events; and racing, and that for the entirety of the week the Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of Assistant Treasurer, regulatory reform and government services. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs will answer questions for the portfolios of creative industries, regional development and agriculture, and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change will answer questions for the portfolios of planning and housing.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

ELECTIVE SURGERY WAITING LISTS

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister inform the house just how many Victorians are on surgery waiting lists as of 31 March 2022?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:02): Can I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Surgical waiting lists, under this government at least, are transparent, regular and available for all to see, unlike the system we inherited, which was murky—

Mr Andrews: In a man-sized safe.

Mr FOLEY: and kept in a safe on level 22, in the office that I now have the privilege of. There is still a dint in the floor—you can see it was very large, next to some empty wine bottles I found. In that regard we know that the Victorian hospitals information authority reports from some 80 public health services every quarter, and they report across a whole range of issues, not just public waiting lists.

Mr Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. It is a very straightforward question to the minister about the number of Victorians on the surgery waitlists by the end of March. I just require a very simple answer for the house from the minister. I ask you to bring him back to answering that very straightforward and simple question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question that has been asked.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Speaker. These are some 80 public health services which are all independent entities that run their own show and report to this agency on a regular basis. That agency

then collates all that information. Every quarter, when they have done that, they publish that information. The most recent information in that regard, for the December quarter, which was published showed in fact, sadly, that there had been an increase in the course of the global pandemic. We know that COVID has had a massive impact on our public health system—a massive impact that this party and this government are committed to dealing with in genuine partnership with our workforce, with our public health officials and indeed, as we demonstrated over the weekend, with the private sector. As soon as that data is received, as soon as that data is collated, it will be released, as it has been assiduously by this government ever since it was elected.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): How many years has the government forecast that it will take to clear the surgery waitlist backlog that has built up since the Labor government was re-elected in 2018?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:05): What this government is now committed to—which this government shared with the people of Victoria on Sunday when I had the pleasure of standing with the Deputy Premier at Frankston Private Hospital to announce it—is a \$1.5 billion investment that this government is bringing to address for good how we deal with a new approach to dealing with elective surgery. We know that we want to get the delivery of care in surgically recommended times to Victorians so they can have confidence in their world-class health system. We inherited a mess when it came to elective surgery. We worked hard, we invested substantial resources and we worked in partnership, and we would do it again to fix the mess. *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ELECTIVE SURGERY

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:06): I am pleased to rise to update the house on the ways in which the government is supporting our health workforce: our nurses, our ambos, our doctors—the whole team—cooks, cleaners, orderlies, ward clerks—the list goes on and on. Health care, as you know, Speaker, is delivered by teams of people, and every member of our team is important, but every member of that team is very tired I think at the moment. It is fair to say that the last two years have been like no other. Despite the record levels of patients and the extreme demands that have been placed on them—everything from donning and doffing PPE, all the way through to being sick themselves; in recent days as many as 2000 of our health team in just public hospitals alone have been away from work sick or caring for someone sick—despite all of those challenges, our staff have done an amazing job. And we stand with them, not just in words but in funding, in ratios in legislation, in support—ratios in legislation, for anyone who did not hear it over there, in law for ever. So it is not just words.

On Sunday the government made a profound announcement—\$1.5 billion—to support our workforce to do more surgery faster. The Frankston Private Hospital—not for much longer—is going to be leased and turned into a public elective surgery centre. And it is not just a blitz, not a once off; it is growing the total capacity of our health system from a surgery point of view up to 125 per cent, literally tens of thousands of extra surgeries each year, every year. COVID has done a lot of damage. COVID has cancelled a lot of surgery. But we will deal with COVID—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: I am terribly sorry. COVID has cancelled a lot of surgery.

Mr R Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrandyte is warned.

Mr ANDREWS: Goodness me! Imagine if the member for Warrandyte was running anything more than a bar. Could you imagine that?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The level of shouting in the chamber is inappropriate. Members will be removed without further warning.

ELECTIVE SURGERY

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Health. Melissa has severe arthritis and requires a total jaw replacement. She is a 42-year-old single mum of two kids, and up until 12 months ago was in full-time work. Twelve months ago she was told the wait for her surgery would be six months. She has now just been told by her doctors that that wait to complete her surgery is three to five years. She is in constant pain, cannot chew or eat properly, has lost weight and suffers from migraines from the pain. She can no longer work. Can the minister please explain to Melissa, who is watching today, why and how her surgery wait time has blown out from six months to three years?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:09): Can I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Not being familiar with the particular case that he has raised, I take it as fact that it is an accurate reflection of the circumstances that Melissa is facing. Subject to understanding a bit more detail of the context—public or private patient, the clinical status—subject to those kinds of issues, which clearly I am not in a position to comment on, not being the clinician, what I would say is that subject to all those kinds of issues clinical decisions are made by clinicians.

If in the course of a person being on a category 2 or category 3 list for elective surgery their condition deteriorates, they can upon clinical advice move up—and do move up—to category 1. Category 1 throughout the entire course of the pandemic has continued to be delivered on time. Of course when it comes to the impact of a one-in-100-year event called a global pandemic, which has seen these circumstances of a growth in surgery waiting times and deferred care in Victoria, in New South Wales, in Queensland, in every state and territory of the commonwealth, we have seen these arrangements blow out. But rather than admire the problem, rather than make the problem worse by attacking the workforce, questioning the public health advice and undermining the public health response, what this government does is get on and fix those problems.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr FOLEY: Rather than act in a way that others would to make the problem worse, what we do is work in partnership. We bring substantial resources to that partnership—a \$1.5 billion plan to address this issue in a new way. This new creative way expands the public sector capacity to deal with these issues, brings in a new workforce—a trained workforce, expands the footprint to partner in new ways with the private sector and to bring capacity into this sector from our private partners, and indeed grows the public footprint by establishing models such as the Frankston Private hub, which will be tangibly delivering 9000 if not more public surgeries to public patients to bring the very sort of circumstances that the honourable member refers to back into a position of sustaining a new approach. This is a government that funds the work that we need to do to build our public health system in partnership with the community to get this problem fixed.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): With around 100 000 Victorians in the same boat as Melissa awaiting surgery and the minister refusing to tell Victorians how long it will take to clear this surgery waitlist and unwilling to even reveal how many Victorians are on that waitlist, what confidence should people like Melissa have that they will actually get the surgery they need in a timely manner when the minister refuses to answer such straightforward questions about his portfolio and the health care of thousands of Victorians?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:13): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his supplementary question and just refute the basis of his suggestion that this is a government that is not addressing these issues. The honourable member asked a series of questions, he got a straight answer about them and I would just point to the comments that others have made to point to who is serious about fixing this problem, who is serious about making sure that this once-in-100-year pandemic is dealt with in a way that not just fixes the problem that the pandemic has delivered but builds a new model of care to make sure that we stay on top of it for good—a \$1.5 billion investment partnering with the public and private sector, working with our workforce rather than attacking it.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, I would just ask you to ask the minister to look at you when he is speaking so that you can actually call the point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has concluded his answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: FEDERAL BUDGET

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:14): I wish to update the house on how Victoria's healthcare system has once again been short-changed by the commonwealth government. Last week's budget was an opportunity for the national Parliament and the national leader to act in the national interest, particularly when it comes to dealing with a national problem called a global pandemic and its impact on the country's healthcare system. Instead what we got was a repudiation of a partnership model from this Prime Minister. What we saw was a \$5 billion cut to the partnership arrangements with the states around how we deliver healthcare funding to our hospitals. In Victoria alone that is a \$1.49 billion cut that the federal budget, Scott Morrison's budget, has delivered to Victoria's public hospitals, about exactly the same amount that we announced yesterday—Monday, Tuesday, Sunday rather—

Mr Andrews: Every day.

Mr FOLEY: every day indeed—about we how are going to build our system. So it was extremely disappointing, because what this government is doing is getting on and fixing and dealing with the problems of a one-in-100-year pandemic. When we were elected we had to fix the mess that was delivered to us by those opposite when it came to our health system. We have a proven track record, and we know that this one-in-100-year event has made huge dents in our public health system and in our hospital system. We are going to partner with our public health professionals, our doctors, our nurses, our allied health professionals, our primary care partners, our private hospital partners and our workforce, and we will fix this one-in-100-year impact on our hospital system by this record investment for a new system.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. Members have been warned.

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

HEALTH SERVICES

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Health. Last sitting week the opposition asked about James, from Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs, who lay for days awaiting an emergency appendectomy, a potentially life-threatening situation. Over the weekend reports revealed that seven-year-old Man-Ha from Melbourne's west was sent home despite having a burst appendix. How has our health system deteriorated under the minister's watch to such an extent that a seven-year-old child is sent home despite facing such a life-threatening situation as this?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:17): Can I thank the member for her question. Again I will have to take as read and as

fact the honourable member's assertions that a particular case that I am personally not familiar with was dealt with in the manner that she reflects. What I would say in the context of how our public health system in particular has dealt with a one-in-100-year pandemic that has had an enormous impact on it and its professionals and all those Victorians who look to its service is that that impact has been recognised by this government. It is a bit of a pity that those opposite do not take that same comment to their mates in Canberra, who have just cut \$1.49 billion out of this Victorian system that this government is having to deal with.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has begun to debate the question, and I would ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER: I do not uphold the point of order. The question itself was a very broad one and the minister is being relevant to it.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Speaker. In regard to any decision that is made by our clinical leads, particularly at our busy public hospitals, we back them in because they know that this is a government that will work with them to fix the problems that we are facing. They know that because we have got a track record of doing that. We fixed the mess that we inherited from those opposite when they last were on this side of the chamber when it came to health. The honourable member for Altona led a partnership model in working with our ambulances, with our clinicians, with our hospitals, with our nurses. This is a government that, having—I am relatively confident—got through the worst of this global pandemic, is now facing a rebuild exercise of a similar dimension if not even more challenging, and the investment that we announced just a few days ago, the investment that we made of \$1.4 billion in further investment in February, addresses precisely the kind of—

Ms Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was specific to a seven-year-old girl who needed emergency surgery for peritonitis. The minister is referring to other matters—federal matters. He is also speaking to elective surgery. Having your burst appendix removed is not elective. I ask you to bring the minister back to this story of this seven-year-old girl.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The question at the end of the preamble was 'How has our health system deteriorated?', which is a fairly broad question. The minister is being relevant to it.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, Speaker. Clinical decisions and clinical priorities are made by clinicians, and we back them in. We do not undermine what their professional bodies talk about. We do not undermine public health advice. We do not attack nurses, the AMA or paramedics. We work in partnership with the private sector to address and build and rebuild the capacity so as to make sure that all Victorians get access to the services that when it comes to their health system they rightly deserve and which this side of the house has a track record of delivering and will deliver again as we build our way out of this one-in-100-year global pandemic.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:21): Responding to Man-Ha's situation, the AMA's Dr Sarah Whitelaw said:

This is not the result of the pandemic. The pandemic ... has revealed the stress that was there already.

Man-Ha's father said that someone has to take responsibility. As the person in charge of Victoria's health system, does the Minister for Health take responsibility for repeated failures like Man-Ha experienced in the Victorian health system?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:22): Dr Whitelaw is an outstanding clinician at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and is a very serious person when it comes to how world-class care is delivered in world-class circumstances. Her advice and her direction in how clinical decisions are made should be at all times respected when it comes to her patients. In regard to a particular patient that I am unfamiliar with, but which I did understand from the honourable member's substantive question related to, as I recall, Western

Health—I stand to be corrected, but that was my understanding from the honourable member’s initial question—we know that you work in partnership, whether it be with the AMA, the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation, the paramedics, the allied health professionals or others. We know that the government takes responsibility for acknowledging that there is an impact on our health system like never before— *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:23): I rise to update the house on how the Andrews government is keeping school and early childhood staff, students and children safe during the global coronavirus pandemic. Throughout this global pandemic we have been guided by the public health experts. It is why we have already delivered more than 49 million rapid antigen tests to schools and early childhood settings, we have over 40 million masks rolling out to schools and early childhood, 111 000 air purifiers are to be in schools by winter, we have ventilation grants for early childhood settings and mandatory vaccination requirements are keeping staff, students and children safe, supported by an extensive vaccination program providing access and support to staff, parents, students and their communities.

The commonwealth and Victorian governments funded RATs for school and early childhood staff 50-50, reflecting that this pandemic was something faced by all Australians. And it is paying dividends. Burnet modelling estimates voluntary surveillance testing has prevented 113 500 infections throughout term 1, and that is precisely why I can announce to the house that surveillance testing will continue for the first four weeks of term 2. But last week we saw the Morrison government revert to type as it cut \$1.5 billion from our COVID response here in Victoria. That means cuts to funding for RATs for school and early childhood staff, cuts to inreach vaccination in schools, cuts to pop-up vaccination. Nothing—\$1.5 billion to zero. The pandemic is not over, yet what do we get from the federal government? Cuts. And what do we hear from those opposite about those cuts? Absolute silence. We will continue to support our schools and early childhood settings.

SANDRINGHAM HOSPITAL

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Health. Sandringham Hospital has been providing quality care to the bayside community now for 58 years. Surgeons have advised that the surgical unit at Sandringham Hospital will be disbanded, with no guarantee that the existing seven surgeons will be reappointed. Why is the government allowing that surgeons at Sandringham will need to reapply for their jobs, with no guarantee of re-employment, at a time when Victoria is facing a health crisis that includes a shortage of surgeons?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:25): Can I thank the member for Sandringham for his question. We were in conversation with the royal college of surgeons on a range of issues just in recent days. One of those issues that we went to was actually Sandringham Hospital, which is a fantastic facility run by Alfred Health and, as the member rightly says, does a really, really good job. That is why Alfred Health proposed and this government agreed that it should be one of the rapid access hubs for the \$1.5 billion program that we announced on Sunday that will see investment in surgeons, perioperative nurses, technicians; will see a renovation of theatre spaces; will see substantial investment in meeting the partnership arrangements that the people of the south-eastern suburbs more broadly, and I suspect the honourable member’s electorate in particular, will have access to.

Mr Rowswell: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand that question time is not always answer time, but it is certainly not story time. On relevance, I have asked the minister a very specific question about the potential redundancy of seven well-equipped, well-credentialed and local surgeons at my local hospital, and my community expects that in this Parliament he directly answer the question which I have asked on behalf of my community.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question that has been asked.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you. So part of the \$1.5 billion announcement that we made on the weekend goes to specific support, be it capital, be it people, be it equipment, at eight rapid access hubs, including Sandringham, as it happens. I look forward to keeping very, very busy those great surgeons in Sandringham and Alfred Health. I look forward to their great partnership through the AMA and through the royal college and through their constructive arrangement with Alfred Health to keeping them busy as they partner with us to rebuild on the back of a one-in-100-year global pandemic and the devastating impact that that has had on our public health system.

This is a government that inherited a mess from those opposite when it came to government and invested to fix that mess, to in 2019 get to record levels on just about every measure that you could imagine. We will return to that, if not exceed it, by partnering with those health professionals, including those referred to by the honourable member for Sandringham. When it comes to Sandringham Hospital and when it comes to the surgeons and all the wonderful health professionals at Alfred Health, I look forward to us partnering with them to keep them very busy in the interests of the people of Victoria.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:29): What consultation was undertaken with the local—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Oakleigh can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. I ask those at the table to assist in the smooth running of question time.

Member for Oakleigh withdrew from chamber.

Mr ROWSWELL: What consultation was undertaken with the local bayside community—

Members interjecting.

Mr ROWSWELL: Speaker, I am entitled to be heard in silence according to the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members! The house will come to order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will come to order.

Mr ROWSWELL: What consultation was undertaken with the local bayside community regarding the changes to Sandringham Hospital that will lead to the potential loss of seven well-credentialed and local surgeons?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:30): I thank the member for Sandringham for his supplementary question. We speak all the time to professional bodies, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the AMA, Alfred Health, private sector partners and surgeons that transfer between the public and the private sectors all the time—every week in fact—and we certainly consulted very particularly with the royal college of surgeons and the AMA when it came to that particular hospital in the honourable member's electorate. We also consulted through the local public health area network, the south-eastern public health network, a network set up by this government to engage with communities and to engage with hospitals, about where the best location for these important services would be located, and Sandringham Hospital came through because it is full of great people, led by a great team. I look forward to working with those surgeons to deliver better services to the honourable member's electorate.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke—Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Youth) (14:31): The Andrews Labor government are committed to supporting all Victorians to live with COVID-19, and as part of this we are ensuring that no Victorian is left behind. That is why the as a government we have dedicated a massive \$68.6 million to Victoria's multicultural communities over the course of the coronavirus pandemic. But given all the challenges and sacrifices

made throughout the pandemic, multicultural and multifaith Victorians needed and deserved a better commonwealth budget for a better future. Instead what they got was a 13.7 per cent decrease in funding to refugee humanitarian settlement and migrant services. There was not a single new initiative relating specifically to the aged care needs of older Victorians from multicultural backgrounds, no additional funding for language services in the sector and no provision for improvements in the pay and conditions of aged care workers, at least 50 per cent of whom are from migrant backgrounds.

All up, a pretty underwhelming \$10.6 million over two years to develop a preventative health communications campaign targeted at CALD communities is in contrast to our government's investment of \$10.3 million in Victoria alone, which includes the multicultural communications outreach program, which has been enormously popular. Our government has quadrupled its investment in the multicultural affairs portfolio since coming to government in 2014. We have built, renovated or upgraded more than 400 multicultural community facilities, funded more than 5600 multicultural festivals and events, supported more than 1000 multicultural seniors groups and strengthened Victoria's multicultural media sector to ensure long-term viability. Our commitment to multicultural communities and our investment in them will not stop there.

COVID-19

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (14:33): My question is to the Minister for Health. One of Australia's leading health experts, Dr Nick Coatsworth, stated on Friday that there was plausible harm to children in forcing them to wear masks. Paediatric infectious diseases physician—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Mr HODGETT: Paediatric infectious diseases physician Robert Booy has said:

We need to get the masks out of schools ... We need to stop impeding ...

kids' education. Paediatric psychologist Deirdre Brandner went further to say learning, communication, socialisation and emotional regulation were hurt by the prolonged wearing of masks. When will Victorian kids in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 be allowed to attend school without wearing a mandatory mask?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:34): Can I thank the member for Croydon and just reflect ever so briefly on those opposite's almost fundamentalist desire to see failure in our public health system. Those opposite, through their Trumpian position on so many things, are wishing the worst for Victoria's public—

Mr Hodgett: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the question. It is a serious question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. The minister to come back to answering the question.

Mr FOLEY: Can I thank you for your guidance, Speaker. We know that public health advice is at the heart of what has been by any global standards a successful Australian and Victorian response to the global pandemic. To reflect briefly, last week I had the pleasure of being with Professor Peter Doherty, who the Doherty Institute is named after, who reflected that in particular the role that the Victorian government played had contributed substantially to better public health outcomes. He reflected on the role that masks played in that, as indeed have the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States, which earlier this year published—and it is there for the world to see on their website—a particular study about how masks in junior schools, together with a range of other projects, including vaccinations and appropriate management of pandemic social distancing and ventilation and other measures, contributed to a reduction of somewhere between 23 and 28 per cent in transmission in those schools, which then if you multiply that out across their home settings, saves thousands of infections in those communities and saves lives. So I will take the advice of Peter Doherty and the centres for disease control every day when it is reflected in the advice of our—

Mr Hodgett: On a point of order, Speaker, I asked when Victorian kids in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will be allowed to attend school without wearing a mandatory mask, and I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question that was put to him.

Mr FOLEY: One of the contributing factors, as the honourable Deputy Premier pointed out, is the contribution that free provision of RATs has delivered, saving thousands of cases in our schools. Put all of that together, what the contribution of our public health officials in partnership with families and schools—private, independent and Catholic—has done is save thousands of cases across our community and, with that, pressure on our health system. And ultimately, serious disease and death have been averted as a result of these measures. In that regard those who undermine those credentials, such as those opposite, those who undermine how that advice is applied—it is really something for those opposite to reflect on.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lowan can leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour.

Mr FOLEY: And I would urge them to reflect very seriously on that.

Ms Kealy interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Lowan can leave for 90 minutes.

Member for Lowan withdrew from chamber.

Mr FOLEY: That is very disappointing from the member for Lowan and those opposite. In short, the answer is: for not a second longer than it needs to be, based on public health advice.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (14:38): Will the minister guarantee that the mask mandate for kids will not be extended further to include students in younger primary school years or to students in secondary schools?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality) (14:38): Again those opposite fish for the catastrophising, wishing failure and hoping that systems break down because they do not actually support evidence, they do not actually support what the public health advice is. They are actually extremists pretending to be—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the house comes to order. There is too much shouting.

Mr FOLEY: Thank you, honourable Speaker. I would refer the honourable member to the public health advice—the most transparent state and territory in the country when it comes to the advice we receive and how we act on it. That advice specifically deals with the issue the honourable member raises. Now, I know those opposite essentially treat the government as their research arm because they are too lazy to do any work themselves—

Mr Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, in the 10 seconds remaining can you please ask the minister to actually address the question the member for Croydon asked and give a guarantee that kids will not have to wear masks in the other years at school?

The SPEAKER: The minister should come back from attacking the opposition and answer the question.

Mr FOLEY: I guarantee that this is a government that will follow the health advice and fix this problem—this one-in-100-year pandemic's impact on this health system.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTH FUNDING

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:40): I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's historic investment in our health system to keep Victorians safe during the insidious global COVID-19 pandemic. As Victorians have come to learn, testing was and remains a vital part of our armoury in response to the global pandemic. Our government has committed over \$20 billion in funding since the pandemic began to protect Victorians by setting up state-run PCR testing facilities, establishing mass vaccination centres and helping our hospitals cope with the extraordinary pressure placed on them by the pandemic. Whether it was the \$1.4 billion package announced in January to ensure that doctors, nurses and paramedics have the resources and support that they need in order to continue caring for Victorians in hospitals or at home, or the \$1.5 billion COVID catch-up plan that was announced by the Minister for Health and the Deputy Premier over the weekend, Victorians can trust this government to adequately resource our health system.

This is in sharp contrast to the federal government, who have failed to deliver on their fair share yet again. In their budget last week \$1.5 billion of costs for Victoria's COVID response went missing. Well, it is time the Morrison government lived up to the commitment that they should be making to all Victorians, to all Australians, because I have news for the federal government: we are part of Australia. It did not appear in their budget, but I can assure you we are. We deserve our fair share of funding, and it is time that those opposite stood up to the Prime Minister for Sydney and started fighting for this state.

Constituency questions

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:42): (6296) My question is to the Treasurer. The Alfred Caulfield hospital plays a crucial community and statewide role with rehabilitation services which include acquired brain injury rehabilitation. It also specialises in aged and mental health care. It was founded in 1871, over 150 years ago, and its old facilities are barely fit for purpose. As a result we are looking at—during the middle of the healthcare crisis—desperately needing more funding. We know in 2019 the state government committed to funding for a feasibility study as to the future use of Alfred Health Caulfield Hospital, and only a few days ago the Minister for Health confirmed that this government does not yet have a plan to act on the Caulfield hospital feasibility study for what is going to happen thereon. In the middle of a pandemic, with the opportunity to use these facilities, when will upgraded facilities be made available to Caulfield health?

TARNEIT ELECTORATE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (14:43): (6297) My question is to the Deputy Premier in his capacity as the Minister for Mental Health. It has been more than a year since our government handed down the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and as I mentioned the last time I was here in this place, this is an extremely important piece of work that our government has undertaken, putting mental health service delivery and access to mental health services as high priorities and major concerns for many, many Victorians, including in my own electorate. As part of the recommendations our government has begun work on establishing six local adult and older adult mental health and wellbeing services across Melbourne. Just recently our government announced it would expand upon that to another 21 sites across Victoria. In Wyndham we were fortunate to receive not one but two of these services, including one in Truganina, which I represent. My question to the minister is this: what mental health services will this hub provide for my community and how will it benefit my community?

EUROA ELECTORATE

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:44): (6298) My question today is for the Minister for Education. I would like to know when the government will complete a new master plan for Broadford Secondary College.

That school is supported by a wonderful and passionate teaching staff, but it is in an area that is rapidly growing. We have got huge population growth through that corridor, and the school are in dire need of capital funding, but they do not even have a current master plan. There is a feeling that they have just been left to languish. If no master plan is done, then there is going to be no call on the government for additional funding. They have recently been forced to convert run-down portables into learning spaces, and their B block needs a complete overhaul. They also need new, dedicated spaces for subjects like art and sports. I invite the minister to join with me to see for himself why the school needs capital funding to improve its facilities. I visited there, it is a wonderful school, and I look forward to him accepting my invitation.

CRANBOURNE ELECTORATE

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:45): (6299) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. How will the minister respond to the growing need for a new school in the Cranbourne community? Cranbourne is one of the fastest growing communities in the south-east. Young families with kids are growing up in the best part of the world, but their access to facilities and teachers needs to match. An equivalent of four classrooms a week is being born into the Casey LGA. A new generation of young people is appearing in my community, and it is our responsibility to ensure we keep up with this growth. I bring to the attention of the minister that there therefore is a demonstrated need for new schools to be committed to the area and that a new school would be welcomed by the community that values high-quality education. Whilst Victoria is proudly the Education State, Cranbourne is the education community. I would appreciate any further information the minister can provide on how he is responding to the need to deliver a new school in Cranbourne.

RIPON ELECTORATE

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (14:46): (6300) My question is to the Minister for Education. Is the minister planning to fund the much-needed refurbishment of Ararat College? And if not, why not? I recently met with Ellie McDougall, the principal of Ararat College, and she showed me a school that is in a rebuilding phase academically—and more power to her leadership—but the facilities are not fit for purpose. They are still stuck in the 1960s, when they were built in many cases, and they do not have the right amount of airflow and all the things that we need these days in the current circumstances we live in, let alone facilities fit for purpose. She has got a plan to refurbish the school. She needs some money, and the government should deliver it.

BURWOOD ELECTORATE

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (14:47): (6301) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Housing. Minister, can you update me on the progress of construction of the Markham estate in Ashburton, which began last year? Last sitting week an opposition member in the other place—in fact a former housing minister—stated that:

There is no point putting a very low income, probably welfare-dependent family in the best street in Brighton where the children cannot mix with others or go to the school with other children or where they do not have the same ability to have the latest in sneakers and iPhones ...

It was a shameful statement that speaks to the reflexive, casual snobbery that is alive and well in the Liberal Party. The Andrews government does not believe there is any room for this kind of class-based discrimination, and these mealy-mouthed statements should be condemned. Labor is building 12 000 new homes for Victorians—good homes in areas like Ashburton and Hawthorn—because that is what Victorians deserve, whatever their circumstances, whatever their stage of life and indeed whatever their choice of sneakers.

MELBOURNE ELECTORATE

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:48): (6302) My question is also to the Minister for Housing. Most of the public housing estates in my electorate—North Melbourne, Kensington and Carlton—have community rooms which are able to be used by residents for free or at low cost. The rooms are used

by everyone: the Mandarin-speaking group of seniors in Kensington, who use them once a week to play mahjong, the Eritrean elder women's group, after-school study support groups for kids and groups that hold weekly dinners for isolated residents. But the rooms have been closed for two years due to COVID. Residents have been forced to hold their activities in other, expensive venues. Most of the people cannot afford that, so they just stopped doing the activities altogether. Now, after increased campaigning and questioning from my office and questions from the media this week—surprise, surprise—we just heard today that the rooms will be opening in two weeks, which is good, but that is months after pubs, restaurants and theatres opened. Minister, why were these rooms closed for so long? Can you guarantee that they will remain safely open from now on? And why are public housing residents always left as the last people that the government considers?

BASS ELECTORATE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:49): (6303) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What is the status of the Bass Highway corridor planning project at Kilcunda, which seeks to add safe pedestrian crossings and a service road? The Bass Highway cuts right through the middle of this town. It is the main access road to Wonthaggi and through to Phillip Island, it is a freight route and it connects us to South Gippsland and the city. The volume of traffic continues to grow. The entire precinct is a chaotic vehicle shemozzle. It is more than a road; it is a destination with breathtaking views. The George Bass walk meets the rail trail and the iconic trestle bridge in its glory, whales swim by, surfers catch waves and people flock. The community, including the Kilcunda Community Association, have been very active—unwavering in their advocacy. The call to do something spans years—petitions presented, letters continue to flow. It has been a priority project for me prior to and since being elected. Thank you, Minister, and I look forward to your response.

SOUTH-WEST COAST ELECTORATE

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:50): (6304) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. Can the minister outline when sufficient funding will be provided to establish the Lookout residential rehabilitation centre in Warrnambool? When fully operational the Lookout will provide 20 residential rehabilitation beds to support people with drug and alcohol addictions in their recovery journey. There is an urgent need for residential drug and alcohol services in South-West Coast, and I have been advocating for the government to fund this project for too many years now as the local member. The Great South Coast was singled out in Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year infrastructure strategy, released last year, as one of the regions it recommends the government build new residential rehabilitation facilities in. The Lookout steering committee has done an amazing job, raising \$650 000 for the project. Planning is approved for the site at Dennington, and the community supports the need for the centre. The only thing needed now is for the Victorian government to provide recurrent funding. I stress the importance to the minister: the funding needs to come in this May budget.

FRANKSTON ELECTORATE

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (14:51): (6305) My constituency question is for the Minister for Community Sport, and it is regarding Frankston bowls club. I ask on behalf of our community for an update on the Frankston bowls club project, with current project plans in place which will enhance the facilities at this wonderful bowls club. The Frankston club is part of a great community, but it has also been an absolute rock during COVID. I would like to thank the executive team of the bowls club, because they are amazing. The club's plans are in place. They cater for huge growth, and they also cater for things like opportunities to host events for the Commonwealth Games as well, which is quite amazing. I support this project 100 per cent. We would like to know any information that the minister can provide us, to give us an opportunity for some positivity about this project, but also if there is an opportunity to meet with the minister in person and talk about the project.

Bills

ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

*Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:52): I must admit I have risen quicker than I anticipated rising. I am surprised that the Minister for Ports and Freight only did 2 minutes on this bill, given that before question time she was quite emphatic about how important it was to the people of her electorate and the number of trucks that go through her electorate to the port. So I must admit, on behalf of her constituents, I am disappointed that she could not actually spend a bit more time in the house talking about those particular issues.

The Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 does a number of things, but principally it is about putting in place evidentiary matters to detect people who are not wearing a seatbelt and detect people who are using their mobile phone illegally while they are driving. I must admit that on reading the second-reading speech from the minister when this legislation was introduced, the fact that 31 people died last calendar year not wearing a seatbelt, when we have had seatbelts in this state since 1970, I think it is, and there is very good evidence that seatbelts do save lives and do prevent injuries—I am bitterly disappointed that there would be that many people who lost their lives because they were not wearing a seatbelt. They may have saved their life or they may have only been injured if they had worn a seatbelt, rather than being killed. So 13 per cent of the road toll in 2021 was people who passed away while not wearing a seatbelt. There is no excuse. It just defies logic to me. There is no excuse for not wearing a seatbelt. I think for everyone now it should be a habit that as soon as you get in the car—whether you are just backing it out of the driveway, whether you are just moving it in a car park or whether you are actually going on a longer journey in a car—you should put your seatbelt on. There is just no excuse for not doing that.

The other major change is around people who are using their mobile phone illegally or their mobile device illegally. If they go under particular cameras, they will also be caught doing that and attract a very serious fine and a serious penalty with points. Again, as the ads say, ‘If you’re using your phone, if you’re playing on your phone or if you’re texting when you’re driving, you are driving blind’. I think we all, on both sides of the house here, would support the fact that we want people to be safe on the roads. We want people to get home alive. We do not want to see more trauma and more tragedy on our roads. For the families that are impacted but also for all the emergency services staff that have to attend those accidents when they do happen, they are traumatic. They are traumatic for everyone that is involved. Anything that we can do to make the roads safer and make people get home alive without accidents will make it better.

But if we are talking about road safety legislation, we are talking about road safety in general. I am disappointed that the Andrews Labor government’s solution to the conditions of roads in regional Victoria is effectively to put up a speed restriction sign. Too often in my electorate—and I am sure a lot of the other country members would say the same thing—the solution to fixing some potholes, to fixing an area in the road where the surface is breaking up, is to put up a speed restriction sign and leave it there literally for years and years and years. One of the roads that I used to come to Melbourne regularly on is just north of Kyneton on the way to Redesdale. For over two years there was an 80-kilometre restriction on that road. It has been fixed now, but for over two years there was an 80-k restriction. Where the government made a tactical error was they also put a sign up saying, ‘We will be fixing this road soon’. I must admit I probably did Facebook posts for two to three years, I think, every six months. As I came down that road I would stop and I would take a photo of ‘We will be fixing this road soon’ and actually date stamp it, because it went on and on and on. If a road needs fixing, it should be fixed as soon as possible to make sure it is safe.

I have got an issue in my electorate with the Echuca to Kyabram road, where there is a section of that road that has had 80-k signs on it for, I think, over two years now. There are dips and the asphalt is breaking up in a number of places, but it has got to the point now where most people do not even slow down because they just are used to the condition of that road. That is probably unfortunate. Where signs are put up and the road is not seriously dangerous it creates a false sense of security for those people who drive through, and when they actually find a bit of road that is seriously unsafe then they are not prepared for it because there are already signs on roads that are not damaged as much as that.

I followed a police car through that section of road a number of months ago. I do not want to dob a policeman in for speeding, but they did not slow down either, which I found interesting at that time, because they are just so used to that road having speed restrictions on it and with humps and hollows, but not necessarily as dangerous as a lot of other places. It is a very well known fact that if you actually invest in country roads you save country lives.

This legislation brings forward some enforcement measures that will make sure people wear their seatbelts and make sure people do not play on their mobile phones, because if they get caught it will be a serious fine and a serious points penalty. But the key thing the Andrews government should be doing when it comes to road safety is actually investing in country roads—not having the cuts in the road budget that we have seen, not having the roads built to a standard that means they break up almost immediately after they are made. I do not know if the member from Ripon talked about it, but a classic example would be the Western Highway out near Beaufort, where that road has been rebuilt I think three times since it was originally upgraded. There is not enough thought, planning and design specifications given to the roads that are built in Victoria to make sure they last, and I do not believe there are enough engineers within Regional Roads Victoria to make sure that those contractual arrangements are enforced and the roads are built to such a standard as would be beneficial to make it good value for the investment in roads here in Victoria.

The Liberals and Nationals will not be opposing this legislation. We believe that people should wear a seatbelt. We believe that people should not use their mobile device while they are in a car, but we do encourage the government to make sure they actually make serious investment in roads in Victoria to make them safer for regional Victorians.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (14:59): I join with my colleagues in being very pleased to speak on this rather important amendment bill. Again, it is another example of the Andrews Labor government getting on with it and getting things done. It has been an interesting debate, and I am glad to hear that those opposite are not opposing these amendments, because they are incredibly important. What I do find interesting is that yet again we are seeing a policy deficit zone where it is about attacking us and creating stories around a blanket 80-kilometre-an-hour speed restriction on arterial country roads, which in fact is not the case, and I know that people on this side of the house will not be surprised to hear that. So local roads will change at the direction or at the request of a local council, and any speed limit changes will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Speed limits are a fact of what is necessary for a road and what is necessary to keep that road safe. It is not a blanket approach, because a blanket approach is actually lazy and bad policy. So again we see cheap political pointscoring; we see those opposite who just want to create a story where none exists because they are not prepared to do the hard work, to do the policy work to come out with something concrete that helps people in their day-to-day lives. We are wanting to implement change that helps people preserve life. This is what we are focused on with these amendments. We are not interested in cheap shots that do not actually stack up.

The bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into the road toll recommended that the speed limit on all rural and regional roads undergo a review. This report was supported by Liberal members from the upper house. It was also supported by the Transport Matters Party, so it says a lot about the coalition's approach to road safety that they are prepared to play political games with people's safety; that they are prepared to talk about changes to road speed limits that are not actually on the cards, that are not

being proposed and are not being implemented—and they still have not replaced the member for Kew as a shadow road safety minister.

Now, as part of the current road maintenance blitz our crews are out in force across the road network delivering more than 1050 individual road maintenance projects on some of our busiest regional roads, including the Wimmera, Henty, South Gippsland, Sunraysia and Hume highways. In fact, Acting Speaker Taylor, with your indulgence I will read you a text message from my mum, who had to drive from Traralgon to Healesville on the weekend for a family friend's 80th birthday—and they had a very good time, thank you for asking. What she texted me was:

Did two different roads too and from Healesville ... roads were very good, do not know why the Nationals complain???

This is Mum and Dad going along the back roads of regional Victoria all the way to Healesville from Gippsland, and they had a lovely drive despite the rain and despite the bendy roads. So never let the truth get in the way of a good story. I will talk to my mum through lived, real-life experience as opposed to the imagined fantasy that we get from those opposite.

In total we are rebuilding, repairing and resurfacing more than 1400 kilometres of the state's regional road network, mowing more than 30 000 kilometres of roadside grass and replacing almost 30 000 signs. Now, 1400 kilometres of the state's regional road network—I do not know if anyone else around here is playing Wordle, not Wordle but Worldle. You get told that you are 1400, 1500, 1600 kilometres away and you are talking about the length of Europe when you are trying to find country A to country B, trying to work out where you are to work out what the map is, right? Fourteen-hundred kilometres is a lot of road. It is a lot of road. We have already completed more than 600 kilometres of this work, with the remainder to be delivered between now and June this year. Since 2014 we have rebuilt, resurfaced and repaired more than 10 400 kilometres of the state's regional roads, delivering more reliable journeys for hundreds of thousands of drivers. This is us driving more or less all the way to South America, right? This is a lot of a road.

We know that cars are an important part of our lives, and I suspect that there will be many people on both sides of the chamber who have got stories of their experience with cars, particularly from when they were younger. For me, when I was born my mum and dad put me in a bassinet and shoved me behind the bench seat—in the car well of the back seat. Then when I was big enough to sit they had a little red vinyl seat that hooked over the bench seat, so I sat in the front seat next to Mum and Dad.

Mr Battin: You're lucky. We had panel vans.

Ms WARD: I take note of the member for Gembrook's comment about having a panel van. I do feel privileged for being in the front on Mum and Dad's bench seat in the Kingswood. So we have come a long way, and technology has allowed us to come a long way when it comes to road safety. I will be happy to share a story of my first car, which was a white Mazda 1600 that Dad put some money and effort into making a roadworthy car for me. Much to Dad's unhappiness—and I do apologise to him—I managed to smash it. I managed to smash it on Research-Warrandyte Road on a wet day, going around a few bends and skidding into a tree. I have to tell you, Acting Speaker, I am incredibly glad that I had a seatbelt on, because I hate to think of the damage that I would have done to myself without one.

We know that with increased technology—we have got airbags, we have got a whole bunch of things that help us keep safe in our cars—we also have the distraction of new technology. As a government we have brought about the road safety action plan. We have made it a priority to invest \$34 million over five years to roll out new detection cameras and enforcement systems. We cannot expect the police to look into every car. We cannot expect them to see what everybody is doing in every car or to know what everybody is doing in the car, but we need people to be more responsible in their cars. If people know that there is an opportunity, when they are driving along—my kids were telling me earlier this week that they were next to someone who was sitting in her car, in the driver's seat, and

she had the phone that she had been texting with right in her lap—for these behaviours to be countered with new technologies of cameras and so forth, that can help make people feel more cautious about their behaviour. It can have people change their behaviours.

These new cameras can pick up when someone is not wearing a seatbelt or when they are using what we are calling ‘portable devices’ when driving, and of course a portable device is anything like a mobile phone, an iPad and so forth. We know that driver distraction is a huge problem and it is a dangerous problem; in fact it is a deadly problem. It is so easy for us to be distracted with our phones, with our devices. We have been trained by our phones to respond to pings, to vibrations, to think that we have got to be on call and grab anything in real time as it appears. We have become incredibly impatient with waiting to respond to any message or phone call that we get. What we know is that in around 11 per cent of road fatalities last year a contributor was people being distracted—that is 24 lives lost last year because drivers were distracted.

What I found even more surprising though was to learn what the figures were for people who were not wearing seatbelts. Thirty-one people died last year because they were not wearing seatbelts. I find that astonishing. I recognise that people can get in their car, be distracted and forget to put their seatbelt on, but there is clearly a cohort of people who are making a deliberate choice to not put a seatbelt on. Having additional penalties and overview of people to encourage them to wear seatbelts while driving is incredibly important. We saw the dramatic decrease in the road toll once we did introduce—and it was a Labor government that did this—seatbelts in this state. I cannot imagine why anyone would get into a car without wearing a seatbelt. It is clear that it is one of the most important safety measures that you can take when you get into a car.

What we are doing today is adding new sections to the Road Safety Act 1986: section 80B, dealing with the illegal use of a portable device; and sections 80C and 80D, which deal with the failure to wear a seatbelt. These are important additions to make to our legislation. While we recognise with the camera work that people are considered innocent until the camera footage has been examined, we have got the opportunity to do this. There is an evidentiary burden put on the accused to show that it was not them in the camera shot. I am very pleased that Victoria Police will have the power to immediately suspend licences or disqualify people from driving in circumstances where they have been charged with committing serious road safety offences.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (15:09): I rise on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I note that the opposition are not opposing this piece of legislation. I will continue on from where I think many have left off in discussing road safety issues, particularly around mobile phone use. Seeing how many people these days use mobile phones whilst driving, I think it is a scary, scary statistic. The statistics say one in 42 drivers uses their mobile phone while driving. These are the ones who have been caught; like all of these things, it is the ones that do not get caught that are the higher statistic. But you just drive along the freeways or the roads now and you will see people who are quite comfortable using their mobile phones; they do not have any hesitation about texting, calling, Facebooking. We have seen some horrific scenes. Many would have seen—and I am going off memory on this one, but it was on *60 Minutes*—the story around a couple of girls who were Instagramming live when they had an accident, using the mobile phone whilst driving, and one of the girls in that accident was killed.

Whilst the legislation changes everything in there, it needs to be packaged up with talking about education and how we deal with talking to, at the moment, the next generation about using mobile phones whilst driving, but also I am going to say people in this place here. I am sure, I would be confident, that almost everyone—I will not say everyone; there will be someone that has not—would have at some stage used a mobile phone whilst driving. I think it is something that needs to be educated through the system on how that impacts and impairs your driving in our state.

I am in the position now—and others in here are in a similar position, or coming up to it or have already gone past that early stage—where I have got an 18-year-old who has got their licence. I think I reminded her every day when we did her learners for the 186 hours that we were in the car why you

do not use a mobile phone whilst driving. In those conversations were things about not drink driving and about other things. But in our education it is instilled in us now about drink driving. The governments of the day from both sides have been very strict on the 'If you drink and drive, you're a bloody idiot' advertising campaign. We have had some very graphic TAC ads in the past, and it is ingrained in us.

I note the member for Eltham was talking about things that used to happen in the past. I recall being in the car with my father, who was on the wrong side of the road, and saying to him, 'You're on the wrong side of the road', to which he said, 'I was just checking to see what was coming'—because it was not a negative; it was not a massive thing within our culture to not drink drive. It is a totally different circumstance now, because education has changed, our circumstances change and people are changing—and that includes everything. If you think about smoking, all my friends smoked; nearly none of my friends smoke now. It is about education and retraining, and then that goes on to the next generation.

The reason that we are obviously not opposing this, and the reason we would support some of the areas within this bill, is the fact that changing the way that people can be caught, penalised and worked through that system also alters the way that people start to think about it when they are getting into the car and driving. When you are explaining to an 18-year-old, who up until today—and we are talking about in schools, everything—has been using their mobile phone wherever they wanted, that all of a sudden they have to put it down for, most of the time, a short period of time while driving to McDonald's to get their Big Mac at 2 in the morning because they just happen to have woken up or, in the circumstances of my daughter, who randomly found a boyfriend in Swan Hill, while on the road driving for 4½ hours, that scares you as a parent. That is why I think this sort of legislation comes back to us as well, to retrain our views, our vision of what we see as responsible driving here in this state.

Having had the pleasure of working in the role that I did in the past, knowing how many people's lives were saved through wearing seatbelts, knowing how many people's lives were changed through vehicle safety features, knowing how many lives were saved because of the road conditions, there are so many different things that have been reducing our road toll here in this state. But anything that can continue that education and make sure we can keep people safe on our roads should be supported and should be something that we work towards as a goal, which we join the government in: net zero deaths here in Victoria. It would be an awesome year if you got to wake up on 1 January and say, 'Last year we had no deaths on our roads'. Obviously we do not believe it is going to happen at the moment, but it is something we would love to wake up and see. The way we are improving that is a lot with safety. A lot of the suggestions, ideas, commitments and ways we have fixed our processes here in Victoria and made roads and cars safer have been through the Road Safety Committee, which was a committee that existed here in this Parliament for many years. That committee formed the views of how we should use seatbelts, make sure that people wear seatbelts and make them compulsory here in our state—changes that have affected and impacted on lives—and it made speed limit recommendations. It changed the way a road can be assessed for what the speed limit should be in specific areas—whether there are shops, houses, schools—and made recommendations and put them out there around speed limits around schools to make sure children are safer. There is a whole world of recommendations, a whole list of recommendations, that this committee made.

I know the member for Eltham again said 'a policy-free zone'. The first policy we would put forward I think would be one of the most important—to bring back that committee, because it had bipartisan support. It was an opportunity for this Parliament not just to talk in a room like this amongst ourselves and yell at each other and abuse each other but to bring in the best of the best. We could bring in those from the police force who have seen the outcomes of the accidents on our streets. We could bring in the experts on our country and regional roads to talk about the impact of a deteriorating road and how that affects a car, how that affects safety on our roads, what the impact is, how many accidents have been near misses, how many accidents have caused injury and how many have caused death. We could actually bring all those statistics in and do what this Parliament is supposed to do—that is, take that information in a bipartisan manner to make the best laws possible to protect Victorians on our roads.

And if the recommendation was around investing more in regional roads—which it was in the final report in 2018 by the Victorian Labor Party, who held the majority in that and supported it—then that should have happened and we should have seen more investments in our regional roads, not a cut of 25 per cent in the maintenance of regional roads here in Victoria but an actual increase to ensure that our roads were safer and that people were safer driving around all of Victoria. We have got potholes all the way through the west, and we have seen example after example with cars damaged. We have got potholes all the way through the east, where we have seen example after example of cars that are damaged. Each of those is potentially coming very close to an accident.

I note there was a recommendation—and I am not saying this would happen across Victoria; I am not going to put that out there at all—and I know some have mentioned it, about making blankets of 80-kilometre speed limits across the whole state. However, what I will say is this government's reaction to the poor quality of roads, particularly through regional Victoria, has been to reduce the speed limit. In the areas where the road is unsafe they have continued to reduce the speed limit, and I will use Koo Wee Rup Road as an example down in my electorate—or just outside my electorate, but many in my electorate use it. The government continue to reduce the speed limit rather than fix the actual problem of the quality of that road, which is used by thousands of people these days. Not that long ago probably the most traffic Koo Wee Rup Road had would have been when we had the trade on for the cattle auctions down the road and the trucks were going up and down and farmers would come into town to buy their cattle. It has changed. If you go to Pakenham now, thousands upon thousands of people live in that area. Thousands of people use these roads to go to and from work. You change a road's perspective when you put a McDonald's on the road—there is a McDonald's on the road. We now have so many people using those roads with major trucks and infrastructure, and it is a transport hub to make sure people can get from the areas in industrial Pakenham onto the freeway or heading down through to Hastings, to Gippsland or to the city. This road has been neglected for so long, and unfortunately we have seen deaths on that road.

I get frustrated that a commitment was made in 2018 that that road would have the funding to be fixed, but then that funding was cut. The government cut it only to recently reannounce that they are going to be committing to that funding again under a new plan under a new model to see that road fixed for the future. It should have been fixed in the past, and we would not have had the deaths that we have had there out in Pakenham in the past two years. It disappointed me most when the government came out and said their fix for that road at the moment is to reduce the speed limit. If we are going to be serious about road safety, if we are going to be serious about saving lives and reducing deaths in Victoria, then we have to be serious that we take all information on board, that we analyse it the best we can and we work in a bipartisan way, as we have in road safety for many, many years. My recommendation to the government on that, as we are not opposed to this bill, is to bring back the Road Safety Committee. If they bring that back, we will guarantee from this side we will work with them to ensure we try and reach our goal of no deaths on Victorian roads.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (15:19): It is a pleasure to speak on this bill for many reasons but primarily because I do not think any government in Victoria has done more than our government to improve road safety both in a legislative sense and in an investment sense. Obviously this bill is in relation to several key features, including facilitating the enforcement of distracted driving and seatbelt-wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras and adding it to the list of serious offences that trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986, and a range of other things, including the Transport Accident Commission, which were in the minister's second-reading speech. But this bill is fundamentally about every effort to improve road safety. As I said at the outset, that is legislative but fundamentally it is also about investment. The other side can talk about re-establishing committees and a range of other things, anything but actually putting your money where your values are and making the investments and the commitments needed to improve road safety for all Victorians. We have a huge record in that regard. It is not often highlighted, but before we came to office there were 59 dangerous level crossings. Not 56, 57 or 58 but now all 59 have been removed, and we are well on our way to

removing 85 under a very competent and very energetic minister. Obviously this was a big, big commitment by the Premier in 2014. It was an iconic part of our brand and our policy commitment to the Victorian people. That is one of the biggest parts of our practical commitment to road safety.

What is the commitment of those opposite to road safety? Is it a Jaguar through your front door? What is the commitment to road safety by those on the other side other than establishing a committee? Fundamentally the Liberal-National parties have failed in relation to investment in road upgrades, in road safety. Not only have they failed on any benchmark but they have failed in relation to our historic high benchmark, our unprecedented historic investment. And I do not need to remind anyone on this side of the house, as some of the ministers did in question time today, that that commitment is not at all matched by the federal Liberal Party, not at all matched by the federal government. They are happy to fund car parks, pork-barrelling as that is. They are happy to fund a whole bunch of other things, but not life-saving road infrastructure.

There is a bunch of different ways you can measure this, but 6 per cent of all new federal infrastructure money came to Victoria—6 per cent. We have 26 per cent of Australia's population. Depending on what snapshot you look at, if you extend it out to a five-year outlook, we are still well under, about 4 or 5 per cent under our proportion of the population in terms of spend on infrastructure by the commonwealth government. And if you look at the last couple of years, we are about 17 per cent, so a much bigger gap. While I am talking about the whole of Victoria, by 2029 Melbourne will be the biggest city in Australia. What do those opposite have to say about this? What does the opposition in the Victorian Parliament—the same political colour as the government, hopefully soon to be the opposition, in Canberra—have to say about it? Absolutely nothing. They are silently endorsing the restrictions on resources to Victorians in infrastructure, as they were during the pandemic on a whole range of fronts—on JobKeeper, on business supports and everything else. But we will not let that silence, we will not let that act of treachery by the commonwealth government—we have got a Treasurer from Victoria but he is not for Victoria, as the Premier often says—we will not let that overt political ideology where they just hate Victorians distract us from what we are doing.

I could go into a lot of other areas about our investment in roads, both country roads and suburban roads—the new package—and the new way of funding suburban road upgrades, a whole range of other areas, not least of which is enormous expenditure on public transport, which gets cars off the roads. I could go on about that, but I will go on to my favourite topic, level crossing removals. Who would have thought that in 7½ years you could achieve so, so many of them? Kororoit Creek Road, Williamstown North—level crossing removed. On the Belgrave line, Scoresby Road, Bayswater—level crossing removed. On the Belgrave and Lilydale lines, Blackburn Road, Blackburn—level crossing removed. Heatherdale Road, Mitcham—level crossing removed. Can I just remind the house that too many people have died at level crossings, far too many people, both in terms of pedestrians and drivers. On the Craigieburn line, the Buckley Street, Essendon, level crossing has been removed. On the Cranbourne line, Abbots Road, Dandenong South—everybody now—level crossing removed.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: I should say 'Gone', member for Cranbourne. Evans Road, Lyndhurst—the level crossing there is gone, as the member for Cranbourne said. Greens Road, Dandenong South—level crossing gone. Thompson Road, Lyndhurst—level crossing gone. It is extraordinary, the commitment, the perseverance, the discipline and the absolutely judicious way we approached this. Nothing will get in our way of saving lives on Victorian roads, running more trains and upgrading the infrastructure for generations to come.

On the Cranbourne-Pakenham line—my favourite line in Melbourne—the Centre Road, Clayton, level crossing is gone. The Chandler Road, Noble Park, level crossing is gone. The Clayton Road, Clayton, level crossing is gone. Corrigan Road, Noble Park—level crossing gone. The Grange Road, Carnegie, level crossing is gone, again in my patch. At Heatherton Road, Noble Park—I think in the Premier's patch or the Minister for Racing's patch—the level crossing is gone. Koornang Road in Carnegie—in

my patch again—the level crossing is gone. I could go on; I could go on for hours. That is the commitment and the work that we have put in. Murrumbeena Road, Murrumbeena, level crossing—

A member interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Gone. Thank you, member for—

A member: You have got one friend.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Poath Road, Hughesdale—level crossing gone. I have got to say the amount of private sector investment that has gone into some of these areas once the government has gone in and upgraded the infrastructure is extraordinary. Literally new bars and businesses have opened up—new restaurants. It is a far easier proposition for the private sector to invest when the public sector has come in. Frankston line—another excellent line that I sometimes use through Ormond station. Argyle Avenue, Chelsea—level crossing gone. Balcombe Road, Mentone—level crossing gone. Bondi Road, Bonbeach—level crossing gone. Centre Road, Bentleigh—level crossing gone. In fact that was one of the first ones because of the hard work and commitment of my friend the member for Bentleigh. Charman and Park roads, Bentleigh—level crossing gone. Chelsea Road, Chelsea—level crossing gone. I am going to have to move for an extension of time. Edithvale Road, Edithvale, level crossing—

A member: Please don't.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: gone. Eel Race Road, Carrum—level crossing gone. Lochiel Avenue, Edithvale—level crossing gone. Mascot Avenue, Bonbeach—level crossing gone. McKinnon Road, McKinnon—level crossing gone. North Road, Ormond—level crossing gone. The Parkers Road, Parkdale, level crossing is in the planning stage right now. The Seaford Road, Seaford, level crossing is gone. Skye and Overton roads, Frankston—level crossing gone. Station Street, Carrum—level crossing gone. Swanpool Avenue, Chelsea, level crossing—

A member: Gone.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: On the Geelong-Ballarat line, Mount Derrimut Road, Deer Park, is in the planning stage. On the Glen Waverley line, the Burke Road, Glen Iris, level crossing is gone. Toorak Road, Kooyong—level crossing gone. Grange Road, Alphington—level crossing removed.

Ms Theophanous interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Gone, that is right, member for Northcote. Lower Plenty Road, Rosanna—level crossing gone. Manchester Road, Mooroolbark—level crossing gone. Maroondah Highway, Lilydale—level crossing gone. On the Mernda line, the High Street, Reservoir, level crossing is gone. On the Pakenham line again, Cardinia Road, Pakenham—level crossing gone. Clyde Road, Berwick—level crossing gone. Hallam Road, Hallam—level crossing gone. South Gippsland Highway, Dandenong South—level crossing gone. Furlong Road, St Albans—level crossing gone. Holden Road, Calder Park, is in the planning stages. And on the Upfield line, the Bell Street, Coburg, level crossing is gone. That is just one part of our agenda for road safety in this government, and it took me almost a full contribution just to get through one part. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:29): Like all Victorians, I want a safer road network. I want to know that my family, my friends and my community are on safe roads, so the opposition is essentially supporting the government's position on the road safety legislation. This piece of legislation is seeking to tighten up some loopholes in legislation. It is trying to support the TAC to be a better carer of people involved in road trauma. But like so many things this government does, I call into question the rhetoric. In particular I refer to the second-reading speech of the minister where it talks about the grand ambition of this legislation: that this is going to help reduce our road toll by 50 per cent.

Now, as a tireless country road safety campaigner that I feel I have been over my six-year journey in this Parliament, the rhetoric is beyond belief. The facts simply do not stack up. This government's commitment to truly making roads safer and more accessible for Victorians just simply is not true.

And you cannot go any further than just the bland statistics, the basic statistics, that this government produces. By the TAC road accident toll figures, in 2018, a full two years before the pandemic, we had a road toll down to 213 souls. Since that time this state has committed in excess of \$1 billion to wire rope barriers. We heard information from this government that it was going to make roads safer. We heard information from the Monash research institute about this investment in a cobweb of wires along country roads, put out and inconceivably constructed in areas that clearly made no sense to the travelling public or to Victorians at large, this massive investment.

What has happened to the road toll since then? Well, the following year it was 266. It increased. The following year, just before the height of the pandemic, it actually came down to 211. Then in the two years of the pandemic there was up to 35 per cent less traffic on our roads, Victorians in Melbourne were not allowed to travel into country Victoria or anywhere where the deaths occur and in some months of the year there was 60 per cent, or more, less traffic. In fact the police kept people locked in their homes, essentially. The government should have had record lows. But what did we see happen? The first year of the pandemic the road toll went up to 232. The following year it increased again. In fact this year we are, year to date, 7.8 per cent up on the year before. At this rate we are going to have a death toll in Victoria approaching 250 or greater, which is the sort of toll we have not seen for a long time in Victoria, and that is after this government's alleged commitment to road safety, its commitment of taxpayer funds of \$1 billion.

What are country Victorians saying, the people that use the roads? They are saying, 'A safe road is a road with a good surface. A safe road is a road that's got clear run-offs on the side of it. A safe road doesn't have massive trees and branches hanging over it'. I mean, if you go on the Princes Highway West at the moment, as I do every week when I come down to Parliament, in the centre median of this road that technically has not even been officially opened by this government yet, because I suspect it is so embarrassed by the quality and structure of this wire rope cobbled freeway that is already having to be resurfaced—the Minister for Roads and Road Safety has not even been down to it to cut a ribbon—there is a sea of massive dead trees in the middle of it. Any one of those trees could fall at any moment, in any gust of wind, with any of the storms that we have been encountering, onto the road and absolutely take some innocent motorist's life, some innocent country Victorian's life, because the road simply is not being maintained.

So it is all very well for the minister to gladly get up before the Parliament and tell us how we are now going to have some new technology employed that will see the government able to essentially fine more people for not wearing seatbelts and fine more people for talking on their mobile phones. While no-one is going to disagree with that, it is seen as a little bit of a cheap shot to think of more ways to tax people and fine people for road safety. But when it comes to actually putting some money into where the community wants it, people want to see money spent on roads that have got holes so big in them you literally can go fishing. We are talking about roads where the edges are so soft, so worn away, so elongated. There are no longer white lines marking the edges of some of our most major roads, where we have massive potential tourist traffic. Along the Great Ocean Road and certainly in my electorate in the Otway hinterlands are some very popular and at times very busy roads that regularly spend months of the year closed down to one lane because there has been a road slip or the drainage has not been maintained.

This is basic road safety that this legislation does not address. It is almost laughable that the minister can claim that fining more people for no seatbelts and fining more people for being on their mobile phones is going to cut this road toll down, because we know over the last five or six years they have spent a billion dollars on one particular technology which they have, in expensive TV advertisements which I am unable to get FOI information on because the government is keeping secret how much they have spent on road safety ads. They have spent a pot or so. We know it is a lot of money, and yet what has happened? The road toll has increased so much that we are looking at a 15 per cent increase in deaths on our roads over the last five years in a period when there was up to 60 per cent less traffic on the road. It makes us wonder how actually committed to safe Victorian roads this government is.

We heard previous government speakers talking about their level crossing removals. Well, look, if only this government had put that much effort into just making straight roads safe and roads in the country safe, and if roads that have got huge overhanging trees, built-up brush and built-up debris on the side could just be cleared and maintained. Most importantly, and everyone in country Victoria will tell you this, you just need to get the drainage right on roads so every time it rains a road does not disappear underwater and every time it rains roads are not undermined and culverts are not washed away. It is just basic infrastructure that seems lost to this government—absolutely lost.

This legislation also seeks to strengthen and improve the way the TAC deals with victims of road trauma and road accidents. I have been working for quite some time with a constituent in my electorate, who just prior to the COVID pandemic suffered great pain and discomfort and quite a lot of injuries from a road accident. Now, that is fine. The system is supposed to stand up for him, but there are actually limits on the TAC system. You only get the support for three years, until you have had your corrective surgery. But this government has failed to correct that policy, when for two years they have shut down elective surgery. I have got constituents who have been desperate for surgery, desperate to get their lives back, desperate to get back on the road and operating in a functional way, but they are unable to. They are unable to operate because this government—

Ms Settle: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, on relevance, I am not sure what elective surgery has to do with the road legislation before us.

Mr RIORDAN: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, elective surgery has everything to do with this, because you cannot fix most of the ills of a traffic accident without surgery, and the surgery can often mean spinal surgery, leg surgery, hip surgery or arm surgery. It is very important.

Ms Settle: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, road trauma is not elective surgery but rather emergency service surgery. I find it peculiar that elective surgery should be acquainted with trauma and road trauma.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): I am ready to rule on the point of order. I uphold the point of order. The member to continue in the context of the debate on the bill.

Mr RIORDAN: I would just point out to the member for Buninyong that if she seriously thinks that someone who has been in a massive road trauma accident only goes to hospital once, then that actually typifies the ignorance that this government has towards the needs—

Ms Settle: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is disrespecting the Chair's ruling.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): I have ruled on the point of order. The member for Polwarth to continue on the bill.

Mr RIORDAN: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Unfortunately people are not magically cured with one ambulance ride after road trauma. They in fact can spend many months if not years in surgery being repaired from the damage. When you have not been able to get surgery for two years, you very much suffer from that.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (15:39): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Of course the objective of this bill is really to make sure that we can cut the road toll by 50 per cent by 2030. I just want to take a moment to pause when we think about that. The use of the word 'road toll' perhaps belies the pain and agony that these road traumas can cause. I think it is well for everyone in this house to remember that the toll is in fact a life. It is a family member, it is a partner, a husband, a friend. We would all do well to remember that.

This legislation in particular is looking at distracted-driving and seatbelt-wearing offences. The distracted driving—I am the mother of two boys. They are 20 and 18. The 20-year-old is driving; the 18-year-old is not yet. It was pretty terrifying watching them drive off on their own for the first time, and sadly, young men are too often represented in statistics around road trauma. So anything we can

do that might in some way decrease those numbers—the numbers of people who lose their lives—is incredibly important.

We know that people are not wearing seatbelts. The seatbelt laws came into effect in 1970. Interestingly enough, I am old enough to remember the world before seatbelt laws. My mother talks about trying to do the right thing. I do not know if anyone else in the house remembers those sorts of bouncy things that we put babies into. My mother, in trying to do the right thing, used to slip the wire bit into the front seat between the seat and the back to try and secure me in a car. That fills me with horror as a mother to imagine that now, but I know that my mother was doing it with the absolute best intent.

I find it pretty extraordinary that 50 years on there are people that are still losing their lives from not wearing their seatbelt. In 2021, 31 people died not wearing a seatbelt. On average, 23 people a year are killed not wearing a seatbelt, and rather distressingly for me, 69 per cent of those are on regional roads. There has been lots of research done by the TAC into why people do not use seatbelts, and I think it is that thing, you know, it is just a short journey, you will not get caught. Sadly, too many people are hopping into their cars on regional roads and not buckling up. There was a massive campaign in 1969, Declare War on 1034—1034 was the road toll back in 1969. A year after that campaign was launched it did, sadly, increase to 1061, but again let us not call them road tolls. Let us call them what they are, which is people who have lost their lives on the roads.

The member for Polwarth sort of seemed to take up this line about ‘All the government is doing here is fining, fining, fining’. This seems to be something that is coming from the other side. It is really important to understand that what this is about is trying to change behaviour, and sadly, fining is a way to make people change their behaviour. I did tell a story in this house recently about my 20-year-old parking on a clearway and getting a \$300 fine. Well, he has never, ever done that again and he will not, because he learned from that fine. I refused to pay it and made him pay it. So fines really do have an impact, particularly on that age group.

The seatbelt enforcement is an incredibly important part of this—and of course mobile phones. The world continues to change and we here in this place have as one of our responsibilities to make sure that legislation keeps up with change. We cannot just rest on our laurels and think that everything has been done that needs to be done. Mobile phones came along and they have created some enormous distraction for drivers. What is happening in this bill really is around allowing for the use of cameras to identify people that are using their mobile phones or not wearing their seatbelts to fine them to change that behaviour, so it is worth remembering that consequential change.

When we had a briefing, we had a long discussion around this bill, and I know that a lot of people use their phones these days for Google Maps. Certainly I do. It was something that came to light in conversations around this bill. But it is really around touching your phone. There is nothing to stop you from having your phone direct you, but it is really, really important to have that phone in a mount. What you cannot do is touch that phone. Do not leave that phone in your lap. Do not touch that phone. Put it in a mount and then by all means use it. I rely on Google Maps to get home every week after Parliament, and she takes me on many weird and wonderful ways. I have discovered parts of Melbourne I never knew existed. But it is important to not touch them; that is the really important thing to remember about it.

We have committed approximately \$34 million over five years to roll out these cameras, and it is important to know that initially there will not be fines in the first three months. This is really about trying to change behaviours. It is about giving people a chance to understand how dangerous this activity is and to change their behaviours, so there will be a brief period where those fines will not be issued and people will be sent warning letters. I hope that people take on board that warning.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre estimated that a mobile phone enforcement camera program could prevent 95 casualty crashes a year. I was distressed to hear the member for Polwarth sort of try and diminish this bill as just revenue collection, some way to get fines, when indeed august bodies

like the Monash University Accident Research Centre are telling us that it has the potential to save 95 lives in a year—casualties of 95 crashes a year. This is not about revenue collection, and indeed in the first three months there will not be revenue collection. This is about trying to change behaviour. It is extraordinary when you look at the seatbelt campaigns. You know, in the 1970s nobody wore seatbelts. I would not dream of getting in a car without putting on a seatbelt now. It is so automatic. It is as automatic as turning the car on. We really need to make sure that not using your mobile phone, not falling prey to distractions as a driver, becomes just as normalised as seatbelt wearing is to all of us.

This government obviously has been very, very committed in this space, and in fact just today the 2022 TAC community road safety grants have been announced as beginning. This government is giving community groups across Victoria the chance to receive grants of up to \$30 000 to address local road safety issues. Applications for the 2022 TAC community safety program are now open and close on 2 May. This is a really important way of trying to address some of these issues, because of course communities know best. Localised communities will know what the local road safety issues are and can get a grant and try and make a change and really help us to get on our road to zero.

‘Road to zero’ is not just one of those phrases that should be thrown around. As I say, it is very much somebody’s life. It is interesting, because the word ‘toll’ sounds like a price that has to be paid, but we do not have to pay the price. We do not have to lose lives if we can encourage people to think before they take part in any sort of risky behaviours, like using their mobile phones. So let us not pussyfoot around this and use words like ‘toll’; let us talk about life saving. This bill at its heart aims to save lives through really making people aware and trying to change behaviour around distracted driving. As a mother of two young men that are now on the road I am delighted that this government continues to make roads a safer place for all Victorians, and I commend this bill to the house.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (15:49): I am delighted to rise to make a contribution on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and as we have heard from earlier speakers this bill seeks to enable better enforcement regarding distracted drivers and non-seatbelt-wearing motorists by giving formal status to images from new types of road safety cameras. I think this is a step forward, particularly on the seatbelt side of things. I am amazed that people still continue to not wear seatbelts, but anyway that is another story. We are not amazed that there are a lot of people using their mobile phones while they are driving. The bill will also add to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986. The bill will also alter the transport accident scheme by making various amendments to the Transport Accident Act 1986.

By way of background, recently the government has been conducting trials of this new technology to detect usage of mobile phones and people touching their mobile phone as they are driving along. As we have heard from others, sometimes it is for Google Maps, sometimes it is for texting and other reasons, but we all know it should not be occurring. It is certainly making our roads far more unsafe. And of course there is the incorrect usage of seatbelts. The trial ran for three months and scanned over 600 000 motorists. This three-month trial found one in 42 to be using their mobile phone, and that is a number that we all know is way too high. As a result of the trial the government is seeking to provide evidential status to images from the new camera and penalise motorists from 2023. We have spoken about fines, but it is still only one way of trying to change attitudes in motorists. Yes, it does work in some ways, but the big stick is not always the way. There are other ways that we can improve safety on our roads.

This forms part of the government’s road strategy to reduce the road toll that certainly has escalated under this government. When motorists are identified by this technology with mobile phone usage or incorrect seatbelt use it will go to a trained individual—I am pleased to see there will be proper checks and balances in place—for verification as a protection against technological error. Do not get me wrong: on this side of the house we do support new technology and ways to make roads safer, but fining people is not the only method to try and make sure that people start to do the right thing.

We have seen in regional Victoria the massive increases in wire rope barriers, for example, which I have spoken about in this house when we talk about safety barriers. For some, and particularly motorcycle riders, it is actually more dangerous on some of our roads than it previously was. As a keen motorcycle rider myself, I know firsthand that the risks of severe injury or death have increased for motorcyclists since the Labor government rolled out hand over fist some of these wire rope barriers. There are places where they should exist and do exist and are in a great spot, but there has been an excessive amount of wire rope barriers that have been rolled out, and as I said, for motorcyclists it has made it less safe. We cannot keep hearing this spin about how we want to make our roads safer and all these ideas that the government have when at the same time they are making it unsafe for particular users of the road—as I highlighted, motorcyclists. So in some ways it is misleading to say that we are making all our roads safer. We are not. The government stands in this place and says it is throwing this amount of money at this or that amount of money at that. Now, just because you are throwing a heap of money at something—or Victorian taxpayer money at something—does not mean you are solving the problem. In some cases, as I said, it is making it worse.

This bill adds to the list of serious offences for which VicPol may trigger on-the-spot fines and licence suspensions, which also allows more consistency in the legislation. Previously individuals involved in hit-and-run incidents could have their licence revoked on the spot by Victoria Police. The Transport Accident Act has been amended to ensure drivers convicted of manslaughter, murder or culpable driving will not be able to receive death benefits if they survive and are charged with an offence mentioned.

My understanding of this bill also is that currently cyclists who are injured by a car door opened by a driver are covered by the TAC but cyclists injured by a car door opened by a non-driver are not covered. That is my reading of the bill. I know this firsthand, as many nights I have cycled home from this place over the many years only to find a taxi roaring to a screaming halt in front of me and people diving out of every door possible without looking at who is coming along behind. It is quite an interesting aspect at 11 o'clock at night trying to get out of the way of people who are bailing out of a taxi, and this legislation, if my reading of it is correct, will actually support cyclists, particularly if they have been car doored by somebody who is not the driver.

I also want to touch on the funding that this government cut, the country roads and bridges funding, when they came to power—again, funding that is absolutely critical in our regional areas, on our regional roads. Country roads and bridges funding was a great opportunity for local councils to really dip in and fix roads and bridges that their current budget, their roads budget, does not allow them to fix, because many of our local authorities have many thousands, tens of thousands, of kilometres of roads. That Country Roads and Bridges Fund was a great pool for them and a resource to draw on to fix problem areas that were just out of reach for a local government authority, and it is really disappointing that taking that country roads and bridges funding away has clearly contributed to making our roads more unsafe. Certainly a massive cut by the Labor government to road maintenance funding is completely obvious when you come to areas like the Ovens Valley and you see some of the roads that we drive on. In fact some of our roads have had a speed limits put in place—80 kilometres—because the government for Melbourne has cut that road maintenance budget and there just are not the funds to go ahead and fix that road when that road is unsafe. We say the budget should be restored and those roads should be fixed—not just a measure of cutting it back to 80 kilometres an hour.

Of course I want to raise the government's lack of commitment to the former Road Safety Committee. Every time this Labor government comes to power they abolish the Road Safety Committee, which was a bipartisan opportunity to genuinely work with both sides of the house to improve road safety. The government cannot claim to be committed to road safety, but it is committed to more spin and more TV ads about how much taxpayer funds are being spent—not to how or if the problem is being solved.

Within the bill, clauses 3 to 5 allow for new camera technology to receive evidentiary status, clauses 6 and 7 are about the changes to offences for which on-the-spot licence disqualification may be conducted by senior police officers and clauses 21 to 23 address inconsistencies in weekly benefits in

the rare cases where an individual receiving benefits is involved in a secondary accident. Now, all of those are significant and important in this bill, but again, we cannot stand in this place and say, 'We're fixing the problem', 'We're throwing X amount of dollars', 'We're building wire rope barriers', 'We're putting in safety cameras' or 'We're going to fine people more'—the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Let us see what happens to our road toll as we move towards Easter and the school holidays. Our regional roads will be full of metropolitan drivers, and we welcome them with open arms to come to our regions and enjoy what we have on offer, whether it is in the north up in my patch in the Ovens Valley or whether it is down in the Western District or over in Gippsland where they get to enjoy what we have on offer. We encourage them to come, but at the end of the day we need to keep our roads safe and keep investing in our roads to make sure that they are safe for those people who travel on those roads. And I note the Minister for Roads and Road Safety said in this place that Victoria has the smoothest roads in the country. Well, clearly he has not travelled along the Great Alpine Road or the Murray Valley Highway or the Benalla-Tocumwal Road or even the Wangaratta-Whitfield Road. As I said, as we head towards the school holidays it is really important that we keep working towards methods that will actually keep the road toll down, not just saying, 'We're spending this and doing that, and that'll do'—that is just a bandaid effect. With those comments I want to commend this bill to the house and hope that into the future we get some genuine outcomes on road safety.

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:58): I am grateful to have the chance today to contribute to the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I have to admit I was steeling myself a little bit for this debate; on a topic like road safety there are always so many heartbreaking personal stories. Every life lost on our roads is a tragedy. Every life lost leaves behind a family, children, parents, partners and workmates whose lives will forever be impacted by grief. Every serious injury represents a life transformed, sometimes beyond recognition, by disability and trauma.

Victoria has led the nation and indeed the globe when it comes to road safety. We were the first state in the world to introduce mandatory seatbelts in 1970, and we led Australia in legislating random breath testing in 1978 and the introduction of speed cameras in 1986, when I was born. Many of our hard-hitting prevention initiatives have been adopted internationally. As a result, over the decades we have made our roads safer for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and seen a substantive reduction in lives cut tragically short. However, the heartbreaking reality is that we continue to count the road toll each year—last year that was 232 people who did not come home. For this government there is no number of lives lost on our roads that would or can be acceptable. It is why we must always and continuously work towards zero.

Here in Victoria we have a road safety strategy which aims to reduce the road toll by 50 per cent by 2030 and that puts us on the path to eliminating road deaths by 2050. The amendments contained in this bill contribute to this important work. Improving road safety is a complex job. It involves all levels of government, multiple agencies and departments, and there are a number of interconnecting and powerful tools that we can leverage as a government to reduce the road toll and support Victorians impacted by road incidents. At the heart of our work is promoting a culture of safe road usage through our licensing system and education initiatives.

Ultimately we each have a responsibility when we get behind the wheel to follow road rules and drive to the conditions. In those split-second decisions we need people to do the right thing. But sometimes they do not, and we know that. In 2021, 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt. In 2020 an investigation found one in 42 drivers to be illegally using their mobile phones while driving, with the real number expected to be much higher. Driver distraction is said to account for about 24 lives lost each year and over 400 serious injuries. These numbers are substantial. What they represent in terms of lives, families and trauma cannot even be quantified. Those few moments with our attention away from the road can have devastating consequences. It is why our road rules system and its enforcement are life-saving aspects of our work to end road deaths, and it is why this bill makes amendments to improve compliance.

The bill makes changes to support the use of new automated detection cameras which can detect drivers using mobile phones or not wearing seatbelts. Our government has already committed around \$34 million over five years to roll out these cameras, and these legislative reforms mean that the images they collect can be used as evidence. The logic behind this is nothing new. Automated camera-based enforcement, in conjunction with police enforcement, is already working in Victoria to address other high-risk behaviour, like speeding and red light running. The data shows that 99 per cent of people passing road safety cameras do follow the road rules and that the cameras do deter dangerous driving. In terms of cameras detecting mobile phone and seatbelt use, the Monash University Accident Research Centre has estimated they could prevent 95 casualty crashes per year. That is 95 lives saved, 95 families that do not have to suffer the horror of their loved one not coming home. Cameras work.

Any argument that this is just a revenue-raising exercise not only is deeply cynical but totally misses the point. Fines are an effective deterrent, and people are only fined if they are breaking the law and putting people at risk. As with other camera-detected road safety offences, drivers will have options to seek a review of any fine issued by the new cameras. We will also be partnering with the TAC on community awareness campaigns, and the first three months of operation will see warning letters sent to people caught on camera. The bill also improves safety on our roads by addressing gaps in the current legislation, adding hit-and-run and other serious offences to the list of offences that may trigger immediate licence suspension or disqualification.

Road safety is something that my community are very conscious of. In the inner north our suburbs are a mix of local streets, cycling paths, two train lines, two tramlines, buses and major arterials into and out of the city. There are significant needs in terms of balancing the various users of our roads and paths, and scarcely a week goes by when my office is not contacted about things like speed limits, maintenance, pedestrian crossings, footpaths, intersections and parking. Many of these issues come under the responsibility of local government, and several have been points of contention between me and council as I have sought to encourage them to listen and to act on the feedback of residents. It does not always end up that way.

Since coming into government in 2014 this government has invested more than \$34 billion to build new roads and make our existing roads safer, as well as \$1.7 billion in road safety initiatives. Locally that includes our glorious Chandler Highway bridge, which now extends majestically over the Yarra, with six lanes instead of two, giving relief, safety and precious time back to the 44 000 drivers crossing it every day. Up in Thornbury we have seen critical improvements in pedestrian safety along Normanby Avenue, with new solar-powered electronic speed signs which flash during peak school hours, reminding drivers to slow down. In Alphington and Fairfield there are big improvements to cycling infrastructure. Our trial bike lanes on Heidelberg Road are in place, and I look forward to hearing more feedback and data about them; VicRoads has installed new wayfinding signage and road markings around St Georges Road, Station Street and Victoria Road; and we are in the process of finally connecting Alphington to the Darebin Yarra Trail.

When it comes to road safety my philosophy is that locals know best. They use our roads daily and they know where the pinch points are. I have been extremely grateful to be able to work closely with many residents in my community to identify and secure improvements. Recently this included the Bell Street bridge in Coburg. Over the past year I have been working with locals to raise awareness of the safety risks to road users and pedestrians along this bridge and its surrounds. The Bell Street bridge precinct is a high traffic area with six lanes of arterial road incorporating two intersections at Elizabeth and Nicholson streets, slip lanes, a tram terminal and a crossing bridge. There are narrow footpaths, sloped guttering, uneven surfaces and a lack of barriers separating pedestrians and vehicles—all contributing to a heightened sense of risk. A local petition calling for a safety review has garnered over 1300 signatures, and this year residents and I were successful in pushing for some really important initial safety improvements. This includes dragon's teeth markings and slow-down line markings to provide visual cues to drivers to slow down and keep to the centre of the lanes. We have also installed new pedestrian warning signs on approach to let people know this area requires high alert for motorists.

There is more to do in this precinct to make it modern and accessible, and last month I brought the Minister for Roads and Road Safety out to take a look himself. I am looking forward to building on our collective efforts here.

Of course we cannot speak about road safety without reference to our extraordinary program of level crossing removals. This has been a massive success in Grange Road in Alphington, and we have four more underway in Preston that will make our roads, footpaths and cycling paths safe and accessible for everyone. I look forward to supporting even more dangerous level crossings being removed in Northcote.

Before I close I would like to turn just to the final amendments in this bill, namely improvements to the TAC system to better support Victorians when they and their families have been in an accident. Victoria's transport accident insurance scheme already provides world-leading care and support to victims of road trauma, but those with lived experience have identified ways we can improve the system, and we have listened. In addition to some changes to the administration of the scheme, the bill addresses some anomalies and inequalities. It increases the age of a dependent child from 16 to 18, expands the definition of 'immediate family' to include grandchildren and provides children who lose both parents in one accident the same compensation as those who lose them in separate accidents. It also ensures those who have done the wrong thing do not derive benefit from their actions, so someone who has been convicted of murder, manslaughter, culpable or dangerous driving causing death or child homicide cannot access dependency benefits or compensation. We are also better protecting Victorians by increasing the level of deemed lost earnings for older workers and those whose preaccident earnings capacity cannot be determined. This is an important bill that will save lives and make our roads safer for everyone. I commend the bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:08): This is a bill about road safety, but if we really want to talk about road safety, we need to talk about the elephant in the room—the deteriorating, dangerous condition of rural and regional roads. Everyone I speak to in South-West Coast, whether it is local councils, farmers, residents, bus drivers, truck drivers or grey nomads, all say the same thing: 'Fix our roads and fix them properly'.

Road safety is of critical importance, and this bill does a number of things that no-one would argue with. Distracted drivers cause accidents. People not wearing seatbelts—astounding. I do not think anyone in this house has said anything different. It is just such an automatic thing to do when you get into a car to put your seatbelt on. I still do it even if I am in a paddock, because it is just what I have done every time I get into a car. So it is good to see that we have a bill in the house that will hopefully improve the road safety issues, but I totally think we are ignoring some of the issues here.

Some of the evidence does say that road safety is not around roads being bad, but I struggle to believe that. When I talk to the Australian Road Research Board, they talk to me about how we assess accidents and the ways our police have to assess a scene. It is not actually capturing the information that we do need to be able to determine an incident. If you have travelled on the country roads, like I do obviously every day, you have seen the crumbling shoulders and you have seen the size of the potholes. It is no wonder that if you hit a pothole doing 100 kilometres per hour, which is the road speed, it does distract you; it does make you get very nervous—you can see somebody having an accident 100 metres down the road because they have lost control of the car. But that is not how we assess an accident scene. We do not go back 100 metres and say, 'That pothole, that crumbling shoulder, that lack of white lines is probably what resulted in the situation of someone being severely injured or even dying'. So I think road safety is important, obviously, but road surfaces cannot be ignored. My one plea to the government, through the Chair, is that in the May budget decent funding gets put into regional roads so that the roads can be fixed properly, once, so we do not have to go back weeks later—weeks is exactly what we see, actually; sometimes months—and have to fix the same bit of road. It is a waste of taxpayers money.

You know, if you look at the Auditor-General's report of 2017, they said that in five years time 90-something per cent, I think it was, of the roads in the regions will be in a poor condition. Well, we are pretty much there now, and that is because there are no processes in place. There is no supervision of the works. There is no accountability. There is no monitoring of the works. Now, it is not that hard to build a road. We have got the technology. They do it in South Australia, they do it in the Northern Territory, they do it in Germany. We can do it in Victoria, but we are not.

South-west Victorians, along with all regional Victorians, are sick to death of seeing the money that goes into the city to build tunnels and to build infrastructure—the waste of those projects when they go over budget. The wasted dollars that we are seeing and the over budget amounts going into Melbourne projects is \$24 billion. When regional Victorians see that they just think, 'How many roads could have been done well, once, with that money?'.

I think safety is something none of us are going to argue about. None of us are going to want to see our children, our friends and our kids on school buses at risk. But you are seeing school bus drivers, like in my area, not wanting to take on the role, terrified of the responsibility they have—because roads like the Woolsthorpe-Heywood Road are just too terrifying when you see how deep the shoulders are, and I am talking probably a foot at least in some places. When you are on a road that is B-double permitted—and they have a right to be there—but there is not even room for a white line down the middle, so mums and bus drivers and dads are taking their kids to and from school with B-doubles coming at them, it is actually terrifying.

I remember when one of my sons started driving we were going along the Hamilton Highway on the way to Melbourne. He hit a pothole at 100 kilometres an hour, and he absolutely—I do not know how to say this without using an inappropriate word—got a very big fright and swore and said, 'Gee, these'—

Mr Eren: He crapped his daks.

Ms BRITNELL: That was it, but I was not going to say it. Thank you very much, member for Lara. Can they put that in *Hansard* for me? Can I quote you? He crapped his daks. He absolutely did. He was 21 at the time. He was quite late getting his licence, and he just said, 'Mum, these roads are horrendous', and I thought, 'Wow, you know, this is what people contend with every single day'—but it is not until you get behind the wheel, as he had just done, that you realise how bad it is. So I invite—and I do this very regularly in the Parliament—the minister for roads, through the Chair, to come to the regions, drive our roads, talk to the mums, talk to the families and see that what we need is the roads fixed properly. It is a basic fundamental right.

Now people are discovering the beauty of the regions and moving to the regions and holidaying in the regions they are discovering that, but they are also worried about how to handle driving on country roads. So we have got roads, like I have said, the Woolsthorpe-Heywood Road, the Caramut Road, the Warrnambool Hopkins Highway—the road to Mortlake, that is—and the Henty Highway, the highway either side of Heywood. In fact somebody said to me once: 'Which roads need fixing?'. I said, 'It's probably easier for me to tell you which roads don't need fixing', because it is just so bad right across the region.

We see a billion dollars going into wire rope barriers. They are an appropriate tool in appropriate places, but when you have got a bucket of money that has got to be spent on wire rope barriers that has got a billion dollars in it and a bucket of money that has got very little in it that can only be spent on road surfaces, the two do not marry up. I remember being in the member for East Gippsland's region when I was the Shadow Minister for Rural Roads. I saw the roads that were having wire rope barriers put on them, and the surface work was not done first. Now those roads are crumbling because they do not have the foundation in place to support the wire rope barriers. It is illogical. I mean, you can just see the amount of mess on the sides of the roads where these barriers are. There is just not the money to fix them, because that comes out of the other bucket of money that has very little in it.

In the 2010–14 Parliament, when we had Denis Napthine and Ted Baillieu in charge, we saw the country roads and bridges program. The councils to this day say to me, ‘Roma, that was great. We could fix the roads properly. We could tell you where the money needed to go. We understood our region, so we determined where it was best spent’. That is the sort of project management that we want to see back. We do not want to see the country ignored, and we do not want to see all the money going to the city. It has got to be fairer and more equitable.

My hope is that in this May budget the Minister for Roads and Road Safety puts enough money into regional roads so that we can get our roads up to standard. We are sick to death of seeing the waste. We are sick to death of them falling apart with the first rains of winter and being told that it is an unusual winter. As I keep saying, in western Victoria we grow grass well and we feed cows well because we get a lot of rain. We know that that is going to happen every year. The government are just not putting enough money into fixing these roads and doing it well once.

Roadside vegetation management is another area. If you let the vegetation get away, then water is captured on the side of the road, and if you have not got the road camber right and you have got flat ground on either side and it is not graded and it is not managed, you get water undermining the road and it falls apart. This is really basic sort of stuff. Many farmers do this every day on their land. They say to me, ‘Roma, why aren’t they grading the side of the road? Why aren’t they doing it well once? Don’t they know how to build roads anymore? Don’t they understand it?’, and I say to them, ‘I’m saying that in the Parliament all the time. They’re just not interested in prioritising the country’. And they say to me, ‘Well, Roma, go down there and tell them this: fix the bloody road and fix it well once’, so I have delivered that message.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind members about using parliamentary language.

Mr EREN (Lara) (16:18): Can I just say that I am delighted to be speaking on this bill today. It is a very important bill, the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I would like at the outset to congratulate the minister responsible for it because we know that every life lost on the roads is a tragedy. It multiplies the tragedy in the sense that all the relatives of the deceased obviously suffer for a very long time after a terrible accident.

Having said that, with this bill before the house, I got a phone call from my youngest son. We have five children, and our youngest son got his licence today.

Ms Green: Hear, hear!

Mr EREN: Thank you. I was very happy with the fact that he got his licence, but at the same time there was a bit of trepidation from knowing that new drivers on the road are the most at risk in terms of driving on the road. I was happy and excited but also a bit afraid. It is very much a dangerous thing. Once you get into that vehicle and you head off onto the road, anything could happen. We know that accidents do happen on the roads. Unfortunately, to date some 69 people have perished on our roads, and that is an absolute tragedy.

Being a former chair of the Road Safety Committee, I know there has been a lot of discussion about that committee and the important work that we did back then. We managed to implement some very important recommendations to government, who have taken on board those recommendations as a result, obviously, such as when we first discovered electronic stability control, for example—where if you run off the road, the car, even if you slam on the brakes, automatically corrects itself so that you do not run off the road—and side curtain airbags. Every passenger vehicle in Victoria that is registered must have these two technologies on board. We examined how many lives would be saved as a result of these technologies. Over 100 lives a year were saved as a result. If every car had electronic stability control and side curtain airbags, they are more likely to survive that crash. So there were many important decisions that we made, and obviously as a government we have been concentrating very much on trying to make the roads as safe as possible. Some of the technologies coming on board, not those two that I have mentioned but the lane departure warnings, the brake assist—all of these things

that are coming on board the car. I suspect that there will be autonomous driving within probably 10 years. At some point, you know, you will just say the words to the car 'Take me to this location', and you can relax and the car will take you to that location. I reckon we are about 10 years away. There are some high-end cars that are able to do it now.

Even then there are certain accidents that will occur on the road, even though the technology on board will be superior. So we hope that by implementing some of these laws that we are bringing in today we will halve the road toll by 2030. All we can do is make sure that we home in on what is required. We know that this legislation that we are talking on today has already been implemented in New South Wales and Queensland, and there is some good data that we have looked at, obviously, since they have implemented this important technology of cameras detecting people not wearing seatbelts or indeed people that are actually occupying themselves, distracting themselves, with their technology on board cars while driving.

I remember a story on one social media post that this guy was travelling down a road doing well under the speed limit, and he noticed a camera on the side of the road. He went past it and he noticed the flash and he said, 'I wasn't going over the speed limit', so he did a U-ey, went back and he did it slower, well under the speed limit, and this flash went off again. He thought, 'I've got them now, they're getting me unnecessarily. They're trying to cheat me'—revenue raising and all that sort of stuff. Then he went to the car and he said, 'Look, I went past. I was well under the speed limit and the flash went off', and he said, 'Sir, this is a seatbelt camera, not a speed camera. You don't have your seatbelt on'.

I think I have mentioned before: you do not have to pay a fine, actually—do not break the law. Do not speed, have your seatbelt on and do not distract yourself with the phone and you will not get a fine. It is fine. We do not want your money, we do not need your money, what we need is for you to be alive to add value to our economy. You know, every person that is deceased on the roads unnecessarily is a cost to not only the psychology of the families but also a cost to the economy. So what we want to do is have preventative measures in place, and we know that fines do work.

Some of the opposition members have talked about revenue raising. Well, it is very clear in this bill there will be a lot of advertising campaigns warning Victorians about this technology coming on board, warning Victorians that there will be camera technology to detect if you are actually on your IT—computers or phones or whatever—in the car whilst driving, and if you have not got your seatbelt on you will be caught. Further to that—because it is not around revenue raising, because we do not want their money, we want them to be alive—in the bill it says that you have got three months grace. If you are detected by one of these cameras whilst it is operational, you will get a warning letter.

I think that is quite fair; there is nothing wrong with that. If we are advertising that the technology is coming on board, if we are warning people with a letter saying, 'You have been detected breaching the law; don't do it again', and they do it again, then I am sorry, they are going to have to pay the fine. We do not want to issue the fine, but—

Ms Green interjected.

Mr EREN: Exactly. This is about saving lives, and that is what we want to do.

I do want to mention the TAC. The TAC, a wonderful organisation that has moved now to Geelong obviously, is doing a great amount of work trying to educate the public about inherent dangers. I suppose you save more money saving lives than having people perishing on the road, so you invest a fair bit of money trying to educate people to do the right thing on the road. I congratulate the TAC. I will not go through it—I think the member for Northcote went through all the implementations of the TAC in relation to all the changes that it has made and its assistance to government with appropriate advice in changing the rules and regulations on road laws, which go a long way to protecting vulnerable people particularly and also some people out there that flout the law and think that if they are in a car they can drive any way that they like and hurt anyone that they please. Well, no, they

cannot; they have got a responsibility to the broader society when they are behind the wheel. This bill that is before us goes a long way, hopefully, to educating further those people.

I drive along the Geelong Road and Princes Freeway often, and unfortunately there are so many people, particularly the young cohort, that are engaged with their phone whilst driving. Whether it is juggling their food and trying to look at their phone—your social media is not going anywhere. I do not think they know the dangers of driving whilst not looking at the road. Especially if they are in a car that has not got the technologies to warn them if there is something ahead, if they have not got brake assist and they have not got lane departure warnings—they have not got any of that technology—it is Russian roulette. It really is.

I think that in the sense of trying to change the culture through fines, as the member for Buninyong mentioned before, yes, they are harsh fines, but they have to be because that is sometimes the only way people learn to do the right thing. We do not want their fines, as I said before; what we want is to save people's lives. This technology will hopefully go a long way to teaching people that they must wear their seatbelts and teaching people that they must not engage with their technology whilst they are driving, and that is a totally reasonable proposition from the government. As I have said, there are plenty of advertising warnings and there is a three-month grace period for those who actually breach these road laws, and that is only fair. I commend the bill to the house, and I really wish it a speedy passage.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (16:28): I rise to make a contribution on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I note that we are not opposing this bill as its aim is to introduce measures that will assist in bringing down the road toll, and I do not think any MP in this chamber would argue with that general philosophy. The suggested changes are generally supported, but I cannot help but think that this government overlooks one of the major areas that needs improvement. I will get onto that a little bit later.

But firstly, there are provisions in this bill that cover new cameras that will better detect people not wearing seatbelts, people on their mobile phones—previous speakers have covered off on that. Actually I was reading in the minister's second-reading speech that there is data around to suggest that one in 42 people are using their mobile phones while driving. I can assure you when I am driving home on the Monash this Thursday afternoon in gridlock I will see a lot more than one in 42 people who are holding their phones—and I am assuming others are on their phones because when you are in gridlock I do not think that there is any other reason to be staring at your crotch, but a lot of people seem to be doing that and I can only assume that they are looking at their mobile phones. I am sure that this new technology is going to put a lot of people under a much higher level of scrutiny in relation to use of their mobile devices, and that will inevitably help make our roads a lot safer.

The other element of this bill that is worthy of mention and another element that I agree with is the list of offences that may trigger an immediate loss of licence. These are at the more serious end of our road safety laws. Culpable driving is one—hit and run incidents. I cannot help but think that the horrible, horrible experience with Mr Pusey has brought on some of these changes. They are changes which I endorse and that I think are certainly a step in the right direction. People who offend in this manner at the extreme end should not be allowed to then continue on and get straight back behind the wheel. The loss of their licence should be immediate.

What I want to touch on around road safety more generally is the condition of our roads. This is an area that I believe requires the most attention when we are talking about getting the road toll down. The minister recently stood in this place and said our roads are safer and smoother. That is not accurate. Our regional roads are not safer and smoother, they have never been worse. Indeed in her contribution the member for Eltham stood in this place just before and reflected on a text from her mother who drove from Traralgon to Eildon, I think it might have been, and said, 'The roads were great. I'm not sure what the Nats are complaining about'. Well, the fact that she never drove through a seat that is held by the Nats is one point I would make. But that is not accurate. I would like to get her mother's thoughts on the Princes Highway between Stratford and Bairnsdale, on the Monaro Highway, the

Bonang highway, Bengworden Road, Paynesville Road—I could go on and on and on—roads that are falling to bits at the moment.

When I got the response back from the minister after I queried the issue around our roads being safer and smoother, the ministerial response I got back stated that it was extreme rainfall and wet weather that were the major causes of this. Having been in the minister's position, I know you get a lot of correspondence put before you, and you have got to sign off on a huge amount of letters. I am not sure he would have read that letter that he signed in its entirety, because the wet weather is not the major reason. There are two reasons for that. We have had a wet summer—granted—but the problems that we are having with our roads in rural areas were well advanced before we had a wet summer. The roads were falling to bits well before the extended high levels of rainfall that we have had.

The other issue is that we have a situation where we are not building roads to be able to cope with rainfall. Our roads have got to be built generally to a higher standard. The wet summer that we have endured, which the minister stated was the reason that our roads are falling to bits, was well and truly forecast. Every warning that came out from the bureau indicated that we had a wet summer ahead. If you are going to have a wet summer ahead, what would possibly be the first thing that you would do if you were a roads authority? You would address the table drains to let the water get away and escape. You would think that we would have a bit of a blitz on that. But no, we did not. Our table drains on our rural roads have been chock-full of debris—some of them on the Princes Highway and our major arterial roads I do not think have been cleared for over two years—and water just cannot get away. When you have got your table drains clogged with debris and then the roads flood a lot more than they would normally otherwise flood and the road surfaces fall to bits, you cannot say it is the heavy rainfall—it is lack of maintenance. It is the roads not being built to that standard and quality, and it is the infrastructure, the table drains not being maintained to the level that they should be.

I really want to make the point that we must be building these regional roads to a higher standard. So many times in the last six months roadworks have been done only to fall apart not even three months later. Sometimes in a matter of less than a month we have to have road crews back fixing the road shoulders and fixing the works that they have done because they were not done to a high enough standard. Just this weekend when we got rain there was a pothole between Bairnsdale and Stratford. Fair dinkum, you would not want to walk into it—you would disappear—but six cars suffered significant damage that we know of. That can happen from time to time—you can get a big pothole that comes along quickly—but it is just happening too frequently and on far too many different roads in our region. The six people that have been to my office yesterday and this morning—I just checked at lunchtime with my electorate officers—I can assure you are not living in fantasy land as the member for Eltham indicated earlier. She spoke about her mother having a lived experience. The six people that have been in to my office yesterday and this morning with vehicles that have had to be towed away by the RACV have been having a lived experience of our road situation as well.

You have only got to drive the Princes Highway east to see the hundreds of locations where water cannot get off the road. Even when we get small amounts of rainfall the water pools in the low points and cars that are travelling along that road are aquaplaning because the camber of the road does not allow the water to run off. Then when it does run off the table drains are that full of debris that the water flows back over the road surface. Here we are in the chamber talking about road safety, and these basic measures in relation to maintaining our roads and maintaining our infrastructure are not being addressed.

Over recent months I have stood in this chamber and I have mentioned, as I have said, the Princes Highway and Bengworden Road. I have mentioned the Great Alpine Road, Paynesville Road, the Monaro Highway and the Bonang Highway and the parlous state that they are in. We are not talking one or two potholes here; we are talking large areas of broken surface. The Monaro Highway that connects Victoria to the ACT is an absolute disgrace on the Victorian side. It has massive potholes and broken surface metres in diameter in about 20 different locations, but our roads are meant to be smoother and safer.

When asked, Regional Roads Victoria say they are pressed for funds. I have contract workers that I know who come to me—we live in the country, we talk to these people, we have a beer with them on Friday night at the pub—who tell me that they are building roads to a standard they basically know is not going to stand the test of time. Until we get serious about these matters, we are just not getting serious about road safety. If we can build our roads to higher standards with a greater level of investment, the minister can then truly come into this chamber and say that this government is investing appropriately to make our roads smoother and safer. But to say that at the current time is just not the case, and that is the biggest issue we face in relation to road safety in regional Victoria.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (16:38): I rise today to make a contribution on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I echo the sentiments in the contributions made on this side of the house so far today. Each year here in Victoria and across Australia we see the toll of accidents on our roads. Every single digit is someone's loved one who cannot come home. It is a family member or someone that someone loves. This is why this single piece of legislation on road safety is critical and, as I said, very important, because it is our government that is looking out for and protecting the lives of Victorians on our roads. I want to acknowledge the government's continued commitment to tackling and taking action to improve safety on our roads, including the contribution made by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in this space. Of course we are also providing care and compensation to those who have tragically been injured in transport accidents. Our government will keep doing more when it comes to road safety because saving lives and preventing serious injuries is absolutely a priority for our government.

The member for Northcote raised the issue of level crossings and how important in saving lives removing level crossings has been. Just in the electorate of St Albans I think most people have heard some stories in relation to the notoriously dangerous level crossing at Main Road in St Albans and also the Furlong Road level crossing. We saw as a community so many deaths and so many near misses occurring on those two level crossings. Over my childhood and growing up in St Albans we heard many promises made in relation to removing those level crossings. And it was the Andrews Labor government in 2014—the minute we got elected we wasted no time, removing one of the state's most dangerous, deadly level crossings that was the Main Road level crossing. Today we see no more deaths at the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings, and that is thanks to the Andrews Labor government. They are very important projects that have had such an enormous impact on the lives of so many in St Albans but also for our emergency responders as well.

Of course we did not stop just at Main Road and Furlong Road. We have continued our level crossing agenda with the Fitzgerald Road level crossing in Ardeer, and it is great to see the overpass bridge being constructed at the moment together with the two additional crossings along Neale Road in Deer Park and Robinsons Road. And further along the track it will be level crossing free, making it safer, much more accessible and with fewer delays for commuters and emergency services vehicles as well. This really makes a huge difference. It has saved lives already, and it is fantastic to see that program successfully rolling out in Victoria.

Now, talking a little bit about texting and driving, we know we have seen so many fatalities and incidents occur when mobile devices are used in vehicles while driving, and this continues to be an increasing trend and a rising concern. As the TAC messaging says, when you are on your mobile you are driving blind, and everybody hurts when you drive distracted. Research shows that if you use your phone while driving your risk of having a crash is between twice and 10 times the risk of other drivers. It can hurt you, your passengers, your loved ones and other road users. That is really something to consider: the minute you actually sit in the driving seat you are responsible not only for your own safety and your passengers but also other road users as well. It is a mammoth responsibility, driving a car, and especially for young teenagers this is a real issue. Distractions in the car and mobile phones continue to be issues, so this continues to have more impacts.

We have seen so many reports from first responders who have to deal with the aftermath of a crash and have to deal with family members and innocent lives that may be lost. If you are injured, there are

the hospital and rehab workers and other staff and the time that it takes for you to be rehabilitated in some way—and those who are permanently injured as well. These amendments and this bill recognise the dangers of driver distraction and the fact that police on the ground can only do so much, and that is why enabling camera detection of drivers using portable devices while driving will assist our state to make meaningful inroads towards stopping this dangerous practice.

Yes, that is one way, and it is a strong way and of course there will be infringements and strong fines associated with this, but they go back to having that responsibility. The minute you enter a vehicle as a driver that needs to be first and foremost on your mind. We have seen the analysis undertaken by Monash University Accident Research Centre estimating that an automated mobile phone enforcement camera program could prevent 95 casualty crashes per year, and that is a significant amount. It is not just a number; it is people's lives—families, friends—and those are innocent lives as well. So this is why reducing driver distraction and increasing compliance with seatbelt wearing complies with priority initiatives under the Victorian *Road Safety Action Plan 2021–2023*.

The bill will add offences relating to driver distraction due to the use of mobile phones and other portable devices to the range of numerous offences that can be detected using automated enforcement technologies, and I think that is a really important step because it is very clear. Again I go back to younger drivers that continue to be distracted—but not only younger drivers, older drivers as well unfortunately. Whether it is a mobile phone or whether it is just being distracted in a vehicle, this can have severe consequences on a community.

So this bill is critical to tackling the rise of mobile phone use while driving and to updating legislation to reflect changing road safety technologies. The deployment of this technology will save lives, as I have said, and reflects the new efficient and effective methods available to make our roads safer in Victoria. I am very happy to see these changes that have been made by this government putting the safety of Victorian road users front and centre, and that is what is critical. Again I want to thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for his work on this important legislation, and I would also like to thank the Transport Accident Commission for their tireless work, advocacy and support for preventing road accidents, and that is what is really important—preventing road accidents before they actually happen. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (16:48): I rise today to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and as has been comprehensively covered by my good friend and National Party colleague the member for Euroa, this bill has a number of objectives which are around enabling better enforcement of distracted driving and seatbelt wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras, and adding to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986. The bill also intends to alter the transport accident scheme by making various amendments to the Transport Accident Act 1986.

This is something that is to support a pilot which has happened across Victoria where camera trailers have been tested around the state which take multiple images of drivers and then run over some AI which ascertains whether somebody is wearing a seatbelt or not, if they have a mobile phone sitting on their lap or if they are handling it, and then from that those images will be scanned. The ones where it is found that there could be someone doing the wrong thing are then handed over to a human for interpretation, and if it is found that somebody has got an image which shows they are holding on to a mobile phone or have not got their seatbelt on then a fine will be issued, and the usual processes around that will be applied. Of course we know that driver distraction is a cause of many of the accidents that we see right across the state of Victoria.

But there is something that is often raised with me, and that is around how the state of our country roads is contributing to accidents and to people being unable to drive to the speed limit. We have seen the road conditions result in speed limits being reduced temporarily due to potholes, crumbling edges and undulating surfaces, but also we have seen permanent speed limit reductions put in place. Now,

something that we often hear is that we must have our cars roadworthy, so why shouldn't we have our roads car worthy?

Certainly in many areas of my electorate, where we rely so heavily on our road network to get from point A to point B, whether that is about getting to school safely or getting to footy and netball training—you might want to get to work or even just go to a medical appointment—we need to travel by road. We do not have alternatives readily available to us in the west of Victoria. We do not have a passenger rail service aside from the Overland, which runs twice a week between Adelaide and Melbourne, so it is either you drive yourself, you get a lift with a friend in a car or you jump on a bus if you are fortunate to be able to make your times connect properly. One of the biggest challenges that we see across the region is that this is putting local lives at risk.

In my electorate of Lowan just last week I undertook a mobile office, where I take my office on the road to make sure I can get into my communities and people can raise their issues with me. They can point out other issues that we have got, or sometimes—quite often—they show me something they are quite proud of that they have taken the initiative on to make their region a better place to live, work and do business. Just last week I was in the fabulous town of Rupanyup, and a number of locals raised with me their significant concerns around the speed limit of the Wimmera Highway in Cromie Street, in the main street of Rupanyup. From the northern entrance to the town the corner has a very odd camber to it where it actually pushes the grain trucks which come into town from that direction right off the road and into an area in front of the post office, where cars can be parked, and if somebody is getting out of a car at the wrong time, it can be an absolutely terrifying experience to have those near misses of a large B-double truck or sometimes an A-triple coming incredibly close to these vehicles and pedestrians in the area.

This is also a road which houses the maternal and child health centre, a kindergarten and the school drop-off area for neighbouring schools—there is a community school bus. That is where the kids are dropped off, and that is when it is particularly dangerous—there are a lot of kids around, parents are parking their cars to pick up their kids, and it is just too fast to have a 60-kilometre-per-hour speed limit. The locals would like to see the speed limit reduced in that community, and I would urge the government to review the speed limit—it is something they have been calling for for a long time—and also review the incoming northern road as it comes in and to fix up that area so that trucks are not bolting down and getting off balance when they come into Rupanyup.

A similar issue was raised up at Rainbow—a fabulous community up there. They really are the salt of the earth in that region. They do a great job in creating a fantastic heartbeat and community that you do not see in all other communities. Taverner Street is one of the main roads through Rainbow; it links in from the south through to the northern edge of town, where the gypsum pits are. Over the gypsum season we can see up to 300 trucks a day travelling along this road, and again in a similar scenario to Rupanyup this is a road where there is a school on it, there is also the kindergarten and we have got a lot of other pedestrian and cycling traffic that goes along this road—a lot of residents as well.

Again the community are really calling out for the speed limit to be reduced in that area. Peter Gosling, who does an enormous amount of work for that community, recently did a bit of a test and found that if you reduced the speed limit by just 10 kilometres an hour, it would only add about 55 seconds onto the travel time. Now, this is not targeting the gypsum pits or the trucks that travel along there. The gypsum pits offer a fabulous business, and we need to access gypsum to get the maximum value out of our crops, the maximum growth. We are not condemning the truck industry, but I think everyone accepts that we need to make this road safe, and this is a simple way to do it.

Road conditions are also an issue in our area particularly when it comes to the Mount Zero Road at Halls Gap. This is an unsealed road, but Google Maps puts it as a main way to enter Halls Gap from the Western Highway, from the Horsham direction. This road is very slippery. It is totally unsealed. The locals have got a collection of hub caps that have been lost along that road, and there have been multiple accidents on this strip, including I think the latest rollover that I am aware of, which was back

in November of just last year. It needs to be sealed. It would close off of course that tourism route—the route linking Halls Gap around past Heatherlie Quarry and Plantation Campground right through Roses Gap and Mount Zero through to Hollow Mountain and the fantastic rock climbing that should be available in that region. It needs to be managed a lot better than it is. That is something again I urge to government to address.

As we know, the priority has not been about managing our roads appropriately in the country. Just last budget we saw from the state Labor government that the road asset management line was cut by 25 per cent. This puts enormous pressure on VicRoads to be able to manage and maintain our country road network—when they are simply not given enough money to do their job properly. Speaking to people within VicRoads, they know they have got a lot more work to do when it comes to making our roads safe and building better roads, but until Labor stop the cuts and start giving VicRoads the budget that they need to do their job we are always going to be putting country lives at risk on our crumbling country roads.

I would like to just run through a number of other roads which I really urge the government to prioritise for funding in the upcoming budget. I will just list them off. I have mentioned them before, but I would like to get them on the record today. They include the Glenelg Highway, particularly around the Muntham hills, an area which has had some significant roadworks done in recent years but it is already falling apart. I spoke to Kristy McDonald of Casterton recently, and she said she is so scared of driving in that area. The way the undulations are, it either bounces you off the road or bounces you into incoming traffic. She will not drive a sedan on that road anymore. She only feels comfortable driving in a four-wheel drive and at a much, much-reduced speed.

Dunkeld-Cavendish Road is, again, another road that needs significant works. The drop-offs on the edges are significant. You could lose a whole wheel in some of those holes. Birchip-Rainbow Road—the drop-offs on the edges of that road are about the equivalent of a Coke can. They are incredibly deep. Again, it is only a single-lane road. It is a highway and a major thoroughfare for trucks heading in and out of Rainbow. Donald-Murtoa Road has got a permanent speed limit reduction now to 80 kilometres per hour, and it is so dangerous. There have been a number of accidents. It needs to be fixed. The Hamilton Highway at Mortlake, again, has undulations and potholes and cracking surfaces. There is the Western Highway, the Henty Highway, the Wimmera Highway and single-lane bridges that we have got as well at Rainbow Road, Warracknabeal, and Fyans Creek Road at Halls Gap.

What I would like to see from the state Labor government when it comes to this year's budget on the first Tuesday in May is that we reverse these drastic cuts we have had to the road asset management budget. We have simply had too much money cut out of VicRoads, and they cannot maintain our roads effectively. When it is our number one way of getting from point A to point B in the country, the Labor government must make sure they— *(Time expired)*

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (16:58): It is an absolute pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and from the outset I will have everyone in the house know that I am a massive supporter of this bill. It makes total sense. There will be people that talk about their freedoms and whatnot, but driving a car on our roads is a privilege. When you have been on the other side of the coin, so to speak, when you see people who are no longer driving their car but they have exited their vehicle through the windscreen, there is no talk of freedoms or that the laws are too harsh. They are usually asking for their mum or dad or ambos or someone to help them. So anything that can prevent that, in my mind, is an absolute thing that everyone should support.

The primary objective of this bill is to support the delivery of the road safety strategy and the government's aim of reducing the road toll by 50 per cent by 2030 through measures that have been outlined here today, but I will go through them again. There are two main objectives: enabling better enforcement of distracted-driver and seatbelt-wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras; and adding to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the

Road Safety Act 1986. This bill is also intended to improve and make the transport accident scheme fairer by making various amendments to address identified anomalies in the act itself.

Now, it is fair to say that we were one of the first jurisdictions—I think the first jurisdiction in the world—to introduce mandatory seatbelt wearing in 1970, and we have come a long way since then in technology in cars to the point where now we are seeing cars that virtually drive themselves, with the underlying instruction that the driver must be at the wheel at all times. We have seen airbags, we have seen pyrotechnic pretensioners on seatbelts—all the things that as a vehicle rescue technician make your life really hard but are fantastic for the safety of the occupants of the vehicle. The thing about wearing seatbelts or having seatbelts in cars and all this other paraphernalia that is not automatic is that the person must actually engage those safety features. So many times on the Mornington Peninsula, in the south-east, in Frankston, it was so sad to attend a vehicular accident where someone had exited the vehicle—and if only they had put their seatbelt on, they would have had their life saved or they might not have been degloved by a windscreen and they might not have had to spend years and years in rehab, costing ratepayers and also taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars just because of bad decisions.

Now we are seeing a similar type of result from people using mobile phones. We live in a time where people are basically taught that if you cannot do five things at once, you are not using your time efficiently. There are a million books out there on Audible and there are a million books out there in a bookshop saying how you should be able to do this and that and that this is what success means. That is part of what drives our youth as well, with social media, to be addicted to these screens. The issue is that they just cannot put them down, even when they are driving, because they are taught from a young age that this is part of them and they can have conversations with people, they can do a job—we have all walked into a retail store and wanted some help and had someone behind the desk on their phone texting their mates about what they did last night. I guess there is a bit of a generational gap between my generation and the younger generation where people believe that that multitasking can occur successfully. Unfortunately when driving vehicles it does not work that way.

As regards seatbelt wearing we saw that 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt in 2021, which is 13 per cent of the road toll. But we have also seen many, many people distracted by using their mobile phones and having huge accidents, and that might not be an accident where the person is trapped in their car and has injuries—it might not affect them—but it could be the person on the bike, the pedestrian or the person with the pram. Unfortunately it is hard enough sometimes to avoid accidents when you are doing the right thing on the road without being distracted, but it is too little too late when people realise that they needed to focus on the road and look for the thing coming for them, the other person on the road that was behaving like an idiot or the other person that went through a red light or did not know they were distracted themselves.

We are led to believe, through data given to us by the Monash University Accident Research Centre, that distraction is estimated to contribute to around 11 per cent of road fatalities, amounting to 24 lives lost every single year. Driver distraction is also estimated to change the lives of around 400 people each year through serious injuries. In 2020 an investigation found that one in 42 drivers were found to be illegally using their mobile phones while driving. I come from a generation where there are all the excuses in the world for using those mobile phones, but I think this is where the rubber hits the road—no pun intended—and now there is no excuse. There never has been an excuse, but now it will catch up with you. There is now the technology available that can scan and identify people that are using their mobile phones, or indeed not even wearing their damn seatbelts, and can fine those people quite significantly, which I totally support.

The amendments in part 2 of the bill will enable the images captured by the new cameras I have just spoken about to be used as evidence that:

... the driver of a motor vehicle was, while the vehicle was moving or stationary but not parked, touching a portable device, or had a portable device resting on their body or on clothes being worn by them or on an item in their lap ...

and that the driver or passenger of a motor vehicle was, while the vehicle was moving or stationary but not parked, occupying a seating position in the vehicle fitted with an approved seatbelt and the driver or passenger was not wearing the seatbelt or was not wearing the seatbelt properly. That evidence is relevant and:

... without prejudice to any other mode of proof and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, proof of the relevant fact on the relevant occasion.

So for the laypeople in law, that is essentially saying that these almost operate the same as a speed camera: if the evidence is there with no relevant evidence to the contrary, you will receive that fine and be found guilty of that offence.

As I have said previously, anything that enforces or strengthens licensing powers to make people safer in their vehicles is a really good thing. We have heard people on both sides of the chamber today talk about the effect of lowering speed limits, which does actually have that effect as well; we have heard people talk about drink driving, fatigue driving and drug driving; and we have heard people talk about obviously more things pertinent to this bill like seatbelts and not wearing seatbelts and also the use of mobile phones in cars. It still to this day is quite shocking to see people pulled over for not wearing a seatbelt, though, and that is something I would like to reiterate. Those incidents just tear your heart out when you see people that have been distracted involved in an incident—it could be one car, could be two cars, could be multiple cars—where they were not wearing a seatbelt. It is the most fundamental safety device, but it involves having drivers engage their brain to engage their seatbelt and make sure that it saves their life—because they really are life saving. It is so sad to attend incidents where a very, very simple device—which is what a seatbelt is; it is a piece of fabric with a centrifugal clutch that arrests the forward movement—could have saved a person's life.

As I said at the outset, we were the first jurisdiction in 1970 to introduce seatbelts. We were fairly progressive with it, and we have not looked back since. Even parliamentary cars and VicFleet cars have to these days come up to the 5-star Australasian New Car Assessment Program ratings, and there is very good reason for that, because these devices do save lives. In saying that, though, before I commend this bill to the house, anything that brings awareness, whether it be with a stick or carrot, that people need to be off their mobile phones when they drive is a great thing. We have heard about different types of devices and apps and whatnot that can do this, but really, apart from an education campaign, what it comes down to is an enforcement campaign, because we are not talking about people doing something small here that they might be punished for. This is a life-saving law, and I commend the bill to the house for that reason.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (17:08): The coalition is not opposing the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 that is before the house, as has already been canvassed. While this legislation goes part way to addressing road safety issues, there is a lot more that the government can be doing in this space, which I will address a little bit later. The objective of the bill that we have before us is to enable better enforcement of distracted-driving and seatbelt-wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras, and that is something I actually look forward to seeing—what we get when we look at those images—because at this stage we have not been able to view anything like that. But as artificial intelligence moves on, progresses and advances all the time, we can expect that it is going to be used in a variety of ways, and this is one way that it can be usefully utilised. Also, this bill adds to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986. For public safety and for other road users this can be a very useful component. In addition, it will make some amendments to the transport accident scheme by making various amendments to that relevant act.

I think the government have a lot to answer for at the moment with regard to road safety, because if they have a look at the road toll, it is actually heading in the wrong direction, so their record is not great. For the year 2020 there were 211 deaths, and last year, in 2021, there were 232. That is up 10 per cent, so that is not heading in the right direction. We have had an ordinary start, in fact a dreadful start, to 2022. Already 69 lives have been lost, which is up another 7.8 per cent from this period last year. So the road toll is absolutely heading in the wrong direction and is something where the government really needs to get a grip on it and understand all of the factors that are at play here. As I said, whilst this legislation is going to go part way, it is not going to go all the way and really drive down those numbers even further to some of the lower levels that we had in previous years.

We are all in this chamber, and most people in Victoria would be, aware of dangerous driving and the factors that make drivers on the roads even more dangerous—distractedness, speeding drivers, drivers under the influence of either drugs or alcohol. It is pleasing to see that booze buses are back out, but the drug buses are not out in as much force as they could be. In my area in and around Hume the police officers had training early on in this and were able to roll this out, the drug driving, a lot quicker than in many other areas around the state. I really urge the government to do further work in this area, because people driving on drugs—if they are only going to be picking up .05s and not getting that—pose a risk.

Reckless driving, distraction, mobile phones, chatting sometimes—I have seen people moving their head, talking to their passenger, looking over at the back when they really should be concentrating on the road. Many people have talked about the use of mobile phones. In country Victoria we have other components that play into difficulties with driving. We have loads of animals on the road, particularly in my electorate, which is heavily forested with a lot of bushland. We have an enormous number of kangaroos and wombats. We have deer on the roads, so at night you really need to be careful. In some areas there is probably room for better signage. I have also seen, quite disturbingly, overtaking on double lines. Not so far from my place recently, in fact only a few kilometres up the road, on one of the few decent patches on the Melba Highway there was a fatality. I understand that the young female that was driving overtook on double lines. I have seen in an overtaking lane a third vehicle go out and overtake the cars in the overtaking lane as well, so you had three lines of traffic heading south. That was really disturbing, and everybody had to slow right down because it was really dangerous. So we have some dreadful driver behaviour out there that really does need addressing.

Now, what the government can do further in this area is to make improvements to the roads. I have had lots of reasons to drive around the state recently, and I have noticed that the Calder to Bendigo and the Ballarat road to Geelong are all in much better shape than a lot of the roads in my electorate. My electorate has a lot of tourism. It has a lot of heavy vehicles. We have freight. We have horse floats, lots of people towing caravans and motorbikes—so many different types of traffic—and coaches, and the roads are in pretty ordinary condition. We have also had a heavy reliance by this government on the wire rope barriers, and I want to just reference the Victorian Auditor-General's Office report in June 2020 about safety on Victoria's roads and the regional road barriers. They were not as cost effective as VicRoads and TAC intended:

The Towards Zero Strategy states that flexible barriers have been shown to reduce run-off-road and head-on serious causality crashes by up to 85 per cent.

But they have no evidence to support this. Now, the Auditor-General's report was really quite scathing on what was being done, and I put to you that there was quite a lot of money wasted at that time. In my own electorate, between Yea and Molesworth we had some 8 kilometres of centre wire rope barriers. It was at a cost of \$18 million, then it was \$18.5 million. Once the speed limit got back to 100, it was about three weeks later, and then they reduced it again to 80 and they virtually resealed it. So we have never been able to understand the exact cost of the implementation.

Now, there was signage that was put up at Limestone and at the other end near Yarck that cost \$530 000, and it is barely used. It is advertising now or alerting people to planned burns and that school's back—and there are no schools in that general vicinity either. But the government wasted an enormous load of money there, and it should have instead been sealing shoulders and fixing potholes.

Recently between Dixons Creek and Glenburn there were—I took photos—nine ‘Reduce speed’ and ‘Rough surface’ signs. I could not take photos of all of them because some of them were on double lines as well. That is just not good enough. The government needs to invest in our roads properly—properly invest—not make cuts to the budget, which is what we have seen happen so far. It is really quite appalling. People in the country area know they play second fiddle to major projects in the city, and they see those projects blow out by billions—some \$24 billion—and that could have been used to properly fix a lot of our regional roads. So there are things that I call on the government to do. In the next budget I would like to see that road funding in regional Victoria is increased and that we have proper treatment of our roads, that we have the shoulders sealed.

In addition, I have been calling for years now for electronic signs to be installed outside Wesburn Primary School on the Warburton Highway. The government needs to pay attention to that. There is a bridge at East Warburton that needs to allow pedestrian access for the safety of the students so they do not have to go on the road at that particular point. There is a lot that the government could be doing. Heidelberg-Kinglake Road is a very steep, winding road with very sheer drop-offs. Far too many trucks use that road. The government needs to really work out what strategy it is going to put in place to make that road safer and to keep those trucks off the road.

Kinglake itself is subject to very heavy fog and low-lying cloud, and for years, again, I have been calling for fog lights to be installed there, like they have on the Calder. Now, we have had instances where school bus drivers have not been able to see oncoming traffic because the fog has been that heavy. We had a dreadful incident, the helicopter tragedy last week, that may have been related to heavy fog and low-lying cloud. This is an issue for the people living in Kinglake. Every winter, and even in periods not in winter, they are subjected to this. So the government needs to look at installing fog lights on the main road through the Kinglake Ranges, and as I have said, it needs to work out how to get the trucks off Heidelberg-Kinglake Road, because this makes it very dangerous for the users who use that road every day heading between Kinglake and St Andrews and further on. The government tell me that there are things that they can do, but they actually have not outlined exactly what that is. People in those areas want to know exactly what is intended, and I call on the government to make that clear.

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (17:18): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I acknowledge and am delighted to hear that those opposite are not opposing this bill. It is good that road safety is something that unites us.

This bill is a significant step in this government’s commitment to reducing deaths on our roads to the only acceptable number, and that is zero. I have been really interested to hear some of the debate about ensuring that we do not really think of it as a road toll but as people, because we are very conscious that this is what the focus is on—it is the people of the Victorian community that we need to keep safe—and the importance of government taking action. That is what this amending legislation before us today does. By committing to addressing non-compliance with seatbelt wearing and driver distraction such as with mobile phones, this bill is definitely a step towards making Victoria’s roads safer and keeping road users free from harm. It has been really important to hear the contributions, and several people have spoken about the importance of demonstrating the right behaviours when we are teaching young people to drive—I have been fortunate to have been involved in teaching six people to drive—and what that means when we do have those conversations about distraction but more importantly how we behave ourselves and what model we provide to the young people in our lives and the young people around us. It is crystal clear now, the science is crystal clear, that the consequences of that sort of distraction—what people might think of as having their eyes away for only a moment from the roads—are just tragic. The repercussions can be immeasurable, and it is really important for us to be able to focus our attention on making sure that we do have an approach that does look at the best science and the best research.

The amendments in this bill will enable camera detection of driver distraction, portable device offences and seatbelt-wearing offences. This is absolutely designed to address and reduce the significant causes

of increased crash risk and road trauma. Subject to the passage of this legislation, cameras will be rolled out in early 2023 and preceded by an extensive communications campaign during the rollout, which will include warning letters being sent to offenders instead of fines. Increasing compliance with seatbelt wearing and against driver distraction is being prioritised under the *Victorian Road Safety Action Plan 2021–2023*.

I want to especially take the opportunity to acknowledge the impact that not just driver distraction but driver trauma can have on our emergency services. I am always pleased to have the opportunity to hear a contribution from the member for Frankston. We also have on the side the member for Melton and the member for Bayswater, who have extensive experience in emergency services and responding to the trauma that they have seen. I would like to take the opportunity to thank our emergency services for the work that they do, recognising that it is not just people who are working in emergency services but also so many others who act out of altruism to respond to what people see on the roads, but really the onus is on the operator to prevent trauma.

Like similar schemes, drivers may ask for reviews or choose to have any matters determined in court. This bill proposes that images from a camera can be used as evidence of the fact that the driver of the vehicle was using a device—a mobile phone. This bill will enable the use of camera images in subsequent court proceedings for the offence, and the same will also apply to the wearing of seatbelts. The evidence is clear: you are more likely to finish in a serious road injury or fatality when you are distracted by a device. It is a factor in 11 per cent of fatalities and 5 per cent of serious injuries on our roads each year.

I do want to take the opportunity to thank some important organisations and particularly acknowledge the Road Trauma Support Services group, an organisation that came to my attention many years ago through Christine Harrison, and the work they do in educating road users, particularly focused on young road users, about what the implications are of distraction, as we are talking about today, and other driver behaviours and the importance of being focused on the task ahead—or the task in front—which is actually driving safely. Just 2 seconds of driver distraction can double the chances that your morning drive to work, to the Parliament, to school, could result in injury and/or death, and you are 10 times more likely to crash when texting, browsing or emailing on a phone. These are amazing statistics. That data is compelling, it is absolute, and I think that is why we have such widespread support for action. It is something that, as has been demonstrated in the contributions today, many of us see, but I am sure it is something we are all conscious of—pulling over to the side of the road and taking the time to put phones, as the minister identified, in the glove box or taking whatever action you need to to change behaviour to make sure that we temper what we do and focus on getting safely to where we intend to be.

As I said earlier, I would like to acknowledge and thank the police, emergency responders and members of the public who attend horrific scenes that are obviously the subject of this legislation. In their line of work and in their commitment to respond to some of the most intense and harrowing scenes imaginable, police, first responders and emergency services are part of that primary group of people who are affected by road trauma. And actually it is knowing the kindness and altruism of people across Victoria and in my electorate of course that we know that the genuine gestures of heroic responsibility do not need to be undertaken by a professional responder. But they are agonising scenes that are etched in the mind of whomever is faced with that trauma. I think we all acknowledge fines are annoying, but perhaps we ought to be conscious of what the alternative is to a fine. So this government is committed to addressing road safety issues with this evidence and empirical science.

I would like to take the opportunity to perhaps follow on from the contribution the member for Oakleigh made earlier, where he was listing the importance of the level crossing removal program and what that means for safety across Victoria. I can take the opportunity to speak about the community that I represent and serve and how level crossings in Thompsons Road and Evans Road both are gone and part of our history and what that means for the safety of the users on the road, what that means for people being able to get safely from one side of the community to the other. Particularly Evans Road

was interesting, because the road itself was shut down because of a tragic accident that happened at that level crossing. It was closed for many, many years before that level crossing was removed, and in the closure was an acknowledgement that the trauma that had been experienced by community members was too great. So to have that road closed was really significant. I am very pleased that that level crossing has gone, and I am delighted that we will be getting rid of Camms Road soon. Work is underway there.

I would, though, like to take a moment to thank particularly the constituents of Cranbourne who have raised issues of road safety, particularly with my office, and namely the unsafe behaviour of a fraction of drivers on our roads. It is something that I know is really important to the community. Particularly I would like to be thankful for Justin from Cranbourne, who has raised issues. Know that these are issues that we do take very seriously. It is reassuring to know that the statistics and stories of those who have spoken up overwhelmingly point to Victoria's strong and outspoken condemnation of dangerous behaviours such as those that are addressed by this bill, so I want to take the opportunity to thank people who have contacted me, because I think, again, it demonstrates that it is the safety of others, often children and families in the community, that is very much the focus of the attention of this chamber—our government—and also the people in our community. Measures such as this and the ongoing efforts of Victoria Police will act upon this community's persistence, and that is the measure of a government that is taking action, not observing a problem. I commend this bill. I am very grateful to the minister for bringing this to us, and I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to contribute.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:28): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As the member for Cranbourne indicated, this is largely an area of bipartisanship when it comes to road safety, and certainly as to the detail of the bill I am happy to confirm that the opposition will not be opposing the legislation. There is not so much bipartisanship on the issue of our roads more broadly, and I will come to that.

While there are a couple of different parts to this bill, the main element is of course the introduction of new road safety cameras that have the ability to detect basically whether people are using a mobile phone. This is, I guess, an issue close to my own heart for sometimes all the wrong reasons. I am not going to stand here and claim to be a saint when it comes to those issues. I noted the comments of the member for Frankston earlier about the push for all of us to be more efficient, and as an MP, I dare say as a country MP, it is a particular issue. I estimate that in normal times pre COVID and probably in the last couple of months as things have got back to normal, I probably spend an extra 10 hours on the road. I spend at least 10 hours on the road a week, and that is 10 hours I do not have to read, to assess reports, to deal with emails and to do all those things that perhaps particularly city MPs, who do not have to travel as much or at least as far, have more time for. It is an issue that vexes me a lot, and certainly it does tempt you to be doing things that you should not be doing. I, for one, look forward to the autonomous vehicle; I think I will be able to get a hell of a lot more done when it comes. But it is an important issue. Looking at your mobile phone, sending messages, checking emails or whatever while you are driving is obviously a seriously dangerous thing to do, and I am sure we have all done the wrong thing from time to time and given ourselves scares as well. It is one thing I try to avoid.

This legislation will introduce the ability to use these new cameras. I am comforted that there is not a pure reliance on the artificial intelligence technology which will detect whether people are indeed using a mobile phone, but where that technology identifies that there will then be a human review of the images as well to see whether someone has done the wrong thing or not. I believe that the report that related to the trial that has been done of this technology has not yet been made public. I think that is something the government should do. There is a tendency in the public sometimes, particularly when it comes to speed cameras, to see them more as revenue raisers rather than road safety devices. This additional measure needs to have the best possible public confidence, and releasing all the information that relates to the trials and to indeed how the technology works would be a wise move on the government's part to engender that confidence in the community. We have seen in the past faults with speed cameras, red-light cameras and the like that have caused some concern, and of course

we have seen big issues in the fines department—though that is a separate issue. But that is something that I think the government should be doing.

There are a number of other elements to the bill that other members have touched on. I will not necessarily go into those now. I do just want to speak, though, a bit about road safety and roads in general. It is critical of course that we do what we can to improve road safety and get the road toll down. What I am concerned about that has been grossly overlooked by this government is the condition of the roads themselves, and that is an issue that has been consistently the number one issue in Gippsland South since I was elected in 2015. It is absolutely up there again at the moment, the last 12 months or so, partly due to obviously the last couple of wet seasons that we have had; that certainly has made the roads break up much faster. But there is no question that the roads in country areas are falling behind, and it is an issue that comes to me extremely regularly from my constituents. It is the one that they stop you in the street about, it is the one that they comment on social media about and it is the one that they send you emails and ring the office about. I get regular complaints, and they are genuine.

In that context I was interested, in listening a little bit earlier, to hear the member for Eltham basically saying that the concerns that we have raised in the past are wrong. She used the lived experience, I think she said, of her mum, who sent her a text and said she had driven from Traralgon to Healesville and ‘The roads were great, and I really don’t know what the Nats are going on about’. Indeed the words she used were that The Nationals are raising ‘imagined fantasies’. Now, that is going to go down well in my community and indeed the communities around country Victoria if government members think that the poor states of our roads are ‘imagined fantasies’. It is extraordinary that a member of the government would say that.

When I first got elected in 2015, I remember the state Labor government then making a 10 per cent cut to the road maintenance budget. We have seen this year in the most recent budget a 25 per cent cut. We might remember, those of us who have been around a bit—and indeed the member for Mornington is sitting here—us asking questions in PAEC of the then minister for roads, who promised \$1 billion for country roads over eight years. When we challenged him on that in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee process he was unable to show where that \$1 billion ever actually came up. That is because it was largely a fantasy. We have seen that, yes, the spending on roads has increased from time to time since those budgets, but the most recent one again is another cut.

We also of course saw the abolition of the country roads and bridges program, which actually did a lot of good for our small rural shires in particular. They were getting a million dollars a year to upgrade local roads—the roads that people live on, that the cattle trucks and the milk tankers go down. That was a huge loss and a completely unjustified cut by this government.

I want to mention too that there was some significant work done last year—and it was pretty much all funded, or largely funded, by the federal government—on road safety across the state, some of it in my electorate, most of it going towards road shoulder sealing. I have raised this a number of times in this place, most recently with an adjournment, because what happened with that funding is the shoulders were sealed but they almost immediately began breaking up. So I raised this with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I know the member for Gippsland East and others have also raised it, because that was another frustration. There were many in my community who were rapt, including me, that these shoulders were going to be sealed on some of our main roads, particularly around Sale, and I might mention Bengworden Road, Rosedale-Longford Road, Longford-Loch Sport Road, Seaspray Road and Traralgon-Maffra Road as well. Many of these were done, but they almost immediately started breaking up, resulting in potholes and the like.

I got a response from the minister to an adjournment on 8 March where he basically said that with the money they had they went for the longest possible distance that they could do the sealing, which may be a noble aim, but that in doing that weaknesses in the existing pavement are expected in works such as these. So basically the government knew that there were going to be failures with these roadworks and went ahead anyway, and that is consistent with what I have heard from many of the contractors.

Many of the contractors who had those jobs told Regional Roads Victoria, ‘This isn’t going to work; you need to actually change the camber of the road totally, or you need to use different materials’. But they were told, ‘No, we’ve got the money now. We’ve got to spend it. Go ahead’. And we ended up with these incredible failures on the roads, which is just not good enough. I am not sure whether to give the minister a 10 out of 10 for honesty or a one out of 10 for the failure of actual management of our roads, because it was a disaster and it continues to be a disaster. Regional Roads Victoria is now going back and having to fix up all these potholes and mistakes on the side of the road that have occurred from mismanagement.

To suggest that the poor state of our roads is an imagined fantasy is a fantasy in itself. The member for Eltham and other government members should get out and see the state of our roads. Then they will understand that road safety is not just about new cameras.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (17:38): I am very pleased this evening to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is a bill, of course, a significant and important piece of legislation, that goes to road safety within our state. We know that the Andrews Labor government is committed to reducing our road toll within this state, and we know that one life lost is one life too many. This government is committed to investing in those projects, those initiatives, bringing pieces of legislation before the Parliament such as this one that go to making sure that those that use our roads each and every day, no matter where they live, are as safe as they can possibly be.

I know that a number of members this evening and throughout the course of the debate today have spoken at length as to why these matters are important, but we know and understand that road safety is indeed a shared responsibility: a responsibility between road users, local communities, local councils, us as a state government, indeed the federal government, pedestrians and those that really work hard in road education, whether that be a whole range of initiatives and programs that run through many of our primary and secondary schools, whether it is bicycle education, education around learning or getting your licence for the first time—programs, investments and initiatives that are important.

I have also heard this afternoon through the course of debate about the work of our emergency services. I want to take the opportunity, as other members have done, to acknowledge and thank all of our emergency services, that do an incredible job both to support those that use our roads within our state and of course respond to the whole range of different emergencies that we know do occur. It is a shared responsibility, and what is critical is also understanding that we are on a journey. It is not just with road education and driver education; we can certainly take the opportunity to reflect on the past 40 to 50 years and that incredibly quick journey and the important role that technology has played within many of our vehicles that are on our roads.

I listened to some contributions earlier from other members, and if we do reflect on that journey through decades over time, many of the safety features that are on vehicles that we use today of course did not exist decades ago. I think we should acknowledge and put on the record those people who work in those industries to make our vehicles safer, and that is indeed a good thing. Whether that be air bags or the use of crumple zones, safety features are on cars that certainly were not on the first car that I owned. It certainly did not have any safety features like many of the modern cars that are on our roads today do. We know there is not just a sliding scale of safety features that exist; it also comes down to driver awareness and indeed driver concentration. That is where this bill is critically important.

We know that the legislation is designed to improve road safety by facilitating enforcement of distracted driver and seatbelt-wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras and adding to the list of serious offences that trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986. It also improves the transport accident scheme by making various amendments to the Transport Accident Act 1986 that address identified anomalies.

The details of the proposal—and a number of members have spoken about this in their contributions—are that the government has committed approximately \$34 million over five years to roll out mobile phone and seatbelt offence detection cameras as a priority project under the new *Road Safety Strategy Action Plan 2021–2023*. The bill makes legislative reforms that are needed to support the use of new technology for enforcement purposes. The bill provides that an image from a prescribed road safety camera is, without prejudice to any mode of proof and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, proof of the relevant fact, such as a driver touching a portable device while driving.

We know of course that the use of mobile phones is incredibly common now within our community. I was at a public hearing last week and mentioned the most recent images of Lance Franklin kicking his 1000th AFL goal. I did have to get that in as a Swans supporter. The image to me that stood out as thousands of supporters flooded the SCG was indeed that—and I did not go through and count them one by one—just about every single supporter had a smartphone within their hand. If we look around, not just this precinct but all work sites and many workplaces and schools within our community, we know that smartphones are not just here to stay but are absolutely everywhere. This is an important piece of legislation that goes to responding to not just the evolution of technology within our community but the use of technology in a way that makes our community safer. This is why this piece of legislation is important.

I know that a number of members have in their contributions spoken about the number of lives lost on Victorian roads. As I said earlier, one life lost on a Victorian road is one life too many, but we as a government—and indeed, I would say, as a Parliament—should always be supporting initiatives, projects and pieces of legislation that go to improving road safety and reducing road trauma within our state. In the 3 minutes that are remaining I did just want to talk about some of the broader investments in road safety. Particularly if I take the opportunity to look across my local electorate, I am really pleased and proud that we have been able to get some key investments in local roads. The Sunbury Road duplication will be a transformative project within my community. Acting Speaker Halfpenny, I know as a colleague and a member of Parliament you also have experienced growth within your own electorate, and I know that what is really important for electorates like ours is investment in roads as we continue to see more and more users on those roads. Projects like suburban and arterial road upgrades, of which Sunbury Road is one, are critical pieces of investment in road infrastructure that go to road safety. Installation of signals is another one. Gap Road and Horne Street within my electorate is another significant project, as well as removing the local Gap Road level crossing and planning upgrades for the Calder Freeway and the Bulla bypass—projects that are critically important to road safety.

We know, whether it is through community awareness and education programs, whether it is through those investments in those key roads that we know more and more people use each and every day or through using technology—which is addressed in many of the provisions in this bill—to improve community road safety across the state, this is something that the Andrews Labor government will continue to invest in and will continue to deliver as part of a broader suite of reforms that this government will continue to invest in and bring before the house.

I did just want to make an observation, because I know there has been some commentary from over the other side about investment in roads. When I look through successive budgets that we have been a part of, the investment from this government, not just in the local projects that I have mentioned previously but right across the state, is unmatched. When we look north to the budget from last week and the investment from the federal government, what really concerns me is that the investment is simply not there, nor is that ability to see many of these road projects that are in growth corridors such as where I live—Sunbury Road, for example. We need to make sure that projects like that and many, many more are continuing to be seen on the map. We need the federal government to step forward and put some money into these projects, to see Victoria, to recognise us as a state in this nation and to continue to invest in road safety. This is an important piece of legislation that goes to road safety. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Morningside) (17:48): I think the member for Sunbury is probably right: the level of road investment in this state is unmatched; it has never been as poor as it is right now. I certainly do not need 3 minutes to talk about the road projects that are occurring in my electorate, because there are not any. There might be an occasional bit of re-sheeting, a little bit of maintenance, but there are no projects underway and there have not been—in any year that Labor has been in power in this century and a little bit before.

The Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is straightforward. It amends the Road Safety Act 1986 and the Transport Accident Act 1986, basically intending to achieve three outcomes. It aims to enhance enforcement against distracted behaviour—people on their phones, texting or trying to find the next podcast, everything else you can do on a smartphone—and enhance enforcement against a failure to wear seatbelts. Absolutely crazy: why would you get into a motor vehicle and ignore the safety device that is closest to you, the seatbelt? It is just absolutely crazy. But we know it is happening, and we know that we do not have enough police on the road to enforce this in the way we have traditionally done in the past. As someone mentioned, there is an opportunity to use technology. So that is what this is about.

The second point is about strengthening the licence suspension powers where a serious road safety offence is alleged and there is a risk to public safety. The final change is around the transport accident scheme. On the one hand this is tightening the eligibility requirements where particular offences may have been committed and compensation would be, to put it mildly, inappropriate and in many ways morally wrong. The second change deals with anomalies that potentially disadvantage people who may be involved in a second collision and therefore be penalised by having the support that they have been receiving reduced.

The background to this legislation is that while road safety has improved enormously in this state over an extended period, you have only got to look at the graph that was included in the government's own road safety strategy. It makes it clear that road safety has, despite the enormous growth in vehicles on roads, improved enormously since the 1960s. I was just looking back this afternoon, and I well remember as a kid the *Sun*'s 'Declare war on 1034' campaign. The headline was 'Let's end this grim harvest of tragedy', and when you look at the way the numbers were increasing at that time, it really is very, very unpleasant reading. This article refers to the 1969 figure of 1034. The high-water mark for deaths on the road was 1061 the following year. But the article was suggesting that mathematically it was likely—this was in, I think, November 1970—that the road toll for 1970 would finish up as 1118. Thankfully it did not, but had it done it would have been 22 people every week. Of course the reference there is very much to the decision of the government, on the recommendation of the Road Safety Committee, to require Victorians to wear seatbelts. The report, which I have in my hand, handed down in September 1969, made some pretty tough recommendations, including within two years the compulsory wearing of seatbelts.

The reason I raise this is because one of the factors on that graph that I referred to is that basically since this government was elected the numbers have plateaued and in fact they are starting to increase. All the way down 1970 the graph is in a downward trend until we get to the election of this government, then it flattens out and starts to ease up again. Unfortunately one of the first things the government did was in fact to abolish the Road Safety Committee, which had ensured that road safety was considered to be a bipartisan issue. Both sides had an investment in that.

There are a few smirks going on in the chamber, but when you look at the history of this, the 1969 report, the opposition and the government—then a Liberal government—were included in the make-up of this committee. The report talks about a survey conducted by the RACV. When you look at the numbers, fewer than half of the population supported compulsory seatbelts. More than half of the population opposed compulsory seatbelts, yet the committee went ahead and made recommendations that seatbelts should be compulsory in a range of situations immediately and then within two years be compulsory across the state. They were able to do that because they had that bipartisan membership and the issue was able to be pushed hard by both sides. Sadly, as a result of this government's actions, we have lost that

bipartisan approach. The government would rather play politics with this issue—not all members of the government, and I certainly do not include the current minister in this category—but too many people want to play politics with road safety, and road safety is about the loss of human life.

As the government's strategy makes very clear, it is not good reading, and it is something that has really got to be turned around. Frankly, I do not take much joy from the strategy, although the issues that we are dealing with this afternoon I think are of value. There is not a lot in it. One concern I very much do have is that towards the end of the strategy there is talk about safety performance indicators and output indicators. They are all generalities. We have not seen the specifics. There are some issues that are to be dealt with by 2030, but how are we going to know that the strategy is on track, how are we going to know that the strategy is actually having an impact, unless we see those numbers? And of course, apart from the raw numbers—the number of serious accidents, the number of people killed on the road; we know those headline numbers—we do not know how we are tracking in so many other areas. Mobile phones, texting—we are dealing with that this afternoon. We are not doing anything at this stage to deal with the epidemic of drug driving, we are doing very, very little in terms of drunk driving, in terms of .05 breaches; those numbers are just not getting any better, so I think there is a long way to go.

In terms of the changes that are being made this afternoon, as I mentioned there are some changes around technology, so allowing cameras, through the use of artificial intelligence, to detect—and then it being verified by humans. The information provided by the government after the briefing was that we currently have an offence rate of 2.4 per cent. One in 42 drivers is using their mobile phone. Frankly, I would not be surprised if it was much higher than that, but even if it is one in 42, it is an epidemic problem. Hopefully this change will go some way to dealing with this.

On the changes around licence suspension, serious offences—whether it is leaving the scene of an accident, whether it is a range of issues around protecting emergency services workers or whether it is around the final issue of dangerous or negligent driving, all of those issues—are dealt with, and dealt with reasonably. On the final one, as I mentioned earlier, the transport accident changes, the only point I would make on that is that the measure that is intended to prevent further loss of earnings is not retrospective. I think it is reasonable to ask: why is that not retrospective? The response we had back from the government was, 'It would be a significant administrative burden'. Perhaps it would be, but what about the impact on the individual? I am sure it is a much more significant impact on the individual than it would be an administrative burden.

So I think it is a step in the right direction. There is a lot more to be done. We desperately need more enforcement beyond cameras. We need cops on the road. We need people wondering when they are going to pop up. It is a step in the right direction, but if we could make this a truly bipartisan effort, we would have much more success.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (17:58): I too am pleased to speak on this bill that will improve road safety for our community, and I welcome the bipartisan support from those opposite. Road safety is a critical issue for the government because too many Victorians die on our roads and too many families and friends are unnecessarily touched by the road toll. Road trauma can be prevented, and this legislation is another step towards that. I support the government's road safety strategy of eliminating deaths from our roads by 2050 and reducing the road toll by 50 per cent by 2030.

The statistics paint a clear picture of what changes we need to adopt to save lives. Sadly, 31 people died last year while not wearing a seatbelt. This equates to 13 per cent of the 2021 road toll. We need to make changes to laws and methods of detection to ensure people are wearing seatbelts. It is too important not to. Further, we must address the issue of driver distraction, particularly the use of mobile phones while driving. Driver distraction is a significant contributor to fatal accidents on our roads. It is estimated that driver distraction has led to the loss of more than 20 lives annually—20 funerals that should have not been held, 20 families who should not be grieving and 20 communities that should have never been impacted.

Driver distraction is also estimated to cause over 400 serious injuries per year. In 2020 an investigation found one in 42 drivers to be illegally using their mobile phones while driving; however, because there were limitations surrounding how this information was collected, the real amount of mobile phone use by drivers when driving is expected to be much higher, and anecdotally I believe that to be the case.

I thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and his ministerial office staff, as well as Regional Roads Victoria Grampians regional director Michael Bailey, manager of transport integration Angela Daraxoglou and their team, for the excellent job they do in looking after roads in Western Victoria.

Importantly, this bill that we have before the house today will amend the Road Safety Act 1986 as well as the Transport Accident Act 1986, and in doing so this legislation will improve enforcement capabilities. It will allow for immediate licence suspension and disqualification for serious road offences, so three reforms to the Transport Accident Act 1986.

Great things are happening in Ballarat when it comes to roads and road safety. I thank the minister for his support for upgrading Ballarat roads and making our roads safer for all users, whether that be trucks, buses, cars, motorbikes, scooters, bicycles or pedestrians. One fantastic example of this is the new Ballarat Safer Cycling Connections Sturt Street shared path, which has greatly improved road safety for bike riders and the broader community, with new traffic lights and pedestrian signals installed in the median to allow pedestrians and cyclists to cross safely at these intersections. I am also pleased to see that the Sturt Street–Drummond Street crossing is well underway as the final stage to be completed of our shared path. The new shared path replaces the existing narrower gravel path that runs along the southern edge of Sturt Street between Pleasant Street and Dawson Street, with a smooth surface for bikes, trikes, scooters and prams. Importantly, the design of our new shared path has an increased buffer between the path and existing traffic lanes, making it safer and easier for pedestrians and cyclists to access central Ballarat by bike or by foot as well as to enjoy our historic Sturt Street gardens. The path also provides safe passage for students wanting to ride their bikes to Ballarat Clarendon College, to St Patrick's College, to Loreto College and to Ballarat High School from central Ballarat. The safety upgrades to Sturt Street and the construction of the shared bike path have created local jobs as well as providing safe alternate transport options for the community. This transformative investment was part of a \$9.3 million Ballarat Safer Cycling Connections project in partnership with the Transport Accident Commission.

We are also improving local roads and road safety with the Keeping Ballarat Moving projects, which are being delivered to support growing populations in my electorate in Alfredton, Delacombe and Winter Valley, as well as new traffic lights in Gillies Street, Adelaide gardens, Albert Street in Sebastopol and out the front of Loreto College. We are also upgrading the roundabouts at Cuthberts Road and Sturt Street to improve traffic flow, and as the projects are titled, we are keeping Ballarat moving. I was at Delacombe Bunnings on the weekend thanking our Grampians Health team for the great work they are doing with the pop-up vaccination clinic and was pleased to see the amount of work going on with the removal of the roundabout in the lead-up to the installation of new traffic lights at the Delacombe town centre. The \$60 million investment is significant for our community. The upgrades of six traffic hotspots in the surrounding roads will improve travel and reduce the risk of crashes at key intersections, thus road safety across Ballarat.

Road safety is a priority for this government. Through our road safety we are addressing the road toll and aiming for a 50 per cent reduction by 2030, just eight years away. The Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is a crucial part of this strategy. Its critical amendments will make our roads safer and our transport accident scheme fairer. First of all, the bill improves enforcement capabilities through legislative reforms that support the rollout of mobile phone and seatbelt offence detection cameras. We know that driver distraction and disregarding seatbelt requirements are both tied to the significant increases in crash risk and road trauma. Addressing this behaviour is key to reducing the road toll, and according to the Monash University Accident Research Centre automated traffic offence technology has the capacity to prevent 95 casualty crashes per year. This government has committed

more than \$33 million over five years to this rollout, which is anticipated to begin in early 2023 with a three-month transitional period and an extensive information campaign.

Secondly, this bill proposes to add to the list of offences that trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification. These additional charges include culpable driving causing death, dangerous driving causing death or serious injury and the most serious of hit-and-run offences, ensuring the removal of the most dangerous drivers from our roads.

Finally, the bill makes important amendments to the Transport Accident Act 1986 concerning how benefits are paid in specific circumstances. These include increasing the age of a dependent child from under 16 to under 18, in line with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006; also removing discrimination for older workers who experience traffic accidents at retirement age by increasing entitlements from 12 months to 36 months; ensuring that children who lose two parents in a single accident receive the benefits for each; and expanding the TAC scheme to further cover cyclists injured by opening doors. These amendments correct anomalies and inequalities in Victoria's transport accident insurance scheme and facilitate the essential work done by TAC in supporting victims of road trauma. It is well known that regional and rural Victoria is over-represented in the road toll, and we need to do more to save lives.

I would like to give a shout-out to the TAC for the support they give community football and netball clubs across Victoria, particularly in rural and regional areas. Football and netball clubs are the lifeblood of so many communities, including mine, which is why it is so important the TAC are working with clubs to encourage their players, the parents, family members and supporters to follow the road rules and drive safely. The TAC have built a strong relationship with local football and netball clubs in the Wendouree electorate, including the mighty Redan football club and the Lake Wendouree Lakers, working with them to educate club members about the importance of road safety. This was included in the *Towards Zero* round in the AFL Goldfields region in 2019. Then in 2020 the TAC provided \$1.3 million through the *Towards Zero* club grants program.

What we have heard about this legislation that is before the house today is that we need to take action to save lives. We need to do things differently, and by doing things differently we need to use technology better to make our roads safer. We need to reduce driver distraction because we know that mobile phones are causing fatal accidents and bringing about far too many injuries every year. As a government and community, we need to do better. We must do better when it comes to road safety and addressing the causes of the road toll. Too many lives have been lost because of people not wearing seatbelts. This is not on—this is not on in 2022. Everyone must be wearing a seatbelt, whether it be a child in the back seat or a parent in the front seat. I strongly encourage everyone to take road safety seriously. Wear a seatbelt, drive to conditions, follow speed limits, do not drink and drive, and put your phone on 'Do not disturb' to stay alive.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (18:08): I am pleased to rise this evening to make a contribution in relation to the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We can see that this bill broadly covers three different areas. It enables better enforcement of distracted-driving and seatbelt-wearing offences by giving evidential status to images from new types of road safety cameras, it adds to the list of serious offences that Victoria Police may use to trigger immediate licence suspension and disqualification when charges are laid under the Road Safety Act 1986, and the bill is also intended to alter the transport accident scheme by making various amendments to the Transport Accident Act 1986.

As many speakers have said, the genesis of this bill is particularly in relation to the trial that went on in 2020 regarding taking photographs inside people's cars. That was to do two things. It was to detect people using their mobile phones whilst driving and also to detect motorists that were not wearing their seatbelts. It was interesting to look at statistics that we received from the department, and I thank the department and the minister for the briefing and the information that ensued from that.

In that particular trial 680 000-odd vehicles were assessed, with one in 42 drivers using their mobile phone whilst driving. I think that that is a very revealing statistic and one that should be of concern to all of us. We have heard many stories today from other members, and I am sure we could all tell our own stories, of when we have been in traffic—whether at high speed, whether at low speed or stationary at the lights and so on—and we have seen other motorists fiddling around with their phones. It is the classic situation where the light goes from red to green and the vehicle in front does not move because the person has got their head down, and they are inevitably fiddling around with their phone. It is a dreadful distraction. It is obviously even worse when the vehicle is in motion. There is that very effective ad—I think it is a TAC ad—where the fellow has his eyes covered over and you can see the distance that the vehicle travels whilst he is messing around with his phone. I think that is quite a powerful ad.

It was interesting also that the not wearing of seatbelts was detected as part of the pilot program. That was one in 667 drivers that were not wearing their seatbelt. That is quite a staggering number as well. Except for forgetfulness, you would wonder how on earth anyone would ever end up in that situation. It is interesting to note, as others have, that it was 1970 when seatbelts became compulsory here in Victoria. That was as the result of a parliamentary inquiry and parliamentary work done by a committee back in those days. That has been a life-changing development for all Victorians and indeed has spread around the world. It is interesting, as I said. In relation to the seatbelt statistics, I looked them up on the TAC website, which I found was a very comprehensive resource. That showed that the number of drivers who were killed on the roads while not wearing a seatbelt in 2020 was 22, and in 2021 it was 27. That was an alarming increase of 23 per cent over that time. Obviously through the last few years, in general terms, there has been less vehicular movement on the road with the extensive lockdowns and other things, so that is an alarming trend. I trust that that is a matter that will continue to receive attention from the TAC and others.

In terms of the overall road toll, we can see there again that the statistics contained on the TAC's website note that the majority of the tragic accidents are on rural roads. Many other contributors to this debate have talked about the rural road situation, and I think that that is one of the factors that the government absolutely has to address in trying to improve road safety here in Victoria. It is just an absolutely essential aspect that they must consider.

In talking about that, I particularly wanted to go back and look at a couple of the Victorian Auditor-General's reports in relation to that, particularly the report from June 2017, *Maintaining State-Controlled Roadways*. As we have heard in the countless examples today, particularly from my colleagues on this side, the condition of the roads can lead to either damage to a vehicle or, worse, vehicles running off when hitting wrong cambers on a road or poor drainage on a road, which impact upon a driver's ability to handle the particular conditions at the time. If we go back to the report from June 2017, I just want to read the conclusion in relation to that on page vii of that report. It says:

The increasing proportion of the state road network in very poor condition presents a growing risk to public safety and increases road user costs.

Not enough funding is allocated to road maintenance to sustain the road network, but VicRoads also cannot demonstrate clearly that it is making the best use of its existing maintenance funds.

Its approach to road pavement maintenance is reactive, with maintenance generally being carried out only when it becomes critical. Targeted early intervention to prevent roads from needing more costly and extensive maintenance has been limited. This approach has not kept up with the rate of deterioration of road pavements across the network.

From the stories that we have heard today there is no doubt that that situation is probably many times worse. Particularly in certain parts of the state where there have been significant amounts of rain over the summer, the roads have not stood up very well, and anybody that has driven on country roads in Victoria will attest to that. The government needs to be on notice to get out there and fix the roads, make sure that they are in a condition that is appropriate, and that will obviously well and truly contribute to safer travel for all Victorians but particularly for Victorians that live in rural and regional areas.

We can go back even further to various other reports from the Auditor-General's office. We had the report on 18 June 2020, *Safety on Victoria's Roads: Regional Road Barriers*—and that was an issue that I wanted to bring up, particularly the wire rope barriers, as they are known. I was alarmed when I saw evidence from some of my colleagues in relation to those wire rope barriers and how they had been put so close to the edge of the road. I remember seeing a photograph of a car parked next to one of the wire rope barriers, and the car was still half on the highway so there was no room to pull off. I thought at the time, 'What a disaster waiting to happen', and it just makes me scratch my head and wonder how on earth that was ever done. I trust that the government is getting out and trying to sort out that self-made mess again for the obvious safety reasons.

There was also an Auditor-General's report of 17 March 2021 in relation to maintaining local roads, and one of the conclusions that was drawn there was interesting as well. It says:

... councils cannot determine whether they are achieving value for money when maintaining their road network. This is because councils lack detailed cost data to analyse and benchmark their performance.

So I really wonder as we continue to look at these particular matters whether we have made any progress at all.

Again, it is incumbent upon the government to make sure that they are addressing these basic but critical aspects of road maintenance and of road management, both locally and more broadly, particularly in rural and regional areas. As we have heard from other members, the issue of potholes is a very real one, and coming up to the winter that is a very significant issue that we know can cause a driver to lose control and run off the road. So the government needs to look at road safety, to look at all these matters, from a holistic point of view and not leave out one of the key aspects of it, which is the road surface and the road conditions in the country.

I think there is no excuse for people using their mobile phones while they are driving. Everyone is on notice in relation to that. Hopefully these cameras will be an effective deterrent, and we will be able to retrain motorists—and particularly, I would dare to suggest, younger motorists—to leave their phones in the glove box, in the boot or on the back seat but out of reach, for the safety of all Victorians.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (18:18): I too rise to speak on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I think there have been some great contributions on this side of the house in relation to this bill, what it does and how it is going to make our roads safer for everybody travelling on them.

As I start my contribution I just want to share a story from my childhood about why road safety and seatbelts are so important. I noticed going through the notes in preparing to speak for this bill the number of deaths—31 people that died across Victoria last year from not wearing a seatbelt. And I felt really saddened and really quite frustrated about that—that we are still having a conversation around people wearing seatbelts and that being a safe way to travel in the car. It made me cast my mind back. I thought twice about sharing this story, but I will share it—but I will keep names private, although I am sure at the end of this story you will realise who I am talking about.

I grew up in northern New South Wales in a beautiful, very small, very sleepy beach town. One of the things that I did in my teens that might surprise many on this side of the house is I used to go surfing. We would finish school, and we would go surfing. Way back then not many girls went surfing there in northern New South Wales. I remember going surfing and seeing a young girl paddling out with her dad, and many years later you would know her as Stephanie Gilmore. So that tells you a little bit about where I grew up.

I remember two beautiful-looking young men, and this is when I was about 16 or 17 years old. I know that I could drive. I had a white Daihatsu Charade that I used to drive. Not many of my friends had a car, and I would pile us all into the car and we would drive to the beach, go surfing, maybe drive around town or go to parties. But I remember on one particular occasion at South Beach in Kingscliff, which was kind of a dangerous beach to go surfing, as we were heading out there were two young

boys of about 20—beautiful blonde-haired young men, very, very tanned, very athletic and very, very good surfers.

I can still see the image in my mind of these young boys because some weeks later we went to a party at the southern end of the Gold Coast in, I think it was, Greenmount or Rainbow Bay at the time. It was one of those parties I probably drove to—but we did not tell our parents we were going—and because I was the driver I was not drinking. Lots of people from school were there. All the guys that we had crushes on were there, and I remember seeing these two young boys. I think at the time one of them was dating one of my friends that I went to school with, that I was in the same year level as, from the same town. We had had a great night. We all headed back home in my car, and I dropped everyone home. I remember the next morning my mother asking if I was at that party. ‘Yes’—I confessed that I was. We had not told them; she was pretty cross. But something had happened at that party, something very unexpected and something that changed the community and people’s lives—a mother’s life, a father’s life and most certainly their son’s and siblings’ lives.

Those two young boys probably had had quite a bit to drink and jumped into the back seat of, I think it was, a wagon back then. I think they were lying down. The girl I went to school with, the girlfriend, was in the passenger seat, and she had her seatbelt on. The driver, who was also of driving age but still young and not drinking, got into the car and put on her seatbelt. The roads—I cannot really remember back then; I do not think there was an issue with the road. The driver lost control of the vehicle, and the vehicle hit a tree not far from the party—because I still remember where these trees were in this part of the southern end of the Gold Coast. The two girls had seatbelts on and the two boys did not. I remember my mother said to me that the two boys were thrown out of the car, because they were not wearing a seatbelt, upon impact with the tree. Those two boys, those two 20-year-olds—I just checked the media article about the deaths—died. There is nothing said about seatbelts, but my mum made it very clear to me that they were not wearing seatbelts and that that is why they were thrown out of the car. Now, the first responder on the scene—the paramedic or the ambo at the time—was the father of the girl that I went to school with. He attended the scene, and I think both young boys died pretty quickly upon impact.

As I said, that was something that went on to destroy lives, and it certainly hurt and put a lot of determination into the brother of one of those boys. I will not say his name here because I am not sure it is a story that is told very often, but you would know him as one of Australia’s and the world’s most famous surfers. That happened many, many years ago, and it stuck—the importance of seatbelts and seatbelt safety. It is a story that no doubt I will pass on to my children. It was a story told and a reminder given by two worried parents, my parents, to my sister, my brother and I repeatedly about the importance of wearing seatbelts for road safety—that they could and indeed did save lives. So I feel disappointed we are still having this conversation around Victorians needing reminders and needing enforcement measures in place to put on their seatbelts.

I am pretty proud that we have gone ahead and committed to a target of halving our number of road-related deaths by 2030. That is quite an ambitious target. Last year—and it is just so tragic because every death on the road is preventable—236 people died on Victorian roads, and this was an increase of 10 per cent from 2020. That is not something that anyone standing in this chamber wants to stand up and talk about—an increase from 2020. When you look at these stats they are pretty sobering. You know, some people might say, ‘Less than 300 people in Victoria die on the roads; there are states that might have bigger road tolls’, but when we stop and we think—and I think about stories like those two young boys; it is quite interesting now seeing a picture of one of them, because it is just as I remember him—every single one of those casualties is a person. They are a mum, they are a dad, they are a brother, they are a sister, they are young children, they are wives and husbands, they are family, they are our friends, and they help make up our community and who we are as Victorians and as Australians. They are more than a statistic, and if road safety was observed, they might still be here today. You know, I quite often wonder whether those two boys would be here today if they had had their seatbelts on.

We know that at least 20 per cent of these incidents were caused by speeding—we still know that speed is a massive factor—and, as I talked about, another 13 per cent were caused by not wearing seatbelts. We know that we need to do better. We need to do better if we are going to actually reduce the road toll by that 50 per cent by 2030. We are rolling out \$34 million to install those new speed cameras, which is really important. People talk about revenue raising. Well, whether it is raising revenue or, as I see it, getting people to slow down and save lives, we are going to be able to detect not only the speed that the cars are driving at but, remarkably, whether seatbelts are being worn and whether portable devices are being used. I know there is a lot of community awareness around using mobile phones. We look at other portable devices like DVD players—and I just cannot believe that drivers would actually be looking at them while driving—but we are going to be able to detect indeed if the drivers are looking at these things. We know that mobile phone usage contributed to 24 road fatalities in 2021—that is about 11 per cent of overall deaths on the road.

A lot has been said about this bill in the house—you know, I have very quickly run out of time in sharing with you my childhood story about the importance of road safety and seatbelts—but this bill goes a long way to helping make our roads safer, whether it is enforcement or whether it is upgrading roads and things like that that this government has been getting on and doing. Being able to save just one life on the roads from an accident incident that is completely preventable is a really big deal. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the house.

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (18:28): I rise today to contribute to the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and in doing so, at the outset, say that we will not be opposing this bill. In fact I think it is fair to say that on most occasions, pretty much at all times, we are on a unity ticket across all parties within this Parliament when it comes to road safety, keeping our roads safe, making sure that road users are safe and that there are measures in place to limit any dangerous incidents and accidents and making sure that people get home to their families. However, I think that the approaches are often different, and whilst we will not be opposing this bill there are some concerns that we have in terms of the government's overall approach when it comes to road safety.

At the outset I just want to make mention—and it has been mentioned by a number of other speakers today—that it has been on a couple of occasions and most recently that this Andrews Labor government abolished the road safety parliamentary committee. It is our—on this side of the chamber, the Liberal-Nationals—commitment that that is an important parliamentary committee. It has been a tremendously important parliamentary committee over many decades and has given us significant insights and recommendations on making our roads safer. In fact it was the Labor government in 1982—it was instituted, I think, back in the 1960s—and then in 1982 and in 2014 the Andrews Labor government actually stopped that parliamentary committee, which means that for Victorians they are poorer for it. It is a committee that recommended introducing and legislating for seatbelts and the demerit point system. Various road safety initiatives had come through that committee process, and the mind boggles as to why the government abolished that and turned a blind eye to that joint parliamentary committee.

In saying that, the Andrews Labor government has taken a bit of a piecemeal approach. Whilst they have got some initiatives in this bill that we hope will make our roads even more safe, they take a piecemeal approach to road safety. We can see that as well around the road safety funding and road safety upgrades. Through our regional, country and outer suburban communities we know that this Andrews Labor government has failed to deliver on significant road safety upgrades, and that contributes to road trauma incidents.

I would like to take this opportunity—I am not sure that we have really spent enough time talking about this in the contributions so far on this bill—to pay tribute to the local police, particularly in my community, the Yarra Ranges police at the Lilydale and Mount Evelyn stations and surrounding stations, and also to first responders to road trauma incidents, volunteer firefighters at the Seville CFA and the Wandin CFA. When there is a road safety accident, whether it is from speed or from somebody using their mobile phone—driving dangerously—the Yarra Ranges police, particularly the highway patrol and

the traffic police, are the ones that monitor these roads, and it is our first responders, our volunteers, who go out to the accidents, see the trauma, help the families and clean up the mess. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to them and what they do each and every day of the year for our community.

In my community we have got a number of roads that are dangerous and need significant attention, and it is not just these initiatives in the piece of legislation that we see today. What we are calling on this Andrews Labor government to do is to significantly address the complete and utter crumbling of our roads—dangerous intersections, dangerous roads—because if they actually took the time and the effort to get out of the tram tracks of the city and have a look at these outer suburban and country areas, at these roads, they would see that actually fixing the roads would go some way to reducing road trauma. In my community we have the Melba Highway, the Maroondah Highway and the Warburton Highway. The Warburton Highway is notorious for severe accidents. The Andrews Labor government should not wait for another tragic accident on one of these roads—on the Melba Highway or the Warburton Highway or indeed at Maroondah Highway–Killara Road in Coldstream. They should not wait for another death before they upgrade these roads, which they have known about for a very long time.

The minister at the table, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, is turning around and looking quizzically at his colleagues up there in the corner. I think that they know that these roads need fixing—these dangerous roads and these traffic problems, unaddressed by them for years and years. Despite the community gathering together, campaigning and advocating for these roads to be improved, this government has done nothing. What is their strategy? To leave the potholes, to leave the roads crumbling, the sides of the roads decaying? You know, putting in some flimsy reflector poles does not fix the traffic accidents. We call again on the government to fix the Maroondah Highway at Coldstream, the Warburton Highway in Seville and Seville East and the Melba Highway through Yering and in fact into my colleague the member for Eildon's area—right through her area. These bridges are narrow. They are insufficient to support the communities that use these roads—the transporters, the tourists and just the people who live there who want to get around there day to day, to get to and from work and school and to get home safely. If this government took the time to fix these roads and address that, then I think it would go a lot of the way to fixing road safety.

I heard the contributions from a number of members from the Labor government talking a lot about the removing of level rail crossings, and I know that that is particularly important. In my community in Lilydale the level crossing has been removed there and the construction still is not complete, despite the fact that the government says it is done—it is not. But interestingly the main street there in Lilydale has no road strategy and in fact the congestion is far worse than it was before. Despite the government saying that it would slash congestion, it has made it worse, and it has made the main street, Maroondah Highway through Lilydale, more dangerous. This is concerning for everyday Victorians who live in Lilydale and drive through this area. They are very concerned about the safety of this road—that under the sky rail bridge it goes from two lanes to one lane in the middle of an intersection. This is not normal. This is a problem, and it is unsafe. Already there have been a number of near misses at that intersection, and it is only a matter of time. So when the government says that it is removing the level crossing, the boom gates, in order to remove a dangerous intersection, it has really generated another danger with the traffic lights and the changing from two lanes to one lane right under the bridge within the middle of an intersection. It is not a solution. We know that we have already had near misses and nearly accidents right there, with the buses coming out and so forth. Again, what is the strategy for the constituents and the residents in my community that need to use that on a daily basis to get to and from work and school and to get to and from home safely?

Again, with the short time that I have remaining, the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill introduces a couple of measures to add to the suite of measures that are of a bipartisan or a multipartisan nature. We have sought to have improvements to make roads safer through initiatives like the wearing of seatbelts—the first jurisdiction in the world to introduce seatbelts. As a mum of two boys, since the day they were born I have been saying that they need to have their seatbelts on.

These initiatives are important, and we support those initiatives, but we would call for a better strategy and more funding for roads.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (18:38): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The member for Evelyn began her contribution by saying that road safety is above politics, and indeed it is. I think regardless of politics, throughout Victoria's history Victorian governments have pioneered road safety. In 1971, for instance, Victoria became the first jurisdiction in the world to mandate the wearing of seatbelts. Another one that you might not know is that Melbourne's roads were the first in Australia to have traffic lights. That is actually in the latest crossword puzzle of my Bentleigh electorate newsletter, that one. It just goes to show that we as a state have pioneered road safety.

It is also in the messaging around road safety, around seatbelt wearing. I remember when I was 10 years old visiting Greece with my family. In 1996 of course hardly anybody in that country would wear seatbelts. They were there, they just were not worn. I remember we would wear seatbelts all the time and people would look at us as though, you know, they were looking at somebody wearing a face mask three years ago. They looked at us in that way, but we came obviously from a country that certainly did place significant emphasis on road safety and the simple act of just wearing a seatbelt. We know how important wearing seatbelts is. In 2021, 31 people died while not wearing a seatbelt, which was 13 per cent of the 2021 road toll. That of course is devastating. You know, those are probably preventable deaths—if only they had worn the seatbelt. The seatbelts are there for good reason and the laws are in place for good reason.

This government has a strategy in place and a target—a target that we are confident we will reach—and that is to halve the road toll by 50 per cent by 2030. That is a target that is underpinned by many things, including the measures in this bill. This bill does a number of things, but essentially what this bill does is formalise the use of detection cameras for mobile phone and seatbelt offences. It also ensures that that evidence can be used when following up a violation of mobile phone and seatbelt laws. Subject to the enactment of the bill, the rollout of automated detection and enforcement will commence in early 2023—not far away at all.

The member for Evelyn also pointed to what she called a failure to deliver road upgrades, so it has just prompted me to perhaps talk about a few road upgrades in my electorate, where there certainly has not been a failure to deliver. I see the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the table, and he has certainly always been a listening ear when it comes to the road safety needs of the Bentleigh electorate. I suppose the biggest road project in the Bentleigh electorate ever was the removal of those three level crossings. The member for Evelyn laments the removal of the level crossing over in Lilydale; apparently the removal of that level crossing has made the area less safe. Look, I do not know Lilydale, I do not know the area, but I can honestly—

Ms Vallence: Well, maybe come out of the tram tracks.

Mr STAIKOS: We do not have any trams in Bentleigh, by the way—we never have. I do not live in a tram-tracked area. But what I can say is that the level crossing removals, the three of them in the Bentleigh electorate, have certainly made the area safer. I remember vividly at the Centre Road, Bentleigh, level crossing a lot of deaths. I remember quite some years ago the death of 15-year-old Alana Nobbs, who was a student at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College. Her father for many years after that campaigned for the removal of the Centre Road level crossing. There were so many others. I remember an elderly lady was collected by an express train right in front of her husband at that level crossing. These were tragic accidents. This government obviously at the 2014 election embarked on a very ambitious agenda to remove 50—we are removing 85. We keep adding to that. Those are projects that certainly make our roads more safe, not less safe. I am sure, not knowing that area over in Lilydale that well—

Ms Blandthorn interjected.

Mr STAIKOS: Well, the member for Pascoe Vale does know the Lilydale area, and she assures me that it is much safer than it was. So maybe have a look at that one again, member for Evelyn.

I must say, given the member for Evelyn said there has been a failure to invest in road safety initiatives, I do remember back in 2016 when the level crossing removals were under construction in my electorate one Georgie Crozier, otherwise known as the shadow minister against health, marching up and down Centre Road petitioning against the level crossing removals. I have never understood the strategy of those opposite, throughout the Level Crossing Removal Project over the last seven years, in campaigning against it. I mean, if they think that is a vote winner, they have got another think coming.

If I go through the list of other road safety initiatives in my electorate, I think of the roads we have converted to 40 kilometres per hour in those high-pedestrian areas—Centre Road, East Bentleigh, where my office is, and now North Road in Ormond. These are shopping strips. They are high-pedestrian areas. When you announce these, you inevitably get people saying, ‘Stop slowing down traffic’. But we have got to think of road safety first. Road safety cannot be an afterthought. Yes, we have got to get people from A to B in a timely manner, but we have also got to make sure that the roads are safe, because roads are not just for motorists, they are also for cyclists and for pedestrians. It is a bit like the South Road upgrade. Forty thousand cars use South Road each and every day, and it has been made busier because of the Mordialloc Freeway. The member for Mordialloc is not here, but he has heard this from me before. That upgrade is not just for motorists. Yes, it will make traffic flow better, but it will also make South Road work better for pedestrians, make it safer for pedestrians. We are often criticised whenever we embark on a road initiative for that reason. There is a view among some that we should only upgrade roads to make traffic flow better. We need to make sure we are making traffic flow better, but we need to make sure that we are making these roads as safe as possible.

We also, in the 2020 budget, funded the signalisation of the Centre Road and Bignell Road intersection, and that one I do know well because when I was a kid I was involved in a car accident at that intersection. St Peter’s church is on that corner, and on multiple occasions cars have ended up in the church garden. It is a very, very dangerous intersection. When we announced this I heard from a lot of people who said, ‘Oh, another set of traffic lights on Centre Road’. But it is better than people dying, and we have to weigh all these things up. These are very important. Facebook can be a really weird place, and often on Facebook you see people warning each other about speed cameras. Well, just do not speed. Road safety should not ever be an afterthought, but I am afraid for some people it is.

These are good initiatives in this bill. They contribute to our road safety strategy, a strategy that has a target of a 50 per cent reduction in the road toll by 2030. I congratulate the minister on bringing this legislation to the house. It is a good piece of legislation, and I am sure, member for Evelyn, that the level crossing removal at Lilydale has substantially improved and enhanced safety in that area. I commend the bill to the house, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (18:48): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the debate on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Can I start by thanking the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for the important work that he continues to do. As we know, things change over time and road safety needs to be reviewed consistently. When I was growing up back in the 1970s all eight of us got thrown into a very small car—no seatbelts were required at the time—and when I think about that now, if we had had an accident, I probably would not be standing here today.

The introduction of seatbelts was so significant for our communities, for keeping people safe. As we go through the years, different things change. Now we have the issue of people using mobile devices in their vehicles and being distracted. These are things that are so important to our community. I know in my community of Geelong many people have been impacted by road accidents because someone was killed or seriously injured, and the impact on their family and their friends—the devastating impact, particularly on young people—is something that we need to try and deal with all the time consistently.

We are very lucky to have the TAC head office in Geelong. They do amazing work. Their advertising was referenced earlier by another member in this place—the TV advertising that they do and the impact that that has. But sometimes I think that it impacts on people like me, but we need to be getting that message across to other people who may not be watching TV, like young people. There is lots of work to do around road safety, but I do commend the work of the TAC and what they do. They also get out and about in our community and run awareness campaigns and work particularly with sporting clubs, because we know from the past that people have a few beers down at the sporting club and drive home, and whether it is alcohol, whether it is speed, using a mobile device or not wearing a seatbelt, we have seen the impact of that. We have seen the devastation of people being killed on our roads. It is really important that we continue to work on road safety, ensuring that we are dealing with the issues as they come up from time to time.

I think the use of mobile phones is really concerning. I know when I drive around—and I know a lot of members referred to this in their contributions today—that I see people using their mobile devices and phones, and we know that it only takes a second to completely change your life or somebody else's life. When you are using your mobile phone, you are distracted, you are not looking at the road and you then put everyone at risk—not only yourself but other people, road users or passengers in your vehicle. We need to continue to drive that message to anyone using their mobile phone. And it is not just young people, I have to say; I see older people using their mobiles and being distracted when they are driving. In fact I have seen numerous minor incidents, fortunately not major incidents—running up the back of the vehicle or side-swiping a vehicle—because someone has been on their mobile phone.

I would imagine there would be many, many families out there that would welcome this legislation. I know over the years I have spoken to many families who have been impacted by serious vehicle accidents, whether the person was using a mobile phone, not wearing a seatbelt, speeding or affected by alcohol—all those issues that we see from time to time that cause accidents—and they have lost a loved one or one of their loved ones has had such a serious injury that it has really impacted on their quality of life. So I think there is a lot that we need to be doing and focusing on to ensure that those families can be reassured and our entire community can be reassured that we are dealing with road safety and that we are not going to allow this sort of thing to continue without at least putting in whatever measures that we can.

The new technology is something that I welcome, and I know people in my community of Geelong would welcome it as well—that if you are using your phone or not wearing your seatbelt it is picked up. And if you were not the driver or you want to challenge that, you have got every right to, but it is really important that we continue to use technology in this way to provide road safety. The research shows that while you are driving your risk of having a crash, depending on the type of phone activity, is between twice and 10 times the risk of other drivers. We know the damage that can be done. But for me it is about that split second of making the wrong decision, making that decision to pick up your phone or to be distracted in some way. Whether it is your phone, not wearing a seatbelt, alcohol or whatever the issue is, it can just all be over in a flash—not just your life but that of passengers, other road users or your loved ones. I have met people that are living with the fact that they have actually killed a family member, a loved one or a friend, and they have got to live with that for the rest of their life as well as dealing with the justice part of it—being convicted for culpable driving and those sorts of things. Nobody wants to live with that.

I also want to make note of the significant road improvements that we have been doing around my community. Only the other day the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who is here in the chamber with us tonight, was down in Geelong looking at some of the fantastic changes that we have made to improve our road network. Geelong's population is growing really quickly, and we need that road infrastructure. I am pleased to say that the minister has listened to the people of Geelong and ensured that there are good road improvements right across my electorate of Geelong.

As I said, there are amendments in the bill that recognise the danger of driver distraction. The police on the ground can only do so much. It is so important that we recognise that, yes, the police are out there. They are doing their job—they do a mighty job in our communities. But they cannot be sitting there at the side of every vehicle to make sure people are doing the right thing. As first responders, whether it is them or the paramedics or the fireys, they are turning up at these horrific scenes and are having to deal with someone's very bad decision that has caused a trauma, a tragic accident, where people are killed or seriously injured. You can only imagine what it must be like for them turning out there. I was listening to members talk earlier about how often in smaller communities the first responders know the person that is in the car that has been killed. As first responders, the work that they need to do is something that someone like me has no idea what it must be like for them. I do send a big shout-out to our first responders. But also it is not a matter of having more police on the road as such; it is about having that technology. We have the technology. We need to use it and we need to continue to use it to ensure that we can identify who is using their mobile phone and whether they have got their seatbelt on. When they get the fine, maybe next time they will think about not doing the wrong thing. This is a great bill. I recommend the bill to the house.

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (18:58): I too rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, a somewhat short and truncated contribution this evening. It occurs to me that when you look at road safety it is something that continually evolves, and it evolves over time. As new technologies emerge, as the way we live our lives continues to change, of course legislation in this space is also going to need to be amended. But it is a really good start, firstly, that we have a minister not only for roads but for road safety as well. You have got to have someone who is actually in charge of the agenda and that is driving an agenda as well. Secondly, and as importantly, you have got to have some sort of overarching vision and some sort of strategy to work within to be able to drive the road toll down, which is ultimately what the aim is at the end of all of this. You have got to utilise research, you have got to utilise data and you have got to use that to keep driving that through to come up with the plans that you need.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

KOORYONG–NORTH ROADS, CAULFIELD

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:00): (6306) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is an urgent review, including a traffic report, of the safety of the Kooyong Road–North Road intersection as well as an immediate start of a proper safety upgrade of this site. On 9 November last year a teenage boy was hit by a truck at this intersection. He suffered severe injuries, and he was fighting for his life. It was a horrifying wake-up call to many locals about the dangers this intersection possesses. There are many young children that actually use this area on the way to school, and both I and the member for Brighton met with a number of the parents and these kids wanting immediate action to ensure that this intersection was made safe.

Well, it has now been five months since the accident took place, four months since I raised this matter in Parliament and three months since the department committed to making this intersection safe for the people of my electorate of Caulfield. What has happened since? Nothing. The community desperately wants action. There have been over 1000 people who have signed a petition, and an additional petition that we will table in Parliament had a further 361 people sign it. This is a real concern in terms of safety for many parents. It is a real issue for many kids, and when we have seen near misses—a kid being bowled over by a truck—something desperately needs to be done.

The residents have also made a number of suggestions as to what can be done, including ensuring better signage and speed reductions. Even the lip on which the cars turn right could be raised slightly,

because many cars override it and go onto the footpath when they travel through. If the government is going to ignore these people, then we are only one accident away from a tragedy. I call on the minister, I implore the minister, tonight to do what was first asked and was promised—that is, give us a traffic management report of what we can do to upgrade the safety measures that are desperately needed at the Kooyong Road–North Road intersection so we can go back to those parents and we can go back to the residents that live around this intersection to make sure it is finally made safe.

REID'S GUEST HOUSE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:02): (6307) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, and the action that I seek is for the minister to provide me with an update about the temporary closure of Reid's Guest House in Ballarat and what steps have been taken to support displaced guests. Reid's Guest House is one of Ballarat's largest accommodation facilities for people who are experiencing homelessness. Reid's is owned and operated by Uniting Vic.Tas, with guests typically offered an initial stay of up to 60 nights while staff provide support to find long-term housing during their stay.

On the evening of 10 February this year a fire broke out in the lower floor of the facility and caused significant structural and electrical damage to the residence hall of the building. This led to the evacuation of 50 guests and staff from the building to Uniting's BreezeWay facility. This very important facility and team of dedicated staff usually provide meals to Ballarat's most vulnerable people. On the night of the fire at Reid's Guest House, BreezeWay again stepped up for these people and provided emergency relief accommodation for those 50 displaced guests. I would like to acknowledge the devoted staff at Uniting for their tremendous work in supporting these guests through the challenges of relocation while the facility is being repaired and made safe. I would like to recognise the advocacy of Abbey Cutler and the team from CatholicCare Ballarat in providing information about this acute issue to my office. Many other providers, such as Anglicare, have also been supportive by providing meals for displaced guests.

Reid's Guest House is such an important refuge for the most vulnerable members of our community. This was acknowledged with an extensive \$1.2 million renovation funded through the state government's Living Heritage program. This investment was allocated for works on both the inside and the outside of the building. I would again like to thank the minister for his strong and compassionate leadership in Victoria's largest ever investment in social and affordable housing. At least \$80 million has been allocated specifically to Ballarat as a part of the transformative Big Housing Build, which will not only create housing for vulnerable community members but boost employment in construction. I look forward to hearing from the minister and receiving an update about this very important issue to the people of Ballarat.

GIPPSLAND EAST ELECTORATE HOUSING SUPPORT

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (19:05): (6308) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Housing, and the action I am seeking is for him to overturn the decision to make the Bairnsdale and Sale offices of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing available for appointment-only services. We have situations arise from time to time, as I am sure all members of this chamber will agree, when people who are seeking housing support need urgent attention for their own peace of mind, and they often need urgent attention in relation to the outcomes that they are seeking. To have to book to see a departmental representative is simply not good enough. These people are public servants. Public servants are there to serve the public, and they should be accessible.

This comes at a time when our Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning offices have been closed for an extraordinary length of time post the bushfires and the COVID period in East Gippsland. They are now thankfully back open, only for us to be greeted by the news that at these offices you can only get in now if you make an appointment. We do not know why this change in service delivery has occurred. We do not know how long urgent housing cases and issues will have to wait before they can see someone. We should be making our departmental reps more accessible, not

less accessible, and I would encourage the minister to overturn these decisions and allow people to walk in when they need service and, when they need their issues addressed, to be able to see somebody from that department.

LARA ELECTORATE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Mr EREN (Lara) (19:07): (6309) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek from the minister is for him to visit the growing suburb of Lara in my electorate to look at the way population growth is affecting traffic congestion. Lara has grown significantly over the years, and what was once considered a small rural community is now one of Geelong's most popular growth areas. The population is exceeding expected population growth for this community, and this will only increase. The next five to seven years will see a continuation of steady growth in population. While this growth is fantastic in many ways, it does create real pressure points in this community, and roads are one of them.

Lara is seeing some major traffic congestion concerns at key intersections. The majority of roads in the community are managed by the local council. However, Forest Road North is a state arterial road and one that is under constant pressure, especially at peak times. On that road there is the Lara Lake Primary School, and as you proceed further down there is an intersection where there are six different roads intersecting in that very busy section of the road. On the other side, which is Flinders Avenue, there is another primary school, which is the Lara Primary School. As you can appreciate, at both drop-off times and pick-up times it is just a nightmare to get through that intersection. The majority of roads, as I have stated, are local council, but there are some roads that are state government responsibility.

The *Lara Traffic Management Plan 2019–2029*, which was adopted by the City of Greater Geelong, also highlights broader traffic management issues associated with the growing population of Lara. This is all good of course. We want more population growth in certain parts of Geelong, and Lara is well over 20 000 residents now and far exceeds what the expectation was. Clearly there are some pressure points on roads, particularly when it comes to road safety, and we want to make sure that as a state government we are on top of these issues before we get into a situation where there might be some accidents in the future when further growth in population occurs. The action that I seek is for the minister to visit the growing suburb of Lara in my electorate to look at the way population growth is affecting traffic congestion.

EVELYN ELECTORATE STORM DAMAGE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (19:09): (6310) It has been 10 months since the devastating cyclonic storms that ripped through my local community from Lilydale, Mount Evelyn and Montrose right up through the Dandenong Ranges, where these communities continue to grapple with long-lasting impacts. It is extraordinarily underwhelming that as we approach the anniversary of this disastrous event our community has been left hanging by the Andrews Labor government in terms of ongoing disaster relief funding. Local residents, volunteer organisations, small businesses and the council all desperately need the confidence that disaster recovery funding will be extended to ensure these communities can recover and rebuild.

The matter I raise is for the Premier, and the action I seek is that he explains to my community why the Andrews Labor government has refused to provide full disaster recovery funding, including for fixing vital infrastructure such as drains and roads, and business recovery funding and that he intervenes and commits to extending the council support fund for the Yarra Ranges council, as requested, by an incremental \$2 million to ensure council-employed resources can continue beyond 30 June this year and provides a further \$3 million in direct funding to ensure that the 75 to 80 families whose homes were utterly destroyed during the storms can have full risk assessments conducted by council, given the complexities of being in a bushfire and erosion zone with environmental overlays.

It is outrageous to hear that the Andrews government has told these communities and council to just wait until the state budget. Further delays mean our communities risk losing these vital support workers, losing that intel, losing that momentum and risk leaving people in my community behind. It makes no sense to me that the Andrews Labor government has abandoned these Victorians. No wonder local residents in the most impacted areas of the Dandenongs are scratching their heads, astonished that their local member, the member for Monbulk, has done nothing to advocate for this funding to ensure these resources and works can continue. Clearly he has no gravitas. Why isn't he championing the cause of the people in his electorate? Why is he missing?

Yarra Ranges council have been required to submit five business cases to the state government for funding for recovery—for fallen trees and debris, damaged structures, roads, bushland—and yet the Andrews Labor government has failed to take action. The fact that five business cases were required—it is as if the state government were completely oblivious to the fact that these communities experienced the most vicious storms causing a level of damage not seen for decades. Premier, please urgently take these actions, provide these explanations to my community and ensure council receives this vital and requested funding.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Evelyn, there were multiple requests within your adjournment tonight. Can you clarify which action you are seeking, please? It can only be one. Just to clarify, member for Evelyn, your first request was an explanation regarding funding, and I will take that as the request and the action sought.

Ms VALLENCE: Yes, the explanation to my community of why they have refused to provide the funding and intervene to commit to extending the council support fund for the Yarra Ranges council by an incremental \$2 million to ensure council-employed resources can continue beyond 30 June and provide a further \$3 million in funding for the 75 to 80 families whose homes were utterly destroyed during the storms so they can have those risk assessments done.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Evelyn. That clarified it for me.

WARNEET BOATING PRECINCT

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (19:13): (6311) My adjournment is to the Minister for Fishing and Boating and Minister for Ports and Freight, and the action I seek is for the minister to come and visit the coastal village of Warneet and meet the key local representatives from the yachting, foreshore, boating and fishing clubs and committees. I have met with local residents and visited this stunning part of the world on several occasions recently. I also attended a meeting last week organised by Alex Stroud, commodore of the Warneet Motor Yacht Club, with a focus for me being to listen to the members from the jetties committee, who are passionate advocates and relentless campaigners and active in their community and know this area, its history and its waters so well.

We went through the *Warneet Boating Precinct Plan*, which was released late last year, which outlines the priorities for the area. Feedback during both consultation rounds included replacing ageing jetties at the north and south sites, new public toilet facilities and an upgraded boat ramp and car park at Warneet South. The final plan outlined concept designs addressing these and other infrastructure priorities. Whilst both jetties are managed by Parks Victoria—the assets themselves—the works identified on the jetties will be considered under the *Sustainable Local Ports Framework*. The members present were pleased to hear that the ports portfolio is also held by the Minister for Fishing and Boating.

There is nothing better than sitting down, going for a walk, standing at the area of interest, asking questions and listening to locals speak to their priorities and aspirations. I learned so much about this area, its history and the value and vitality of their jetties, and I appreciate the work that has gone into Better Boating Victoria, who have taken the lead and are working alongside state and local government agencies and community to develop up the precinct plan. There are 90 boats moored in Warneet. It is a township with one road in and one road out—the same road. It is interwoven with the surrounding

communities of Blind Bight and Cannons Creek, backdropped by the Ramsar wetlands and set in a tree conservation zone. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Warneet to join with me and meet with these incredible advocates.

CORIO BAY GAS IMPORT TERMINAL

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:15): (6312) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Planning. The action I seek from the minister is to commission an independent assessment of the emissions that would result from Viva Energy's plan to build a gas import terminal in Corio Bay. As the minister would be aware, Viva Energy wants to build a new gas import terminal in the bay near Geelong and the environmental assessment for this project is currently underway. Over the past year many members of the local community have contacted my office to raise concerns about this project. They are worried about the impacts of a new fossil fuel project for the climate and for the local environment and also the safety risk it poses to the community. Now that the environment effects statement process is underway locals have contacted us with concerning analysis that Viva may be deliberately misleading the EES process by undercounting the climate emissions from their project by up to 12 times. Viva is doing this by failing to count the emissions that would be created by the gas being transported to the terminal. This is why today I am seeking that as part of that environment assessment process for the project the government gets an independent assessment of all the emissions from Viva's planned project to make sure that they are accurate. The accounting trick that Viva seems to be trying to pull is an example of how much work the community groups and environment organisations have to do just to ensure that projects do not get a green light based on incomplete and inaccurate information.

Another key concern from the community is the risk that this terminal would pose to community safety. It would be located just 250 metres from homes and close to critical port infrastructure. Analysis shows that over 30 000 Geelong people live within the range of harm should an accident occur, yet Viva have downplayed these impacts. They have presented only the impact of a very minor leak that might occur, but elsewhere in the world we have seen quite destructive accidents have happened at similar gas terminals.

If we do take a step back, it is pretty disastrous to be even considering new fossil fuel projects at all in 2022, as evidence of the escalating climate crisis is all around us. In fact just this week the UN Secretary-General said that investing in any new fossil fuel infrastructure would be 'moral and economic madness'. It is just over a year since the Minister for Planning made the welcome decision to reject AGL's energy plan to build a gas import terminal in Western Port Bay on Boon Wurrung country. That was the right decision, and the community was very pleased by it. Any more investment in fossil fuels or any more support or approval of fossil fuel projects would be a backwards step that our climate cannot afford, and communities should not have to fight off project by project one after one. So I implore the government to please reject this project and to focus the government's efforts on getting our state off fossil fuels and off gas. I know they have already, hopefully, started.

CANTERBURY SPORTS GROUND

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (19:18): (6313) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport. The action I seek is that the minister join me in visiting Canterbury Sports Ground to inspect it and discuss potential improvements. This vital community hub is home to three important local sporting clubs: Canterbury Cricket Club, Canterbury Football Club and Canterbury Junior Football Club. These clubs have a combined membership playing group and supporter base of around 4000 people. While the Canterbury Sports Ground is a key community asset, the outdated design means it is no longer fit to serve the growing and diverse needs of a modern sporting facility. The three clubs have worked hard to increase participation from younger age groups, veterans and women, with clubrooms predominately designed for a smaller and mainly male membership. The current facilities simply are not welcoming for all participants. Inclusive facilities are crucial to encouraging the growth of community sport across all genders and age groups.

The design shortcomings of the current facilities also extend to the location of the clubrooms in relation to the ground. The existing clubrooms sit roughly a metre below the surface of the playing arena; coupled with a fence at eye level for seated spectators, this severely hampers the viewing experience of onlookers. The current sunken location has also made the clubrooms prone to flooding. The non-inclusive nature of the current facilities, compounded by the functional limitations of the clubrooms, undoubtedly impacts the experience of members and visitors alike. A renovation of the current facility would no doubt benefit the three clubs and their many members and patrons, and it would also better serve other sporting clubs and organisations that use the facilities from time to time. It would therefore be a true community investment.

I know the minister is a genuine champion of community sport and has in particular supported many initiatives to encourage greater female participation in different sporting codes. I believe that Canterbury Sports Ground's challenges and needs will resonate with the minister. I therefore extend a warm invitation for her to join me at Canterbury Sports Ground to see the issues I have described here today firsthand. I look forward to the minister's visit.

FOREST HILL ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (19:21): (6314) I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to investigate why there is no longer a bus service along Highbury Road in Burwood East between Blackburn Road and Middleborough Road and to reinstate the former bus service along this road. Buses in Burwood East currently run north-south on both Blackburn and Middleborough roads. They also run along a short section of Highbury Road east of Blackburn Road. However, there is no bus service on Highbury Road between Blackburn Road and Middleborough Road. This is a distance of about 1600 metres. This means that anyone wanting to catch a bus has to walk more than 800 metres to get to the nearest bus stop.

I have been contacted by local residents regarding this issue. These residents find themselves in a position where they either have to walk almost a kilometre to get to the nearest bus stop or else make alternate transport arrangements. Many of the residents in this area are older people, and thus the walking of long distances is infeasible. On the north side of Highbury Road, in the immediate area alone, there are almost 500 residents over the age of 65 years. Transport is particularly vital for older people who are often confined to their homes or restricted in their transport options. It provides the elderly with an essential link to family, friends and the wider community as well as providing the ability to attend vital medical appointments. The ability for older residents to maintain their independence, especially when no longer able to drive themselves, is very important. According to the national Council on the Ageing, about 92 per cent of seniors have at least one chronic disease and 77 per cent have at least two. The proportion of older people who regularly use public transport is highest amongst the 70 to 74 age group, before declining with age.

Minister, residents of the Forest Hill district should have access to local public transport and be able to use this for their transport needs. This is an important issue for many residents, particularly older residents, and needs to be addressed. Thus I look forward to receiving a positive response to this matter so I can convey this to my constituents, which will then assist them to be able to move more easily around the area.

ANZAC DAY

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:23): (6315) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Veterans. The action I seek is that the minister join me for what is a beautiful Anzac ceremony put on by the Boronia K-12 College in my electorate. One of the greatest honours I have in my role is representing the state government at local Anzac services across our community, and indeed I am looking forward to attending the dawn service at the Boronia RSL, which is always such a respectful and solemn occasion.

Of course last year I was also lucky enough to be invited to the Boronia K-12 service and even had the honour of speaking at it. And let me say, I was absolutely blown away at their service last year. It included children as young as three all the way through to adulthood sitting in absolute silence and showing the respect and dignity required of the occasion. It was truly a sight to behold. The service also included two wonderful musical performances from students as well as students dressed in traditional service men and women's uniforms from previous conflicts our veterans have been in. The gentleman that led the ceremony, Wayne Robinson, gave an excellent explanation of the parts of the service to give all of those in the audience a greater understanding and respect for the occasion and for our fallen heroes. To finish, the last post was played and the national anthem sung and a cannon salute was also conducted.

I am indeed proud to be a member of the Boronia RSL and to support our local veterans community and of course to play my part in supporting that important community, and I am so proud that our school community is doing exactly that as well. I am hoping to have the minister see the wonderful service put on by the school for himself, and I thank the minister for his consideration of my matter.

RESPONSES

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (19:25): I am pleased to refer the following two matters to the Minister for Housing. One is from the member for Wendouree seeking an update on Reid's Guest House in Ballarat. The other one is from the member for Gippsland East seeking the minister to overturn a decision regarding the Bairnsdale and Sale Department of Families, Fairness and Housing offices' appointment system.

I will also pass on to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety matters from two members. One is from the member for Caulfield, seeking an urgent review of the intersection of Kooyong Road and North Road in his electorate. The member for Lara is seeking the minister to look into population growth impacts on local road congestion in his electorate.

The member for Evelyn has raised a matter for the Premier seeking an explanation as to why further disaster recovery funding has not been provided to the communities in her electorate. The member for Bass has raised a matter for the Minister for Fishing and Boating and Minister for Ports and Freight seeking a visit to the coastal village of Warneet with her to meet with locals. The member for Melbourne's matter I will be referring to the Minister for Planning, seeking the minister to commission an independent assessment of CO₂ emissions regarding Viva Energy's proposed import terminal. The member for Hawthorn has raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport seeking her to join him to visit and inspect facilities at the Canterbury Sports Ground. The member for Forest Hill has raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking an investigation into the absence of a bus service along parts of Highbury Road in Burwood East, and the member for Bayswater has raised a matter for the Minister for Veterans, seeking him to join him for the Anzac Day ceremony at Boronia RSL in his electorate.

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

House adjourned 7.28 pm.