

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

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

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, 24 May 2022

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms JM Edwards) took the chair at 12.03 pm and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:04): We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

Bills

**EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ADULT AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022**

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:04): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Public Administration Act 2004, the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 and the Worker Screening Act 2020 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:05): Could I please ask the minister for a brief explanation of the bill?

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (12:05): The bill will amend the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and other legislation to improve the governance frameworks for the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and AMES Australia, it will make some technical amendments to the regulatory powers and functions of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority in relation to the child safe standards and compliance audits for registered training organisations—so to get some consistency in terms of the VRQA—and it will also modernise and simplify the Victorian student number scheme. This is about ensuring that we can better track post-secondary pathways for students and also when students move between government and non-government schools.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

**SUSTAINABLE FORESTS TIMBER AMENDMENT (TIMBER HARVESTING SAFETY
ZONES) BILL 2022**

Introduction and first reading

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 in relation to enforcement and other matters relating to timber-harvesting operations and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:06): Can I ask the minister for a brief explanation please?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (12:06): Yes, of course. Every worker in Victoria has the right to a safe workplace, regardless of where they work. The bill will modernise the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 to better deter dangerous and

illegal protest activities that put the safety and wellbeing of forestry workers at risk. The amendments will increase penalties for offences related to timber-harvesting safety zones protests, prohibit more things from being able to be possessed in timber-harvesting safety zones, clarify that the offence of interference with timber-harvesting operations includes interfering with authorised personnel and machinery, and include a new banning notice power for authorised officers and police officers.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

CASINO AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Introduction and first reading

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Casino Control Act 1991, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011 and other acts in relation to casino regulation, to provide further for the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, to establish the Victorian Liquor Commission and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:08): I request that the minister provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:08): The bill will finalise the establishment of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to increase its oversight of the Melbourne casino, including implementation of further recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. The bill will also confer new powers and functions on the VGCCC and its casino inspectors, embed harm minimisation in its functions and objectives and provide for the transfer of the regulation of liquor to a new regulator within the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice given.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:10): General business notices of motion 32 and 44 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 petitions presented to house by Clerk:

KOOYONG–NORTH ROADS, CAULFIELD

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the dangers of the intersection of Kooyong and North roads both to pedestrians and road users.

On Monday 9/11/21, a young man, about 14 years old, on a bicycle, was hit by a truck and suffered severe head injuries. He was unconscious and taken to the Royal Children's Hospital.

This intersection is extremely dangerous. Many children and families walk or ride through this intersection everyday on their way to school. It has become increasingly busy over recent years due to the increase in construction in our local area, with trucks traversing this corner constantly throughout the day.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly and the Minister undertake the following simple steps:

1. Move the traffic signal box on the corner of Kooyong and North roads, so cars can see children waiting to cross.
2. Change the traffic signals so right-turning traffic from North Rd into Kooyong Rd does not run the risk of running over children crossing Kooyong Rd.
3. Build a lip on the footpath on the east corner of Kooyong Rd and North Rd, so cars, trucks and buses do not mount the kerb where children are waiting.
4. Introduce a 40 km/hr limit school zone on North Rd from Hawthorn Rd to Lantana St.
5. Provide a school-crossing supervisor ('lollipop person').

By Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (360 signatures).

HOSKEN RESERVE

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria Moreland City Council's intention to redevelop Hosken Reserve, a 'local' off-lead 4.9 ha park, for the benefit of Pascoe Vale Football Club (PVFC), against the needs of the local community. In recent years PVFC has been granted growing exclusive access to the park. Currently, local residents cannot access the reserve after 4pm weekdays, and from 8am–6pm on weekends.

In September 2020 Council advertised a tender to fence, formalise and occupy 80% of the Reserve (and install artificial grass and lighting) for the benefit of PVFC. The project, originally costed at \$2.7 million was in conjunction with a State Government Sport Grant of \$500,000, which was withdrawn, due to failures to consult with local residents and irregularities in the grant application. The Council undertook so-called consultation in 2021 but arrived at a predetermined outcome to continue with the handover of the park to PVFC and to commit \$5.9 million to build infrastructure for the sole benefit of PVFC. We are outraged by the lack of meaningful consultation, potential undeclared conflicts of interest, misuse of ratepayer assets and funds, and loss of benefit to local residents.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria require Moreland City Council to immediately discontinue the Hosken Reserve Masterplan Refresh Project, and initiate a public, independent inquiry into the process that led to circa \$70 million worth of public land and \$5.9 million (inc contingencies) of ratepayers' funds being assigned to benefit Pascoe Vale Football Club.

We further request that Moreland City Council be required to undertake genuine consultation to develop a new Masterplan for Hosken Reserve that recognises the reserve's current character as a "local" park, prioritises ongoing, ready access for local residents, and limits the PVFC footprint on Hosken Reserve to the existing southern pitch and pavilion.

By Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (1230 signatures).

Tabled.

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

Ordered that petition lodged by member for Polwarth be considered next day on motion of Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth).

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 7

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:11): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 7 of 2022, on the following act and bills:

Child Employment Amendment Bill 2022

Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Act 2022

State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Summary Offences Amendment (Nazi Symbol Prohibition) Bill 2022
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:

Essential Services Commission—Accident towing fees review 2021—final report and recommendations under s 212G of *Accident Towing Services Act 2007*

Municipal Association of Victoria—Report 2020–21

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

Baw Baw—C139

Boroondara—C355

Cardinia—C257

Greater Bendigo—C261

Greater Geelong—C422

Mansfield—C50

Moreland—C216

Nillumbik—C131

Stonnington—C297, C317, C318

Victoria Planning Provisions—VC218

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005—SR 25

Gas Safety Act 1997—SR 29

Long Service Benefits Portability Act 2018—SR 26

Road Safety Act 1986—SRs 30, 31

Service Victoria Act 2018—SR 27

Summary Offences Act 1966—SR 28

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 24, 26, 27, 30, 31.

Bills

ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

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

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:13): I inform the house that the Speaker has received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022*Clerk's amendments*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:13): I advise that the Speaker has received reports from the Clerk of the Legislative Council that, under Legislative Council standing order 14.33, he has made the following corrections in the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022:

In Clause 39, line 28, he has inserted 'Safety' after 'Road' in the new Division heading to be inserted into the Transport Accident Act 1986; and

In Clause 39, page 35, line 4, he has inserted 'Safety' after 'Road'.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (FINES REFORM AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022**ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022****TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PORT REFORMS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022***Royal assent*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:14): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Fines Reform and Other Matters) Bill 2022, the Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and the Transport Legislation Amendment (Port Reforms and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

STATE TAXATION AND TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022*Appropriation*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (12:14): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

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

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:14): 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.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:15): Yes? Thank you, and I am delighted to have the opportunity today to speak on this important motion—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will state the question. Is leave granted?

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (12:15): No.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I had not called the member for Shepparton. Please resume your seats. Leave is not granted.

Leave refused.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:15): 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.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:16): 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

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing) (12:16): 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, 26 May 2022:

Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022

Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022

State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

The two appropriation bills will be debated concurrently, and the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 will be debated separately. Of course, these bills give members in the chamber the opportunity to put on the record their views about the appropriation bills, the budget and the state taxation bill, and that is, I am sure, an opportunity that all members will very much want to take up. In regard to the parliamentary appropriation, it is appropriate for us all to thank the Parliament staff for the incredible work that they do on our behalf in the running and the conduct of the Parliament and indeed to put on record our support for the important work done by parliamentary committees as well. I am sure members will want to reflect on that in their contributions on the bills that are part of the government business program this week.

It is from our point of view an opportunity to reflect on the fact that this budget is putting patients first and delivering on a record investment in the health system and that after two years of an unprecedented global pandemic and record growth in demand the health system will receive a massive \$12 billion boost as part of this year's budget. You will undoubtedly hear members take up the opportunity to talk about the fact that there are 7000 more healthcare workers to be trained and hired as part of the pandemic repair plan—5000 of them as nurses; more paramedics; more support for paramedics; more capacity for 000 call takers and dispatchers; an unprecedented package to train, recruit and upskill healthcare workers; billions of dollars to upgrade new hospitals, including the doubling of emergency department capacity in Casey and Werribee; a massive investment in surgical capacity; and funding to manage the pandemic across the health system and in the community well into the future. That COVID catch-up plan, which is also part of this year's budget, includes the surgical activity, the 40 000 extra surgeries, the reduction of the waitlist and the building up to a record 240 000 surgeries in 2024—all things that members will seek to reflect on, I am sure, as part of the budget debate.

I am sure members will take many opportunities during this budget debate to reflect on outcomes in their local electorate, to reflect on outcomes in their portfolio, whether it is additional tourism infrastructure, whether it is additional support for manufacturing, whether it is additional support for inbound investment—all of those things members will have an opportunity to talk about during the debate on the appropriation bills. In regard to the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, we will have the opportunity to reflect on the fact that universities will now be fully exempt from the windfall gains tax, and we can express the hope that with the change of government in Canberra the war on our university sector might finally be over and the incredible work that they do

to build our skill base, to build our graduate base and to bring in international students will finally be appreciated and reflected. It also provides an exemption from motor vehicle duty for wheelchair-accessible vehicles that provide commercial passenger vehicle services, supporting more wheelchair-accessible CPVs into the market.

For all of those critical investments to proceed, the bills need to pass the Parliament before 30 June. This sitting week gives every member of this place an opportunity to put on record their views about the budget and to send this legislation to the other place before that important date comes to pass. I understand the Manager of Opposition Business will put her own view on the record; I will not spell it out for her. For all of those things to occur before 30 June, this week is an important one to debate the budget, and I commend the government business program to the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:22): I rise to speak on the government business program. On this occasion we will not be opposing the government business program. I note that the acting Leader of the House is getting his budget reply in early. Traditionally the government business program debate is about what is going to happen in terms of the mechanics, yet he seemed to cover many of the specifics of the budget that he found interesting. His having opened that door into what members may be interested in discussing, I would note—before I do, I would like to wish the Leader of the House a speedy recovery, as she did for me last sitting week when I was not here. But, as I say, we will not be opposing it. We also want to debate the appropriation bills and the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

I take this opportunity, particularly in relation to the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022, because it is a concurrent debate, my contribution and most people's contributions on that bill will be talking about the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, so I particularly want to put on record during this debate my appreciation as Manager of Opposition Business to the clerks. To those of us who are involved in running the chamber, the clerks' role is integral to that working, and I want to thank them and, with that, also thank the attendants and Parliamentary Services, who make our lives much easier and allow us to do the jobs that we do.

But I note that, unlike the acting Leader of the House, when I look at this budget what I see are cuts to health services. I see billions of dollars being cut out of health services. I particularly see cuts for dental health despite the fact that we have the longest waiting lists we have ever had for dental health, and the government's approach to that is to cut funding. They have found program after program that they would like to take a razor to where things are still needed. There will be plenty of things, I think, to say by members on this side of the house about the failures of the budget contained in the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022.

In fact I know in my own electorate we have got a situation where there was an election promise that the government made in 2018 to build a hospital for Maryborough, and they have not turned a sod on that hospital. I am sure they will rush to Maryborough and turn a sod before we get to 26 November. But the people of Maryborough have noticed that the government has abandoned them, because I note that in the election on Saturday the booths of Maryborough suffered 20 per cent swings. It is the first time ever, could I say, that the Labor Party has not held the booths of Maryborough. They have held them for decades; I would say back even before Federation they would have held those in Maryborough, but not now. The good people of Maryborough have deserted the government, and it is because they do not keep their promises. This is clearly a result of the views of people in Maryborough about the Labor government. It is a major swing against the Labor Party in Maryborough—a 20 per cent swing—because they do not deliver their hospitals, they do not do what they say they will do. I will have plenty more to say on the appropriation bill when we get to it, and I look forward to—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Ripon, I ask you to come back to the government business program, and I remind members that the government business program is to talk about the government business program and nothing else.

Ms STALEY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I am simply following the lead of the acting Leader of the House. With that, though, I can advise the house that I am the only speaker on our side for this, and we will not be opposing this motion.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (12:26): I am pleased to speak on the government business program. I think it is a welcome opportunity this week for us to reflect on the budget that has been brought down and certainly for me to speak on it, to reflect on the investments that the Shepparton district is receiving out of that budget and also to speak on the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022—always an opportunity to thank all of those associated with the Parliament and to reflect on funding for integrity agencies and a range of others.

But I particularly do like to talk about the government business program because one of the fundamental things that is missing in this place is a non-government business program, and I think it is worth drawing attention to the fact that each time I try to move a motion to amend the standing orders to reintroduce the opportunity for there to be a non-government business program in this place, it is shut down. It is always refused by the government side. Just today, however, the acting Leader of the House said yes, but there we go—shut down again, no opportunity to debate what is really just a fundamentally simple provision. This place is the only house of Parliament in Australia that does not have the opportunity for a non-government business program in the whole of its program.

When did it happen that it was whittled away? It started in the 1990s with the introduction of a government business program that has just dominated—dominated—and over the years, slightly, step by step in each Parliament, the opportunity for members on this side of the house to speak, to make a contribution, has been cut away. It is simply not good enough. How can we in Victoria be the only lower house in this country not to have a non-government business program? What are people afraid of? That I might move a bill on something? That I might want to bring forward a motion that somebody else on this side may want to debate, that somebody on that side may want to debate? I have got lots of good ideas, let me tell you, and I would like to have the chance to put them before this place on behalf of my community, my electorate and regional Victoria. But we do not get the chance to do that because we have only a government business program. That is all we have—no opportunity for anyone on this side of the house to have any say on what should be brought before this house and what should be debated, discussed and put forward as bills.

I just put it to all of you: it is a time for change, and we need to see that change happen. There is no reason to be afraid of it. It happens everywhere else. It happens in the upper house every Wednesday afternoon—all afternoon, a non-government business program. Why have we allowed this place to not have a non-government business program, only to have a government business program dominated by the government? There is no need to be afraid of it. We should debate this. We should all be prepared to debate it, and we should all be prepared to stand up and vote in favour of the reintroduction of a non-government business program in this place. You can all see the proposed amendments on the notice paper, in notice of motion 48. It sets out in detail the changes that are needed to the standing orders to enable just a 3-hour provision on a Wednesday for this sort of debate—for an opportunity for this side of the house to have a say. It is about time it happened. It is about time people had a close look at what is being said about the operation of this place—no consideration in detail, no non-government business program. Truly it is time that people looked closely at this issue and had what it takes to stand up, debate it and support it.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

OAKLEIGH ELECTORATE COPTIC COMMUNITY

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (12:32): I, along with some of my councillor colleagues at Monash, attended a celebration of the Coptic faith, the Coptic tradition and the Coptic community in Oakleigh on Sunday. They run this festival every year over two days. It is really just an exceptional

festival. People come from outside the Coptic community. They have all the things you would expect—incredible food and traditions in terms of the collection the church has and the community has; they have kids rides. They are just an extraordinary community. They have been there for decades and really are about inviting others in to share their culture and faith and build bridges and understanding. I want to commend the Coptic community of Oakleigh for the work they do every year, not just for this festival but really on every single day of the year.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr DIMOPOULOS: I also, while I am on my feet, would like to congratulate from the bottom of my heart the three exceptional Labor women that got elected on Saturday in my community: Claire O’Neil, the member for Hotham; Carina Garland, the member for Chisholm; and Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah, the member for Higgins. I have such profound respect for all three, and I am so chuffed that, as the local state member, I get to build an even better community with three exceptional federal Labor women. I wish them all the very best over the next three years of their term, and I am sure they will be absolutely loved by the community.

GLENHUNTLY ATHLETIC CLUB

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:33): Happy 100th birthday to the Glenhuntly Athletic Club. It was a pleasure to attend their birthday celebrations, and I want to put on record my thanks to president Michael Ryan and vice-president Andrew McEvoy, two winners of the Caulfield Local Heroes award, for their work in hosting me and also making me feel welcome to the club. It is the home of running legends like Ron Clarke, Robert De Castella and Brenda Jones Carr, and the club has a colourful history with great legends and athletics. Max Binnington OAM, Australian Olympic hurdler, two-time Commonwealth Games medallist and long-time coach and mentor at the club, said the success of the club was down to culture and community. Alongside birthday celebrations, committee member Gerard Torpy has launched a 343-page book, *Go Hunters*, a copy of which I will be donating to the parliamentary library. Congratulations to the newest club legend, Daisy Drew, and life members Kara Gilbert and Gerry Torpy for being inducted into their hall of fame. It is a great club, and we thank them.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr SOUTHWICK: I want to also put on record my thanks for the great work that Josh Frydenberg, Tim Wilson, Katie Allen, Gladys Liu and my friend in New South Wales Dave Sharma have done in their years of service to the community. We know, no matter what side of politics, people put their individual service above self, and it is a big loss for the party and the people that they represented. Kol hakavod to Josh Frydenberg for what he has done for our community in Caulfield and the Jewish community.

SHARON CUMMINS

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:35): Today we recognise the wonderful contribution of Sharon Cummins, an outstanding early childhood educator in our Kingston community. Sharon has been the heart and soul of Chelsea Heights Kindergarten for more than 22 years. Passionate, talented and dedicated, Sharon has mentored educators and inspired so many to follow their passion while supporting countless children in their learning and development. When you visit Chelsea Heights Kindergarten you feel the spirit, energy and purpose bursting from learning and creative spaces. The philosophy and values have been formed over many years under the careful attention of Sharon and her team.

I first met Sharon back in 2014 when she led the community campaign to keep Chelsea Heights Kindergarten at their site on Third Avenue. Sharon knew if the community kinder moved we would lose the character of the learning spaces, which had been shaped for over half a century. And Sharon was absolutely right: she helped Chelsea Heights kinder remain on that site and undergo a wonderful redevelopment on Third Avenue to continue to support our kids for generations to come.

Before leading Chelsea Heights kinder, Sharon worked at Evesham Road Kindergarten and also Parkdale Preschool. Every weekend she would give up her time and go around to all the kinders, setting up inspired learning and playing spaces for those kids. That is just the kind of beautiful and caring person Sharon is, always putting others first. There are so many people who love and care about her in our community, and her enduring legacy will live on in our community. On behalf of the Victorian government and our community, I thank her for her incredible service.

MALCOLM 'MAC' HILL

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (12:36): I rise this afternoon to remember Malcolm Hill, a wonderful member of our party who was as National Party as they come. Mac passed away on 11 May, surrounded by his family, at the age of 91.

In 1916 Mac's grandfather, William Hill, was the secretary of the Colbinabbin Progress Association and the founding president of the Victorian Farmers Union, which we now know as The Nationals. Frustrated that the interests of rural people were being ignored, William was instrumental in sending farmers to both federal and state parliaments. He himself was elected to the federal Parliament as the member for Echuca in 1919, and his legacy as a minister still shapes rural Australia. He built the Hume weir, he spearheaded the standardisation of rail gauges and he built the railway line from South Australia to Alice Springs.

But for the community of Colbinabbin, William's biggest legacy was not the nation-shaping projects that he was responsible for but rather his family, which included Mac, who was the third generation of the Hill family to farm at Colbinabbin. Mac's children and his grandchildren continued that tradition, and they are active contributors to their local community—no community organisation in Colbo is complete without a Hill. A couple of years after I was elected Mac gave me a photograph of the founding members of our party, and I have treasured it ever since. He was deeply loved in the Colbo community, and I was privileged to know him. He will be greatly missed by his wonderful family. Vale, Mac.

BUNINYONG ELECTORATE

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (12:38): Last week I spent the day visiting some of the wonderful towns in the Golden Plains. I would like to say a very big thankyou to Peter Trevaskis of the *Leigh News* for introducing me to some of the wonderful folk in Inverleigh. There was just such a strong sense of community there. John from the men's group said that the town's success has really been as a consequence of such active community leaders. It was wonderful to speak to people from the Inverleigh Progress Association, the men's group and the senior citizens. It is always a pleasure to meet with someone from Golden Plains council, in this case Clayton Whitfield.

After that we visited the Inverleigh Primary School, and I met with the lovely Steve Trotter. I know Steve well from his time at the Meredith Primary School, and it was just wonderful to see his passion now in Inverleigh. He really is inspiring—and such a beautiful little school. I had lunch at the Teesdale shop and met the lovely owner, Sunny. The Teesdale shop is really the heart of the community: it has got the post office and the general store, so everybody comes through there. It was just a lovely opportunity to meet with so many people. And there is the commitment of all of the users of the recreation reserve in Teesdale—it was lovely to meet with the cricket club, the football club, tennis and even representatives from athletics to talk about their plans for an upgraded rec reserve. Of course the lovely Lynton was there to talk about the Victorian women's public art program, happening soon.

FERNTREE GULLY ELECTORATE YOUTH FORUM

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:39): I was pleased to recently host my regular youth council with the member for Rowville. The event was well attended by students from secondary schools across the City of Knox. These students raised a range of concerns about the impact of the six lockdowns and remote learning on their education. Students spoke of their concerns about a lack of information and resources being provided to students whilst being absent from school due to them either being a close

contact or suffering from COVID themselves. It is important that the Department of Education and Training provides support to Victorian schools to ensure that all schools are properly resourced to support our children. The education of many children has suffered from the impact of COVID rules. It is imperative that action is taken to ensure that no child is left behind.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr WAKELING: Knox residents are deeply concerned about Victoria's health crisis. Nearly 100 000 Victorians are waiting for months on hospital waiting lists and Victorians are dying whilst waiting for an ambulance. The recent Ashton report into Victoria's 000 crisis has confirmed just how bad the system is after the systemic failures of the Andrews government in managing our health system. Daniel Andrews got us into this health crisis, and he is not the person to fix our health system.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

Mr WAKELING: Over recent months I have spoken to many small businesses across Knox. They are struggling under the weight of 42 increased taxes and charges, and they want a government that is focused on them to help them to recover. The Liberal-Nationals have a plan to help businesses recover and rebuild. That is my commitment—to stand up for businesses across the City of Knox.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to call members by their correct title.

MOUNT WAVERLEY RESERVE

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (12:41): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. You will be ecstatic to learn that the Mount Waverley Reserve is going to receive a \$2 million investment towards upgrading the oval and pavilion for the master plan. This includes providing men and women's change rooms, more storage space, cricket nets and better social facilities. It is a fantastic local upgrade for our community. With a \$3 million commitment also coming from the newly elected federal member for Chisholm, if you do not mind, Carina Garland, and the Albanese government—that sounds good, doesn't it?—the City of Monash can now move forward and start work on this local project and delivering the Mount Waverley Reserve master plan. There is no reason to wait. A big thankyou for all the support received from our community and local clubs—in particular the Waverley Blues football and netball club and the Mount Waverley Cricket Club. Hundreds of members of the community have talked to me about this fantastic upgrade to make this happen.

MOUNT WAVERLEY ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr FREGON: Another thing in the budget, just pre-empting the debate a little later today, is it also contains massive investment for Victorian schools, as the member for Mordialloc would know well, including for those students with additional needs, because every student should receive the same opportunities in our state. That is why we have upgraded every special school and every special developmental school in the state, if you do not mind—36 special schools, including Burwood East Special Developmental School, which will receive \$8.697 million to upgrade the school, replacing the relocatable buildings with new permanent classroom facilities.

PUBLIC HOUSING SERVICES

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:42): Over the last few weeks I have heard some concerning reports that the government is effectively closing and/or reducing access to housing offices on public housing estates in my electorate. Instead of being able to drop into the housing office, like people can now, to submit forms or report maintenance issues or ask questions or share safety concerns, residents now will need to make an appointment first. This is very difficult for many residents because it often takes hours on the phone to make an appointment. Often people never get through or people face other barriers to making appointments.

The pandemic highlighted the government's failures in engagement with our public housing residents, and I would have thought that reducing access to services is the last thing they should be doing now.

I have also heard the Victorian Labor government has terminated funding for Cohealth to be on the public housing estates and that this will end in June. Cohealth was vital during the pandemic. They ran COVID vaccinations and testing, coordinated referrals for people and employed local tenants to share information about COVID so people could feel safe and get linked with government services by local people they know and trust. Cutting these services is a terrible backward step and has left residents feeling really abandoned. I urge the government to reopen housing offices for drop-ins and extend Cohealth funding. The pandemic is still with us and now is absolutely not the time to abandon our public housing high-rise residents.

FOOTSCRAY ELECTORATE ARTS FUNDING

Ms HALL (Footscray) (12:44): In Footscray we love live music and the arts. The inner west is home to some of Victoria's most exciting creative industries and artists, and I am thrilled that the arts is the centrepiece of this year's Labor budget locally. Since the start of the pandemic the Andrews Labor government has invested more than \$80 million in dedicated support for the music sector. In the most recent grants from the Victorian live music venues support program, \$114 000 of dedicated funding came to venues in Footscray. Pride of our Footscray, the Hotel Westwood and Kindred Studios are all fantastic live music venues, and I was thrilled that they received funding under the program. Mat O'Keefe, the manager of Pride of our Footscray, said that Labor's support throughout the pandemic has kept that vital venue alive in Footscray. This funding will assist them to get artists back on stages and audiences back in venues and help live music to thrive throughout Footscray. Live music is just one area of the arts that we are investing in. The budget contained a massive \$8.7 million investment for the Footscray Community Arts Centre to help implement stage 1 of their precinct plan. This funding will cement Footscray Community Arts Centre as the heart and soul of arts and culture in the western suburbs. Additionally, there is \$2.4 million for the Go West Festivals Fund, bringing the best festivals to Melbourne's west.

COLERAINE FIELD AND GAME

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (12:45): I commend Coleraine Field and Game for their commitment to working with traditional owners, Parks Victoria and the EPA to meet the requirements to renew their licence to operate on the site they have maintained and protected for decades. Recently Coleraine Field and Game were requested by Parks Victoria to undertake an additional requirement of a cultural heritage management plan. However, it is understood that this is not a legislative requirement. I urge the minister to intervene and acknowledge the work of Coleraine Field and Game to meet all the legislative requirements and cultural and environmental obligations and ensure their licence is renewed as a matter of priority.

RUPANYUP PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms KEALY: Rupanyup Primary School is in desperate need of state funding to build a new playground. The school community have had their current playground assessed as unsafe, and it must be condemned. The school community have been proactive and sought funding to build a replacement playground, but sadly the state Labor government have not supported this vital project. This is a terrible decision that has left the school with the impossible decision to either retain a playground that they know is unsafe for their children or remove the playground—it is the only playground at the school—meaning those kids would not have the opportunity to play and learn in their grounds. I therefore ask the Minister for Education to urgently review this decision and provide the urgently needed funding for the Rupanyup Primary School to build a new, safe playground for their students.

WESTERN HIGHWAY DUPLICATION

Ms KEALY: I recently received correspondence from a Western Highway action group expressing their frustration on the lack of progress to duplicate the Western Highway beyond Ballarat towards Stawell. This project has now halted for three years. It is time that the minister intervenes, provides that funding and allows this vital project, which will save country lives, to go ahead.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:47): My annual Bayswater primary schools writing competition was a hit again. There were over 1200 entries in my Bayswater writing competition last year, and I can tell you it was super hard to pick the winners, as they were all wonderful and thoughtful entries on what two local things students would do to support our local environment—amazing responses, so thank you, each and every single one of you. As promised, I wanted to announce the winners from each school in the prep to year 2 and years 3 to 6 categories, so here we go: Cody and Amber from Bayswater Primary School; Cody and Sophie from the Basin Primary School; Blake and Ella from Heathmont East Primary School; Teah and Maja from Boronia West Primary School; Advitha and Indigo from Boronia Heights Primary School; Liam and Summer from Marlborough Primary School; Abby and Trevin from Great Ryrie Primary School; Matilda and Aine from Boronia K–12 College; Fred and Emma from St Joseph’s Primary School; Ella and Mila from Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School; Chase and Genevieve from Templeton Primary School; and Summer and Seth from Ferntree Gully North Primary School. It was great to also have five overall winners from that list who scored their schools 200 bucks worth of books that I was proud to purchase and donate—some very, very happy librarians.

EASTERN RANGES SCHOOL

Mr TAYLOR: I want to touch on an exciting and special budget announcement made recently that the Andrews Labor government are providing \$5.7 million to Eastern Ranges, which will upgrade the school, including the special building, junior and senior wing buildings and administration at the school. Investing in schools is so important, but this investment for me is pretty special for so many reasons and because students with special needs should get the same opportunities as every other student in the state. Of course Eastern Ranges is an absolutely amazing school community. From having had the privilege of being able to work with the school this past few years, I know this will make a huge difference to the kids and the team down there, who are absolutely deserving of every single cent of this funding.

GARY ‘JOHN’ HANLEY

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (12:48): Gary ‘John’ Hanley passed away on 10 May this year at the age of 74 after a long and brave battle with prostate cancer. John, as I have always known him, and I went to Marist Brothers College in Warragul, and it was there over 60 years ago that I got to know him. John was one of the many unsung heroes in our community—a hardworking dairy farmer, always very involved in his community, a dedicated, loyal and loving husband, father, father-in-law and grandfather, a much-loved son, brother, brother-in-law and uncle.

The comments of his children and grandchildren in his obituary provide an insight about John and the enormous love and respect they have for him. As Luke, Jodie, Erin, Adele, Clare and James said, whilst also speaking on behalf of Ethan, who is in heaven—now with his grandfather:

Dad, you continued to surprise me with how strong you were, even after hanging up the gum boots.

Marcus, Jackie, Joel and Ben wrote:

Your quiet, humble nature taught us more than you realised, and for that we are forever grateful.

Monique, Ewin, Amélie and Camille wrote:

We will miss the laughs, the music and your willingness to embrace life’s changes ... good and bad. Most of all we will miss your ... reflections.

And his favourite daughter, Em, wrote:

Dad, I’m grateful for the time we had together. Thanks for teaching me to be a better human and always believing in me. I’ll never forget your sense of humour.

You’ll always be with me. Your favourite child, Em.

John's wife, Kaye, wrote:

So many memories, I'll love and miss you forever.

Love Kaye.

That says it all. Rest in peace, Johnny.

MARIO BIASIN

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:50): I rise to express my profound sadness at the tragic passing of Mario Biasin, a giant of the construction industry, of philanthropy and of the fabric of football and AFL in Victoria and Australia. Mario migrated to Australia from Trieste, Italy, and still retained the suitcase he arrived with so he would never forget where he came from. Mario co-founded Metricon with the late George Kline in 1976. Under Mario's visionary leadership Metricon has built tens of thousands of homes across Victoria—in regional Victoria and especially in the north. Under Mario's leadership Metricon were early adopters of environmental standards, and their home building quality is recognised throughout the industry.

He has a legacy of more than 1200 employees, many of whom have lived in my electorate. He is missed terribly by his supporters and friends at Melbourne Victory, at the Essendon Football Club, at the Gold Coast Suns and at the Canteen charity and also at homelessness charities. My deepest sympathy goes to Glenda, his four children and his many grandchildren. I will miss him at my annual dinners. He was such a gentleman. When you spoke to Mario it was like you were the only person in the room. You will deeply be missed, Mario. Riposa in pace.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (12:52): On Saturday, 21 May, Australians went to the polls. The outcome of that contest was a change of government—a peaceful change in what have been somewhat turbulent times. I think the outcome, and the manner in which it was conducted, should remind us all just how strong our democracy is and how lucky we are to have it. Personally, it was a disappointing result, and of course it was also a disappointing political result from my perspective. It remains to be seen whether those that wear the teal can now switch from campaigning to actually delivering for their communities. I suspect they will have a choice between sticking to their principles and actually delivering, so we will have to see how that works out.

In the Mornington electorate we have a new member for Flinders, Zoe McKenzie, who actually achieved a slight swing towards the Liberal Party. Unfortunately in Dunkley the Liberal candidate, Sharn Coombes, was not successful, but Sharn was a great candidate. You could not have wanted anyone to work harder. Indeed I think she was probably the hardest working candidate I have seen in my 40 years in this game. The outcome in no way reflected the effort. I do have enormous respect for Sharn's dedication, the skills she brought to the contest and the manner in which the campaign was conducted. I also extend my congratulations to Peta Murphy, and I look forward to working with Peta and with Zoe McKenzie in the service of the people of the Mornington Peninsula.

GLENROY COMMUNITY HUB

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (12:53): Breaking the cycle of disadvantage requires creative solutions, collaboration and constancy of purpose. Hundreds of families celebrated the opening of the latest version of the global learning village model, the \$30 million Glenroy Community Hub. A decade-long process delivered a new public library, providing access to lifelong learning and incorporating a maternal and child health centre to maximise inclusion. There are now five landmark global learning centres to improve the social determinants of life, spanning the old and redrawn state district of Broadmeadows. I thank Moreland City Council for its investment of \$18 million in community funds in the new Glenroy hub, and I thank the former Labor mayor for acting on my advice to secure Victorian government funding to seal this deal, including a loan of about \$10 million at almost no interest rate—outstanding value for investment.

Twenty-three years ago I provided the vision plan and attracted the funding partners to establish the global learning village as a hub-and-spoke model, founded in Broadmeadows when it was still impoverished to the point of lacking even a public library. Securing Silicon Valley giants, it bridged the digital divide with an ideas lab—second in the world to London—to drive technology, empowered leadership and created a multiversity, providing online tertiary education ahead of its time. Hume City Council backed this vision for lifelong learning for skills and jobs, meaning better health and wellness and connecting the disconnected to opportunity. This was vital with the Visy Cares Learning Centre in Meadow Heights. We also have the Field of Dreams being built as the sporting model to connect the disconnected to better opportunities in life.

ACACIA CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:55): I would like to congratulate Acacia Children's Centre in St Albans for hosting recently a Biggest Morning Tea, raising critical, life-saving funds but also awareness for the Cancer Council. I would especially like to thank Olivia, the centre manager, who I know is going through her own struggles at the moment. I send her my prayers and thoughts during her journey in this most difficult and challenging time for her. It was fantastic to see families, parents and little ones and to see how the kindergarten is successfully developing skills. Most importantly, this is a centre where we have invested close to \$400 000 recently to rebuild some parts of the kindergarten.

ST ALBANS SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms SULEYMAN: I also had the great pleasure of meeting the principal, Kerrie Dowsley, at St Albans Secondary College. Kerrie has been there forever—as long as I have been a resident, close to probably over 40 years—at St Albans. And I met the fantastic student leaders, Eric and Telih. It was great to hear about their achievements and how the school is excelling throughout the western region. I am very proud of our schools and very proud of the investment that the Andrews Labor government has made in the last eight years. Every school in St Albans has received an investment, and that is really important to me and the local community.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (12:56): I commenced the weekend like many, full of hope. My community of Burwood started Saturday with three federal Liberal members. Well, what a difference a day makes, because by the end of the weekend three strong, progressive women had been elected—three doctors, no less—three communities that voted for change. A clear message was sent to the now former Liberal members for Higgins, Chisholm and Kooyong—a very clear message indeed.

The constituents of Higgins in particular made history, electing their first Labor member since the seat was created in 1949. I congratulate Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah, who will be their representative in the newly elected Albanese Labor government. I just want to say that again: Albanese Labor government—good words! It was a fantastic achievement there.

In Kooyong Dr Monique Ryan also had a historic win. She became the first woman to win that traditionally Liberal seat, defeating the former Treasurer for New South Wales, Josh Frydenberg. Before her election Dr Ryan served as the head of neurology at the Royal Children's Hospital. She is very much focused on the future of the country, very much focused on the climate.

Finally and just quickly, I congratulate my friend Dr Carina Garland for her win in the seat of Chisholm. She worked so hard throughout the campaign. She deserves her success wholeheartedly. She has dedicated her professional life to advocating for the lives of working Victorians. I congratulate all three of these women on their success.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, CRANBOURNE

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (12:58): I was honoured to join the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne at the launch of the spectacular new book, a history of the Cranbourne gardens, *Of Friends and Gardens*. Written by Carolyn Landon, the book details the rich and winding history of

the friends as they navigated their way towards the vision of the gardens as they are today. Anyone who has visited the Cranbourne gardens knows the beauty and awe that they inspire, and the book is the perfect opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the background of these gardens, seeing its story as one of collective vision. I must mention the esteemed author of this book, Carolyn Landon. Some of you might be familiar with her work with Daryl Tonkin, *Jackson's Track*, or the one that piqued my interest, *Cups with No Handles: Memoir of a Grassroots Activist*. I highly recommend anyone who has an interest in the gardens to give this a read and anyone looking for excellent storytelling to have a look at Landon's excellent, fantastic body of work.

I would like to thank the director of the gardens, Chris Russell; the CEO of the botanic gardens, Tim Entwisle; and the wonderful board of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, for hosting this book launch. It was punctuated by a fantastic panel discussion taking on the vision, narrative and challenges. At a time when climate change is at the forefront of the mind of many in Australia and can shape behaviour and movements in government, the Royal Botanic Gardens in Cranbourne is a reminder of what is at stake. Above all I do thank the Cranbourne gardens friends for their fierce advocacy, altruism and, frankly, hard work, making real the dream of Maud Gibson.

NUNAWADING FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (12:59): The Nunawading Lions football club has endured some tough times in recent years, but under new president Aaron McDonald they are really kicking goals at Koonung Reserve. Season 2022 is the inaugural season for women's footy at Nunawading, and in their very first match at home on 7 May they took the points. It is pretty impressive when you consider that two months ago they only had nine women on the roster and only two of their entire team had played football before 2022. Nunawading is also boosting their junior ranks, with the club now running both an Auskick program and a cubs program for three- to five-year-olds, with participation at these levels up 400 per cent. Best of luck to the Lions for season 2022.

BLACKBURN FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr HAMER: Friday night footy came to Blackburn on 6 May with the very first home match under lights for the Blackburn Football Club. Morton Park looked an absolute treat with its new pavilion gleaming under the new lights thanks to the investment from the Andrews Labor government and local Whitehorse council. The investment in the lights will mean more utilisation of the ground and boosted participation at this terrific local club. A big thankyou to club president Casey Johnson as well as current and past committee members Paul Moylan and Mike McCoy, for driving this project.

CANTERBURY SPORTS GROUND

Mr HAMER: It was terrific to get down to Canterbury Sports Ground with my good friend and colleague the member for Hawthorn to celebrate the great news that the Andrews government's 2022–23 Victorian state budget is delivering \$1.25 million to help upgrade the pavilion at Canterbury Sports Ground. This outcome could not have been delivered without the united vision of all tenant clubs, and I want to acknowledge Sam Warner, Peter Jago and Michael Angwin from the Canterbury Cricket Club, BJ Lashbrook from the Canterbury Football Club and Andrew Hedding from Canterbury juniors.

SHIREEN ABU AKLEH

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (13:01): On Sunday I attended condolences for Shireen Abu Akleh, a well-known and much-loved Palestinian-American journalist who was shot dead during an Israeli defence force raid in the occupied West Bank town of Jenin. I stand and mourn with the many Palestinian-Australians living in the electorate of Thomastown and those that live elsewhere, along with all fair-minded people shocked and angry at this most horrendous crime. For over 25 years Shireen Abu Akleh worked as a reporter for Al Jazeera, bravely reporting events in the Middle East without fear or favour, an independent and professional journalist held in very high regard. She has also inspired many women to follow her path. The Australian Labor Party national conference has determined that a federal Labor government will recognise a Palestinian state, and I congratulate my

party on the sensational election result on Saturday—a government that will support higher wages, good jobs, better health care and a decent retirement as well as human rights. Thanks to Beit Jala association for organising the condolences.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (13:02): 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

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motions of Mr PALLAS and Ms ALLAN:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (13:02): This year's budget has red ink as far as you can see when it comes to regional Victoria. Regional Victoria has been deserted by the Andrews Labor government when it comes to this year's budget, as with other budgets, and that old adage of a city-centric government is just reflected on page after page after page of this particular budget. One of the key things that stands out to me is that under this budget there are now nearly more people in the Premier's own department than there are in what was once the Department of Agriculture—it is no longer a department anymore; it is now Agriculture Victoria, which is down the end corridor of a bigger department. There are actually nearly more people in Premier and Cabinet than there are in what was the Department of Agriculture, now called AgVic.

The food and fibre sector in Victoria is one of our largest export earners, it is one of our largest employers if you look at the whole supply chain from paddock to plate and it is the biggest employer in regional Victoria. There have been budget cuts and there have been staff cuts of over 100 people, particularly on the science side of that department, so the rhetorical question would be: how much value do we get out of having more people in the Department of Premier and Cabinet who shuffle paper, dream up ideas that make it difficult for people, lock us down, close playgrounds and make us wear masks when we do not need to wear masks—they invent all these rules that make it hard for people in Victoria—compared to scientists, researchers and extension officers that actually help farmers and help our food and fibre producers be more productive and manage the environmental issues on their farms better. Rhetorical question: which do we get more value out of, more bureaucrats in Premier and Cabinet or staff in AgVic? I would say, and people right across regional Victoria and particularly the food and fibre sector would say, we get better value out of scientists, researchers and extension officers than we do out of bureaucrats in Premier and Cabinet.

Regional Victoria, food and fibre producers and our farmers most definitely feel deserted by this government and particularly deserted by their minister. Obviously the Minister for Agriculture has no sway when it comes to the budget expenditure review committee in actually getting some good outcomes for her department and for the farmers there. The minister at the table, the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, is shaking his head.

The same story goes for Regional Development Victoria and for trade and global engagement. Again, we are great exporters in this state, but there have been huge cuts to the budget for trade and global engagement. Why in this unstable world environment would you actually reduce the resources to trade and global engagement, to the people that do the work to help our exporters to earn export income? Why would you reduce the money that they have to work with? Why would you invest in an office in

Paris when there are more important priorities? We already have a trade office in Frankfurt. If you were serious about engaging with the EU, why wouldn't you open one in Brussels, where the European government is, so you could engage with the people there that you have the most impact on? The cynic would say the Paris office is going to be a nice retirement package for a retiring MP on the government benches over there, so it will be interesting to see who gets the gift of the gig in Paris out of this particular announcement.

But there have been huge reductions to trade and global engagement and to Regional Development Victoria. Regional Development Victoria have had budget cuts of 68 per cent over the last two years. RDV was a core part of actually making sure that regional Victoria thrived, that business was attracted there, that jobs were created and that export revenue was created, and there has been a 68 per cent reduction in its budget over the last two years and staff cuts that go with that particular issue. Again, like the cuts to AgVic, why would you cut the department that helps our economy grow, particularly as we recover and rebuild from the two years of lockdowns and COVID? Why would you cut that department as well there?

When it comes to funding out of this budget, regional Victoria has been totally left behind over a series of years. If you go to the 2021–22 budget, only 11.4 per cent of the capital spend of this government of Victoria actually went into regional Victoria. If you look at this year's budget, 2022–23, 13 per cent of the capital spend goes into regional Victoria. Twenty-five per cent of Victorians live in regional Victoria, but over the last two years they got 13 per cent in this year's budget and they got 11.4 per cent of the capital spend last year. If you break that down by per capita spend, which is a very good way of looking at it if you are comparing 25 per cent of the population living in regional Victoria and 75 per cent in Melbourne, the capital spend for Melburnians is \$15 268 per person. Look at the capital spend for regional Victorians. It is only \$7142, basically half the capital spend on infrastructure in regional Victoria that there is in Melbourne. Again come back to the old adage of a city-centric government. It stacks up when you look at the numbers in the budget on the capital spend in regional Victoria. It is so city centric.

One of the things that drives that disproportionate spend is the mismanagement of capital projects in Melbourne: \$28 billion now, and counting, on the overrun on capital projects here in Melbourne—\$28 billion. If you think about what that would do in any community, that is 28 brand new builds of what was the Royal Children's Hospital, which cost \$1 billion. You could build that 28 times over with the overrun on capital projects here in Melbourne. You could build the Mildura hospital. You could build the Warragul hospital. You could build the Melton hospital. You could basically give every major town in regional Victoria a new hospital with the \$28 billion—

Mr D O'Brien: And have change.

Mr WALSH: and have change—in cost overruns on the projects here in Melbourne. So it is an absolute blight on this particular government around that.

The country roads and bridges program, which was cut a number of years ago, has still not been reinstated. That program, which gave each of the country councils basically \$1 million a year across the four years when we were in government, was the best program going for local government because they could actually plan, they could do their road maintenance plans and they could do their bridge replacements—because they knew they had money every year. That is one of the cuts that was done a number of years ago that has not been reinstated.

No doubt as the member for Euroa, the Shadow Minister for Public Transport and Roads, will talk about, there has been a huge cut in the road maintenance budget—28 per cent across the last two years—with \$240 million taken out of the road maintenance budget over the last two years. I do not know, Acting Speaker Taylor, how much you drive into regional Victoria, but if you do, make sure you take two spare wheels, not one, because there is every chance you will damage a tyre or damage a rim when you hit the major potholes that you find across regional Victoria. There has been that huge cut to

road maintenance in regional Victoria even though the government likes to spin that it is not actually the case. For \$5 million, if it was in the budget to match the commonwealth's \$5 million, we would have got the business case to finish Murray Basin rail. That would have helped put more freight on trains and less on the roads, which would go back to that issue around the roads into the future.

One of the issues we have talked about in this place a lot is the Country Fire Authority and the damage that the Andrews government has done to the Country Fire Authority now over two terms of government—

Mr D O'Brien: Guttled it.

Mr WALSH: Absolutely gutted it, absolutely destroyed the CFA, a volunteer organisation that started after the Second World War and that has kept our communities safe from bushfires over that particular period of time. But if you go to the budget papers, the Andrews Labor government is collecting approximately \$800 million from the fire services levy in Victoria. In the budget papers there is \$7.16 million in new capital spending for the CFA—\$800 million being collected over here, \$7.16 million being spent back on the CFA in capital expenditure there. In my electorate alone, the Leitchville fire station has needed upgrading for literally decades. There was money announced two years ago, but it is not going to be done until about 2024 so that is on the never-never. The Rochester fire station has desperately needed to be done now for about the same amount of time. That is actually on the never, because it is not in this particular budget. And the community of Appin South, one that I think desperately needs a fire station—again, nothing in this budget. So the Andrews Labor government are collecting \$800 million from property owners right around Victoria but only putting \$7.16 million back into capital spend for the CFA there. One of the things that we want to see is the CFA returned to a volunteer-only organisation that has its own management and its own staff so that we can actually rebuild that organisation and we can rebuild morale in that organisation, rather than the way the Andrews Labor government has destroyed it.

One of the last things I want to touch on is the integrity bodies of Victoria and the funding for them. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission is something that was set up when the Liberals and The Nationals were last in government, something that was desperately needed here in Victoria, something that we actually set up, something that we funded appropriately and something that we gave operating rules to so it could track down and root out corruption in this particular state—something that the Andrews government nobbled with legislative change when they came in. But they have actually nobbled them even more by reducing the funding they have, and we would have seen the recent comments about the demands from IBAC for appropriate funding and rules so they can do their job better. Again, people ask: is one of the reasons that IBAC is not being funded appropriately the fact that government ministers and particularly the Premier are involved in at least three investigations by IBAC at the moment? The rhetorical question again is: is the Andrews Labor government actually making sure that IBAC is not funded appropriately so that they cannot do their job, so that they cannot hold the Andrews government and their ministers, and particularly the Premier, to account for the things that have gone wrong under their watch—from the red shirts to the issues with the United Firefighters Union and the CFA and all the issues of how the Labor Party managed staff in their offices and the interaction between Labor Party business and parliamentary business?

Mr D O'Brien: Taxpayers resources.

Mr WALSH: It is taxpayers money, but the Andrews Labor government, and particularly the Premier, seem to think it is their money, it is their plaything. The thing that happens to governments that start to show disrespect to the voters is that ultimately they will be held to account because the voters are not silly. They will realise that the Andrews Labor government think the Treasury benches, the opportunity and the privilege to govern are theirs for the taking and no-one else should interfere with them.

IBAC needs more funding. It has not been funded appropriately in the budget. The Ombudsman's office is the same. The Ombudsman's office—Deborah Glass does a fantastic job as the Ombudsman—needs more resources, needs more funding, so that she and her team can do the job that they need to do to make sure that we have the checks and balances and that the government of the day, the executive government, is actually held to account.

The third body that needs more funding is the Parliamentary Budget Office. Again, the government have Treasury, finance, all of those bureaucrats there at their call. We know the Ombudsman has been looking at the politicisation of the public sector, but the independent Parliamentary Budget Office is another body that can hold the government to account around costings and making sure that political promises are costed properly.

In this budget IBAC, the Ombudsman's office and the Parliamentary Budget Office are not funded appropriately because in reality the Andrews Labor government does not want to have the integrity bodies of this state funded appropriately, because they will actually hold them to account on the mismanagement and the corruption that are embedded in this state now. As I said—and the Ombudsman has said—the politicisation of the public sector here in Victoria means you have to be a Labor mate to get a job to do something, because the whole issue of nepotism is alive and well with the Andrews Labor government.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (13:17): I am delighted to make a contribution on the appropriation bills for 2022–23. This is a really important budget that has been handed down by the Treasurer. I think if you look at the metrics, what we have done as a government is provided the necessary support for households to get through the worst and the most grave economic crisis the state has seen since the Great Depression, and we have done that while we have had a significant decline in revenues as a consequence of the pandemic, coupled with a significant increase in relation to health and hospital expenditure. We had to make those necessary investments in order to try and stabilise the state.

I was with the member for Gippsland South last week in the Legislative Council committee room, and I recall that in the last Parliament I was having a conversation with the member for Mornington—I think that the Legislative Council committee room was the scene of the 1931 Premiers Conference, where Sir Otto Niemeyer from the Bank of England came out and remonstrated with the Scullin government about the importance of repaying bondholders ahead of funding fiscal support. Now, 'Red Ted' Theodore, who was the federal Treasurer at that stage, had read Keynes for the very first time about the theory of money. For Theodore, who was interested in the idea of using that long-term horizon, of making those significant investments early to provide that level of support, this was something that was quite attractive to him. Unfortunately for Red Ted, he was not able to fulfil that vision. He was subject to a royal commission, and the Labor Party subsequently split when Joe Lyons was recruited by—well, he was recruited by many, but the head of JBWere at the time was pretty influential in encouraging Lyons to come across. And Sir John Latham, who ended up being on the High Court of Australia, relinquished his position as Leader of the Nationalist Party in order for Joe Lyons to become the leader of the United Australia Party. So—

Mr Pakula: Craig Kelly's predecessor.

Mr PEARSON: Indeed. Obviously what happened was when you had a government that decided to run its budget as though it were a household budget, you saw what was a mild economic contraction become a severe depression. So that is why you have got to make these sorts of necessary investments—to provide that level of fiscal stimulus and support to ensure that the economy can rebound strongly. Again, if you take this global pandemic as a once-in-100-year phenomenon, if you look at the costs that have been incurred and you amortise those costs over the course of 30 years, 40 years or 100 years, then the cost is relatively low compared to the price that would have been paid if the Treasurer had been courting budget surpluses at that point in time.

It is important to recognise and note too that the Treasurer had a four-step plan in relation to these matters. To begin with, it was to stimulate the economy and create jobs, and that has been achieved with the really strong rebound—the fact that gross state product for the 2021–22 financial year looks like it is going to be 5.5 per cent, rocketing out of the gates. The second point was to look at having a cash surplus. That will be achieved in the 2022–23 financial year. The third point was about having a cash operating surplus. So that is taking into account issues such as depreciation in the general government sector. That will be acquitted in the 2025–26 financial year. The final point is stabilising debt, and I think you will find that that will be acquitted as well. So in terms of those broad macro strategies that have been deployed, this is a really solid foundation. It is a solid budget. It has really guided us through incredibly challenging times, and it puts us in a really strong, commanding position to go forward with a degree of confidence and to embrace what lies before us.

I am very excited about what this budget has delivered for my portfolio areas. We are providing a significant level of fiscal support to ensure that our agencies and our great cultural institutions get the support that they need to continue to operate. We are investing in NBCUniversal studios coming out to the Docklands. This is going to be an absolute game changer. You are looking at huge volume LED screens that are cutting edge, that were used in, for example, *The Mandalorian*. We beat London to this. They could have gone to London, they could have gone elsewhere. They came to Victoria. This is the only site in the country where you will have this level of investment. We will then turn around and use this as a way in which we can start to really get significant productions based here. Anyone who has spent any time on a film set will know that these productions employ a lot of people. So it is really important that we have these sorts of investments coming in, they are regular and they provide a pipeline of activity, and we create the ecosystem for the workforce to give them a level of confidence. Again, this partnership I think will stand the sector in really good stead.

In addition to this, we are continuing to support live music in Victoria through the music industry growth package. Again, we are the capital of live music in the country. Our musicians have done it hard over the course of this pandemic. In many cases musicians were the first to lose their jobs, and they will be the last to come back. We have provided over \$80 million worth of support to live music, and it is just wondrous to see live music really coming back with a vengeance and a lot of force over the course of recent times.

I am also pleased that we are providing funding for the Go West Festivals Fund. This is about making sure that people in the western suburbs can experience some of the best that our creative industries and our festivals have on offer.

Ms Hennessy: Hear, hear!

Mr PEARSON: Indeed, member for Altona—such as the comedy festival or Rising, as the case may be, to try and really drive that level of activity and engagement.

In addition to this, I am really pleased that we are providing significant levels of funding to Service Victoria. Service Victoria has done a fantastic job in terms of guiding us through the pandemic, giving everyone a level of confidence that they can go out and about and through that QR code check-in system know that if they are at an exposure site, then there is the ability for them to be identified early on. That played a really critical role in terms of reopening the economy when it needed to.

There is in the order of about \$96 million for further work for Service Victoria. I envisage a future where Service Victoria will be that key gateway for citizen engagement. I think one of the reasons why Service Victoria was so successful was the fact that it put citizens at the centre. It is all about the user experience, it is all about how we try and find a way where we make it easier for people to be able to use the system. I think that if you look at the innovations that occurred over the course of the journey with Service Victoria, we constantly looked at innovating. We were really focused on improving the customer experience and the citizen journey. For example, it was about making sure that you had the opportunity to check in your children. It was about making sure that businesses could

check in people who did not have a smartphone. It was about connecting your vaccination certificate to the Service Victoria app.

I just want to pause for a moment and reflect on this. The Australian immunisation register is a commonwealth-run asset, and it is on a mainframe computer. Mainframe computers are often very old. They are sometimes 20-plus years old, and they are designed to hold a large volume of documents and records. What Service Victoria did was get an asset that was not theirs in ageing and legacy infrastructure, connect that with cutting-edge 21st century technology and find a way where you could then transmit that vaccination certificate onto the Service Victoria app. Now, from a citizen experience it was fairly straightforward. It was quite seamless, really. Something like in the order of 6 million certificates were connected in the end to the Service Victoria app, and if you look at Service Victoria there has been over a billion transactions or engagements since the start of this pandemic—around about that quantum. If you think about that for a moment, from the citizen experience it was seamless, it was easy, it gave people confidence, but the tech behind it was involved. I think that what you want to try and do, even if you are dealing with complicated transactions, complicated technological solutions, is from the citizen perspective make it be seen as seamless and easy. That is something that is really important.

I am really pleased that this budget, too, provides additional funding for the Business Acceleration Fund. We provided funding in previous budgets for the Regulatory Reform Incentive Fund, and that was about how you try and use the ability to improve government regulations and processes so that the BAF builds on the work of RRIF, which provides more opportunities to get more of those transactions online.

Talking about the Premiers Conference in 1931, I am attracted to the 1991 Premiers Conference, which was, I think, probably Bob Hawke's last Premiers Conference. It was quite insightful because what Hawke did was get with the states and say, 'Look, I'll do you a deal. You reform some of your inefficient state taxes and I will put money on the table. You will be able to then receive those payments if you reform'. That decision in 1991 played a really important role. Nick Greiner was very good on this. Nick Greiner had said to Bob Hawke, 'Look, it's in the national interest. I'm signing up to it. I will do it'. That underpinned a lot of those great productivity gains of the 1990s that we are all the beneficiaries of.

It is all good and well for me as the Minister for Government Services to go around lecturing local government, for example, about the fact that they need to improve their citizen experience. But words do not count for much. I think that there is an opportunity here to be able to find ways in which we can use a digital solution, a technological solution, to improve the citizen experience and get councils to improve their performance by making some of these investments. The reality is that many businesses will tend to deal with local government before they deal with us. We are probably the third in line in relation to their level of engagement. The average small business might be applying to council for a permit for one reason or another. They will lodge a BAS with the federal government. Sure, they might require a WorkCover premium if they have got staff, or they might pay payroll tax if they get to a certain size. But often for a lot of citizens and a lot of businesses their first primary engagement is with councils.

The thing is with the RRIF and now with the BAF there is a fantastic opportunity to look at finding ways where we can improve the operational efficiency of councils and we can start to work with them in a constructive, agile, collaborative fashion to make things better. The good thing too here is that if we can get it right with one council—for example, if we can try and find a way where you can pay your rates online simply and easily through some form of platform—then it is easy to replicate that across the other 78 councils across Victoria. It is scalable, and it has got enormous potential. This is particularly important when you are talking about regional or remote communities; those councils which do not have much of an IT budget may have some challenges there. So there are some really great opportunities that lie before us by making these sorts of investments. I think Service Victoria gives us some sense as to the future. It gives us some sense as to where this can go and the potential

and the opportunities that can emerge for us to try and find those ways where we can improve our efficiency. The reality is that when we start to improve our efficiency in relation to the statutory and regulatory functions, that will provide us greater levels of fiscal opportunity to reallocate that funding to other things that really count and that do not have a digital solution, that cannot use AI and that cannot use tech. It is a really important initiative.

Turning briefly now to my electorate of Essendon, this budget has really delivered for my community. There is over \$7 million for Moonee Ponds West Primary School—a great local school—and I am really pleased about and proud of the work that Kerri Simpson as principal has done over the last few years in guiding our school community. Kerri is due to retire, which is disappointing; I had hoped she could hang around a bit longer to see this project be constructed and delivered. Kerri has been an outstanding contributor to our community. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of her teachers, the parents and the children at Moonee Ponds West, and she is to be congratulated.

I am pleased and delighted as well that there is additional funding for the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan*. This is something that I was heavily involved in when I was first elected in the last term. We have provided in the order of \$4 million of additional funding to the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan* because it is about treating African-Australian communities with respect—not demonising them, not castigating them—giving them opportunities, believing in them, giving them respect and giving them opportunities to reach their potential. What is occurring at the moment in inner Melbourne is fantastic. We are investing heavily in our schools, and we are investing heavily in our housing. We are investing heavily, particularly in relation to some of the African-Australian communities in my area and indeed in other areas as well, such as by having homework clubs, and are providing the kids in those communities the chance to get the very best start in life. It starts with housing. It continues on with child care and education. It gives them the opportunity to reach their potential. This is a great budget—it is a great Labor budget—and I commend it.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (13:32): I rise to make some comments on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. This was a missed opportunity for the government to actually deliver a budget to help people recover and rebuild from the traumas of lockdown, the traumas of hardship and the difficulties that many Victorians have faced over the last few years. There is no question that many Victorians right across the state have done it tough, including many of my constituents in Caulfield. We have been advocating quite strongly for a number of local projects to be funded, and we had hoped to see particularly some funding in this budget for a number of our schools. I know that we have raised a number of issues and written on a number of occasions to the Minister for Education to see what could be done to support schools such as Caulfield South, Caulfield, Glen Huntly, Ormond and Ripponlea, to see what we could see in the budget for any of that, and unfortunately there was a big nought—and not only that but also a lot of disappointment.

I received a letter from St Kilda Primary School, which borders the electorate of the Minister for Health, the member for Albert Park. The school was so disappointed at not being considered in the recent budget announcement and called for an urgent appeal for funding. That school put out a press release on 12 May saying that even though they had had a number of discussions with the state government they were very disappointed to not receive any funding at all. It really does highlight the fact that the government have neglected those kids that have really suffered during these lockdowns. When you look at a school like St Kilda Primary School, which has huge diversity and kids from a whole range of cultural backgrounds, it is a school community desperately trying to meet the directives of the government, yet the government have turned their back on them. The children simply do not have adequate facilities, undergoing a physical education program in a space that was designed to be a library area sitting in the middle of four classrooms without a wall or any permanent divider. They cannot throw balls. Children cannot run. Their voices need to be kept quiet while the classrooms are being used. It is just inadequate. The physical education program cannot run because they have got no space to run it in. It is a school that has been growing. Certainly it is a school that has had portables and a whole range of things but no funding. Education—huge failure. We will continue to not only

advocate to ensure that those kids are given the infrastructure that they need—the buildings, the classrooms and the physical activity areas they need to get things back from the time that they have lost—but also to invest in those students and their education to ensure that they can catch up on the lost learning that they have had under the Andrews Labor government.

There are a number of things in my electorate that I would have thought were an opportunity for the government to actually do something about which they have completely ignored. I want to focus for a minute on the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. Prior to 2018 the member for Oakleigh and I did a review of that space, which led to the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Act 2017, an act of Parliament to designate that space for public space. You have heard on many occasions in this chamber that I have advocated very strongly for open space—green space. Caulfield in my area—Glen Eira—has the lowest amount of open space in the state. We desperately need some more. We have a big racecourse, and the middle of that racecourse should be used for open space for kids to play, for kids to have sport and for just passive recreation—a whole range of opportunities. There is a lake in the middle. There is a real opportunity.

Well, as a result of the work that we did in a bipartisan manner we had the act of Parliament and we had a new trust. Sam Almaliki has been the chair of that trust. He is certainly a strong friend of the Labor Party but has done his job very well in a way that puts the community first, and he has been advocating for a long time for this government to actually deliver the money that fits the plan. There is a land management plan of some \$500 million—\$290 million from the racecourse and \$290 million they need to actually make this work. There have been three-plus budgets and not one dollar allocated to a plan worth about \$500 million. They cannot even run a fete there. The extent of what this committee have been able to do is pay the wages of the staff that run it. The trust barely have the money available to run the wages and have told me that if they do not get funding within the next 12 months they will be insolvent themselves. They will not be able to continue. The government and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change have turned their back on the very trust they set up. You cannot set up a trust—you cannot set up a program—to fail. The government have done the initial work. They have gone out there. The minister for environment has been out with me and said how fantastic it is. We have had press conference after press conference. We need dollars to provide the facilities to enable many of my constituents in Caulfield to have the recreational space to do the stuff that they want to do. The kids need playing surfaces, and the government needs to provide the dollars to do it.

Caulfield Hospital, the Alfred hospital—again, we know we are in the middle of a health crisis. We desperately need to ensure we have those hospitals available to actually deal with the health crisis. The government, over a budget ago—two budgets ago—provided a couple of million dollars to do a review of the Caulfield Hospital site to see what we could do in terms of utilising that site better. There has been no money, no plans in terms of what the Alfred site could be used for or what could happen to that hospital itself. That hospital is over 100 years old. It repatriated a number of soldiers from World War I—18 000 soldiers through World War I. Unfortunately the buildings are as old as the time, in terms of their still being from the war days. You see the breezeway and a number of those old areas. A lot of it has been shut down. A lot of it has been left. It is an opportunity waiting to happen. In the middle of a health crisis you would think that there would be some funding to actually utilise that site and provide opportunities around it. It has been neglected. Again, many of my constituents would love to see something being done about Caulfield Hospital and that site. Nothing is being done to support it.

So they are two opportunities where there has been complete failure in our area. Open space, and as I have said on many occasions, an opportunity for open space—none of it, not only in the racecourse itself but in pocket parks and a whole range of things where we could have more, but there is not the funding that goes with that in terms of support.

In our shopping strips, the likes of Glenhuntly, Ormond, Balaclava, Carlisle Street, Ripponlea—and many people in this Parliament would have been to Carlisle Street in its thriving and pumping times—again because of the lockdowns, because a lot of those small businesses have not been supported by this government, there are so many for-lease signs. There is a lack of anything to support many of

those shopping strips and a lack of vision to do that as well. They are in desperate need of repair. Ripponlea desperately needs a coat of paint, upgrades, some marketing and some support, and it is certainly something that we have advocated for, should we win government in November. We will provide the necessary funds to ensure we revitalise those shopping strips, that we breathe life into them and that we make them community hubs where people can visit, can enjoy, can shop and spend and shop local, which is so important to the community.

There is not enough being spent on manufacturing. These are jobs. Not enough is being spent on small business. Again money is limited in terms of the recovery, and then the government and the ministers say, 'You know what? COVID is over. We're not supporting you anymore'. Well, those businesses are struggling. When they most need the support, many of the small businesses that are the backbone of our community are struggling. They are on life support. You only have to go down to the CBD of Melbourne and have a look at the for-lease signs there in the CBD of Melbourne. They are desperate. There is no plan to get the CBD back. The CBD should be the gateway to the rest of Victoria. Melbourne was the most livable city, year in, year out. We have gone to eighth, and there is no plan for us to get anywhere back from where we are right now.

If you look at the public sector, there is no plan to get the public sector back—no plan whatsoever. We were down talking to a pharmacist only a few weeks back that supports the Telstra building and the Department of Health. That pharmacy is lucky if they see many of the people that work in those buildings once a month, and when you talk to him and you say, 'Well, what's happening? What would you like?', he says, 'You know what? Even if I got workers back three days a week, I'd be able to run my business. My business is running on a day-to-day proposition because the government has got no plans to get workers back'. Again, what are we doing in terms of the recovery? What are we doing to incentivise? What are we doing to ensure we get a nightlife and we get weekend support? What are we doing for many of these shopping strips, the retailers, to ensure that we breathe life into them?

We desperately need a plan for small business, and it is not just those businesses, it is the families that run them. It is the jobs that they create. There is none of that in terms of a plan, and I am really disappointed that those sole operators have never had any support. Those businesses, many of which have operated from home, had no support during the lockdown, no support at any time and no support now. The best they got—when it was uncovered that if you did not have a GST number, effectively if you were below the GST threshold, there was no money for you and there were no grants for you—was that the government put in a concierge service so they could talk to someone. Talking to someone does not pay the bills. Talking to someone does not put food on the table. These are people that make fashion stuff. These are artisans. These are photographers. These are people that during the lockdown had not a dollar coming in and no support coming in. Again, many of those have struggled. You have heard me talk about gym owners. You have heard me talking about people in the dance industry and the fitness industry, those people that have really struggled during this time. There has been no support, no funding, to actually back them as well.

Our events industry has really struggled. For the events industry, again, we advocated for insurance, which the government did come to the party on, underwriting an insurance policy, which was great. An insurance policy does not underwrite the kinds of thing where you have got artists that cannot come, because of COVID, at the last minute. So again it is very limited in terms of that insurance. But we need more than insurance. What about all of those local events that we want to get back? We want to restart those local events, the food and wine festivals, the regional events—the kinds of things that actually bring people, bring excitement, bring new ventures and bring new opportunities.

It is great that we have things like the Australian Open. It is great that we have a racing carnival. It is great that we have the grand prix. But we have got to ensure that we also support the business events, the corporate events and the smaller boutique events. They are the kinds of things that are going to make Victoria and Melbourne number one again. That is going to get tourism back. That is going to get people back. There has been nothing to support training people, getting traineeships and getting people back into the kinds of jobs that we need.

A lot of businesses cannot open because they do not have the staff. There has been no work being done to ensure that we get those people—we get workers back, we get people back, we get confidence back, we get tourism back. There is so much that needs to be done. Confidence is at an all-time zero because the government have not talked up what they are going to do. The government have not planned what they are going to do. I am very proud of the fact that we in opposition launched our plan, a six-point plan that talks about recovering, talks about rebuilding, talks about fixing the health crisis.

It is appalling, the fact that we have seen people die on 000 because they cannot get an ambulance. People have got to take their loved ones into a hospital because no-one is picking up the phone. Ambulances are being ramped. We hear today that the government is being sued because of the lack of response and that people have been dying because of the 000 crisis. Hospital waiting lists are at 100 000 people—no money for many of those hospitals. We have seen press announcements for Melton and other hospitals—no substance to build them. Again, the health crisis has been absolutely appalling, what we are dealing with. The member for Mulgrave has been the Premier or the health minister for 11 of 15 years, and what does the Premier do? What do they do in this budget? They put out a budget, ‘Putting patients first’. That is the headline. It is all it is, a headline. There is no substance in this budget, none whatsoever. You cannot just give a headline when you have had 15 years to actually do something about it—15 years.

Members interjecting.

Mr SOUTHWICK: The member for Bentleigh can jump up and down. In this budget the member for Bentleigh put out on social media the fact that they were closing a school—a special school, Katandra—and did not even tell those kids and those families at the special school. Well, that is not doing the hard yards. That is another press conference. That is another social media story.

Mr Staikos interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK: The member for Bentleigh can interject all he likes, but those parents who have kids with special needs are very, very offended. The member for Bentleigh can join with me on Friday and meet a number of parents at that school that have been traumatised by the fact that he does a social media post talking about the closure of a school without those parents even being informed about that closure. It is an absolute disgrace.

This is a government about spin. This is a government about a headline. It is not a government about substance, and that is what we are seeing here. It is an appalling budget. This government does not care, and that is why it is a budget that, quite frankly, does not do anything to fix the problems that Victoria and Victorians are facing.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (13:47): Dear oh dear. I have to say I spent all of Saturday at booths across my electorate, which covers the seats of Hotham and Isaacs and Goldstein, and I witnessed with my own eyes the Liberal vote collapse, including in the member for Caulfield’s own seat. You would think that after such a disastrous and cataclysmic event on Saturday they would change course, they would change direction. But listening to that garbage for 15 minutes, it is clear that they are not going to change course, not going to change direction. I will come back to them in a moment, but needless to say if I were them, I would probably think about packing up my offices.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would ask you to refer the member to refer to people appropriately, not by ‘them’.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor): I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr STAIKOS: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. They are a bit touchy at the moment, aren’t they? I do not blame them because I would be very, very jumpy in my seat if I were them. But I did not get up to talk about them; I got up to talk about another fantastic Labor budget of this Andrews Labor government. It is really an honour to speak about this budget. It is in fact our eighth budget as a

government, it is the eighth budget handed down by the same Treasurer, which is a marker of the stability of this administration, and it is a budget that again puts Victorians first.

As the Treasurer's parliamentary secretary I had the absolute privilege of seeing the Treasurer work behind the scenes with his team to develop this budget, and what I saw every single day was a government that is delivering for Victorians and a government with the right values and the right priorities. This is a budget that illustrates everything Victorians need to know about our party and this government. We prioritise jobs for Victorians, and we promote access to health care, education, transport and critical services for all Victorians. We also support the economy to recover and to grow rather than choking it with austerity, and we manage the state's finances in a responsible way—even through the historic challenges of the last couple of years. Despite the difficult and costly decisions that this government has needed to make in recent years, where this government rightly used its balance sheet as a government to support the Victorian community, this budget will deliver a cash surplus of \$1.3 billion in 2022–23 and an operating surplus of over \$650 million in the final year of the forward estimates. It also shows an improvement of \$7.8 billion in our net debt levels and establishes the \$10 billion Victorian Future Fund to reinvest returns in debt stabilisation, meaning we have met or are progressing towards all four steps of this government's fiscal strategy.

I am immensely proud to be part of a government that has, through this and previous budgets, provided more than \$44 billion in pandemic response measures for health and to save jobs. On unemployment, under this government we have reduced unemployment to historic lows, and in our regions the unemployment rate is 3.2 per cent, which is the lowest across the continent. We have removed 60 level crossings and counting. We have invested more than \$11 billion in health infrastructure, including \$790 million in regional health infrastructure. We have built 23 new ambulance stations, and there are 15 more on their way, including in East Bentleigh in my electorate. We have provided funding to upgrade every special school in the state, and for the benefit of the member for Caulfield, I will come back to that in great detail later in this contribution. We have also invested more than \$12.8 billion to build new schools and a total of more than 1850 school upgrades, including in my electorate. We have pioneered free TAFE and free and subsidised kinder, which is expanded in this budget. We have created over 560 000 jobs, of which more than 400 000 are full time, and that includes over 80 000 jobs in regional Victoria. We have created conditions and subsidies that have enabled 250 000 Victorians to buy their first home, and we have driven the biggest infrastructure program in the nation, investing four times more in capital projects on average than when those opposite were in office. I think that that is a pretty good summation of a very good record.

I do want to take some time to talk about something that did not get much coverage at all during the state budget, and that is the gig economy, because I am especially proud of what is in this budget to support workers in the gig economy and, frankly, to provide national leadership in a space where leadership has been lacking. I do want to be very direct on the gig economy and just say that I have never subscribed to the argument that has been put forward by mainly the bigger platforms that these workers are somehow small business people and are somehow their own bosses. Frankly, proffering such an argument is part of their business model. We have never subscribed to that. That is why we are taking action. While it did not receive much airtime, the budget we are debating contains important funding to address the challenges of the gig economy. It is important to see this particular issue from both sides, because the gig economy does promise choice and flexibility, but it also threatens, in the absence of a proper regulatory framework, to undermine the pay, the conditions and the security that working Australians and unions have fought for over a century to win.

As the Treasurer's parliamentary secretary I have had the privilege in recent months to consult with gig platforms, with workers and also with independent experts, with academics, on the best way to regulate the new and growing form of work. My involvement followed this government commissioning in 2018 a landmark inquiry, indeed the most comprehensive piece of work in Australia in this space, led by Natalie James, the former Fair Work Ombudsman, into the Victorian on-demand workforce. And what the James inquiry found was that more than 13 per cent of Australians had at

some point worked in the gig economy and that at any one point in time more than 7 per cent of Australians work in the gig economy. We also funded some groundbreaking research by QUT academics that revealed that gig work can exacerbate gender inequities and structural barriers to women's workforce participation. But despite this comprehensive report, despite its 20 recommendations and despite the advocacy of this government, the former Morrison government oversaw a total policy vacuum in this space.

I am really pleased that the new Albanese government has committed to ensuring that the Fair Work Commission expands its remit to covering employment-like relationships, aka gig economy workers, because that is really what we need. And this is something that started from the national leadership shown by this government in the gig economy space. As I said, our government accepted all 20 of the recommendations of the report, and we are now consulting on a set of six key standards to give these workers some basic protections. To aid in this space the budget provides \$5.6 million to continue the implementation of the government's response to that inquiry, including provision of a support service for on-demand workers to help them better understand their entitlements and work status and to administer the standards that we will implement.

Turning to my electorate, it was another great budget for the Bentleigh electorate. When we talk about schools—and the member for Caulfield had a lot to say about schools that he did not deliver for in the four years that those opposite were in power—I can say that it was a great budget for schools in the Bentleigh electorate. Bentleigh Secondary College's performing arts centre has been fully funded to the tune of \$12.7 million. The performing arts is a space in which Bentleigh Secondary College excels, and I am really pleased to have been able to deliver such a fantastic outcome for them.

The member for Caulfield also spoke about Katandra School. It is important that we put a lot of facts on the table about what he called the 'closure' of Katandra School. Katandra School is a very valued special school down in Ormond. It is a primary school. It is a school of between 35 and 40 students. It is accommodated in a few modified old homes. Nearby in Hampton East there is Berendale School, another special school, which is a secondary school on a substantial piece of land. In the previous budget this government had funded some planning, with \$500 000 to ensure that there was collaboration between Berendale School and Katandra School—between their school councils, between their school leadership—to plan a potential merger of those two schools. To say that there has not been any consultation is a complete and utter lie. There has been 12 months of consultation on this with the school communities; that includes all the families from both Berendale School and Katandra School. And can I say, if the member for Caulfield is about to oppose the merger of Berendale and Katandra schools, he is not on the right side. I think most parents—probably 99 per cent of parents—at both schools are going to have something to say about that. I am proud that this government has funded \$12.2 million to facilitate that merger, but not only that, this government has ensured that through this budget every single special school in Victoria has been rebuilt.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

MINISTER FOR HEALTH

MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

MINISTER FOR PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): Let me inform the house that today I will answer questions for the portfolios of health, ambulance services and equality; the Minister for Public Transport will answer questions for the portfolios of transport, infrastructure and the Suburban Rail Loop; and the Minister for Regional Development will answer questions for the portfolios of Aboriginal affairs, women and prevention of family violence.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Twenty-one Victorians have lost their lives over the last six months due to the ambulance crisis in this state. I asked the Minister for Health at estimates, who refused, and so today I ask the Premier: will the Premier say sorry to the families of those Victorians who have tragically died because of the crisis in the health system that he runs?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:02): I thank the member for Brighton for his question. A couple of points: firstly, with the greatest of respect, it is not for the member for Brighton or any member of this house to determine the cause of death of any Victorian. That is rightly and appropriately a matter for the coroner, and the coroner has not concluded that work in order to make the conclusion that the member for Brighton has made. I will not speculate on what might motivate the member for Brighton to draw those conclusions. He asked a serious question, and that is the first point in my answer, and it is appropriate to make that point. It is not for the member for Brighton or any member opposite or any member on this side of the house to make those determinations.

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: There is an interjection: ‘Well, what about Ambulance Victoria?’. They do not make those determinations either. They are not the coroner.

Mr Pearson: You would reckon they would know that.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, you would think that some might know that. They do not. In any event, in terms of any Victorian who has been let down by a system under enormous pressure, under unprecedented pressure and stress of the sheer volume of calls, to anyone let down by the system, of course I offer my apology as the leader of the government—absolutely I do. But it is not just words, it is not just sentiments; it is about actions. It is about action and investment. That is why we—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, one can only imagine if COVID had hit in 2015, when we had the worst ambulance response times on record, by choice. They chose to have the worst ambulance response times ever. One can only imagine. The key point—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, like their leader I can see the backbench is willing to make a political point when we are talking about families who have died under the watch of this government. We are not talking about 2015. We are talking about the people who have died under the watch of this government, and the Premier and those behind him—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Warrandyte will resume his seat. That is not a point of order.

Mr ANDREWS: I am certain that there are some who do not want to talk about 2015. They do not want to talk about 2015 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19 because in that period of time we went from the worst ambulance response times to the very best ambulance response times. So we repaired the damage done by choice by those opposite, and we will repair the damage that this pandemic has done to our health system. That is why there is a massive boost—hundreds of extra call takers and dispatchers to deal with thousands of extra calls; hundreds and thousands of additional ambulance employees, paramedics and others, to deal with unprecedented demand. Of course I take responsibility. I offer an apology, but more than words and far, far more than cheap politics, we will get on and repair the damage the pandemic has done, just as we got on and repaired the damage that you did to this system.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I would ask members not to refer to ‘you’; that is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:06): The daughter of Stewart Grant, who died waiting for an ambulance, has said:

The state government has blood on its hands because they are spending more money on investigations instead of putting money into the system.

Will the Premier meet the Grant family and say sorry for his government's failure that cost their father his life?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:06): With the greatest of respect to the Grant family, I am uncertain whether the coroner has concluded the work that the coroner must do in relation to this matter.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, they can scoff all they want, but we are not going to have a situation where the member for Brighton determines the cause of death of anyone. That is not a matter for politicians, it is a matter for those who are properly trained under a well-established process. With the greatest of respect, it is simply wrong to assert that the government has not invested like no other government in ambulance services. It is simply wrong to suggest that. It is appropriate to investigate, it is appropriate to understand and then learn from every individual case, every error, every instance where the system has not met the rightful expectations of Victorians. That is called continuous improvements. It is in stark contrast to continuous cutbacks.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTH FUNDING

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:07): I am pleased to rise to update the house on the fact that our health workers, every member of that team, whether it be those working in ambulance, those working at ESTA, those working in hospitals or those working and providing health care in people's homes, are doing amazing work and they still face very considerable pressure. They still face very considerable challenges when it comes to not only a rise in COVID-19 cases and this latest subvariant but also rising flu cases, given that our borders are open and we have flu within our Victorian community.

Winter is always a challenging time for our health system. It is made more challenging, though, by a combination of flu and COVID. Whilst there are very few rules left, and whilst for many of us the pandemic is in essence over, our nurses, our ambos, our doctors—the whole team—are treating hundreds and hundreds of patients in inpatient settings and many others at home. Our thoughts are with them of course, and it is important to acknowledge the contribution that they continue to make all these months later. They are exhausted. They are the best of us, and the key point is they have our strong support—\$12 billion in additional support to help them, to recruit extra staff, to provide better care, to upgrade to the best of equipment, to build new facilities, to give them every support that is possible, not just now but right throughout these next four years, the budget period. This is an unprecedented boost. It is the best and perhaps only way to say thank you, not just in words and certainly not in political stunts. It is about putting patients first and thanking those who are highly skilled, highly compassionate and highly motivated to provide the best care with the resources they need—not cutbacks but more resources to do even better work.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Premier. Evidence to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) shows that the government was aware each time when 18 Victorians had tragically died waiting for an ambulance from October 2021 to March 2022. Why did it take over six months, with then 18 deaths of Victorians like Stewart Grant, Alfred Edwards and Neslihan Kurosawa for the government to finally act on the crisis engulfing our ambulance service?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:10): I in no way make any judgements or reflections on the families or individuals that have been mentioned—just to be clear at the outset. I am not sure what evidence, what verballing the Leader of the Opposition is doing about PAEC—whether you want to re-read that part of the question. Did the Leader of the Opposition precisely refer to something or did he just make a ‘at PAEC it was said’? These are matters—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: No, I am sorry, these are matters of life and death. Too right they are! And if you are going to make assertions—

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

Mr Pakula: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Premier is quite properly pointing out that the Leader of the Opposition in his question made a vague assertion about evidence that was led at PAEC without giving any particulars or any details about where that evidence was.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, I am not sure who led this evidence, whether it was a departmental—

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: That is not in the question, though, is it?

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Because that is not what the acting CEO of Ambulance Victoria said at all. There were three cases that were referenced at PAEC. The CEO of Ambulance Victoria is in no way responsible for the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority, but that is another point made. Again, it is very, very easy if all you are interested in doing is playing politics with these things, trying to obtain a political advantage from tragedy. If people who now raise these tragedies actually cared about these issues, then when they were in charge they perhaps would not have cut ambulance funding.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: They perhaps would not have shut down ambulance stations. They perhaps would not have gone to war with our ambos. They perhaps would not have delivered by choice—not by chance, but by choice—the worst ambulance response times that we have seen. All of these were choices that were made by people who chose to cut funding, go to war with our ambos and deliver appalling performance. Imagine if the global pandemic had arrived in March of 2015 instead of March of 2020, when our government had not had a chance to repair the damage done by those opposite, our government had not been given a chance to recruit hundreds and hundreds of extra paramedics and our government had not been given a chance to repair the damage from hundreds of millions of dollars worth of cuts to our health system made by, you guessed it, those opposite.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Choices, yes. Some chose to gut our ambulance service, others worked very hard to deliver the best ambulance response times on record. We repaired the damage done by those opposite, and we will repair the damage done by COVID-19. Every Victorian can be confident of that.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): With the government confirming via Ambulance Victoria that there has been a code orange in the ambulance service declared on average every single week for the last year, what more evidence is required for the Premier to finally admit that the ambulance system is in crisis and that government inaction is costing Victorians their lives?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:14): It is put to me by the Leader of the Opposition that there is government inaction. In every budget every year more resources for Ambulance Victoria, more vehicles, more equipment, more paramedics, more stations. We are not shutting stations, not shutting—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Oh, really? Worst response times? Best ever before the pandemic—we will just leave that bit out. That is a little bit inconvenient. This is not about convenience, it is not about politics, it is not about grubby little games to try and look after yourself. It is about looking after Victorians. We will not be deterred from repairing the damage of this pandemic with exactly the same method, exactly the same urgency, exactly the same values that we used to repair the damage done by none other than those opposite.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: TAFE FUNDING

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:15): I rise to update the house about how the Andrews government is training the next generation of nurses and healthcare workers. Healthcare and social assistance is the largest employment sector in Victoria and the fastest growing sector of any industry. That is exactly why the Andrews government has provided \$61.6 million for an extra 10 000 places across the TAFE and training system for people looking to re-skill after the pandemic and move into in-demand jobs in health care.

As we are introducing these new places, we are also giving these students the best facilities. The newly refurbished Bendigo Kangan Institute's Essendon health hub will train approximately 900 health students each year. New nursing and pathology simulation labs have been built to reflect actual healthcare settings and ensure students are fully prepared when they start work. We have also upgraded the health training facilities at GOTAFE Seymour campus, TAFE Gippsland in Morwell and Chisholm TAFE in Berwick. We are building a new Health and Community Centre of Excellence at Kangan TAFE in Broadmeadows, and we have already upgraded the health wards at Frankston Chisholm's TAFE, including four replica hospital wards.

There are also free TAFE courses in allied health, health services, mental health and nursing. Last year there were over 10 000 enrolments in these free TAFE courses—only possible under the Andrews Labor government because on this side of the house we know the importance of a strong TAFE sector. We have kept our promise to save and to rebuild TAFE after the cuts and closures of those opposite, with a record \$1.7 billion investment to ensure Victorians have access to high-quality skills and training for a rewarding career in Victoria's health system.

EMERGENCY SERVICES TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:17): My question is to the Premier. The inspector-general for emergency management's (IGEM) legislative role is to monitor, investigate and report on ESTA's performance to investigate adverse events, particularly the deaths of 21 Victorians. How many times has the government referred ESTA to the inspector-general in the last two years?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:17): I take it this question is in my capacity representing the health minister today.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Okay, the question is directed to me as the Premier—whether as the Premier or as the acting health minister, for the purposes of question time I was simply trying to clarify. If I can get you further information, I will. I am very conscious of my obligations not to mislead the house in any way. It is not my understanding, although I am happy to—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, the member has asked a question, and I think inherent in the question is an error. What I am saying is before I assert that I am going to get it checked. But it is my understanding that the IGEM does not need to be told by the government of the day to do his job. He does his job: he has standing powers, standing roles and functions.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: No, the clear inference in the question—

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: You write the questions, and you are not much good at it. If you want to assert that the IGEM needs to be told to do things, I think you are wrong.

Ms Staley: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. The Premier in his last sentence was repeatedly defying your request that people not use ‘you’, and I ask you to ask him to stop doing it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, members more broadly should not use the word ‘you’. It is a reflection on the Chair. The Premier was being relevant to the question.

Mr ANDREWS: Through the Chair, I would simply make the point that it is has been put to me by the honourable member that the inspector-general for emergency management cannot do anything without being told by the government of the day. That is simply wrong. Conscious of my obligations, I am happy to go and double- and triple-check that, and I will ask the minister, who is in fact, I believe, the Minister for Emergency Services, to whom the IGEM reports. And the thing is they cannot have it again. They quoted the act, and they have got it wrong, I believe. I will go and double-check that, and if I can relevantly add to my answer, I will.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (14:20): The government can refer to the inspector-general any of those concerns as legislated. Given that since 2016 concerns about ESTA’s performance have been raised with the government by Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria, why did your government never order the inspector-general to investigate ESTA’s performance given Victorians were dying waiting for an ambulance?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:21): In 1 minute I do not know that I can deal with each of the litany of errors and assertions that are plainly false within that excuse of a question. You have been found to be wrong. Before you quote the act, go and read it. That would be a good thing to do. And on behalf of the inspector-general for emergency management, let me make it very, very clear that in my dealings with him he does not need to be told to do anything. He is a first-class public servant, someone with decades of experience. The member for Gembrook, as is his way, might want to malign him as a public servant and a member of our emergency services family. He has got form maligning people who work every day to keep us safe. But I am not having any of that. The IG does a great job. He has got the powers he needs and a determination to do his job properly.

Mr Battin interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gembrook is warned.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: DISABILITY FUNDING

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (14:22): I rise to update the house on the Andrews government’s support for Victorians with disabilities. Last year some Victorians—200 in fact—with a disability had an average stay in hospital of 160 days. Many of those patients could have been discharged earlier after fantastic care from our health workers in our acute hospital setting, yet many remained in hospital because they were unable to get their NDIS plans approved. That included a lack of accommodation support. Last year our government, the Andrews Labor government, made sure that we would take

action to support those Victorians with disabilities seeking accommodation when they need it—absolutely at that time when they are ready to be discharged from hospital.

I am pleased to inform the house further that in the state budget we provided some \$38 million to boost the transition care program. That will support patients with disabilities to get the care and the post-hospital accommodation that they need and deserve while they wait for those NDIS accommodation and plan approvals. It is part of our government's longer term investment in this budget as well—the \$698 million expansion of the Better at Home program, a program that will help 15 000 Victorians to access home-based care in addition to telehealth check-ups. It is what Victorians want—to be at home and supported by our healthcare professionals.

Can I say also that the Victorian community and the Victorian government provided some \$2.8 billion to the NDIS in 2021–22. It is funding that supports some 138 000 Victorians who are clients of the NDIS. It gives peace of mind and support to their families, their carers and the people that look out for them. There are some 70 000 Victorians using the NDIS for the very first time, yet we know that the time-motion experts—those opposite—have delayed, obfuscated and held back support for those with disability in our community to get the support with their plans. We welcome the election of the Albanese Labor government, who will put people with a disability at the centre of the NDIS along with the Andrews Labor government.

OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:24): My question today is to the Premier. Premier, over the weekend the federal election saw big swings away from both major parties towards parties and candidates who campaigned for stronger action on climate change than either of the two major parties were offering. Yet last week the Victorian Labor government's oil and gas regulator gave final approval to gas drilling near the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park. Given that Victorians have clearly now shown they do not want any more climate-destroying oil and gas projects, will the government reverse this approval for this gas project?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:25): My honourable friend the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change points out there has been a slight change in wording. It used to be right in the heart of the Twelve Apostles, now it is 'near'. Like, seriously—just change the facts to suit your narrative. There was also quite a big vote for the United Australia Party, who do not think climate change is real. So let us be clear. If all of us are asked to give our interpretations on the federal election, I will hazard a guess that they might well be quite self-serving interpretations, and this is a pretty self-serving interpretation. Because do you know what matters more than talking about climate change?

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Actually doing something about it—actually doing something about it. You can bemoan fossil fuels all you want, but unless you get off and do something about it, then we will remain reliant upon them. There is a reason why the Clean Energy Council says Victoria is the centre of renewable energy in our nation—because, member for Melbourne, with respect, we are. We are, and we cannot power our homes with the words of some. We can only power our homes and businesses and not harm the planet by actually delivering a renewable energy, low emissions agenda—an actual agenda—not a slogan, not a one-liner, not a pamphlet, not a triangle, but an actual agenda.

By the way, why wouldn't you get on and deliver that agenda? It is great for the planet, great for jobs, and it delivers reliable, lower cost energy for households and businesses. Now, there is a reason. When I was at the Committee for Economic Development of Australia recently I made some announcements. One can only think what the Greens' view of CEDA is, but it has got the term 'economic development' in it, so not very much, I would think. I made announcements about Australia's first ever offshore wind targets. That is to say, no such target exists anywhere else in our nation. And look, to be fair to the rest of the nation, it is not just about our leadership; it is also about the richness of our wind resource off our coast. There is enough power for all of Melbourne and most of Adelaide. There are enough

jobs for 6500 families. It is investment pushing \$10 billion—indeed more than that in fact; it might well be closer to \$40 billion if the whole vision is realised.

So all I would say to the member for Melbourne is: there are lots who talk about these issues. I am not being critical of them—it is fine; talk is fine and if that is all you offer, then offer it—but the better thing and the more important thing is to get on and get the job done, and that is what our government is doing.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:28): The Premier in his answer talked a lot about action. So let us talk about action. Last week at Victoria's budget estimates we learned that since the Victorian Labor government lifted the ban on onshore gas drilling they have now approved 12 new onshore gas production licences across farmland and bushland in Victoria. That is the action that has been taken. Now, Victorians made it very clear with their votes on the weekend—I do not think anyone can dispute that climate was front and centre of people's votes—that people want action on climate change and to move away from coal and gas. Given this, will the Victorian government now act and revoke these 12 new gas licences which are making climate change worse?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:28): I am afraid I cannot accept the contention that the government is not acting. There is probably not enough time—for every answer in question time there is not enough time—to go through all the things we are doing. But I can shed some further light on why we might have gone from describing this as literally at the base of one of the Twelve Apostles to now 'near'. I am advised that the well in question is 7 kilometres from the Twelve Apostles and just a lazy 1.3 kilometres below—below—the ground and below the seabed. So, always good to check the facts. Always assume that the narrative has been crafted in such a way as to support a particular world view. Well, world views do not keep the lights on, pamphlets do not keep the lights on, half-well-drafted questions do not keep the lights on. Only Labor government climate change action—not Green words, but Labor action—will keep the lights on and save our planet.

MINISTERS STATEMENT: RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (14:30): I rise to update the house on the massive investment the Andrews Labor government is making in the health of regional communities across Victoria in the 2022–23 state budget. Regional Victorians deserve the same quality of care as their city counterparts, but the past two years, we need to acknowledge, have tested health systems right around the world. That is why this year's budget has responded with a \$12 billion pandemic repair plan that will deliver a \$3.3 billion healthcare investment across regional Victoria. Now, this investment includes delivering the Barwon women's and children's hospital for Geelong's rapidly growing population, building three new public sector residential aged care facilities in Camperdown, Mansfield and Orbost, planning to redevelop the Bright and Heywood aged care facilities, constructing an alcohol and drug rehab facility in Mildura and delivering a 10-bed early parenting centre in Shepparton to support families with children in those critical years up to four years of age. And of course we are investing to continue palliative care in rural and regional communities.

That is not all. Our budget continues to invest in our flagship Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, with a further \$300 million invested in this fund for projects across rural and regional health services. Since the fund began in 2016 we have supported over 480 projects in every corner of the state, and I might say, Premier, it was fabulous to have you in Kyneton recently opening the \$9.6 million healthy community hub.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (14:32): My question is to the Premier. Adrian, a cancer patient from Rowville, was recently rushed to the Monash Medical Centre by ambulance with a severe headache and vomiting. He spent 24 hours in the emergency department and was transferred to a day care ward for a further 24 hours. He was discharged by overworked staff without an MRI and with no follow-up

care when he had actually had a stroke. Can the Premier explain how he has allowed the Victorian health system to decline so far that situations like Adrian's are now common?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:32): I would take issue with the final part of the honourable member's question. Every patient is unique, so describing things as 'common'—the member for Rowville may be the father of the house, he is not a clinician. He is not, last I checked, a clinician, and the judgements about what care is provided, the detailed triaging that it is done in every emergency department, every hour of every shift, right across every week, in every part of our state, are not made by politicians. They are made by those who are clinically trained—

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, resources are a matter for politicians, yes, too right they are: \$12 billion of extra funding, as opposed to those who, when they get the chance, every single time cut the funding—every single time. And if they are not content to cut the funding themselves, they sit on the sidelines cheering on their mates in Canberra who do exactly the same. So, yes, thank you, member for Warrandyte, for your timely interjection. Action matters, resources matter, choices matter—absolutely. But you know what? No-one in this chamber, to the best of my knowledge, is in a position or ought to pretend to be able to provide clinical advice on the individual circumstances of this particular person. If the member for Rowville provides me with the details of this particular case, then I am more than happy to, with Monash Health—

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, it is too late, according to the member for Warrandyte. No, it is not too late at all, and if the member for Warrandyte knew anything about the health system, he would know that it is not too late. Every single case you should learn from. Every single case is unique. This patient and others like him may well learn from what occurred to him. That is what our clinicians, our doctors, our nurses, our ambos are passionate about. They are passionate about continuous improvement and always learning. They are not passionate about political games where follow-up apparently is not something that is important.

Follow-up is important, and if you provide the details to me I will make sure that the health department and/or Monash Health speak with this family. If there are any learnings at all that can be embedded in our response for other patients, then absolutely. I have met enough people in our health system to know that that is exactly what they will do. If you are not raising this for follow-up, one can only ask: why are you raising this? If you are not raising it to help this patient or patients like this patient, why are you raising it? You are raising it for your own benefit, not for the patient's benefit. Otherwise you would not groan when I offer to follow it up.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (14:36): When returning to the Monash Medical Centre, cancer patient Adrian had to wait 5 hours to be seen by a doctor and sat for a further 7 hours in a chair before being put on a trolley out in the ambulance waiting bay before he could even be given a bed. Sadly this is not an isolated case. Does the Premier take any responsibility for the state of Victoria's health services and the demands on its overworked staff?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:36): Of course. And if the member for Rowville is asserting any differently, then he is simply wrong. As I said, if—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: It is really important to not perhaps let the inference be made that a whole lot of staff are sitting around the ED down at Monash twiddling their thumbs. They will have been treating patients. Not to diminish how serious this patient's condition was, but the sickest patients get treated quickest. It is called triage, and that is very challenging, particularly when you have got thousands—

Members interjecting.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

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Mr ANDREWS: Well, no, the notion of triage—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Goodness me. If you would like me to follow up on this particular patient, I am happy to do that. If you have raised this matter for your own political gain, well, it says more about you than the nurses, the ambos and the doctors who, I know, every hour of every shift at Monash and every hospital do their best for every patient. To suggest otherwise is just a continuation of your anti health worker policies and record.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTH FUNDING

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:37): I am pleased to be able to rise to make some further comments in relation to investments in our health system. I spoke in my first ministers statement today about \$12 billion in additional funding, and it is so pleasing to have those health experts opposite confirm that resources matter. Yes, they do—they absolutely do. And cutting resources never helped any patient anywhere, yet they keep on doing it. You would almost say it is in their blood, it is in their DNA, and it is—it absolutely is. There is also the small matter of the fact that some people who at every stage, using every platform, undermined the health advice throughout the global pandemic now would quite like to run the health system. That does not quite work, I do not think. I do not think that quite computes.

But while others are playing politics and putting politics first, our government and our most recent budget put patients first. It is a shame that my honourable friend the Minister for Health is not here today, because he would be able to talk about a visit he made yesterday to mark the expansion of the emergency department at Werribee Mercy Hospital—and we pay tribute to our denominational hospital partners who do amazing work. Werribee Mercy—extension after extension after extension by our government, and we are proud to have supported them in unprecedented terms.

And of course part of that \$236 million boost is to the Casey emergency department at Labor's Casey Hospital. I well remember that used to be a paddock. They all start as paddocks, and then you turn them into hospitals. Some do not seem to know that. But the Minister for Health was out there with record support, backing our clinicians, our nurses, our doctors and our ambos to treat more patients and do even better things, not through politics, not through pretending to be a clinician or the coroner but in fact through doing what governments should do—backing our nurses to treat more patients.

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I just have some overdue matters which I have raised points of order on in the past: adjournment 6290, to the Premier about reclassifying the Yarra Valley as regional Victoria, and adjournment 6310, also to the Premier, in relation to disaster recovery relief for the Yarra Ranges.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, I am just raising, Deputy Speaker, four questions that remain unanswered: questions 6390, 6389, 6220 and 5899. The last one was due to be answered on 9 July 2021 by the member for Albert Park, the Minister for Ambulance Services. I have raised this with the Speaker on a number of occasions now. Hopefully your intervention will bring results where his intervention has yet failed to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will refer the matters raised through points of order to the Speaker on his return, and we do wish him well as he recovers from COVID.

Constituency questions

EUROA ELECTORATE

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:41): (6356) My question today is to the Treasurer. I would like to know when the Andrews government will sell the old Benalla High School campus on Barkly Street. When Benalla college moved out of that site in November 2018 the Barkly Street campus was in good repair. It had been well maintained by the school, and the buildings were structurally quite good. At the time

I urged the government to move swiftly to find a new purpose for the site to make sure that it did not fall into disrepair. Instead of heeding that advice, the government has sat on its hands. It erected temporary fencing and basically left the school and the campus to deteriorate. The constructive thing to do would have been to sit down with the community and actually have a conversation with them about appropriate use for the site, but instead the government has just walked away, and it has become a target for vandals and for graffiti. Unfortunately, the government has got a track record of this. I saw it happen with the Seymour East Primary School, and I want action.

THOMASTOWN ELECTORATE

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:42): (6357) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. Our government recognises the terrible strain on resources there has been in the health sector due to the global pandemic and has invested hundreds of millions in the recent budget to support and recruit paramedics, provide better ambulance services and also add resources to the 000 emergency calls. My question to the minister is: what updates are there regarding the new five-bay ambulance station being built on McDonalds Road, Epping?

BRIGHTON ELECTORATE

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:43): (6358) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: has the minister reviewed why the state Labor government is awarding schools in non-Labor metropolitan electorates substantially less school funding than those in Labor electorates? The budget overview openly boasts that Labor is neglecting children in non-Labor electorates. The overview states that of the 13 new metro school constructions, 85 per cent are in Labor electorates; 82 per cent of the 22 school upgrades are in Labor electorates; and 82 per cent of the metro special school upgrades are in Labor electorates. We also know that in the budget last year 80 per cent of the 35 metro school upgrades went to Labor electorates and 85 per cent of the 78 metro school upgrades announced in November 2020 went to Labor electorates. The statistics are more than just facts; they show that Labor is treating kids differently if they live in Labor-voting electorates. If the minister had any honour, which he does not, he would review his own funding approvals.

NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:44): (6359) My question is for the Minister for Public Transport regarding the Casey bus network improvements as announced in the recent state budget. Minister, how will this Andrews Labor government investment in expanded bus services benefit constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South? I recently had the pleasure of catching up with the Minister for Public Transport and the member for Cranbourne in Hampton Park for the announcement of expanded local services. The south-east is one of the fastest growing areas in Victoria, and the bus network needs to keep up with the pace of change. I welcome this budget announcement, as public transport is very important to so many who need to get to work, school, family and friends. These services should also be as easy to navigate as possible. Minister, I would appreciate any further information that you can provide on the Casey bus network improvements, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

FERNTREE GULLY ELECTORATE

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (14:45): (6360) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and I again raise concerns on behalf of Knox residents about the future of Lake Knox, which is still destined for destruction by this government. Local environment groups and the community have again reinforced their concerns over the potential loss of more than 80 diverse wildlife species, including the endangered blue-billed duck, for which this site is one of only 17 breeding ground sites across the state. The Liberal Party has committed to saving the lake, to establishing an advisory committee, including local representatives, to determine its future and to consider designating the lake as a sanctuary, as advocated by the local community. But again the Andrews government is not listening and is progressing with bulldozing this lake. Minister, on behalf

of my constituents: can you confirm that you will withdraw your application to bulldoze the lake and finally listen to the residents throughout Knox and make sure that they save this lake from destruction?

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (14:46): (6361) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when will detailed planning and design works get underway for Mordialloc Beach Primary School's \$2.9 million upgrades to learning rooms and classrooms? I want to place on record our deep appreciation for principal Sue Leighton-Janse, her team of educators and the wonderful students that make up Mordialloc Beach Primary School. We see student numbers growing, we see a first-class education there, but we do not want some of the buildings to stifle some of the outcomes for our students. Across our state and across all of Victoria's communities we see record investments in education the likes of which we have never seen before, but particularly in this state budget the investment in all of the 36 specialist schools and special developmental school settings that takes it to 83—all SDS and specialist settings will be substantially upgraded under this government. It is one of the proudest achievements not only of this government but in our state's history in 150 years of education.

MELBOURNE ELECTORATE

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:47): (6362) My question today is for the Minister for Education. Last year I worked alongside parents and community members to ensure that the new school campus being built on Abbotsford Street would be a second campus of North Melbourne Primary School and not a separate school. At the time the community feedback was clear—having two schools would divide the community—and I was very pleased the government agreed to make the new campus part of the existing primary school. But now we are hearing that the school might still effectively be split in two, with all year groups at both locations. Parents have been very clear: they do not want to split or divide the community. They want to make sure all kids have access to the same facilities and resources, so there is an obvious preference for a junior and senior campus model. So my question is: can the minister please confirm whether the junior and senior campus model will be supported by the government and department rather than a model that effectively sees two separate schools created?

ST ALBANS ELECTORATE

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (14:48): (6363) My question is to the Minister for Health, and the question is: how will my local community of St Albans benefit from the \$12 billion pandemic repair plan in this year's state budget? We know that the Andrews Labor government has invested \$12 billion and is making sure to put patients first. Health care workers, in particular in my electorate at Western Health's Sunshine Hospital and the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, have worked tirelessly over the last few years and in particular during the pandemic. They have been caring for and supporting locals, and they continue to work and contribute towards the care and safety of St Albans residents. It is extremely important that we provide the support. This is a government that has built hospitals, including the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital and the multilevel emergency department at Sunshine Hospital.

BENAMBRA ELECTORATE

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (14:49): (6364) My constituency question is to the minister for transport, and the information I seek is to determine whether any of the money allocated in budget paper 3 for reliable and people-focused transport services is designed for Wodonga and creating a bus route for Killara. Earlier this year I asked the minister about the issue, and the response was, to paraphrase his words, it was all going to be all right. In the state budget there is no mention of Killara, and this is a community of 2000 people who have a bus shelter but no bus. School buses do not stop there because they are full. When parents ring the education department, the department tells them to get their kids to catch public transport. The only problem with this is there is no public transport.

SUNBURY ELECTORATE

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (14:50): (6365) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. Minister, what is the latest information on construction time lines for the critical upgrade of Sunbury Road in my electorate? Minister, as you will be well aware, this is yet again another fantastic project made possible by the Andrews Labor government and our significant investment to get on and get this important project done. The end result for the upgrade of Sunbury Road will see a safer, less congested Sunbury Road, catering for growth and creating jobs along the way. It is a significant, important and indeed very popular project within my local community. It builds on the investment around removing the Sunbury level crossing, upgrading local schools and upgrading local sports precincts, making sure that at each and every opportunity we are working with the local community to get on and deliver those projects that support the Sunbury electorate and will continue to do so as we get on and deliver for this state.

Bills**APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022****APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (14:51): Before I was interrupted by question time I was going through some of the fantastic achievements in the 2022 state budget for the Bentleigh electorate. I spoke about Bentleigh Secondary College and about Berendale School. We are also designing an accessibility upgrade of Moorabbin station as part of a \$150 million package to make public transport in Melbourne more accessible. In addition to that we are planning some road safety upgrades in the electorate as well. There is planning funding for a signalised pedestrian crossing at East Boundary Road near Clarence Street, which is something that families of Bentleigh Secondary College have been asking for. There is also planning funding for the signalisation of the Mackie Road and North Road intersection.

Finally, I am very pleased to have secured in this budget \$500 000 for Glen Eira City Council to establish its outdoor netball facilities at Bentleigh reserve, which is home to the Bentleigh Football Netball Club. That will mean that there will be netball and footy facilities co-located, which is going to be very, very useful for that club.

In the remaining 1½ minutes I just want to respond to the member for Caulfield's contribution, where he kind of mocked the theme of this budget, which is 'Putting patients first', because he said there was nothing to back up that theme. Indeed there is \$12 billion in extra funding to back up that theme. There is \$12 billion for better hospitals, for more hospitals, for more surgeries, for more nurses and for more ambos. I do not think Victorians will ever forgive those opposite for the callous disregard that they held our healthcare workers in over two years—two years of undermining healthcare advice. Their former leader last year called coronavirus a 'sniffle'. Try telling that to our dedicated healthcare workers—people like my aunty, who, as a doctor at Royal Melbourne Hospital in 2020, in the epicentre of the pandemic, actually treated unvaccinated coronavirus patients in that hospital. What did those opposite do? They spent two years undermining healthcare advice. Well, they ought to take heed of the message sent to them over the weekend: Victorians will not cop this. They thought they were on a winner. Senator Jane Hume said there was going to be more of a 'Dan Andrews factor', and they were disappointed that there was not. Well, how did that work out for them? They are headed for another such result in November. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (14:54): As we know, the budget provides us that exposure to the books. We get a look at really what is going on, and it is one that we do look forward to. We are very keen to know where the spending is, where the money is coming from, how much taxpayers are being slugged

and certainly what the debt is. This budget was big on announcements, very high on deceit and very low on integrity. It was built on some heroic assumptions that everything was going to bounce back like there was no pandemic. International student numbers, visitor numbers and even migration levels—miraculously they were all going to bounce back very quickly. I think with those underlying assumptions we know that the budget is already in strife. This is of course with a backdrop of \$28.1 billion in total cost blowouts on major projects since 2014. So \$28.1 billion has been blown on waste and blowouts and that is really quite extraordinary.

As I have listened to budget contributions, I can see that the members of the government have just been told to regurgitate certain facts which may actually not be quite correct. Here is where some of the deceit is. First of all, the Premier has claimed that there will be a \$12 billion health funding boost. This is deceitful, because they have deceitfully included \$3.5 billion of health funding already spent in 2021–22 and also more than \$1.5 billion of unfunded promises in their \$12 billion. This is all very verifiable through budget paper 3, pages 54, 55, 66 and 67. It includes lots of things regarding PPE and COVID pathway programs that have been jointly funded by the commonwealth government; money spent on rapid antigen tests, which has also been co-funded by the commonwealth government; and a whole bunch of other things. This \$12 billion is actually quite deceitful, and I hear the government members over there prattling it off as though it were a fact without checking the budget, because they could verify that that is in fact not correct.

Also, the budget does include some funding for the 000 system, which is broken. It was left to break, to come to a point of almost no return. When we know how long it takes to retrain staff or when you bring on board new staff to answer the phones; there is quite a lag there. It has been allowed to get into an appalling state, and it is very difficult to quickly recover from that. We do not have time to recover. We need to be recovering immediately, and a longer term plan is not going to help the immediate catastrophes that we are seeing day after day, with 000 calls not being responded to. We have heard that 21 deaths have occurred with people waiting for ambulances.

I am just going to touch a little bit on the finances as well, because we see that the taxes are all up. The payroll tax is up \$6.13 billion to \$7.63 billion and land tax has taken a hike to \$4.84 billion. There are hikes in vehicle registration fees and transfer duty. The taxes on insurances have gone up and so has the fire services property levy. We also have big jumps in net debt, and this is something that is particularly important, because we need to know that we can pay back the moneys that we owe—our liabilities. From last year's forecast for 2024–25 of \$162.7 billion, we see now that the outward number in 2025–26 is \$167.5 billion. This is quite an extraordinary sum. This is extraordinary for a number of reasons. Firstly, we will carry twice the debt burden as those in New South Wales as our record debt soars. We have also got this higher cost of living, fewer opportunities and less secure jobs. Not only will we carry twice the debt burden as New South Wales, but by the outwards and the forwards we are going to have a debt equivalent to New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland put together, and that puts Victoria in a very difficult spot—very difficult to attract investment, and certainly the rating agencies are going to look on us very negatively.

So not only do we have this escalating debt, the net debt to gross state product is 21.7 per cent. New South Wales is 13.7 per cent, so they are in a much better financial state. Their books are so much better than ours in terms of future agency ratings. Their credit rating is a lot better than ours. We have already been downgraded, and so we can see that this key figure, the net debt to GSP, is putting us in quite a bit of financial difficulty.

The budget surplus is interesting because the budget is expected to be in surplus by 2025–26. I have already said there is a whole bunch of heroic assumptions that the budget is based on, but to be in surplus by \$0.7 billion? I heard someone say the other day that it is great that there is a plan. I will tell you what the plan is: the plan is to raid the TAC. In fact \$3 billion over the forward estimates is going to be pulled out of the TAC budget to prop up the state budget because the government cannot manage money—\$3 billion. Now, \$1.3 billion of that is in fact in the last year. And when you are looking at

the \$0.7 billion, if you did not have that \$1.3 billion that you are going to rip out of TAC at the time, you would not be in surplus at all. It would be in negative, so that is particularly concerning.

I guess you have got to ask the question, ‘What does it mean for TAC when they are raiding it?’. We could not get a guarantee that this record funding raid is not going to leave the TAC financially crippled. This is a big concern because it is about the future of the third-party no-fault compensation scheme being perhaps unsustainable. We know that every year money from the TAC is put into programs to help fund some of the Victoria Police activities, whether that is the roadside drug testing—last year’s money partly allowed that to happen—or speed detection equipment, all these sorts of things, fixing blackspots and advertising campaigns about road safety. They are all important elements of the TAC. Not only that, but they have a lot of seriously and profoundly injured people—people injured in accidents—that they need to support. Will there be less telehealth funding for these clients or less community grants? This is of great concern.

The Victorian Managed Insurance Authority would be in serious trouble if it was not for some of the dubious accounting practices that the government have gone about this time—the way that they have revalued assets and the way that the dividends and the raids on the TAC and VMIA are also being treated as grant income. It is really quite extraordinary. In the VMIA’s annual report last year the balance sheet shows this entity continues to be insolvent, with net assets being negative \$13.6 million. This is a very precarious financial situation, and I do not know how the government proposes to pay for future insurance claims that are made. On top of this already precarious financial position, the government is going to pull out \$50 million in the 2022–23 financial year and \$25 million in the following two years. They are already in a very, very tricky situation, and the government is only going to make it worse for the VMIA and for the TAC. I think that the Assistant Treasurer really needs to have a good look at what they are doing, because they could land the state in some very serious trouble.

The funding for sport, recreation and racing has been cut by 18 per cent. The revised budget of \$748.5 million in 2022 and even the budget before that of \$497 million—all of these have blown out, and now they have had to cut it back, which is really staggering. One of the things that I find most staggering actually though is the Victoria University media release that was put out very recently:

... more than 230 000 players left their clubs ... in 2020.

Participation numbers have plummeted. We have a whole bunch of schoolkids that did not have school for two years. They were at home. They did not get PE. They did not get to develop their gross and fine motor skills. We have children now who have been out of community sport. They cannot throw, they cannot catch, they cannot kick and they have left community sport in droves. This is not the time to cut the budget for sport and recreation.

I am going to touch quickly on the budget locally. Again my electorate did not get a lot. Roads are the biggest issue in my electorate, and we know that the Andrews government has doubled down on its cuts to the state’s crumbling road network and is cutting even more funding for maintenance of the state’s roads. A further \$24 million has been taken from the road asset management program after \$191 million, or 23 per cent, was slashed in last year’s budget. So we see progressive state Labor budgets that are absolutely pulling money from what is most needed in country Victoria.

The only good news story for me was funding for Mansfield aged care. The Mansfield hospital, which runs the aged care as well, has a plan and a strategy in place for staged redevelopment of the aged care facility and the hospital. At the time of the announcement on budget day the Minister for Regional Development was up there, and she was very loath to mention how much funding was actually going to be given. What I do know is the hospital is still a little bit in the dark. It is in the dark about what the final master plan looks like. It is in the dark about how much money it is actually getting and when it is getting it, and it would like to know, because this is a project that is ready to go. It can get this moving very quickly, and it needs that funding very quickly.

I have CFA stations that need upgrades. Hoddles Creek have been waiting for donkey's. Yarck have been waiting for even longer to move. The land around the corner has been purchased to get the Yarck CFA off the main street with the quaint group of shops where it sits. They have been waiting. The land is purchased. We just need the build. We need the money to relocate Healesville CFA. The volunteer emergency services are saying they are waiting for volunteer emergency services equipment program grants for considerable periods of time. They are waiting for the year before last's funding to be released by the government. I have SES stations waiting. Upper Yarra would love some investment. And we also have the Mansfield station that is in desperate need now that the council there have determined where the emergency services precinct will be. They are waiting for that. And the ambulance station in Mansfield needs to be co-located.

Parks are waiting for upgrades. The bridge over the O'Shannassy trail above Millgrove has been out, and we are really unsure whether the government is replacing it or going to have a detour or upgrading it, because we have had mixed messages from the department, from what is on their website and from the minister. Recently through FOI we have discovered some wonderful information that even the staff are really dubious about when it is going to happen. If you read some of the comments that they have put in emails between themselves about this project, you would know that things are in a pretty dire state because they do not think they are going to get that money to fix it.

We have got the cutting of the bus route from Eildon to Southern Cross station, and people are outraged about this because it also stops in that medical precinct in East Melbourne—plus it stops at Box Hill and Ringwood, and it really provides a great service. And now that the government wants them to all get off at Lilydale, change from bus to train and head in straight to Spencer Street it is not going to stop at the medical precinct in East Melbourne, which is a real let-down and a shunning of that community.

Finally, I want to comment on the parliamentary appropriations. It is always important that we support this and support the parliamentary services that help us in our roles, and whether it be in the chamber here, whether it be through the library, through IT and through the back-office functions, we are always very pleased to support that. But through this we see that again IBAC and the Ombudsman are not being funded to the level that they should be funded. We have heard Robert Redlich multiple times talk about staffing limitations. The agency cannot do what they want to be able to do. He is constantly on the record—radio and speaking out—to say that the lack of resources is responsible for the low number of cases that they examined, and that is not good enough.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (15:09): It is an honour to be here today to talk about the Andrews Labor government's budget and the vision that it outlines for the 2022–23 financial year, because this is a budget about keeping our promises. It is about investing in Victorians to create jobs, to help business, to help our communities continue to thrive and, most importantly, to support the recovery on the road ahead—the recovery from COVID. This is true in relation to the finer details for residents in my electorate of Sydenham. The budget also provides for significant programs in my ministerial portfolios of corrections, crime prevention, victim support and youth justice, which I will turn to after touching on the local aspects.

This government is putting patients first and making the investments in health care that I know my community needs. I am so proud that more than \$900 million is being put into the new 24/7 Melton hospital, providing a vital link with neighbouring public hospitals and ensuring our growing suburbs have the best care close to home. Residents have been calling for this much-needed hospital now, and it is time for us to deliver. It will be delivering and providing more than 100 medical and surgical beds, an intensive care unit, maternity and neonatal health services, more mental health services, interventional services and ambulatory care.

In the broader picture of health, after two years of the unprecedented global pandemic and record growth in demand on the hospital system, we are really pleased to be investing in a massive \$12 billion boost as part of the Victorian budget. Our pandemic repair plan looks at training and hiring up to

7000 healthcare workers. This is inclusive of 5000 nurses, more paramedics, more support for paramedics and increased capacity for 000 call takers and dispatchers. Of course that is most evident with the \$333 million investment to upgrade ESTA. There is \$2.9 billion to upgrade and build new hospitals, a record investment in surgical capacity across the state to give Victorians the specialist care they need before they end up in emergency and additional funding to manage the pandemic across our health system and in our communities into the future. This also includes a \$1.5 billion COVID catch-up plan to increase surgical activities, which is something that I have heard loud and clear from my own electorate is a real need. This also invests in Better at Home care. I cannot talk enough about how wonderful that program is and has been throughout COVID. I have heard from many of my constituents who have used the services, particularly the telehealth services that come in connecting them to their doctors at hospital. There is more support for our maternity workforce and also a really record-setting package for the recruitment, training and upskilling of our healthcare workforce, many of whom reside in my own electorate.

Locally, additional budget funding will also support the operation of emergency department, mental health and alcohol and other drug hubs within Western Health services. The mental health services, including addiction treatments, show how much this government considers mental health to be just as important as physical health. I have spoken before about the importance of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and how mental health and physical health should be considered equally important. The inclusion of mental health services in the budget's investment demonstrates this point exactly. Local families deserve to have access to the best services locally.

I know that is really important when it comes to local schools, and that is why we are planning for the future. We have a massive growth corridor in my electorate, and I am really pleased this budget delivers funding to secure land for a brand new school in the Fraser Rise-Plumpton area, giving kids great classrooms for education and at the same time creating local jobs in the build of that facility. We are also investing out of this year's budget an additional \$900 000 for maintenance upgrades at Sydenham-Hillside Primary School, and I was really pleased to recently be able to tour the new school that has just opened this year in Deanside—that new primary school which is quite phenomenal.

We are making sure that people from the western suburbs can get where they want to sooner and more safely, and this year's budget delivers \$14.9 million for a road duplication along the Melton Highway between the Crown Drive and The Regency intersections, improving not only travel times but also safety in that strip of road. People will be able to get where they are going faster thanks to this funding.

Melbourne's west is also home to a diverse and vibrant community. Whether it is our sports clubs, our multicultural groups or even the local Lions clubs, it is paramount that all residents feel represented and are able to enjoy local spaces. That is why the budget has committed \$15 million to the Living Local Fund, which will focus on upgrading community activities and centres, and also \$50 million for the Growing Suburbs Fund—one of my favourites—that we have seen deliver many projects across the Melton municipality. On top of that, the \$2.4 million for the Go West Festivals Fund will fund our creative industries and artists to be able to hold festivals and for more entertainment to happen out in the west, in place.

In terms of my portfolios, the government's record investment in victim support continues to grow this year. Through this budget we are allocating \$39.5 million to the financial assistance scheme. This brings the government's funding to the victim support portfolio in the last two years to a total of \$100 million. These investments and the bill that is currently before the other house show what this government's commitment is to victims of serious crime and their recovery. Importantly this investment will ensure that we have the resources, the ICT investment and the staff to build and implement the entirely new trauma-informed and accessible financial assistance scheme for victims of crime. It goes hand in hand with the bill that we have. Our reforms are a one-in-50-year transformation that will support victims of crime to access support and the compensation they deserve to get their lives back on track.

I have been discussing these reforms with local communities, victim-survivors, legal centres and community organisations, including recently with the member for Thomastown, the member for Northcote and the member for Wendouree, and I look forward to this Friday joining the member for Box Hill in his local area to talk about how others can access justice in a better way. We can only deliver this with a strong budget investment. Key reforms will deliver a new financial assistance scheme that will be simple, that will be accessible and that will operate online, providing formal acknowledgement of victims of crime and their experiences and expressing the state's condolences through victim recognition statements and meetings. This is an Australian first. No other system, no other state, has this. This is something that we have listened to victims about. They have put this on the table, and we have turned it into a reality with this funding. There is support for victim-survivors to apply to the scheme through the use and support of a victims legal service and by also removing the backlog that currently sits at the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal with additional funding and resources.

Making Victoria a safer place is the absolute focus of our corrections system. We have invested in offending behaviour programs, in training and in education and employment services to ensure that prisoners have the best chance of leading safe and productive lives when they return to the community and of course to minimise reoffending. We have focused on rehabilitation and reintegration services to reduce reoffending and improve the long-term safety of the community, and in these budget papers we are certainly seeing the results. The 2021–22 expected outcome for the rate of return to prison within two years is 37.7 per cent. This is 6.6 per cent lower than the 2020–21 results, so we are seeing a drop in the right direction. These numbers also reflect a change in how the data is recorded following a national agreement of appropriate counting rules to bring Victoria into line with other states, such as New South Wales. We now all calculate based on the same formula. However, it is really important to emphasise that whilst there is a change in the methodology, there has not been any change to what the success of the outcome is. So under the previous way of measuring this, we still see a drop of 43.6 per cent down to 40 per cent, which represents the largest drop in recidivism in this state in 34 years.

I would also like to highlight the Women and Mentoring program that has been funded out of this budget. This is an amazing program that invests in helping women who have been in the justice system to turn their lives around upon leaving. The Women and Mentoring program addresses issues such as the complexities and drivers of offending behaviour and the relationship between this and issues like family violence, homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol abuse. Reducing incarceration rates of women is a priority for this government, and that is why we are supporting the Women and Mentoring program with a new investment of \$3.6 million over four years. This will support an estimated 100 women in mentoring matches across Melbourne alone, increasing to a total 180 women over the next few years. This will provide crucial support to women to get their lives back on track and avoid contact with the justice system. It is a proven program that works.

Our new Prime Minister highlighted on Saturday night that we have a responsibility to take care of the most vulnerable people in our community. It will not surprise the house that this is something we fully agree with, and this budget certainly takes action on that, particularly for young people. This is where our youth crime prevention grants come in. These are tailored programs to help young vulnerable people who are at risk of coming into contact with the justice system or who have had contact with the justice system to turn their lives around. This budget has invested \$4.5 million in programs to continue 15 successful programs that are currently running across the state. It is truly this investment that shows results. There has been a marked reduction in youth offending and a drop of 29 per cent for those participants in these programs. This program works with some of the most disadvantaged kids in Victoria, so a reduction of this size is a huge achievement. Behind the statistics are dozens of young people that have had an opportunity to rebuild their lives, to build resilience and to contribute to our society through education and jobs. I have recently been able to visit an amazing project in Melton called UTURN193 with my colleague the member for Melton, and there is the Youth Umbrella Project in Brimbank. Both projects have remarkable results in providing safety for our community by reaching out to young people at risk and turning their lives around. Thanks to the staff in both of these programs who work tirelessly and have absolutely delivered.

Our overall commitments in this budget really benefit those in need: the most vulnerable, the sick, those with mental health challenges, those with addictions, those in need of training and a job and those that find themselves experiencing racism in their local communities. These are really important issues that are being dealt with through this budget and delivered through many of the programs in this budget. They have certainly been given a voice and a future throughout all of these commitments. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (15:23): I rise to speak on the government's budget, and I will not spend too much time talking about the fact that the government refused to give a dollar to the electorate of Warrandyte. I will not spend too much time on that because, like my colleagues, I think our respective communities have seen that this government is one that only rewards those who support it. The Premier certainly has a history of punishing those who dare to go against him. In those Liberal and National seats it is pretty clear that the government will not put a dollar in there, and the rhetoric about governing for all is certainly not apparent in its actions.

What I will talk about is the budget, which is basically PR cover for a PR problem. The government has enormous problems with the health system, and it is a fact that the documents that pertain to the budget are merely cover for the government leading into the election. The title 'Putting patients first' is a PR title. It is dutifully trotted out by every member opposite as they continue the government line, and if anyone thinks, looking at the actions of the government over the past term, that the government is going to deliver on these actions, then they are sorely mistaken—and I point to the 10 community healthcare facilities that were promised at the 2018 election, none of which have been started, as an example of that.

Now, if you listen to this government, you could reasonably be fooled into thinking that everything is going absolutely fine, and I do wonder, as I look at the state of the way that this government is managing things in this state, how those opposite could possibly think that things are going well. I also wonder: by what method and by what levels would they measure failure? We have almost 90 000 people on hospital waiting lists at the moment; that is on average about 1000 people in every single person in this chamber's electorate. I wonder: if you think that is a success, is it 100 000 before you think you have failed or 150 000 before you think you have failed? At what point does this government take responsibility for the biggest number of people on the waiting list that we have ever seen? We have also had, as we have raised in this chamber today and on numerous occasions, 21 people die as a result of the crisis in the 000 system. Again I ask the government members: at what point is that a failure? Despite telling me that three years ago everything was fantastic, with the examples that we bring to this place in terms of people who have died waiting for an ambulance, I do not think their families really care, frankly, what things were like in 2015, 2016 or whatever time frame that you throw out. They are worried about things today, and if you do not think as a government that 21 people dying as a result of 000 is a failure, then again I wonder where you measure failure. Is it 25? Is it 30? If we hit 50 people who have died as a result, is that the point where you are going to say, 'We're not doing so well'?

I look at so many other portfolio areas and so many ministers who have failed in discharging their duties. I look at a court backlog: 11 per cent of people waiting for more than two years for a trial. It is extraordinary: waiting for trial in the County Court more than two years. We have got 30 per cent of people waiting for more than a year in the Magistrates Court for a civil claim, and if you want to talk about and want to blame COVID all the time, a comparison is: we have got 30 per cent of people waiting for more than a year; New South Wales has 3.7 per cent of people waiting. So we are almost tenfold what our neighbouring states are doing.

We have got a two-year wait in VCAT. For those who have not gone through the VCAT process and had to wait for their case to come forward, let me tell you that you wake up every morning with many of these issues that are taken to VCAT on your mind. The constant stress and worry are endemic in that delay. Again, if the government measures a two-year wait as success, at what point does the government measure failure? Is it a 2½ years? Is it three? I could go on.

The debt levels in this state are equal to New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland combined, almost \$200 billion—more than three states combined. That is in this government's eyes a measure of success. 'We're managing the books beautifully', say the government. Again, at what point do those opposite think there is failure?

There are issues around mental health problems, with record calls to Kids Helpline, to Lifeline and to Beyond Blue—record levels. Again the government seems to tout that as some sort of success. It is extraordinary. Where do they measure failure? There is \$28 billion in major infrastructure blowouts. The government likes to talk about its investment, and as an aside I will say that in real terms the value of state assets has actually dropped since 2014, for those who take the time to look at the budget papers and understand them. At what point are these massive billions of dollars worth of blowouts measured as failure? Despite those opposite saying that things are going well across the medical and health systems, we have got 151 000 people on the dental waiting list, actually a service cut in this budget. If that is a success, I do ask those opposite: at what point do they measure their performance as a failure?

Child protection investigations take more than a month on average. Someone reports an issue of abuse towards a child; it takes this government a month. Again, by comparison, that is three times the national average. In this state it takes us three times longer to respond to reports of a child being abused or in distress. Something particularly poignant in these times is the Navigator program, a program designed to get kids who will not go back to school back to school. The Auditor-General said that some students were made to wait six months to access this program. Let me tell you, if you are a parent trying to get your kid back to school, six months is too long to wait, and again I do ask the government: is it a year where you measure failure? You are certainly not measuring failure at six months, and you are not measuring the impact on those children in the way that you should be, because in not acknowledging the problems that I have just listed you are not inclined to fix them.

Now, a lot has been said over the last few days about the values of the Liberal Party, and let me make it clear exactly where my values are, where my party's values are and where I expect to see a government led by the Leader of the Opposition after November. My values are about defending small business. This government has let small business down at every turn over the last two years and continues to. My value is defending small business, which is the backbone of this state. My value is smaller government interference, and after last two years I can tell you that people want governments out of their lives. It amazed me to hear the Premier say that former Prime Minister Scott Morrison was wrong when he said that people wanted government out of their lives, and it is just an example of how much more our Premier wants to get involved in Victorians' lives.

I am for lower taxes. I am not for 42 new taxes. I promised Victorians that I would not put more taxes on. Forty-two new taxes—I am for lower taxes. I am about rewarding and encouraging effort. I left school when I was 16—I left home shortly afterwards—and everything that I have done and everything that I believe my party stands for is about rewarding effort and getting outcomes that you yourself achieve. In saying that, my party's values and my values are about supporting and encouraging aspiration.

I want to make particular mention of our multicultural communities, many of whom have come to this country with aspiration in mind. I will say to them that the Liberal Party is one that will support that aspiration and encourage that aspiration, because we know that with government support and with those values at our heart, we will be supporting those multicultural communities to do the best they can. I will also say that my value and my party's value is ensuring that every kid gets the education they need—not locking them away from school for 250 days over two years, not saying to those kids in eight terms over two years that they were not going to complete any one of those terms, but making sure that those kids get back to school.

Victorians are bending under the weight of this government at the moment. People are looking forward to a government that is not driven by pessimism—the doom and gloom of the government over the last two years; by arrogance; or by revenge—a person who acts out not just on those who do not support

him outside of his party but on those who do not support him within his own party. We have seen the revenge that has been taken on the member for Narre Warren North, the member for Kororoit and Mr Somyurek in the other place. This is a government bent on revenge for those who do not support it, a government who has instilled ugliness in state politics to a degree which I have never seen in my time in this place or even beforehand, a government that is driven by division. Those who are not with this government are categorically classified as against them, and the government acts accordingly.

I want to be part of a government that acknowledges problems and strives to genuinely fix them. And that is the government that the member for Bulleen will lead after the November election, a government that is not mired in corruption allegations. We do not even know whether this Premier has been to IBAC three times, four times, five times—who would know? He would never tell us. He is being interviewed in secret. There is a culture of corruption in this government, and it is plain for all to see. They have cut funding to the corruption agencies, and that is a huge example of the lengths that this government will go to to make sure that their dodgy dealings are not put on show for everyone.

Victorians are fed up. They are fed up with a government that thinks about itself before it thinks about Victorians, a government who strives to make sure everything is looking okay, because when a government concentrates on making sure it is looking okay, it is forgetting about making sure that Victorians are okay—and that is the important distinction to make. We raise in this place issues about people who are on waiting lists, who have been waiting for 000, who are the victims of a poorly funded and under-resourced health system, and I actually cannot believe the lack of empathy from the Premier in his rants and his accusations across the table. These are people who have brought their problems to the opposition many times. They have brought their problems to the government first many times. They have brought their problems to the government first and come to us in opposition for us to raise them in this place, and the dismissive manner in which they are so carelessly cast aside is something that I just find so incredibly difficult to believe.

But people want a government that will not tell them what to do, will not berate them, will not blame them—a government who works with you not against you and who has respect for you—and that is the main thing. This government and this Premier do not have respect for those who are at the mercy of an underfunded and under-resourced health system. He certainly does not have respect for anyone else. That is the choice people will have in November: a government that works with them or a government that works against them and is vengeful and abusive and berates people. I think that people are more than ready for a change.

I hear those opposite say we are in these circumstances because of COVID. It is an excuse that is wearing thin, it is an excuse that other states are not using, it is an excuse that does not bear any scrutiny, because other states are doing better. In blaming COVID this government is saying we should be striving for mediocrity. Well, I do not want to strive for mediocrity; I want to strive to be the best state in the nation. I want to be the best example for every other Australian because Victoria is the best, because unlike settling for mediocrity, my personal values, my party's values—the Liberal Party's values—are to strive to be the best you can and to take pride and satisfaction in the rewards that we all enjoy when we meet those aspirational goals together. That is the party that I am proud to be part of, that is the person that I am proud to be and it is the government that I will be proud to work under post November.

The budget is not an aspirational budget—it is not an aspirational document. There is more pain, more debt and an acknowledgement, in throwing money at the health system, of the government's failures. It is not hard to be better than that. It is not hard to imagine that things can be better than what this budget puts forward, and that is a government that can do better—not just say they will do better but actually will do better, actually deliver for Victorians. That is the government that I want to be part of. That is the government that I will be part of.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (15:36): I am very grateful for the opportunity to rise and make a contribution on the appropriation bills. I will start by talking a little bit about some of the really

important local investments this budget has made in my constituency, the district of Altona, because they are incredibly important investments and they are ones that in many cases have been the product of advocacy from local groups and hard work and collaboration with other levels of government, and it is really terrific to see the government come to the party by funding some of these important investments.

The first one I want to talk about is a wonderful school in my electorate called the Jennings Street School. The Jennings Street School is an autism-specific school, and it is supported by some of the most extraordinary teachers and support workers that you will ever meet. They are incredibly ambitious for the quality of life of each and every single one of those students. In many cases many of these students have not been in any form of education setting for some time. They may have had some involvement with the youth justice system. They may have had some difficulties around their living circumstances. But it is also really picking up those students that have had such a really, really challenging life but have not found the right educational setting. Jennings Street is a place where those students are embraced and welcomed.

They of course have been doing what all of these gorgeous people who work in this environment often do—they do their best, sometimes without the best infrastructure and tools available to them. They, along with the very hardworking parents on their school council, developed a business case about two years ago for a rebuild of this school so it better serves the purposes of their student cohort and particularly those of the older students who have specific needs. Part of the great challenge in finding support for that investment was it not necessarily fitting any of the existing criteria around the Victorian School Building Authority approach to funding school capital, because it did require a little bit of thinking outside the box. But I am just so delighted that with our work, along with the support of the Minister for Education and the Department of Education and Training, this budget contains the investment to fund the first stage of that important project. Can I tell you that school and their students are delighted and incredibly grateful, and I think that there are lots of lessons there about the way in which we can connect and better support schools who are not necessarily out of the mould that we traditionally acknowledge in many of the bureaucratic funding models that are there for all sorts of important reasons. But to the department and to the region and to the minister we have a great big active appreciation because we are incredibly grateful to finally get progress on this really important investment.

That is corroborated by the critical investment that has been made in the Western Autistic School as well in this budget. These are schools that service lots of people within the broader western region, and the work more broadly in this budget around special needs students and special needs schools is to be commended, keeping focused on those and holding governments accountable for ensuring that every student, no matter what their learning circumstances are, has the best and the brightest of opportunities. I think we can really stand proud in respect of those particular investments.

We have been working very hard trying to advance the Point Cook community hospital, and that is now starting to gather pace. We are very delighted in the local community to have seen the plans for that. We were also delighted, however, in this budget to see such an important and significant investment in the Werribee Mercy Hospital. This is a hospital where so many of our local babies have been birthed. Its emergency department has been under extraordinary pressure because of COVID but also because of the general population growth that has been occurring in Melbourne's west. I am pleased that in many budgets under this government our government has made investments in the expansion of this hospital, from new and wonderful investments that have expanded the critical nature of care that can be provided in the outer west to the investments in improving mental health services at Werribee Mercy and now this investment. What it will do is double the points of care in their emergency department. Anyone that has had the experience of being in the Werribee Mercy emergency department on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night will know the great relief that the wonderful clinical workforce there as well as the local community feels about this investment. When it comes to the Werribee Mercy Hospital, only Labor has supported and invested in this critical

linchpin of health services in Melbourne's outer west. That has been, I think, a really critical and important investment.

I do want to briefly just also make mention of an important investment. A couple of budgets ago money was secured for the purposes of buying land to build a police station in Point Cook. We have the wonderful Altona police station, which we only recently opened with the Minister for Police and the member for Williamstown, another really fantastic investment. I know that the new Werribee police station was opened recently as well. So in this budget to have an important investment to also fund and build a new police station in Point Cook is just such a critical part of the puzzle, because it comes between where we have got such extraordinary growth. Our local police officers have such a tough job. We know that they are working so hard in responding to family violence cases with a new model and a new approach, one that is connected with a range of other service providers, and I want to place on the record my gratitude for that. For us to be able to have, alongside a new SES station in Point Cook, a new police station is a really important investment and one that the community can be rightly proud about.

I just want to make a few comments about some of the important investments around what we could potentially loosely call pandemic repair. There is no question that our health system has been under unprecedented demand as a result of the pandemic. The health system was in the process of being rebuilt and repaired after so many years of Liberal Party neglect, and the pandemic has made that incredibly tough. I do not quibble at all with the frustration that many people have about being able to access services as quickly as they possibly can. I do insist, however, that in making their point they place on the record their support and care for our clinical workforce because, to put it very basely, they are buggered. They are so exhausted from the demands that this pandemic has placed upon them, yet they also feel hopeful about the important investments that are being made to recruit more staff, to ensure that we are training more staff, to ensure that all of the low-hanging fruit is being plucked from the health system tree but also that the medium and longer term investments are being made. But there is no question whatsoever that currently our health system is under incredible pressure and our workforce needs our care and our support. I would make the argument that a \$2.9 billion investment in our health and ambulance services is a pretty compelling piece of evidence that this government is committed to continuing to do what it has always done, and that is invest not only in the health infrastructure but in the health workforce. Investing in the health workforce is critically important.

I want to also make the very important point that one of the other benefits of this budget, and work that I think will be a pressing priority for our new federal government, is that we absolutely do need to lift the productivity of our country. We need to recognise so much of our resilience through the pandemic, as difficult and as challenging as it has been and continues to be in many quarters, and acknowledge that a lot of that has come off the back of the work of what we would call the caring sectors—those that are working in the health workforce, those that are working in early childhood, those that are teachers, that were trying to balance their own lives plus teaching our kids in very, very difficult circumstances. We need to ensure that we do not just say thank you. We need to actually show that we acknowledge those sectors that have been traditionally undervalued, under-recognised and in most cases underpaid. We need to show that we understand the strength and the importance of those sectors in building a strong economy not just because it is the right thing to do but because there is an economic imperative for us to do that. Of course so many people that we need to recruit into those workforces want to have lifelong, prosperous careers that are fulfilling and that are paid well, where they can afford to do things like buy a house, go on a holiday, care for their children and make choices about their lives that are fulfilling and rich. We are only going to be able to do that if we start investing and ensuring that we continue to invest and value those caring and social services sectors.

As I said, I think I heard the Minister for Education say today at question time in his ministers statement that it is the fastest growing section of the economy in Victoria, but it is also a nationally important part of lifting productivity. And we need to lift productivity along with things like driving up better

wages and conditions for people and ensuring that we are investing in supporting new industries if we are able to lift the quality of the living standards of people in this country but in particular in Victoria.

An important part of that has been our investment in TAFE, vocational education and training, as well as bringing a completely new and refreshed policy approach to things like VCE. I have been so pleased to see the Premier loud and proud and out in front making the argument about the value of working in these sectors—how important they are, why they are well remunerated, why they are critical for the future—to ensure that we do not entrench any form of cultural snobbery about the sorts of jobs that people do. I am the daughter of a person who worked at a sewage farm—he would have corrected me to remind me it is a purification plant—and who was very proud but did not have a high degree of respect for either the law or politics. He often joked that selling used cars was likely to be my next career trajectory. Time will tell, but the point is this: these are good jobs. We need to make sure that we are training people, that government is stimulating the economic environment and the industry, that we are supporting that and making it accessible and that we are reducing the inequality of opportunity and access to good and well-paying jobs. This budget delivers on that front as well.

It delivers on that front by doing a couple of things. It invests in TAFE, and we are again on this long, proud process of restoring TAFE as a pre-eminent form of vocational training and education in this state. It heavily invests in early childhood and early childhood development. Again, it is so critical to have affordable child care and affordable and high-quality early education for people to be able to go off to TAFE, to be able to go and work, to be able to raise their families and to be able to ensure that we are not missing the opportunities of early intervention on those young children that may either be at risk or just require some intervention—that we utilise those opportunities and do so before they are at primary school or where other developmental key milestones or literacy and numeracy disadvantage start to log in and set in. Those are the kinds of investments that ultimately have a long tail, but it is so critical that we make them and we continue to make them.

We have a long way to go when it comes to pandemic repair. I do not quibble with that, and this is a government that does not resile from that. You can sure as hell bet, when it comes to significant health investment, the quest for reform, the leadership and the strength, desire and commitment to give people a better life, to be able to work and to empower communities, it is only a Labor government that is going to get this done. This is a great budget that helps facilitate and enable that. I congratulate the Treasurer. With that, I wish this bill a speedy passage through the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:51): I rise to speak on the budget. It is with disappointment but probably not surprise that I report that regional Victoria has once again missed out on the very important projects that are necessary to make sure the state of Victoria is able to recover and rebuild from not only the last two years but two decades of disrepair in places like south-west Victoria. On our roads the potholes are getting bigger by the minute, and it is two decades of a Labor government that have seen that happen—almost two decades. We have a city-centric Labor government that does not realise that the state of Victoria goes from border to border. In fact I am pretty confident that they are only going in their minds from one end of the tram tracks to the other. That is what I have seen in this budget and what I have seen in all the budgets so far over the last six or seven years that they have been handing them down whilst I have been in this role.

Let me begin with my biggest disappointment, and that is the Lookout Residential Rehab facility funding that did not happen in this budget. COVID has been a challenging period, and we have seen people really struggle. Needing help with drug and alcohol rehabilitation is not a new problem, but it has been accentuated over the last couple of years. Having rehab at home in your home area of South-West Coast is critically important for success. I have worked in this sector, as I have said in this place many times, and getting a bed for residential rehab was almost impossible. People going away from home, going out of the region, did not have the same success. Yet we have seen in Gippsland there is residential rehab, in Melbourne there is residential rehab and in Northern Victoria there is residential rehab. There is a gaping hole in south-west Victoria, and filling that gaping hole was tried in 2016

when the WRAD centre, which has been around for 35 years, started putting together the necessary work to put a rehab facility into our region.

They worked solidly with government. They tried to jump all the right hurdles. They bought the land, they raised \$1.5 million, they did the community consultation and they thought they had done what they needed to do, because you should not have to beg for something like this. It is a health facility that is needed and never before needed more than it is now, post COVID. But how disappointing to figure that they have been left out completely from this round of funding in the last budget—just really disappointing. Not only did they miss out on the rehabilitation but they were told constantly to work with the government and do the things that the government asked them to do. They did all that. So how can you say to volunteers and people who put their heart and soul into helping others that they are just not important enough? It does not make any sense to me.

The next issue that I think our community would be really disappointed with is the fact that in July 2017 the government announced that we would have VLocity trains coming to the Warrnambool line. Yet here we are—and that was five years ago—seeing in the budget an announcement today that they will allocate the money to build them. So they have not actually ever ordered them. They said in 2017 that they were ordering the trains, but they have not done that. Five years ago that was, and they have not allocated the money until now, so when will we actually see them? They have not even completed the line upgrades, so there is an absolute lack of faith in our community that we will get any VLocity trains in the near future that I can see.

The Koroit streetscape is a really important project—Moyne council's top project and top priority. Koroit is the fastest growing community area in our shire, and it only needed \$5 million for the footpath and landscape works on Commercial Road and High Street to put the powerlines underground and to enhance the village green—nope, nothing for that project either. The Warrnambool breakwater—now, that is an iconic piece of infrastructure. It is owned by the state government, and the council have said to the government, 'Look, one fierce winter storm could actually destroy it'. It is not optional that we do not do anything. We cannot wait till it crumbles. It is a state-owned asset. It is not possible for the ratepayers to fund it—\$8 million is needed minimally just to put the rock armouring in place to secure that iconic piece of infrastructure. Many people who have visited Warrnambool would have walked along that foreshore precinct and admired the beauty of it, and I cannot imagine that letting it crumble into the ocean is something that is an acceptable way of behaving. But the state government thinks, 'Just ignore anything outside the tram tracks of Melbourne and it won't be a problem'.

I go across to Portland and I often visit the coastguard there. These are volunteers, once again, who, when boats and ships bring things to our shores or when tourists contribute to tourism through tuna fishing, go out volunteering and saving lives. They go and retrieve people who are sick from vessels and just do an incredible job—all volunteers. They are highly trained and skilled at first aid and have all the skills you need to be able to use a ship or a boat like they use, and they are operating out of a shipping container. They say to me, 'We don't want an upgrade of a building. We hear of people who get funding for things in the budget, and they want an upgrade. We actually don't even have a building'. We have some pretty fierce winters on the coast down there. That is why it is called the Shipwreck Coast, by the way; they are pretty fierce conditions. These guys are going out in those conditions, and they are coming back and they are changing in a shipping container. They are training in a shipping container. They have no shelter; it is a shipping container. So I just think, 'Wow, here we are in the state of Victoria, where volunteers give their time to improve our state and help the government with the cost management'. They must save so much money. If they had to provide that service and have paid people doing it, facilities would have to be replaced. And yet volunteers are begging for money for a centre to be able to encourage people to come and volunteer with them. Of course it would be challenging to find volunteers if you cannot even provide shelter for them in the fiercest days of winter.

The other issue I think is really important to raise is the Warrnambool College precinct. Warrnambool College have come to me, and they have said, 'We've been talking to the representatives of Western Victoria in the Labor Party. We've put to them the proposal that we've been working hard on, and we've done the drawings. We need funding. We don't have anywhere', they tell me, 'for all of our school to meet together. There's nowhere large enough for the school to meet'. They have got a basketball centre that is not on their land, but they cannot all meet there because it is not big enough—and it is not even theirs. So they have to have sport and classes all crammed in the same space, they tell me. There is a space on their land, and they are hoping to build a sporting precinct area where they can actually meet as a school community. Something we have all realised is the challenge that schools are facing. Kids coming back and settling back in is a massive challenge, I am hearing in my electorate from the principals right across the schools. Having somewhere as a school assembly point so everyone feels part of the school community is really important, but it did not even get a mention.

I mean, these are guys who are trying to educate our children. They are not busy trying to figure out politics and working out whether they have got to make lots of noise as a community and lobby. Unfortunately that seems to be the only way we can get something done, if we do make a noise, and when we do, we do get success, but that is the only way. It is not just by talking to the government about a commonsense approach, like 'Don't let the breakwater crumble into the ocean', 'Give the volunteers some shelter' or 'The school needs to be able to house everyone under one roof'. No, no, no. You cannot do that. You have got to go hard, like the cancer centre campaigners did when they were told they would not get it. That is why I believe in my electorate. That is why I believe in South-West Coast, because I know as a community we can rally and make our two-decade-old Labor government listen when we need to. I think that is our challenge right now.

We have got a situation in South-West Coast where our roads are dangerous, and we have been trying to bring this to the government's attention. I have raised it here in the Parliament so many times. Unfortunately the Minister for Roads and Road Safety just does not believe us. We heard from the member for—look, I cannot remember where her electorate is, but she said our potholes and roads being poor was our imagined fantasies. I just think, 'Wow'. The minister will not come out and have a look. He does not want to see the truth, so much so that he has cut a further \$24 million from the budget for regional roads maintenance. He has lopped \$24 million from this year's budget. Now, that is on top of the \$190 million, or another 23 per cent, that he slashed from last year's state budget. If that does not tell you that this government is out of touch with regional Victoria, I really do not know what does. There is not a person in south-west Victoria or a visitor to south-west Victoria that does not make comment on how the roads are dangerous, how they are poor and how they are scary—yet we have got a government who cut funding to the roads in this year's budget and last year's budget.

This is a government who has a track record of \$28 billion in blowouts to projects in Melbourne, and yet it cannot fund the region's roads properly. The federal government—Dan Tehan, the local member for Wannon—gave \$60 million to the Princes Highway west project, and yet the state put a paltry amount in. They say they are going to do it—a bit like the trains that they said they were going to order in 2017, which they have only allocated money for—and yet I recently heard from Regional Roads Victoria that that project has not even been scoped yet, and it does not look like it will be scoped until 2023. This is not a government who is at all in touch with regional Victoria. They are completely ignoring the needs of regional Victorians.

They say it is a health budget. The biggest health request is regional drug rehabilitation in south-west Victoria. We do not have one. They ignore it. All the work has been done. We know people want to move to the regions. How do you make sure that that will work well? You invest in trains. This is a government who told us in 2017 it would have VLocitys in Warrnambool. They have not even placed the order, and they only allocate funding five years on. The Koroit streetscape—nothing, totally ignoring the councils who are saying, 'We have our priorities. Listen to us. That's our role to actually make sure we upgrade our facilities, but we can't do it alone'. The Warrnambool breakwater—let it crumble into the ocean? Is that the answer? How on earth can ratepayers pay for that? The

coastguard—as I said, volunteers are begging for shelter. This is just a government who does not have any respect. Here we have a region that is an absolutely wonderful agricultural region, but what does this government do to agriculture? It cuts the regional development funding by 68 per cent over two years—the last two years. How many people do we have in the regions of Victoria? We have 25 per cent of the population, but we actually see this government allocate 13 per cent less capital funding. Only 13 per cent of capital funding goes to regional Victoria when we have got 25 per cent of the population of Victoria in our regions. So that means metropolitan people per capita, per person, get \$15 268—in the regions, \$7142. Now, I think you can see that. You can see that in our roads. You can see it in our health systems. You can see where they have cut funding to things like Portland hospital—women having babies on roads, roads that you cannot even drive safely on. The potholes are so big that people are really scared to drive at night. The shoulders drop away so badly on our roads that it is terrifying to pass trucks on B-double-designated routes when you are a single car driving along what is supposedly a designated route for B-doubles.

This is a government that is focused on itself, focused inside the tram tracks, and that has forgotten country Victorians. They have had almost two decades to prove themselves, and all they keep proving is they do not care. And our terrible roads and the cutting of funding to roads have told us everything we need to know. But come November country Victorians will vote, and I think they will only have to look at the roads to figure out how they should vote, because we will care. The Liberals will care about the state of country roads. Labor have proven time and time again they do not.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (16:06): It is my very great pleasure and privilege to be talking once again about a great Labor budget. Budgets are probably the ultimate expression of the values and priorities of any government. I think we saw an extraordinary expression of values and priorities recently of the federal government, and the people of Australia drew a very firm conclusion about those values and priorities on Saturday. I am delighted that we will now have a partner in Canberra, not a foe, and that we will have a government in Canberra that will help us in delivering for Victorians rather than continuing to steal from Victorians to the tune of some many billions of dollars, particularly in relation to infrastructure funding. But I, surprisingly, digress.

This is a budget that is about a number of things. There are a number of things locally and there are a number of things more broadly which I wish to cover today. But more than anything, this is a budget that puts patients first, a budget that addresses some of the very real needs in health care. Those opposite are pretty fond of saying that problems in the health system attach only to things of the government's making. They say that the pandemic is being trotted out as an excuse. Well, it is not an excuse. It is the reason that we have so many challenges in our health system. It is not an excuse at all. It is the reason, and when you look at the pressure that the ambulance system is under, you only have to look at the call volumes—the amount of incoming traffic to that system—to realise that things have changed. The pandemic has changed the system, the pandemic has necessarily changed our society and, unsurprisingly, the pandemic has changed the government. The pandemic has changed the way in which we respond to these things.

There have been so many learnings over the journey, and it has changed, as is seen most particularly in these appropriation bills, the budget. It has changed the priorities and values that we have brought forward in this budget, because there are a whole lot of priorities and values that Victorians are bringing to their assessment of needs at the moment. It is absolutely the case that all of the doctors, the nurses, the healthcare workers and the paramedics have set an extraordinarily good example, a powerful example, of selflessness right throughout the course of this pandemic—a pandemic, I hasten to add, that has not concluded. More people have died of coronavirus this year, in the five short months it has been underway, than in any other year of the pandemic. There is still extraordinary human sacrifice in terms of deaths as a result of the pandemic and also extraordinary sacrifice by our healthcare workers in responding to it.

So I just caution those who are pretty keen to jump up and down and say that any problem in the healthcare system is that of the government's making to reflect upon the lived reality of the pandemic,

the lived reality of healthcare workers, workers right across the healthcare system. It does not matter whether you are a doctor or a nurse or working in a janitorial team or producing food on site at a hospital or frankly even working in accounts—all of those workers have been impacted and impacted dramatically by the pandemic, and this budget is a very clear response to those circumstances. We have done everything in this budget to give healthcare workers the best assistance we can.

I spoke earlier about a budget being an expression of the values and priorities of a government, and there is no doubt that we have retained our focus on the things that we were elected to deliver on—on health, on education, on infrastructure and on jobs, whether it be in transport or the environment. These are the things that we have continued to work on in government. It is absolutely the reality of this government that we have not wasted a day. We have been getting things done from the very minute we were elected. And despite the extraordinary disruption of the pandemic we have continued to focus on those things that are so important to us as members of a Labor caucus and of the Labor Party: education and health; jobs and transport; the environment; infrastructure—the Big Build; delivering for our communities; and delivering for the state as a whole. We want Victoria to be a prosperous place, a place that is fair and has fairness at its heart. We want world-class education and health care. We absolutely know that the pandemic has made the delivery of those goals really difficult, and that is why this budget goes so far in addressing some of the difficulties we have encountered, particularly in the healthcare system.

But it is worth noting that the best measure of a state's economy, GSP or state final demand, is now back above the levels it was at before the pandemic. That is extraordinary when you think about it. The unemployment numbers we are seeing—4 per cent in Victoria, 3.2 per cent in the regions—are truly extraordinary employment numbers. There can just be no doubt about that. We have got industries roaring back to life, and frankly the biggest challenge at the minute is not so much finding jobs for people, it is finding people for jobs. I see the member for Shepparton nodding. There is no doubt that in the regions there are some real constraints on the economy due to the shortage of workers to fill a whole bunch of roles, and that is undoubtedly a challenge that is going to be a very important one for the new federal government to address and continue to be an important one for this government to address. But you do not address it just by bringing in people to fill those roles. You actually address it in part by addressing skills shortages, because skills shortages and worker shortages are not one and the same thing, and it is so important that we continue to invest in our people to make sure that they can fill those high-skill, high-wage jobs in order to make sure that our economic recovery continues.

We have got lots of great indicators about the health of the economy, and we have lots of great indicators now of some really good progress being made on the health of the population. The work done by those frontline workers, as I mentioned, has just been outstanding, and that is why we are supporting them in this budget by training and hiring 7000 new healthcare workers. Just reflect a moment on that number—7000 new healthcare workers, of whom 5000 are nurses. They are very, very large numbers. And we absolutely know on this side of the chamber that you can build as many schools and hospitals as you like, but it is all for naught if you do not have teachers and nurses and doctors to put in them.

It is absolutely critical that we continue to invest in the skills and intellectual capital of our state and make sure that we have the workers available to make sure our healthcare system and our education system continue to be the very best they can be. That includes investments in things like paramedics, an extra \$124 million; and more 000 call takers and dispatchers, some \$333 million. We have also invested in this budget in a new mRNA manufacturing facility, in partnership with the commonwealth, which builds upon Victoria's nation-leading status as a biomedical and medical research hub. This is the place in Australia where you go if you want to get really wicked medical problems solved and medical research problems addressed. The intellectual capital in Victoria is far superior to anywhere else in the nation when it comes to these very, very thorny questions. There are a bunch of priorities that are reflected in this document. I did say that there are some things about the state and things locally, and I will come to some of those local wins for my patch shortly.

I do want to just turn again, as I have on many, many occasions in this place, to Victoria's mental health system and elevating that health system to be genuinely a world-class network of services—a network of services that not just provides primary care and acute care but addresses every single care need in between on that continuum, that spectrum of need in mental health. We have got to make sure that people have the options to find the care that they need irrespective of where they are on their own mental health journey, and that is why last year we delivered \$3.8 billion. In this budget we invest a further \$1.3 billion into mental health care. We are ramping up the mental health care workforce, with \$372 million to help train 1500 workers in this space, including 400 mental health nurses. We are opening 82 new beds—a total of 270 new mental health care beds have been opened since the 2019–20 budget.

In terms of some of the wins a little bit closer to home, I was absolutely delighted to join the member for Mount Waverley recently at Ashwood School. Ashwood School is a really, really special part of the world, and we were both just absolutely thrilled to be able to tell Ashwood School as one of the many special schools that are being upgraded—in fact we have upgraded every single special school since we came to government, with significant upgrades to every single one of them—about the \$9.7 million being invested to upgrade and modernise their school, with a new permanent facility; upgrades to the school sporting facilities; upgrades to the existing building; getting rid of the portables or demountables; and making sure that we have got a really, really first-class educational resource for those students with special needs. It is the case that those students are special. They are very, very special. They are very special to me; they are very special to the member for Mount Waverley. It is a fantastic community centred around Ashwood School, and they are entirely deserving of this significant \$9.7 million investment.

We have also invested locally in some great bus network reforms. Box Hill to Deakin University, Oakleigh and Southland—that is a significant investment in making sure that all of those Deakin students can get from Box Hill station to Deakin University in Burwood more quickly, more easily, more safely and with better rates of frequency, and there is a whole bunch of different bus routes that travel with that package. It is a terrific package that is going to continue to deliver for all of those people—not just the students but the workers as well—who are accessing Deakin each and every week.

I was very pleased to be able to announce a \$250 000 investment in the KooyongKoot or Gardiners Creek master plan. That is a very, very important initiative, because KooyongKoot—Gardiners Creek—is a waterway that is so important to people all the way from Blackburn Lake down until it joins the Yarra at Hawthorn. It comes through the seats of Ringwood, Box Hill, Glen Waverley, Ashwood and Hawthorn, to use the seats for post the election. It is a very, very important waterway. It is valued and loved by our local community, but it can be better—there is no doubt about that—and the way you make sure that it does get better is by excellent planning. This investment, a significant investment—\$250 000—will deliver that master plan and make sure that we have the very best resources we can when it comes to that natural environment and those much-loved waterways and environmental infrastructure assets.

I am pleased to talk a little bit about some of the wins that the government has delivered for Ringwood, including Mount Pleasant Road Primary School and the investment of \$9.982 million to deliver stage 2 of their master plan. I had the great pleasure of being out there recently with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education to talk about this really, really important investment. There has already been a significant investment by this government into Mount Pleasant Road Primary. This new building will complete that process. It will be a school rebuilt since we came to government—a school that will continue to deliver outstanding educational outcomes for its students and outstanding outcomes for all the families who are so reliant upon it.

If there is something that this government stands for, it is making sure that our schools are the very best they can be and making sure that our school facilities match the very high quality teaching and learning outcomes in those schools. There is no point in having fabulous teachers if you do not give them a fabulous place to work, if you do not give students a fabulous place to learn, and that is exactly

what this investment is about, along with so many of our investments in the education sector over the life of this government.

Roads and road safety will continue to be a very, very important part of the things that the state government delivers. Despite the fact that the commonwealth nicks off with two-thirds of the fuel tax and only delivers a third back to us, we have continued nonetheless to invest in some significant improvements, including—where I was out recently with the member for Bayswater—to the intersection of Canterbury Road and Waterloo Street. It is a very, very difficult intersection. Even as we were there we saw some pretty challenging traffic behaviours, and I am delighted that this budget delivers on that important upgrade to some really important local roads.

I could go on, I really could, but in the 10 seconds I have left I will say this: the Andrews Labor government is continuing to deliver for the east, and we have seen that reflected as recently as last weekend. This is an outstanding budget, and I commend it to the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (16:21): I am very pleased to rise and speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. In delivering his speech to the Victorian Parliament the Treasurer first of all turned to thanking the health workers in the state of Victoria for the outstanding work that they have done—doctors, nurses, paramedics, so many healthcare workers. He thanked them sincerely, and I want to echo those thanks, especially to those in the region that I represent, in the Shepparton district, across all the hospitals—Goulburn Valley Health, Nathalia, Cobram, Numurkah and so many other health services—where people went to work every day. They did not stay at home and test out sourdough recipes, they did not do a whole range of other things that people did in their early lockdown stages or on the continuing ones; they just showed up to work. They had to make arrangements for their families to be cared for, they had to make arrangements for homeschooling, and they showed up to work. And not only did they do the work that they were rostered to do, they did so much more. For so long hundreds of workers were furloughed out of the hospital system as the virus went through those healthcare facilities, but they showed up and they did the work. So to them I think we owe so much, and it is great to see that this budget, the Victorian state budget 2022–23, really recognises the importance of health across the whole spectrum.

As chair of the Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee I have heard about the mental health impacts that the pandemic has had right across the board. I think it was really good to hear the chief psychiatrist for Victoria say that everybody—everybody—has been impacted in some way in relation to their mental health by the pandemic. It is really very timely and wise that we should all consider that in the way we think, the way we behave, the way we look after ourselves and in the way we look after others. So to see a budget that has dedicated a very large sum of money to the improvement of health services in this state is welcome.

Going down to a local level, I am so pleased to see that the Goulburn Valley Health mental health service has received \$163 million to completely rebuild its mental health service, and to add to that, an extra 15 beds so that we should end up with about 35 or 36 dedicated mental health inpatient beds in the region. I can tell you that Shepparton and the region actively took part in making representations to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

So many people from our region attended in Shepparton at a number of the consultations that I went to and told their stories—not only patients but nurses, doctors and a whole range of people who are impacted by that. I can truly say that there has been a very worrying trend in our region in relation to mental health and complaints about not being able to get timely mental health service access when it is needed, and that has been around for a long time. There is no doubt that it has been more severe during COVID, and we have seen a worrying trend in young people taking their lives in our region. It has been written about in the *Herald Sun*. It is something that we really want our community to focus on, to look at and to advocate for services for. That is certainly what I have done, and I think that the expansion of Goulburn Valley Health by this new service will be outstanding.

In addition to that we also got funding—which was very, very long in coming, might I say; the plan was conceived in 1997—for what we then called a mother-baby unit and is now called an early parenting centre. There is \$25 million in this budget to build a dedicated early parenting centre with 10 beds that will provide a broad range of services to families of very young children, so whether it be the fact that you have had to leave hospital after 48 hours and you need ongoing support and residential support, a facility that could accommodate that, or whether it be a range of other problems that might develop in the early weeks and months after taking a new baby home from hospital—sleeping, ill-health issues, even postnatal depression in parents. And it is not just women, it is men too. It is about being able to build the mental health services into that range of services and of course forming strong partnerships with many of the services that we still have in the region. We have great plans for that. It has been an advocacy piece that has gone on for so long, and so many people have stood by it. The Goulburn Valley Health Foundation has \$1.5 million that has always been kept and has remained there for this particular facility to ensure that we could put it with whatever government gave us one day to make a truly outstanding facility. So the foundation and everyone on it is to be congratulated for holding that money, investing that money and seeing it grow to the point where we will now be able to use it on a facility that really will service the needs of our community. We know that we have very low breastfeeding rates in our community, a lot of teenage births in our community—really a range of risk indicators for parenthood that often lead to disadvantage if the appropriate services cannot be hooked in at an early stage.

I am also just so pleased to see that the Verney Road School received an investment of \$24 million in its upgrade. That is our special school, and last year \$1 million was allocated for a feasibility study for that school. It was originally built for about 70 students. It has had about 200 plus in it, and it has a waiting list. So to relocate that to the old Wanganui secondary school and to refurbish that building as a purpose-built facility for those special needs children and young people will be an outstanding outcome. They will have so much more space. They will have classrooms, play areas, ovals—so much more by way of facilities than they previously had on what was a very small, contained site.

We have been given an investment of \$250 million for 12 VLocity train services for both the Shepparton and Warrnambool lines, and I think those of us who travel on train from time to time—and many travel regularly on regional trains—will have seen that the upgrade of the line has been taking place. There have been platforms lengthened at Mooroopna and Nagambie. There has been a passing track, a very long passing track, constructed at Murchison so that there will be the capacity for trains to pass, and particularly, as it is also a freight line, to deal with those sorts of trains. This was a campaign that started before I was elected and was very much a part of my election campaign and advocacy on an ongoing basis, and it truly came from the community. It is fantastic to see that it is rolling out and that we are getting to the point where now we can truly expect to see nine VLocity trains a day each weekday in and out of Shepparton—a train approximately every 2 hours, depending on timetabling. So it is just an extraordinary uplift from what we had and what we have now to what we will see.

The Goulburn Valley Highway intersection at Graham Street in Shepparton is now an incredibly busy one, and there was funding put in by the government to see that upgraded. That will need lights. On the corner is Goulburn Valley Health, and the investment it has already had in the build of the new five-storey tower, the emergency department and a whole range of other facilities and upgrades that have occurred there have made it a very busy place. Traffic management there is essential. With the addition now of the mental health service it is a significant upgrade that will again create that sort of traffic pressure that does need to be dealt with. There is much more that needs to be done at Goulburn Valley Health. There is a stage 2. There is the need for a cancer centre. There is a proposal for a clinical school, which the federal government, the National Party, had committed to, and I am not sure whether that will continue or not.

Also we have in Shepparton a sport stadium that desperately needs upgrading, and there is a great desire to see that happen so the region can capture the benefit of the Commonwealth Games in 2026.

Shepparton was disappointed that it was not named as one of the hubs for the Commonwealth Games, and it was clearly named as a possibility for a range of benefits from the Commonwealth Games. We have the facilities for a range of sporting events to take place there in Shepparton and across the region—Nagambie with international rowing and we have hosted international BMX events in our region, so we have definitely got the capacity—and with more investment the upgrades that can happen to that sporting centre will enable our region to participate much more significantly in the Commonwealth Games when they come.

The bypass—the famous Shepparton bypass that I have spoken about for eight years now—still has not eventuated. The Victorian government finally did a business case about 18 months ago, and since then that business case has sat on the desk of the then Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development, the former Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce. Where it is now I do not know, but we will be trying to track it down and will continue with our advocacy to see that important investment in our region take place. It is not just for Shepparton, it is part of the national highway system, and it is incredibly important that we have a highway that takes us from Melbourne through to Brisbane on the route that includes the Goulburn Valley Highway.

Our future is very much governed by water, agriculture and horticulture, and it is disappointing when you do not see the investment generally in agriculture that is needed. I look to the whole issue around water. It was touted as a major issue in our electorate during the recent federal government election campaign. It remains an outstanding issue of concern in the region because of the lack of planning, the lack of security, that farmers feel in relation to their ongoing commitment to the sort of farming that they would like to do in the region, and while there has been much change and much water given up, it does remain a major issue, with that stocktake of water to take place in 2024 and the absolute knowledge that the water is not there.

So what does that mean? Under the present federal legislation it means that the water can be bought back, and we in the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district have the best high-security water available. We remain very concerned about that and concerned about who our federal water minister will be. Who will be appointed? We hope that it will not be another Queenslander, someone more interested in resources than in water, coming from an area where flood plain harvesting is just continued on and no water comes down the Darling River except in major floods.

There is much to be done and many changes to be made. Food security, with the knowledge that that is of major importance to our communities, has to be at the forefront. We are hearing worldwide now of grain shortages, potential for food shortages and potential for famine. We have a responsibility here in Australia in relation to that. Good management means we can produce large amounts of food, not only for ourselves but also for export. We have recruitment issues that are really critical across regional Australia, and quite frankly, it surprises me that we have not been able to address them up until now. But I do hope that with the releasing of and the different look at the way that infrastructure funding may now be spent across the whole of this country Victoria is not ignored. There may well be opportunity for much more investment not only in the cities but in the regions—projects like the bypass, like our roads, like so many things that do need more investment and some imagination and some vision. I hope some of these things will be looked at and that the people who understand and know about these issues will be heard so that good policy can be put together in Canberra to deal with these issues. I look forward to being a part of that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): The member for Bentleigh.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (16:36): Thank you, Acting Speaker. The member for Oakleigh, but nonetheless—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): I am sorry, my apologies.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: That is all right. I would be very happy to be confused with the member for Bentleigh because he is a pretty awesome fellow. Acting Speaker, thank you very much for the

opportunity to speak. These are the workhorses of our business and what we do here, these budget bills, both the parliamentary appropriations and the appropriations to support our agenda. Like the Premier said today in question time and has often said—and the health minister—imagine the ambulance system and ESTA in 2015–16 and having a pandemic then. We would not have been prepared for it because of the defunding and the absolute chaos the other side of politics when they were in government caused to the ambulance system and the hospital system. You could say a similar thing about imagining the pandemic was in 2014 or 2013. The fact that the pandemic occurred after probably the most prudent financial management of this government—of many Labor governments in my view—under the Treasurer’s stewardship and the Premier’s stewardship of the books meant we could withstand the pandemic’s economic losses; we could use our budget as a state, as the Treasurer says, to help the balance sheets of households and businesses.

We were hit by a pandemic. Before we were hit by a pandemic we had budget surpluses and a AAA-rated economy and we had debt borrowings at about 6 per cent of GDP—capacity to take on the extraordinarily heady winds of the pandemic in an economic sense. We have come out of it—and we are still in some sectors, like the hospital system, coming out of it—and we have recommitted to a prudent financial framework. As the Treasurer said in his budget speech, it is a four-step framework. First is creating jobs, reducing unemployment and restoring economic growth. You cannot do that if you cut; you can only do that if you invest in the economy and the community. So that box has been ticked not only in this budget but in the last two budgets during the pandemic. Step two—returning to an operating cash surplus—is one that we are committed to. Then the more important step potentially is step three, returning to an operating surplus, and we will get there in the 2025–26 financial year with a surplus of over \$650 million projected at this stage. And the fourth step is stabilising debt levels. The interesting thing about the current debt we have is that two-thirds of the debt was accumulated in response to the pandemic, so it was really just the last 2½ years. Only one-third of the debt we currently have is prepandemic debt, yet for the federal government it is completely reversed. Of their current debt two-thirds is from before the pandemic. So in the seven years that that government, the Liberal-Nationals government, was in power they accumulated about two-thirds of the debt they currently have. One-third only is because of the pandemic response, and you wonder what they spent it on.

Nonetheless, even with the debt we currently have because we have invested in the community during the most difficult time in the economy, still the debt-to-GSP ratio is 26.5 per cent of the economy effectively—the debt versus the economy. In Canberra the federal government has left this country with a figure of 33 per cent debt to GDP and not much to show for it. So in a financial sense we were strong before the pandemic. Of course every government around the world has been shaken economically by the pandemic, as has every community, every business, every family. But we have got a strong plan in this budget to recoup and go back to a prudent financial framework.

That is all, as other colleagues and the member for Shepparton have said, in spite of being short-changed consistently by the commonwealth. We have had these figures said before, but Victoria got less than 6 per cent of new funding the commonwealth announced in its budget—less than 6 per cent, yet our population share is 26 per cent. Of the \$7 billion for the regional development plan Victoria got zero. A \$7 billion plan nationally—

Ms Green interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Zero. That is right. Zero to Victoria, as if we do not have regions. Let us not even talk about the distorted GST spending.

So, I have got to say, apart from the fact that it aligns with my values, I could not be happier as a member of this proud government in Victoria that we now have a partner in Canberra, as the member for Burwood and others have said. We have a partner in a budget sense and we have partner in a policy sense, and they have a reform agenda. I will tell you where the partnership is extraordinary: we may no longer be treated, as the Premier says, as a foreign nation when it comes to any grants we may get from the commonwealth. They may no longer look at us as receiving foreign aid. You know, Victoria

was one of the first colonies that signed up to the federation. Like, it was not second or third and it was not a latecomer. It is absolutely part of this country.

Can I just tell you, you had the former Prime Minister out in the suburbs of Australia, including the suburbs of Melbourne, because he is the Prime Minister for suburban Australia, right? But he absolutely scoffed at and mocked the project that serves suburban Melbourne, the Suburban Rail Loop. If you are not going to build infrastructure in the suburbs and you are going to be city focused, stop taking photographs in suburban Australia. This Prime Minister straightaway said, 'No, we're going to invest \$2.2 billion'. We have a partner there.

We have a partner in mental health. The former federal government, for all its protestation, started off really well: 'We're going to do stuff'. They had iconic reports from the Productivity Commission. They had iconic reports from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System here. 'We're going to do stuff on mental health. This is a game changer'. Do you know what they did? They provided \$260 million over four years for Victoria compared to our funding of \$4.6 billion in the same period. We now have a mental health partner in this new government in Canberra.

We have a partner in our TAFE system. The Labor federal government—it sounds so nice to say that, the federal Labor government—has talked about free TAFE and has made commitments in that regard. The mental health stuff is really important, though. This was something really special. We set out on a journey to transform the mental health system so that Victorians in the next two, three, five, 10 years would not be facing the same challenges, the same trauma in accessing the system, that generations of Victorians before them have.

The former Prime Minister squibbed the opportunity to do something meaningful and significant, yet he still accumulated so much debt. We have got a partner in Canberra on state school funding—a genuine partner on state school funding.

We also have a partner when it comes to the importance of superannuation. The appropriation bill we are speaking on now set up the Victorian Future Fund. The contrast with the commonwealth is not only did they not set up something prudent for their own finances; they started going after Australians' superannuation. We set up our own, and we are not touching Australians' superannuation. They did not set up anything, and they are going after yours, because they abrogated the space of affordable housing. They abrogated the space of providing Australians with the dream of owning their own home. In fact when the Prime Minister went and did that photo opportunity with houses in the background mid construction, saying, 'This is the great Australian dream'—no, it is not. The great Australian dream is not robbing your retirement savings to be able to afford a house. He has done nothing to achieve that. He just said, 'Well, your savings, I'll let you access them'. Our complete contrast with that was setting a future fund up for future generations to manage debt and pay back debt in Victoria.

We have a partner in equality in Canberra now, a partner that is not going to attack trans Australians, trans Victorians or trans kids—not weaponise them and use them to score disgusting, disgraceful political mileage.

Mr McGuire: And it backfired.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: And it backfired on them, as the member for Broadmeadows says. It absolutely backfired on them. It was fantastic that it backfired on them. But we have a partner on social policy. We have a partner on equality. This is probably the most diverse Parliament in Australia's history, the federal Parliament, and most of that diversity has actually come from the Australian Labor Party. We have people from the subcontinent. We have got Indigenous MPs. We have got a range of different members of Parliament. It is just extraordinary.

We have a partner also in our work with First Nations people of Victoria. We have a partner. We are the first government to start treaty negotiations and a truth and justice commission, the Yoorrook commission. What we have in the federal Labor government that we did not have in the previous

government is an acceptance of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and setting up an infrastructure which provides an Indigenous voice to Parliament. We have a partner there as well.

Our budget has been absolutely vindicated by the Australian people voting on Saturday and of course in our context the Victorian people voting—absolutely vindicated. We now have a legitimate, genuine, interested and value-aligned partner in Canberra. Our vision is not division, our vision is a plan for every Victorian to live their best life. I was really quite moved by much of what Prime Minister Albanese said on election night. I will not do him justice, but there was a particular line where he said, ‘As Labor governments do, we will edge that door open a little bit more for everybody’. That is exactly what the pedigree of this government is in Victoria. Whether you are a woman, whether you are of a culturally or linguistically diverse background, whether you are in the queer community, whether you are disabled—whatever it is that constitutes your humanity, that will not be an obstacle for you to achieve your best life, not under this government and not under the federal Labor government. We have such a genuine opportunity here to transform even more of Victoria.

I did not even touch on climate change. I did not touch on climate. We have a genuine partner on climate change. We have got a genuine partner in trade relationships across the world. We have got more trade offices in Victoria than in any other state, and the commonwealth will just go further in that endeavour. We have a partner in domestic manufacturing, both a promise and a commitment we have made in our budget but also a promise and a commitment that the new Prime Minister and the new government have made in Canberra. This budget and these appropriation bills sound rudimentary. ‘Appropriation bill’ is not the most exciting title for a bill, but it is the most exciting bill. As the Treasurer and others have said, if you want to see a government’s values, look at its budget and look at where it puts the power of the budget to use.

We are doing it across the sector, across the economy, across every public policy area that matters. From the \$12 billion pandemic response to the health system to the mental health—and I might just spend the remaining time I have got on mental health funding. This is important for the many reasons we all know in relation to transforming the mental health system, but it is also important in terms of a political narrative. We established the royal commission. They delivered the report. Before they announced their final report, just on the basis of the interim report, we announced an \$869 million investment in the 2020–21 budget. So look at this: we set up the commission, before it has concluded we do a down payment. It is concluded and we then do a significant down payment of \$3.8 billion over the forward four years. Estimates are always forward estimates. You can always change your mind the following year. We did not do that. We invested \$1.3 billion this year as part of that commitment to the forward funding of mental health. That is one of the proudest achievements of our government. We will not see some of the benefit of that for years, but that does not matter because it was the right thing to do, transforming the mental health system, and it is really a point of difference, as are many areas that we touch, between us and those on the other side, who have not made up their mind—that is the best thing I can say about them—about their commitment to the mental health transformation. They have not made up their mind. They keep backflipping. It is a pleasure to speak on these bills, and I commend them both to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (16:52): I also welcome the opportunity to make a contribution on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 today. This budget is not fair and it is not equitable. It is a budget from a tired, old, out-of-touch government. If there is one thing that I agree with from the member for Oakleigh, it is his statement that if you want to see a government’s values, look at its budget, because this budget does reflect Labor’s values. It continues Labor’s agenda, which has been supported by independents and micro-parties, particularly in the upper house, of ripping investment away from country Victoria.

Ms Green interjected.

Ms RYAN: The member for Yan Yean says, ‘What a load of nonsense’. Let me put this: the cuts are so extensive in this budget, they are so deep, that it is not possible to go through them all in

15 minutes. But here are two pages. Let us just have a look at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and I will point out that I think listening to the debate tells me one thing very clearly and that is that Labor MPs have not read their own budget. We have had the member for Oakleigh stand up and talk about mental health and climate change. Well, let me just spell out some of the figures that are in their own budget. Climate change has had a \$19 million cut. Environment and biodiversity have had a \$120 million cut. Waste and recycling have had a \$26 million cut. Solar Victoria has had a \$163 million cut. Management of public land and forests has had a \$64 million cut. Fire and emergency management has had a \$65 million cut.

Shall we have a look at health? Non-admitted services have had a \$167 million cut. Emergency services have had a \$25 million cut. Aged support services, vulnerable people in our society, have had a \$35 million cut. Drug treatment and rehabilitation have had a \$36 million cut. Mental health community support services have had an \$18 million cut. Community health care has had a \$106 million cut. Emergency management has had a \$6 million cut. Small rural health services—everyone is silent now; where are you, member for Yan Yean? Do you want to pipe up now? Acute health for small rural health services has had an \$11 million cut. If you want to fact-check it, it is all in your own budget papers. If you want to fact-check it, it is page 220 of BP3. It is all in your own budget papers. You guys have not read it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Member, through the Chair, thank you.

Ms RYAN: Labor MPs have not read their own budget. They want to stand up and talk all about the federal government, because there is nothing good to talk about in here. The cuts in this budget are so deep they fundamentally do go to the values of the government. So, yes, member for Oakleigh, I agree with you. If you want to see a government's values, look at its budget, and they are very clearly spelt out in this budget.

I almost choked today when I heard the Premier say that he is going to fight for a fairer share—I mean, the irony. If he wants to talk about a fairer share, he would be well advised to look at his own administration. Under his government just 13 per cent of money being spent on capital projects in this state is being spent outside of metropolitan Melbourne.

Mr D O'Brien: How much?

Ms RYAN: Thirteen per cent, member for Gippsland South. Last year it was even worse—11.4 per cent of all of the capital spend of the entire Victorian budget was being spent outside of Melbourne. You are all silent now. The reality is that we are 25 per cent of the state's population, and year after year we get duddled by you—we get duddled by Labor MPs and we get duddled by this government. These are not my figures. These are not the figures of the Leader of The Nationals, who quoted them earlier. They are in fact figures calculated by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office, so go and read the report. As the Leader of The Nationals said earlier, Labor is spending on average \$15 268 for every person who resides in Melbourne. They are spending just \$7142 for every person who resides in regional Victoria. Where is the equity in that? Why aren't regional members on that side of this house standing up for their communities and arguing for a fairer share? Because that is all we want in regional Victoria—we want a fair and equitable share—and we are not getting it from this government. We are not getting it.

Members interjecting.

Ms RYAN: So talk all you like. Talk all you like about Canberra, but until those opposite start living by their own hymnbook, until their rhetoric—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Member for Euroa, through the Chair, thank you.

Ms RYAN: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Until those opposite actually start living by their rhetoric, no-one is going to take them seriously, because they have not delivered for regional Victoria. They do

not deliver equitably across this state. They are focused on the city, and their budget reflects it. There are projects like the Kilmore-Wallan bypass—

Mr D O'Brien: Haven't you got that done yet?

Ms RYAN: I have not got that done yet, because the current government simply will not fund it. In 2014 they inherited a completely shovel-ready project—it was ready to go. Instead we have now had a land acquisition process that has been delayed and delayed and delayed. And under this year's budget it has been delayed again, member for Gippsland South, to the end of 2024. This government is fantastic at doing business cases, at consulting, at maybe revising a business case—

Mr D O'Brien: Writing a plan.

Ms RYAN: Writing a plan. 'We write lots and lots of plans. We're doing it. We're doing it. We're writing lots of plans, but it might take us three decades to get there. We'll never actually put a shovel in the ground to get something done'.

Members interjecting.

Ms RYAN: You go outside the city. If you go outside the city, you will not see projects get done. Come to country Victoria, and you will not see projects get done.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Suleyman): Order! Order in the house!

Ms RYAN: For that project, that Kilmore-Wallan bypass, literally all they had to do was come in and start it, and they refused to. The story is repeated across regional Victoria. You might talk about doing projects, but you just chew up the years consulting, examining, developing business cases and revising business cases. You never spend money on construction.

In fact, speak to the Shepparton community about the Shepparton bypass. I found it interesting that the member for Shepparton reflected earlier that the Shepparton bypass business case sat on the federal minister's desk. Guess what—the feds actually coughed up the 80 per cent required for that project. It was the Victorian minister, the member for Bendigo East, who would not put the Victorian government's share into that project. Instead, do you know what she did? She decided to do a business case that magically produced a price tag that was far in excess of what it had previously been, because guess what—the Victorian government could not then do it, could they? Now, I never heard the member for Shepparton talk about the fact that that project, funded by the federal government, sat on the member for Gippsland—sorry, I apologise, member for Gippsland East; you are not guilty of such a crime. It sat on the member for Bendigo East's desk literally for years.

But again, look at the Murray Basin rail project. All anyone was asking for in this year's budget was \$5 million to get that project back on track with, ironically, some business case funding. They would not even do that. Meanwhile, this year's budget contained the very startling revelation that there has been another \$3.9 billion cost blowout on the West Gate Tunnel. The government actually settled with Transurban in December last year for another \$3.9 billion, which brings their total cost overruns on major projects in Melbourne to \$28 billion. Just imagine how far that money could go. Imagine what that could do in regional Victoria.

Mr T Bull: They couldn't run a bath.

Ms RYAN: Those cost overruns are due to poor project management and poor process by this government. As the member for Gippsland East said, they could not run a bath. Now it is Victorians who are having to pay the price for those cost overruns—for their poor project management and for their poor planning. The reality is that all of these things demonstrate to regional Victorians that we are forgotten under Labor.

It is not just capital funding. Have a look at Regional Development Victoria. That organisation, which is the flagship organisation for communities outside of Melbourne, has been absolutely gutted by those opposite. We have got a junior minister that has been put in charge because it is not a priority for Labor, and it shows. There has been a 68 per cent cut to their funding in the last two years—68 per cent. They are basically a shell of what they once were. Funding for roads maintenance, member for Gippsland East, has been completely slashed. Everywhere you go in regional Victoria at the moment you will find yawning potholes and you will find cracked roads. We all know that VicRoads carry around cans of spray paint so they can alert us to where there is a problem with a road. They literally spray-paint around a pothole—

A member: White circles.

Ms RYAN: White circles. I have sometimes bright pink in my region; we must be extra special. God, I would love to know how much money VicRoads has spent on rough-surface roads. They have yellow signs everywhere warning motorists of a rough surface, but they never actually fix the roads. It is not VicRoads' fault. They are doing everything they can on a stretched budget. Now, what do those opposite think about that? Well, the member for Eltham thinks it is an imagined fantasy. She relies on text messages from her mother to let her know about the state of country roads because she clearly never leaves the city, and her mother says that The Nationals' concerns about roads in country Victoria are an imagined fantasy. How about the Treasurer? He says potholes only exist in Liberal Party propaganda. It is quite obvious that Labor Party members never leave the city, because if they did, they would understand just how bad the road network is in country Victoria. If there is no ribbon-cutting opportunity involved, they are just not interested.

Members interjecting.

Ms RYAN: If there is no ribbon cutting, you are not interested. You only want to do the big, glossy projects. They are not interested in the projects that are unglamorous. They are not interested in the nuts-and-bolts work that actually makes a difference to Victorians' lives and to road safety. The Auditor-General actually warned about this back in 2017. He said if something did not change we were going to land in a situation—the exact situation we now find ourselves in—where the infrastructure backlog is so great that it can no longer be maintained. The government did not heed his warnings, and now we have that very situation on hand. Regional Victorians know the truth. They know when they drive their road network that it has never been in such a poor state of repair.

I want to turn very quickly to health. We all know that we have a crisis gripping this state. People are waiting in pain for—

Mr Dimopoulos: No, we don't.

Ms RYAN: The member for Oakleigh says 'We don't'. So we have had 18 Victorians die waiting for an ambulance, and you think there is no crisis in health.

Mr Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Leader of The Nationals does not even know her own electorate. The Benalla secondary school received an upgrade through this budget—\$5.7 billion for regional Victoria—and she says there is no funding for regional Victoria.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Oakleigh—

Mr Dimopoulos: \$5.7 billion—she has no idea.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. Members, do not raise points of order when you know they are not points of order. Good grief.

Ms RYAN: Thank you for your adjudication, Deputy Speaker. Waiting times for dental health are an absolute disaster. People are stuck waiting in pain on elective surgery lists. Again, there is nothing about the reality of the challenges that are confronting us in regional Victoria which is actually matched

by the government's rhetoric. Mental health is a very similar story. For years I have advocated for greater resourcing of mental health.

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

Ms RYAN: Don't you dare raise this, member for Oakleigh. If you want to dispute this—if the member for Oakleigh wants to dispute this—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Euroa, I ask you not to use that term 'you' and to direct your comments through the Chair.

Ms RYAN: If the member for Oakleigh wants to dispute this—I have kids who cannot get into a psych for over a year, and if he wants to dispute that there is a mental health crisis in our region, then that is a very shameful reflection on him because kids across regional Victoria were in a crisis state before the pandemic, and post the pandemic things have gotten so much worse. And do you know what those opposite have done? They have cut \$60 million out of mental health programs. They have ended support for Lifeline, they have ended support for the Kids Helpline and they have ended support for Beyond Blue, and do you know what the Minister for Mental Health said at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee? He said those programs were no longer necessary.

Those of us who live in regional Victoria know the reality. We know that we are not getting an equitable share of funding. We know that the funding is going into the city. We know further that that is a reflection of Labor's values, and the only way that is going to change is if people vote to change the government at the November election. Because it is The Nationals who will ensure that regional communities get their fair share of funding. We will end the dud rip-offs that we have seen for the last eight years from the Labor Party, and we will ensure that our communities get a fair go—that our communities are finally looked after and are not made second-class citizens to people living in metropolitan Melbourne.

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (17:07): I am delighted to join the 18 regional members of the Labor Party and the others across Victoria and across both chambers, who are absolutely delighted to represent the communities that they live in. I have quite a bit to say about the budget, but I just have in my hand some really important data about some of the mental health infrastructure and mental health workforce investments that this government is making. Actually, that word 'investment' is really important, because the 18 members of the Labor caucus who live, work and serve in their regional communities are all incredibly excited about these really important investments. There is a lot going on in Cranbourne, but I just have to respond to the member for Euroa specifically about the initiatives that the Minister for Mental Health announced here just less than a month ago.

We have had a massive expansion of the mental health workforce—\$372 million in workforce initiatives—hiring more than 1500 mental health workers that this state needs, including 400 mental health nurses, 100 psychiatrists and 300 psychologists. Of course these things do not just happen—we do not magic our workforce—but we on this side of the chamber and the many, many members of regional Victoria who serve their community here and in the other place have been talking about the importance of this budget to serve their community. That is why this budget invests \$196 million to deliver 15 acute care beds in Shepparton and acquire land for a further 49 beds in Ballarat and Wangaratta and invests \$10 million to deliver emergency department hubs for regional Victorians experiencing serious mental health and alcohol and drug issues. I think the language used was that there was a 'fantasy'. Well, I can tell you there is a fantasy, but it is not from the many regional members of the Labor Party here with me and in the other chamber.

I am pleased to rise to speak on the 2022–23 Victorian state budget. This is a budget that puts recovery first. In front of us is a budget that will help our state bounce back and recover from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. I am not sure if many people caught Bill Bowtell yesterday on Radio National talking about the absolute dereliction of duty that the previous federal Liberal government

oversaw in this country. But it has been a global pandemic, and we have emerged stronger and more resilient than ever.

I want to thank the Treasurer for making sure that we deliver a budget here in Victoria that supports our healthcare system, our education system and social care and absolutely continues to provide for women and the service sector as well as, as we all know, those extraordinary Big Build projects. The idea that there are no shovels—I am not going to be able to sleep at night without waking in laughter at the idea that there are not enough shovels in the ground in regional and rural Victoria or metropolitan Melbourne. We have got a high-quality healthcare system, better, safer roads and stronger and safer communities. These are the things that Victorians have absolutely had placed at the centre of this Victorian budget that really does deliver for the community.

I am pleased to report that the 2022–23 budget has delivered for the people I serve in Cranbourne as well as the many, many people from regional and rural Victoria who are here with me. These local budget wins in Cranbourne ensure that Cranbourne is well served with all the infrastructure it needs for people to live their lives comfortably and with security. This budget responds to the existing and anticipated growth in the area, ensuring that Cranbourne families have access to high-quality education. I do want to commend the Minister for Education for the way he has approached education and the Education State. I will repeat this as I have before, because the data is extraordinary: there are nearly four classrooms of children being born a week into the City of Casey.

What have we done in response? Labor governments and the Andrews Labor government do not just observe problems. We have got on and made sure that we have topnotch educational facilities to make sure that these young children that are being born are well served. We have extraordinary excitement at the brand new primary school that is going to be delivered in Cranbourne North. The school will bring high-quality primary school education to the Cranbourne North and Casey central areas. I do want to thank the Minister for Education and the departmental officials who have seen the data and responded to what is obviously a really important public policy proposition—that where there is growth we are absolutely ahead of that growth.

What that means for the families of Cranbourne is that the importance they place on education, the aspirations that they have for their children, can be met by the facilities and the places where their children go to get educated, because that is in so many ways the focus of the community, especially for the many people who have chosen to make Cranbourne home from other suburbs, the many people who have chosen to make Cranbourne home from interstate and of course, as one of the multicultural centres of Victoria, the many, many people who have chosen to make Cranbourne home from other countries, or the south-east generally actually. We are making sure that we have the facilities.

I do want to take a moment to pay credit to Kathy Sharp, who is the principal of Tulliallan Primary School. She is a terrific educator, one of the really great leaders in our community in so many ways, and she has been speaking to me for a long time about the importance of education. Recently the member for Narre Warren South and I together went to the school, and she really did make what we already knew to be a strong case for a new school in the community, and absolutely we have delivered. I was really pleased to be able to let Kathy know that we were delivering exactly on what she knew to be her community's aspiration and the aspiration that she had—that there would be enough schools to cater for all the kids.

As anyone who will listen will know, I am a proud parent of a state school teacher, and I do reflect that she is constantly reminding me about what a big impact our educators make in the lives of our young Victorians. She is so proud of the impact that they make, so we are putting our educators first and we are putting our education system first. This is part of a commitment to ensure that every Victorian family has access to a good-quality school, and it is just one part of the unprecedented investment that this government has made into school education. I am so incredibly proud that the Andrews Labor government has built or funded 75 new schools and upgraded more than 1850 schools since 2015. You know, there is a contrast that we could make, and that is the contrast with the four

years when those opposite were given the great gift and honour of serving the community. It is amazing, because if you reflect on the Andrews Labor government's average annual spend of \$1.6 billion on school infrastructure, it is greater than the total spent by the former government over four years. How is that for a contrast? Talk about serving our community and making sure that it is an Education State.

I see the proof of that; I hear that in the sound of children. I see it at Cranbourne West Secondary College, where we have got a new school, and again I pay credit to Rob Duncan, the principal at Cranbourne West Secondary College—looking out on stage 2 of the school build at Cranbourne West. I know that Rob Duncan and the other educators in Cranbourne West are incredibly delighted to know that the Quarters estate in Cranbourne West, one of the great communities of aspiration and optimism, is getting a new school and that that will be ready to open by the time that the little legs are running in, in January next year. I do add to that as well. Jenny Hamilton and the kids at Marnebek School have seen their grounds transformed from last year's \$38 million investment in their facilities—that relief and excitement that our kids who have a little bit more complexity and attend some of our special schools do get the care that they really deserve. The way that our government focuses on caring for our communities is making sure that all our kids have access to topnotch facilities. And I also say it is just the way we see kids at Alkira playing basketball with their friends now that they can play under cover.

But the investments in education do not stop at school infrastructure—far from it. As everyone knows, I am an enthusiastic doorknocker. I was in Cranbourne East and I met a woman—I think her name was Sharon. Her life had gone a bit off track. She was looking forward to getting her drivers licence back. She had just had her kids back with her, and the first thing she was going to do was she was going to take them through the Macca's drive-through. She was really looking forward to that. But the other thing she was really looking forward to was enrolling in free TAFE. She knew the opportunity for her to further her education was a great opportunity for herself and actually for her kids as well. I remember the conversation with Sharon because it was a conversation with somebody whose life had been complex and perhaps there had been pathways that she wished she had not taken, but she had her kids in Cranbourne Secondary College, she was going back to TAFE.

So the budget in front of us includes \$103 million for new Victorian TAFE initiatives, making TAFE connections and placements more connected, with funding for apprenticeship support officers and an access audit on our TAFE networks. Now, this is worthy of incredible fanfare: the budget adds the diploma of Auslan to the free TAFE list, creates a new cert IV in teaching and adds an Australian First Nations language to the system. Now, like many people, I heard new Prime Minister Albanese when he gave his speech on Saturday night. As his first statement the first thing he said was how proud he was and how important it was that the federal Albanese Labor government adopt the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, and here we are in Victoria: we are going to have a First Nations language added to our TAFE system. What does that say about where priorities lie in this state? This budget is more inclusive and more connected and delivers on the Victorian government's Marrung Aboriginal education plan by ingraining better outcomes for Koori students within the TAFE system. This is a game changer, and it just puts, again, at the centre of our agenda this focus on equity.

The title of the budget is 'Putting patients first', so in the short time I have left I would like to acknowledge the importance of our healthcare workforce and again reflect on that slightly startling contribution from those opposite about the healthcare workforce. We are incredibly grateful for the dedication, sacrifice and just grit of our healthcare workers. They do deserve more than being clapped; they actually deserve actual genuine help, genuine support and genuine workforce investment.

This government has invested \$124 million into Ambulance Victoria, which will recruit more than 90 paramedics and unclog emergency departments. There is \$333 million to add nearly 400 new 000 call takers and dispatch capacity and training to allocate calls throughout our state. I want to pay credit to our dispatch workforce, our 000 workforce. It has been extraordinary work, and I do of course need to mention that Danny Hill and the ambulance union have continued the work of the previous member for Melton in making sure that our healthcare workforce is well considered in the constructive approach

they have taken. I also am aware that we are going to have the support and wellbeing of 5000 more nurses and midwives and second-year nursing students in hospitals, and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation and Lisa Fitzpatrick have been speaking to us about the importance of this.

This is a really important budget for all of Victoria. I commend these bills, and I wish them a speedy passage.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (17:22): It is a pleasure to give the Greens budget reply speech today. After COVID surged through Victoria in December and January and our ambulance and hospital system struggled and at times failed to function, it is a relief to see substantial health funding in the state budget for 2022–23. This is just as well considering COVID hospitalisations have been rising steadily for the past two months and COVID patients now occupy 545 beds in our state public hospital system. COVID is currently having the same impact on the system as if we had closed one large hospital. Health funding accounts for about 42 per cent of the \$22 billion in output initiatives announced in this budget. Compare that to three years ago, when that proportion was 35 per cent just before the pandemic.

Much of this extra health funding goes to efforts to bring down the elective surgery waiting list, to recruit extra health workers and to pay for rapid antigen tests and other COVID expenses. The Greens welcome this funding. We hope that it will make a difference. But I do worry whether our hospitals will find the staff we need to replenish depleted workforces across the state. Given that experienced nurses and other health workers are becoming exhausted and some are reducing their hours and others are leaving the public health system, I am concerned that there are few measures outlined in the budget that will entice them back and retain them, because experienced hospital staff cannot simply be replaced by recruiting inexperienced staff. We need to increase wages and improve conditions, especially when the real wages of most staff are falling due to inflation.

We must accept that there are problems in the health system right now, and most of the budget's solutions, while welcome, are years away. Further increases in COVID and influenza as winter approaches will fill more of our hospital wards and increase demand on ambulances and emergency departments that are already struggling. More COVID and flu also means more staff away sick. While it may not be popular to say so, we should do more now to reduce COVID transmission and to take pressure off the hospital system, and there is plenty we can do without resorting to health orders, lockdowns and police enforcement. We should do more to promote the use of masks in crowded indoor spaces, to promote the use of air purifiers or HEPA filters in workplaces and venues and to promote influenza vaccination and COVID boosters. We are at the stage now where I think we need to broaden the eligibility for second boosters or fourth doses of COVID vaccination, as the United States has recently done. Public health advertising campaigns to create a culture of wearing masks would likely be cost effective and should be seriously considered. Many of our own ingrained health behaviours are the result of past health campaigns. We automatically clean our teeth, for example, as a result of health campaigns. Businesses and venues should be rewarded for their efforts to limit transmission of COVID for staff and customers—in addition to the obvious reward of being able to stay open. Subsidising HEPA air filters is a relatively low-cost, high-benefit policy. If nothing else, this should become an OH&S issue for employers. Even if we can lower transmission by 10 per cent by encouraging better behaviour, this will relieve pressure on hospitals and staff.

The budget performance data show that ambulances spend far too long waiting to unload because emergency departments are full, otherwise known as ramping, and emergency departments are full because they cannot move patients into wards that are filling up again with COVID patients. Other ward beds are occupied by patients who no longer require hospital treatment but are waiting for rehab or aged care beds in a phenomenon referred to as 'exit block'. We need some of this increased hospital funding spent on measures to unblock the flow of patients from ambulances to emergency departments to wards and then to home or lower intensity care. Too many COVID cases or ongoing exit block will mean more ramping, fewer ambulances and more critical cases waiting too long at home for an ambulance.

The Greens also welcome the increased mental health funding, particularly the workforce training and the funding to open new beds, especially at Thomas Embling Hospital. The lack of beds at Thomas Embling has led to seriously mentally ill offenders being denied treatment in prison while they wait for a bed. Those who do not consent to treatment because of their mental illness sit in prison with untreated psychosis, and at the completion of their sentence they are often discharged straight into a waiting ambulance which takes them to a hospital where they are detained as involuntary patients. Mentally ill people should not sit untreated in prison cells in a modern democracy in 2022.

This budget also continues a long history of all governments pretending that public dental care is not health care, meaning there is no genuine state plan to reduce the record waiting lists for general dental care, in particular for adults—it is now often over two years and for some patients exceeding three years. It appears the state government has given up on reducing waiting lists for dental care, and the only hope for many Victorians to fix their teeth will be if the federal Greens can negotiate putting dental care into Medicare.

Alcohol and drug treatment and inpatient funding also remain disappointingly lean. In fact service funding has been reduced, as has funding for the prevention of chronic disease and indeed any attempts to better coordinate primary care, again ignoring a lot of good advice on the best way to reduce critical demand on hospitals and their staff. For decades now the prevention of chronic disease, particularly tackling the increased rates of diabetes and obesity that have disproportionately contributed to current COVID-19 hospitalisations, has effectively be ignored. And so I ask: if we do not address this now, when the potential benefits in reducing hospital demand are so starkly illustrated, then when will we do it?

I have spent too long talking about disease rather than health, and one critical determinant of health status is adequate housing. With 119 000 Victorians now waiting for public housing, strong investment in government-owned housing must continue. But with all this increased health spending, how can we afford to build the thousands of homes required to meet this need? The government came up with an answer a few weeks back with a social housing levy, a plan they unfortunately dropped a week later after backlash from the property industry. If only our elections were fought on these real issues of health and housing rather than the law-and-order politics that we have seen at several elections in the past. And because of this damaging obsession with being tough on crime, Victoria's spending on police and prisons has grown by 60 per cent and 96 per cent respectively from 2013 to 2019 according to the Productivity Commission. By comparison, over the same period health spending only grew 45 per cent; education spending, 30 per cent; and spending on housing by around 1 per cent. It is noted, by the way, that the budget says around about a quarter of men's and a third of women's prison beds are currently empty. While this budget's investments in desperately needed hospital beds, community housing and health staff will be many years before they come to fruition, what we will instead get in the next 12 months is 1600-plus new prison beds, and these prison beds will effectively remain empty and depreciate for years while ambulances ramp and people sleep on the streets.

The Greens believe the government should investigate whether some prisons should be sold, mothballed or converted to urgently needed therapeutic uses rather than sitting empty and idle during this crisis. We would also like to investigate why Victoria somehow needs more police officers than New South Wales despite having 1.4 million fewer people and being much smaller in size. We should look into why higher police numbers have not kept us safe in terms of lowering the number of victims of crime compared to New South Wales and why police numbers seem to have become tied to the election cycle rather than to need, including in this budget.

Reducing spending on police and prisons will free up funds for services we need, but revenue does remain an issue in this budget. The government is still grossly reliant on stamp duty and gambling taxes for revenue, meaning that for the government to remain solvent owning a house must become increasingly unaffordable for Victorians while gambling losses must continue to come from the most disadvantaged communities. This revenue model is of course not sustainable, but this government has shown no interest in making the kinds of difficult structural economic reforms that other Australian

jurisdictions are now implementing that will improve housing availability and reduce the risks to revenue from market fluctuations.

Increasing state revenue is so important given the many unmet social needs in Victoria. Inequality is on the rise, particularly when it comes to housing. Others have lost work and struggle to manage their rent. There are really two types of Victorians we are talking about here: the growing number of Victorians in housing stress, battling high rent and unlikely to ever be able to buy a home; and the Victorians who were unable to spend money on overseas trips and dining out during lockdowns so paid down some of their mortgage or bought another investment property. A couple of weeks ago I met a family spending more than half their income on rent. Their situation was made more difficult by the need for a house that was wheelchair accessible. As most Victorians struggle with rising costs—and the greatest cost by far for many is rent—the time has come to set some controls on the rate of rental increase. Currently landlords can increase rent by an unlimited amount. Capping increases in rent will help curb runaway housing costs faced by Victorians who have the least financial resources. If we fail to do this, we are failing to do our job.

The government are building more housing, but by calling it ‘social housing’ they appear to have decided to no longer manage government housing. The difference with public housing is that it will accommodate those most likely to be at risk of homelessness—those with mental illness, those with substance abuse issues, those suffering family violence and those released from prison. The social housing model often cannot accommodate the most vulnerable people, so there will be no solution to homelessness without public housing. Publicly owned and publicly managed housing for the poorest Victorians has been a basic responsibility of government. This government seems to avoid using the term ‘public housing’. This government seems reluctant to refer to government-owned housing and insists on papering over it with the euphemism ‘social housing’ without specifying whether it is talking about public housing or housing owned by community housing NGOs. I believe it is the government’s job to own and manage housing, and they can fund it by bringing in that housing levy. With Victoria’s public debt increasing rapidly, this levy would have raised billions in new revenue that could have gone towards building more public housing. A recent independent costing obtained by the Greens found that a 2 per cent levy would raise \$8.2 billion over the next 10 years while a 3 per cent levy would raise \$12.3 billion over the same period. The alternative is a growing crisis in housing and a failure to address a waiting list with 119 000 Victorians on it.

During this term the government has made some important investments in climate initiatives—some that the Greens have been pushing for for a long time, including grants for energy efficiency upgrades in homes, big batteries to balance our grid and investment in our grid to be able to bring online new wind and solar energy—but not in this budget. This budget sadly did not include new investment in climate solutions despite the imperative to go further and faster on climate action—something that we learnt a bit about on the weekend. I hope that the lack of commitment in this budget is a sign that Labor will actually have more to say on climate as we approach the state election. The Greens will continue to push for a 100 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, a big grants program to electrify homes and get them off gas, a properly funded transition plan to replace our three coal-fired power stations by 2030, a lot more support for electric and public transport, and protecting the carbon in our forests instead of logging them.

This budget was a real missed opportunity to address our state’s biodiversity and extinction crisis. The Treasurer’s speech references a \$215 million investment in climate and environment—compared to the Commonwealth Games, which comes with a \$2.5 billion price tag, and \$21 billion for two toll roads. We also note that the budget included yet another \$100 million for the native forest logging industry and very little detail about what this money is actually for. The *State of the Environment Report 2018* found that Victorian’s biodiversity is rated poorly and is not improving. Scores of plants, animals, birds and reptiles have vanished forever, and a further 2000 plants are now threatened. A detailed 2021 investigation found that 19 Australian ecosystems are beginning to collapse, including forests and rivers in Victoria. These are ecosystems that provide the essentials for our health and wellbeing, including

fresh water and clean air. But as bad as things are at the moment, it does not have to stay like this. Last year a Victorian Auditor-General's Office investigation and a three-year parliamentary inquiry found that with a big funding boost Victoria can reverse the damage to our environment and restore it to health for all of us and for future generations. As with climate, let us hope that the silence on nature in this budget means Labor will have more to say ahead of the election.

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (17:36): I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. Look, this budget, as some of my colleagues have already pointed out, is a very clear statement of our Labor values, and it makes me very proud to stand up and speak to it. At every turn it works to create equity, to ensure that everyone in our community gets the sort of support that they need. But really importantly for me, one of the issues of equity that I have always been very, very interested in is regional equity, and this budget again shows how committed this government is to regional Victoria.

Sometimes I listen to comments from those on the other side and I find it absolutely bizarre. I know that the member for Wendouree and I spend our time out in regional Victoria, and it is news to us that we never leave Melbourne when indeed we spend many days driving back and forth. It just seems to be a line that they want to trot out again and again and again, and it defies the very facts of these governments. The member for Euroa, I think it was, was saying that come the election we were all going to be in trouble, and I would point out that in the 2018 election we got 18 regional members of Parliament, the Deputy Speaker included. That says very strongly that regional Victoria recognises that an Andrews Labor government supports them again and again and again.

The member for Euroa wanted to sort of pick the budget apart, suggested none of us had read it and said, 'Look at all of these figures'. It is interesting how easy it is to play with those figures, so let us have a look at something like the investment that we have put into regional Victoria. On average, since this government has been in, it has come in at \$4.5 billion per year, and that is compared to \$1.8 billion when those on the other side were in government. So it is not just double, it is verging on treble. This is a government that invests in regional Victoria again and again and again.

Now, during the pandemic quite rightly this government saw fit to increase a lot of the expenditure in regions. The idea there was a stimulus for all of Victoria to get us through the pandemic, and of course when you stand up now and compare this year's budget to last year's budget, they are comparing figures that were heightened last year quite consciously as a stimulus package. We look here at the regional spend, and it is still sits in that average place, which as I say, is virtually three times what was spent when those on the other side were in. So I find it just a ridiculous contention to suggest that this government does not know what is going on in Victoria and does not leave the tram tracks. I know I, with an electorate that is 5000 square kilometres, spend a lot of time on the road getting to know all of my region.

But look, on a more positive note, let us turn to what this budget really has done. It would be easy for me to look at the individual wins for my district and my electorate, and I will go to those, but I think it is important as well to look at the sort of big picture that goes on here. One of the things that happens in the budget is there are funding programs that get re-funded. We cannot hang them to a particular sod turn—and there are many of those that we have had to do—but they show almost what the commitment for the next year is going to be.

One of the incredibly important funds in the regions is the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. I know that all the members of our regional caucus are really keen on this particular fund because it is a fund that is dedicated to helping us grow jobs and grow opportunities out in the regions. There was \$30 million put into that fund in this budget. That is a line in the budget, but the real-life impact, to give you an example, is that in last year's RJIF there was money given to Plinius Engineering in Canadian in Ballarat. I was delighted to have the Minister for Regional Development come up with me. This is a fantastic engineering company that has really sort of moved forward in manufacturing, and this regional jobs fund has allowed them to hire 16 new staff—but really importantly to keep those jobs in Ballarat, to keep those jobs in the region. It is important to understand that behind these big

lines there are actual jobs. That is 16 jobs for a small area in my electorate, and it will help us to retain jobs in the region. So something like that Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund is incredibly important to all regional MPs.

Another one like that, lesser to everybody but certainly for me, is the Growing Suburbs Fund. I really want to thank the Minister for Local Government for having the foresight to recognise that many of our regional councils, those peri-urban councils, are dealing with the same issues as the growing suburbs, and so the Growing Suburbs Fund was extended to include the peri-urban councils. For me that means the wonderful Golden Plains shire and also the Moorabool council. I know that since this fund has been extended to them they have certainly made great use of it. It was really lovely this year to go to Rokewood. There was \$3 million from the Growing Suburbs Fund put towards a facility in Rokewood, and the CEO of Golden Plains told me that it was the largest grant that their shire had ever, ever seen. This was a huge injection into this small regional council, and it allowed them to do those really big things like build this new centre. In this budget there is another \$50 million for the Growing Suburbs Fund, and I am really looking forward to seeing my peri-urban councils take advantage of that.

I think one of the things that we were all pretty much rolling around on the floor about in the contributions from the other side was to hear some suggestion that regional health has been left behind. The Regional Health Infrastructure Fund in this budget has \$300 million. That takes it to \$790 million since it was established in 2016. That is an enormous investment into regional health. What that means on the ground is, for example, there was \$6 million for the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative in their standalone medical clinic. And one that I know is incredibly important to my colleague and friend the member for Wendouree was \$6.5 million for robot-assisted surgery. I know that the member for Wendouree fought pretty hard for this one, and I saw her on budget day and there was certainly a very happy step to have it. I guess what I am trying to say here is that that Regional Infrastructure Fund, which only this government has created and invested in, means real, tangible things for people on the ground in the regions. A linear accelerator—we had the Premier to visit, and it was wonderful to have him up to visit the base hospital to look at this. It is a piece of kit that will really help diagnosis in the regions. So any suggestion that this government has not invested in health in the regions is absolutely and utterly laughable.

Of course in this budget as well there is the Commonwealth Games. Now, this is—and pun intended—an absolute game changer. No-one has ever done a Commonwealth Games like this, and what is so fantastic about it is that it invests in the regions. It is spreading it across regional Victoria. I appreciate that it is going to be in some of the major centres, but we all know that is going to be tourism and we all know that is going to be traffic up and down those roads. I am delighted about the Commonwealth Games coming, but what I am really delighted about is the sort of legacy that is going to be left behind. That is going to be, certainly in Ballarat, housing. We will be looking at transport and all of the sporting facilities. So within this budget is an enormous amount of money to get on with that work which has never been done anywhere else in the world. This government considers regional Victoria to the extent that it came up with this idea, this extraordinarily novel idea, to make sure that the Commonwealth Games is spread across the regions—so again, a government that just delivers for our regions.

The other thing about the budget, and I mentioned this earlier on, is that it is very much a reflection of our values, and I know that there are certain values that we hold very, very dear to our hearts. Now, I have talked a bit about health and the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, but of course there is also the increased funding to ESTA call-taking and dispatch capacity. Now, there is actually an ESTA site in Ballarat—in Mount Helen, in my electorate—and I have been out there to visit. They are extraordinarily hardworking people, and really I hate hearing this sort of divisive language from people on the other side which in some ways suggests that these people are not doing their job. They are incredibly committed people working very hard in an extraordinary situation. Again, this government has recognised the extra layer of difficulty and complexity in their jobs at the moment with a continuing COVID pandemic and has invested an enormous amount of money, \$333 million, to try and increase

those staff at those ESTA centres. I know that that will be welcomed in Ballarat, and I know that those wonderful workers at ESTA deserve the support that this government is so, so willing to give.

Another classic of our values, if you like, is education. There will be lots of stories to hear from lots of my colleagues about different schools. I think every electorate has a school that got upgraded. That is the commitment that this government has, so certainly I was delighted to be with the Minister for Education and my wonderful friend and colleague the member for Melton when we went to Darley Primary School to announce \$10.68 million for their primary school. I have been to visit them recently. It is an absolutely beautiful school—such commitment and dedication—but it really needed an investment. You know, there were a lot of portables, and it really needed an investment. I know that this is going to make a massive, massive difference to many people in my area. It is just wonderful to see investment in a school like that and regional schools.

Of course close to our hearts are jobs. They will always be very important, and one of the things I was delighted to see in the budget was \$12 million for more support officers for apprentices. So it is an incredibly good way to get in there and get your career going. I would really recommend people have a look at apprenticeships, and to have extra support there when people are going into it is just wonderful.

I cannot speak without referring to one of our real values around equality. Again and again this government delivers for the LGBTIQA+ community. Within this budget there is \$3.2 million for a safe spaces trial in western Victoria. I am sorry to say it, but it is acknowledged that young LGBTIQ+ people in regional Victoria do tend to suffer more than their regional peers, so it is incredibly important to have these safe spaces created for them. So there is a lot of work going on at the moment to look at how that will be, but certainly to have that acknowledgement invested in our young LGBTIQ community in western Victoria is fantastic.

Community sport gets \$88 million. I know how happy my electorate and sports clubs have been about this government's investment. Again and again it is funny hearing those on the other side suggest there are no shovels in the ground and then in the same breath talk about us going to ribbon cuttings. It is a bit weird. But certainly there has been an enormous amount of work that has gone into the sporting clubs in my region. One of the big ones—it was so good to have our Minister for Community Sport visit me and the member for Melton to announce the \$10 million investment—is the Bacchus Marsh aquatic centre. This is something the community has been crying out for for a long, long time. They fought hard for it, and I know that the member for Melton and I have been jumping up and down about it and are really delighted that we have now got this investment.

And of course there is help for people when it is needed. I look at the power saving bonus—what a fantastic initiative. It encourages people to go and look at how they can save and at the same time gives them that little bit of bonus. There is so much in this budget, so much for everyone, so much that just speaks to our values, to our belief in equity—and I mean regional equity—our belief in equality and our support for health and education. I want to give my sincere congratulations to the Treasurer and everybody—there is a mountain of work that goes on behind this budget, so to all of those that worked so hard. I am utterly delighted. To this government and every member of this government I say thank you for your absolute investment in regional Victoria. I thank you all for supporting us, and people out there know in the regions that this government supports them.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (17:51): It is with some disappointment that I rise today to go through the litany of cuts that have been put forward in this year's budget. To hear the member for Buninyong say that this is a clear statement of Labor values and shows how committed this government is to regional Victoria—I actually agree, because when you look at the comparison of the numbers, when you look at how much is being spent in this year's budget, or the coming budget, compared to how much has been spent in the past, all you can say is that this is an absolute disaster when it comes to looking after regional Victoria and ensuring that they get their fair share and have equitable access to health care, to a good-quality education, to high-quality and safe roads and to good-quality public transport and to have safe police stations and safe streets. That is what we deserve in regional Victoria, but this budget

simply does not deliver a fair share for regional Victoria. It shows the priority for this government—and Labor's values—are cuts, cuts and more cuts and that regional Victorians are treated like absolute dirt by Labor.

It is a Labor government that has cut capital spending on country Victoria to just 11.4 per cent last year and 13 per cent this year. Our fair share would be 25 per cent of the capital budget. There is 25 per cent of Victoria's population that lives outside of Melbourne. It is not unreasonable to ask for our fair share, to ask for a guarantee that 25 per cent of Victoria's capital infrastructure will be spent to support the 25 per cent of Victoria's population who live outside of Melbourne. And yet that is not what we have seen in this budget. In fact it is a very, very short list when I go through all of the commitments in this budget to my electorate of Lowan, which is about 42 000 square kilometres. It is one-sixth of the state and involves 28 police stations, 110 CFA stations, 17 hospital campuses, 42 government schools and 18 private schools. There is a lot of public infrastructure that needs to be maintained in my electorate, but all we got in this year's budget was a glasshouse. That is it. We did not get anything else. And we of course have heard a bit about this budget, because the Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Agriculture actually spoke about this as the only investment in agriculture across all of the state. So in some ways I feel very, very lucky that at least we got a glasshouse out of this budget, because it is the only infrastructure spend that we saw in agriculture across the entirety of the state.

While it is absolutely great that we are going to get a new glasshouse, it does not mean we have got money there to upgrade our schools. As I said, we have got 60 schools in the Lowan electorate. There is not one single dollar in this budget that will go towards ensuring our kids who grow up in regional Victoria have access to high-quality infrastructure to support the educators and to support the best possible outcomes for the kids who grow up in the country. We did not see any allocation in there to any childcare services in regional Victoria. We know how important that is.

The Dunmunkle area we know has been screaming out for improved access to child care. They have put in applications through Yarriambiack Shire Council, they have been very strong advocates to build a childcare facility in the Murtoa area and yet the feedback from the Andrews Labor government is, 'You're not in a growth corridor, so we don't think you need childcare facilities'. Now, I think every single parent who works in that area wants their child to get the best possible start to life in that zero to four years. We know that is when education must start, that is when we must be able to provide that support and care and it also allows both parents to return to work. And more often than not it is the women who have to stay home if they are unable to access child care.

Speaking to the mums in that area, they would love to get back to work. There are intensive care nurses who are not able to return to work because Labor will not fund child care in our area. I look at paramedics who are unable to go to work and scientists who would work at Grains Innovation Park who are unable to go to work. We have even got childcare educators who cannot return to work because they cannot access child care for their own children. It is a massive gap, and just because we do not live in a growth corridor does not mean our people do not deserve access to child care, not just for the parents but also for those children so they can access early education.

We have also seen other cuts across the area, which are going to have a massive impact on our part of the state. We have seen a 68 per cent cut to regional development over the past two years. Now, this is so important because so often we miss out, and particularly under a Labor government. Now that we have a Labor government at a state level and we have a Labor federal government as well my area is very, very concerned that we are going to miss out. We have seen the new Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, already come out and say there are going to be massive cuts to some of those funds that The Nationals put in place at a federal level which support regional development and regional infrastructure. We look at what happens at a state level then and think, 'Well, hopefully the state can back it up', and we see cuts of 68 per cent to the regional development budget.

Agriculture Victoria has had a \$47 million cut. Now, these are important jobs in our local area. If you look at the red meat innovation centre at Hamilton, it has been cut back to a bare rump of what it used to be. There is simply no research being undertaken to understand how our producers—who live locally, who grow red meat locally, and particularly our wool producers and lamb producers—can look at the best possible knowledge and research that they can apply to their businesses. It means that we cannot understand more about how we feed our sheep and how that relates to the growth of their wool, how it relates to the growth of their meat and how it relates to the number of offspring that they have. This is very, very important information that means that our local farmers can be more productive. And if our local our farmers are more productive, that means the entire state is more productive. It results in more revenue for our state and more money to spend, hopefully back in regional Victoria.

We have also seen massive cuts to our road infrastructure budget. The road asset management budget seems to be a continual line of target for the Andrews Labor government. We have seen cuts to this line every single year, I think, since I first came into this place eight years ago—again this year we have seen \$24 million ripped out of the ‘Road asset management’ line. Now, this is important maintenance funding that VicRoads use to keep our roads safe, but VicRoads have had their budget cut so much that they simply cannot afford to fix those crumbling edges that we see on major routes right across the Lowan electorate. Potholes are everywhere. We see the rutted surfaces and the yawning potholes. It is simply not good enough for the roadways that we rely on to get from point A to point B—to go to school, to go to work, to be able to get our produce to market, to make sure we can get our school buses to run and just to go to footy and netball training. They are simply dangerous.

We did not see any funding in here for the Western Highway duplication, to extend that through to Stawell. This is a project that has been stalled for a number of years. It was supposed to be done by 2016. We are still stuck at the tree. This needs to be sorted out. We need to make sure we get that duplication of the highway. Sadly, on the weekend we saw another life lost on the Western Highway. I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the family of Pauline Smith—Stephen and her three children—who tragically lost her life on the way to work. She was a paramedic with the Stawell ambulance group. It is horrific when first responders are first on the scene to an accident of one of their own. I would like to thank and pay my respects to all of those involved in the CFA, ambulance and police—Pauline was a long-serving police officer before she retrained as a paramedic—and also the SES. There are simply too many accidents that these people have to respond to. This highway must be fixed; it must be duplicated as soon as possible.

We have also seen massive cuts to the CFA budget despite \$800 million now being raised through the fire services property levy. Only \$18 million, though, has been put aside for new initiatives. Now, I would have loved to see funding in the budget for the new Dunkeld SES station. This is money that was promised a long time ago. It still has not become a reality. They need a lot more money now because the minimum requirements for a station have been upgraded; they now need to have drive-through access. It is a big expenditure, and this government must provide that additional funding to make sure Dunkeld SES becomes a reality.

I would also like to speak to the cuts to health. You would think that a budget which has the title ‘Putting patients first’ would actually see an increase in the outputs and the supports to build the health workforce but also to provide the services that Victorians expect to be able to access as part of a public health system. In mental health we have seen a massive cut of \$60 million to mental health assistance. This is a program that was developed to ensure mental health support over COVID-19, and I am sure most MPs in this place would hear from constituents on a regular basis about people who need mental health support but simply cannot access support. It does result in people having to get critically unwell before they—usually—turn up to a hospital in a very, very bad way and in a very bad state. It is the only place many can access mental health support. And yet we heard from the Minister for Mental Health at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, ‘There may well be some COVID-specific programs that have come to an end because that particular need is no longer required’. I say to the

minister: listen to your community. Listen to all of the organisations that are saying, 'We simply cannot keep up with demand'. Listen to the constituents of Victoria who cannot get the support that they need, and you tell them that that particular need is no longer required. It is so out of step with what the community are feeling at the moment and what the mental health sector is feeling at the moment that I fear he has made a massive misstep in cutting this vital fund, which supported additional services for Lifeline, Beyond Blue, Kids Helpline, PANDA and the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council as well. This was essential funding; it has been cut.

The mental health community support services have been cut by \$18 million. The alcohol and other drug sector has been cut by \$40 million, including a \$25 million fund which was utilised to train up quickly 100 additional equivalent full-time workers to provide AOD support. We know a lot of people turned to the bottle and turned to drug use over the pandemic because they simply could not cope with restrictions and lockdowns. They were self-medicating. These people desperately need additional AOD support. The government put money into this program, and then with weeks to go until the end of this financial year they were told, 'That's it. There's no more'. That is 100 EFT of AOD workers that have been cut, and it is simply not good enough.

Look at other cuts to health: \$7 million from dental, which means 45 000 Victorians will not be able to get the dental support they need this coming year. Small rural health services acute health have had \$11 million cut out of their budget. Community health have had \$106 million cut out of their budget. Aged care support services have had \$41 million cut out of their budget. In disability there has been a 50 per cent cut to the Office for Disability, which does important work in advocacy for people with disability; they have had a \$7.5 million cut. The prevention of family violence has had a cut. These are desperate cuts, and while we might hear Labor MPs today picking out particular numbers, it is not until you compare the data that you see what that means when there is a budget cut, because that means people are losing their jobs and Victorians are unable to access the services that they need—and this is critically bad when it comes to not being able to access the health supports that they need.

We have heard a lot through responses regarding this bill around the investment in the health workforce, but the numbers in the budget belie the truth of what is actually happening with the health workforce. When it comes to our vital nurses, doctors and allied health professionals and particularly our mental health workforce, the government was warned three years ago that they needed to immediately build the mental health workforce. Five of the nine recommendations in the interim report pushed and said this. It was very, very clear: we need to build Victoria's mental health workforce, and yet when we look at the outputs on page 226 of the budget there are no differences in the target of student clinical placement days in nursing or allied health. If you look at the total funded FTE for allied health positions in the public system, postgraduate nursing positions, medical positions in the public system or early graduate nursing and midwifery positions in the public system, there is no change on the targets for last year. So it does not matter what you say. When you say, 'We're training more people', your budget papers say you are not actually training a single additional person in health or mental health, and that is not good enough, because we know there are shortages. And if there is any story that we have heard more consistently over the past three years, it is that we have not got enough mental health workers and we have not got enough health workers.

While this budget might say it is putting patients first, it simply is not supporting the workforce that our people desperately need. So, yes, I agree with the member for Buninyong: this is a clear statement of Labor values. This shows how committed this government is to regional Victoria, because all we see are cuts and cuts and cuts. And it is not the independents that will deliver this, it is not a Labor government that will deliver this. It is only The Nationals in government that will ensure that regional Victoria gets its fair share and that regional Victorians get access to the health system and the services that they deserve.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (18:06): In my inaugural speech to this Parliament I explained my vision for Hawthorn, a vision honed over a life spent in Catholic education. Whilst I have always found it my role to educate and instil a moral compass in our best and brightest, it has been one of the great

privileges of my life to advocate for these values on behalf of my electorate of Hawthorn. I believe in a Hawthorn and a Victoria that is fair, productive and compassionate, and I believe with every fibre of my being that this is a budget that further delivers this goal. The reforms I discuss tonight will not just make the necessities of life more accessible for all Victorians but will have a genuine, humane effect on Victorians' lives. This budget is about more than just the big picture projects that end up in the papers; it is also about the smaller scale changes that build our communities.

Before outlining what I pick out to be some of the more important aspects of the budget, let me just comment on a few aspects in general terms. It has been a continual disappointment to me to have had the previous Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, any time he was speaking from the heart and everything else, just keep repeating this mantra: 'It's your money. It's your money'. It is the most selfish concept, and to say that sort of thing amongst impressionable young people I think is appalling. This constant 'It's your money. It's your money. It's your money. It's your money' without any reference to the general good is something that I will not miss in the new federal government.

Once again we were treated to a very sensible, I thought, critique—I do not want to sound patronising—from the member for Brunswick. The member for Brunswick, particularly in dwelling on the health aspects, explained what he thought were some of the advances in the budget and what were still some of the challenges. It is very easy just to, I suppose, go through it and get all the cuts. That is probably how the game is played: you pick out all the cuts, be appalled by it, carry on a bit and so on. But you have got to then say that that is what budgets are about. Budgets are about cuts in some places and additions in others. There is no way around it. So while you might pick out the cuts and get a bit of heat over that, you have to recognise the other side to it. I think the member for Buninyong drew attention to that in some of the statements from the member for Euroa and the member for Lowan—this obsession, if you like, this overconcentration on the cuts without picking the good news, whereas the member for Brunswick was able to actually identify a number of the good things. You tend to listen a bit more attentively to the member for Brunswick for that reason, quite apart from the fact of his own medical training.

Let us move along then, firstly into education. I am sure people in this chamber are well aware of the value I place on education, but let me just drive this point home again. Hawthorn West Primary School is located in a grand old building right where Burwood Road and Church Street split, not far from St James Park. Next year it will be celebrating its 170th anniversary. Like many of our Hawthorn schools, it serves as a hub for our community and is full of hardworking staff, led by principal Nerida Smith. It has been a pleasure to be a frequent visitor. However, over the course of these visits I have seen the wear and tear on the 170-year-old building. As a principal for nearly 30 years, I am well aware of the impact time and our promising young students can have on a building. That is why I was so thrilled to call Nerida on budget day to inform her that the Victorian government is funding \$5.73 million in upgrades to this historic school. This is the Education State. I know my fellow former teachers in this chamber know how challenging it can be running a school. Decades of Liberal neglect in Hawthorn have left many of our schools in sore need of help.

I am proud to stand before you today and say that Hawthorn has received over \$39 million for its schools this term. This budget includes \$5.73 million for Hawthorn West Primary School, \$367 100 for Camberwell Primary, \$499 100 for Canterbury Primary School and \$495 200 for Auburn High. These funds will be prudently spent on upgrading the toilet facilities at these various schools.

As great as this funding is, we are not just funding our local schools, we are changing the way we do education in this state. The \$277 million senior secondary pathway reforms are a once-in-a-generation transformation of secondary education. We are offering the new VCE vocational major and the Victorian pathways certificate, offering 12 different vocational pathways to our students. We are boosting funding and pathways for teachers and expanding the Head Start program to every government secondary school in the state. I have been proud to host in the last two weeks the Deputy Premier to celebrate the upgrades that will be made at Hawthorn West, and the Premier to see how planning is progressing on a previous budget item to upgrade Swinburne Senior Secondary College's

sporting facilities at Fritsch Holzer Park, a project that will hold immense benefit for both the student cohort and the community. We are on the ground taking tangible steps to improve our state and the facilities that our constituents use every day. It is not only schools but also local community sporting clubs. Take for example the recent \$1.25 million upgrade at the Canterbury Sports Ground to improve the clubrooms. This will not only improve the facilities but make them more accessible for women and women's sport. That is education.

On environment and climate change I believe we all in this chamber are in agreement that climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. That is why we are committed to a 2025 goal of a 28 to 33 per cent reduction in emissions and 45 to 50 per cent by 2030, with net zero by 2050. These are some of the world's most ambitious targets, and we do not have nuclear power to lean on. These are not just vague platitudes. We have invested over \$2 billion in building a clean energy future. We are innovating: 50 per cent of new car sales will be of zero-emissions vehicles by 2030. We are banning old-growth logging by 2030.

By 2025 all government operations will be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity. That is every school, hospital, tram and metro train. We are also delivering at a local level with measures like the \$250 000 contained in this budget for the Gardiners Creek master plan, which will ensure sustainable management of the creek in years to come. These are big ideas, and we are delivering them. The people of Hawthorn have made their views clear, and the change in our area shows how much we as a community value climate action and environmental protection. We only have to just think back a few days to the weekend to see the dramatic representation of that, for one.

I have lost count of the number of conversations I have had with constituents young and old about this vital issue. It is why I am proud to stand here today to affirm our government's commitment to climate action. We believe the science, and we are taking action. This federal election has reaffirmed the commitment of the people of Hawthorn to climate action—the way the people of Hawthorn, which is almost entirely within the federal seat of Kooyong, comprehensively rejected the regressive politics of the Liberal Party and its leader-in-waiting, Josh Frydenberg, or as some like to call him, VINO, Victorian in name only. Make no mistake, this election was a referendum on climate policy, and the voters of Victoria have overwhelmingly rejected the politics of fear, the politics of the anti-science agenda and the Sky News after dark crowd. I am proud that my electorate has voted for climate action, and indeed I am proud of the east for comprehensively rejecting the person who had the gall to bring a lump of coal into Parliament, like climate change is some kind of joke. The policies I have mentioned today speak to a coordinated, concentrated and comprehensive policy response to one of the greatest challenges of our time.

I would like to, finally, just finish with reference to health, which was occupying the interest of those opposite. In the last couple of years the stress on our healthcare system has been immense. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has fought so bravely during this time: our nurses, our ambos, our doctors and all our frontline health workers. You have been simply heroic, and your sacrifices have not gone unnoticed. We have seen this pressure. We are injecting \$12 billion into our healthcare system and hiring up to 7000 new healthcare workers. We will recruit 2000 foreign healthcare workers to fill workforce shortages and spend \$333 million on 400 new staff for the 000 call service. An additional \$124 million will also be spent on 90 new paramedics.

Now, I understand how this can seem like I am just throwing statistics at you, but let me tell you that these reforms have a real human impact. I would like to highlight what I believe is one of the most overlooked health areas in our society—namely, eating disorders. Around 4 per cent of the population of Australia have an eating disorder, and I have been contacted by distraught constituents about this issue. One constituent, who shall remain unnamed, discussed how his daughter had suffered with anorexia and how he had watched her waste away. That is why I am proud that this budget has delivered \$20 million for eating disorder treatment—vital progress that will aid the development of treatment and eventually a cure.

In the last couple of minutes available to me, just a bit on transport—a subject very dear to my heart. Our city has changed over the last four years. The titanic, nation-building projects undertaken by this state government have quite literally changed our city and our state. The Metro Tunnel will be finished by 2025. Early work has begun on the Suburban Rail Loop, and who could forget the 60 level crossings removed by our government? Indeed I was recently at Union Road in Surrey Hills, and I am thrilled to report that the removal is proceeding well. But again it is not just the big projects, it is about the smaller reforms as well. This is one of the reasons this budget is so important, and we should not play around with jokes about cuts and all that sort of stuff without referring to what has been added.

In Hawthorn this government has delivered on transport. We have received \$150 000 to plan the pedestrian crossing at Auburn Road and \$250 000 to deliver accessibility improvements across many stations—and this is just in this particular budget alone. We have delivered \$228 million to strengthen the Glenferrie Road bridge over Gardiners Creek, and we have delivered \$800 000 to plan the construction of a bridge with a shared bike and walking lane along the Kew to Highett strategic cycling corridor at Toorak Road. I could go on.

Whether it has been at a statewide level or something as small as inserting tactile signals at Hartwell station, we are a government that is working to fundamentally improve our transport system. These improvements may not always be glamorous, but they reduce congestion, they reduce travel times and they improve the living standards of all Victorians. My electorate of Hawthorn contains multiple train, tram and bus lines, and whether it is commuters going to the city or schoolchildren travelling to Glenferrie Oval after class, these lines serve our community. I myself am an avid user of the 75 tram and indeed am excited for the next generation of trams soon to grace Melbourne's tracks. These policies are all part of the government's trademark infrastructure policy program which will fundamentally reshape our city. By slashing travel times, improving capacity and expanding our network these transport policies are creating a better Melbourne and a better Victoria. This is really a fantastic budget, if only just thinking about those three areas.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (18:22): It is a pleasure to rise and make my contribution on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. It is interesting, having been through this process a few times in relation to the budget, to be coming here, and we go through I guess the standard process of people on that side standing up and saying how fantastic the budget is and people on this side standing up and pointing out what they believe to be the flaws and the bad points of the budget. In my contribution I am not probably going to change that too much, that precedent. But what I want to do in my contribution is talk about the budget from a regional perspective, a rural perspective, and outline the figures that are in the government's own budget papers in black and white to support my explanation that it is not a great budget.

The member for Hawthorn just spoke, and I agree with the comment from the member for Hawthorn that budgets are generally about cuts in some areas, additions in some areas, new initiatives in some areas and the removal of initiatives in some areas. The problem that I certainly have—and other members on this side have, particularly from areas of rural and regional Victoria—is we are critical of those areas where cuts have occurred in programs and departments that are important to our local economies, are important to our way of life and are important to our communities that we represent.

I will start off at the top by mentioning the \$47 million cut to Agriculture Victoria. That is an area where we know what has long been said in this chamber—that when country Victoria is doing well, the whole state is doing well. But to have that level of cut when we are coming off the back, in my area, of a significant drought and then fires that impacted a lot of our rural sector, as you are certainly well aware, Acting Speaker McGuire, is very significant to AgVic. We now have this anomaly, and I think other members in the chamber—it might have even been the member for Murray Plains—mentioned that we now nearly have as many staff in the Premier's office as we have in the AgVic office. I mean, goodness gracious me—goodness gracious me.

Ms Thomas: That's absolutely wrong.

Mr T BULL: Well, minister, you might like to explain the \$47 million cut in your department, because I heard you try and explain it on the Warwick Long program. I do not listen to the ABC very much, but I do tune in to *Country Hour* on occasion. I heard that interview, and it was a train wreck, where the minister was asked to explain the \$47 million cut to the department. It just did not go well at all.

But as our economy recovers post COVID we need to look after those areas of rural and regional Victoria that need support. I noted the member for Buninyong in her speech said it is unfair to compare this year's budget figures to the budget figures of last year because they were inflated to deal with the response to the pandemic. I do agree with the member for Buninyong that in some of those cases we had inflated figures from last year to deal with COVID, but there are some areas that I will point out where we go back two years. We have the road asset management budget cut. We have the transport infrastructure budget cut, a combined \$100 million cut, when our roads are in a state of disrepair—an absolute state of disrepair—in Victoria. How is it that we have temporary road signs put up warning of dangers and risks on our roads, temporary signs that are there for eight months at a time?

Ms Kealy: They're permanent.

Mr T BULL: They are semi-permanent, as the member for Lowan points out. They are there for eight months at a time. We have had the regional development budget cut by \$87 million, or 31.2 per cent, but a 68 per cent cut over the past two years in regional development. You cannot blame that on COVID. That goes back to pre COVID, two years ago—a massive, massive cut. Acute health in small rural services, which I think the member for Lowan mentioned in her contribution, has been cut by \$11 million. Drug prevention and control and drug treatment and rehab had a \$40 million cut—40 million. Now, yes, we had a new drug and alcohol rehab centre in recent years opened in East Gippsland, and that is welcome. But this is a problem that is right across the board, right across the length and breadth of Victoria, and we should not have reductions in those very important areas. Community health care was cut by \$106 million, and dental had a \$27 million cut. I had somebody in my office this week who had been to the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service yesterday to get an urgent dental-care job completed and was told the waiting list was two years. Now, how are we going to fix that? And it is longer in other areas of rural and regional Victoria—

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Mr T BULL: Three years here, and we have a cut to the budget. How are we going to fix those long-term waiting lists if we have cuts of \$27 million? The home and community care program for younger people had a \$13 million cut. Sport, recreation and racing is down \$340 million on what was spent last year. Community sport, as we try to get back together and we try to get going again after COVID, where we missed that social interaction within our community groups—

Ms Kealy: Clubs are struggling.

Mr T BULL: Clubs are struggling, and we have to put up with that. I guess what encapsulates this whole issue is when we look at the capital spend in rural and regional Victoria as compared to the metro area. The capital expenditure was 13 per cent in this year's budget. Surprisingly that is up. It was 11.4 per cent the year before. But it is 11.4 per cent and 13 per cent, and rural and regional Victoria has 25 per cent of Victoria's population.

Ms Kealy: It's not a fair share.

Mr T BULL: The per capita—fair share. The member for Euroa, who raised this very point in her contribution, just walked into the chamber. In no-one's language and no-one's interpretation can that breakdown of the capital rural spend be considered fair or equitable. It just cannot be.

Moving on to a couple of my portfolios, by gee, we had an interesting Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearing this week, which the member for Gippsland South here was heavily involved with. We have the Office for Disability funding cut by 50 per cent, or \$7.5 million. I think it

was actually the member for Gippsland South himself who asked the minister to explain this 50 per cent cut to the Office for Disability, which provides services for advocacy groups in our community and supports those most in need in our community. After a lot of paper shuffling on the front table and a lot of looking between the minister and the bureaucrats, it was put down as a mistake in the budget papers—a mistake in the budget papers. I am not sure who proofread the budget papers, but they probably should have picked up a 50 per cent cut. What is interesting, though, is that in the fine print just below it has an explanation for the cut, it has an explanation for the mistake. I am not sure how that plays out, but we hope that we will get a bit more detail when answers are forthcoming.

There was a little episode there that almost bordered on comedy when the shadow minister was asked about the 38 new aged care beds at Orbost Regional Health—

Mr D O'Brien: The minister.

Mr T BULL: Sorry, the minister. I will correct that—when the minister was asked about the 38 new aged care beds in Orbost. He was asked quite simply, 'There are 38 beds there now. Is this a refurbishment of the existing 38 beds or are these 38 new beds?'. The response he gave was, 'This is 38 new beds, in addition'. That means we should have 76 aged care beds in Orbost. That is not the case, I believe. Management at Orbost Regional Health assures me that it is only a refurbishment. I would have thought that the minister would have been across the very basics of his portfolio and be able to know if it is a refurbishment or 38 new beds. It was a pretty simple Dorothy Dixier. You would think he would have thought, 'Well, I'm going to be asked about that in PAEC. I had better prepare'.

But it got even better. There are 103 less special residential services beds in Victoria. You would know, Acting Speaker, that our special residential services beds are those beds that care for the most needy in our community, whether they be people with mental health issues, whether they be people with disability issues or people with a dual diagnosis or various different problems, but they are very important. The budget papers clearly show that there is a reduction of 103 beds in Victoria. I think it was again the member for Gippsland South who asked this question. We were simply wanting to know whether these beds might have been reallocated, or if they had been cut, where they had been cut. Again, it is there in black and white, standing out like the proverbial in the budget papers. You would think the minister of the day would say, 'I'm certainly going to be asked about this'. But when we asked that simple, basic question, again there was a lot of paper shuffling and the three bureaucrats sitting either side of the minister shuffled through papers and then they said, 'We don't know. We'll have to come back to you on those 103 special residential services beds. We do not know'.

We get into aged support services and there is a cut there of \$41 million, or 37.8 per cent. The veterans budget is down \$2 million. The minister was asked to explain the reduction of \$2 million in the veterans budget and he just disappeared off on another tangent that was totally irrelevant to the question that was asked. We only hope that we get the answer back on notice, as has been promised, but we need to know where that money has gone. All these cuts I am talking about come on the back of, I think the member for Euroa mentioning, we are on \$28 billion of cost overruns on metro projects.

A member: Waste.

Mr T BULL: Waste. Imagine what that could do. I am sure the Minister for Agriculture would love a piece of that back and be able to distribute that amongst the agricultural sector in rural and regional Victoria: \$28 billion—not million, billion. It is just incredible.

In my electorate, if I can spend a few moments on that, the road asset management budget has been cut. As I mentioned earlier, that stuff is critical to the regions. Outside the provincial centres, we have Lowan in the far west of the state, East Gippsland in the far east, South Gippsland and the National Party seats of Ovens Valley, Murray Plains and Euroa. Our roads are a disgrace, and we were hoping to pick up the budget papers and see significant investment to fix those road problems. What do we do? We pick up the budget papers and we see another cut this year to road asset management and transport infrastructure.

On a local issue, we have got the Orbost police station. When Mallacoota police station was funded four years ago I had the local police inspector and superintendent driving along in a car ring me and say, ‘What the hell are we funding Mallacoota for? Orbost is at the top of the list by a long way’. They are having trouble recruiting police to Orbost because the facilities there are so downgraded. Another budget passes with nothing for them. With the minister’s permission I attended the Maffra police station about four weeks ago. It is in desperate need of an upgrade, absolutely desperate need of an upgrade. They literally have not got room to cater for the staff in that growing little country community. The plans have been there for several years now. They missed out.

Metung fire brigade is a great little fire brigade. They have bought their own land. They are ready to go. They are shovel ready. They just need the money in the budget to build their fire station. Another growing community that needs a modern facility—nothing. Lakes Entrance fire brigade have got the land put aside on Palmers Road for their new station. They are ready to go—nothing. We wanted some of these very important emergency services facilities knocked off in this budget. We are not unreasonable. We do not expect to get them all, but at least give us one or two.

Ms Kealy: A fair share.

Mr T BULL: But we had nothing, no fair share. The irony is that for some of the budget funds that we had distributed, the people who were receiving them knew nothing about it. The 38 beds I mentioned earlier at Orbost Regional Health—I had Orbost Regional Health management on the phone asking me, ‘What’s all this about?’. They are very welcoming of getting the money. The East Gippsland Specialist School got money coming that they did not know was coming—absolutely did not know it was coming, no communication whatsoever.

I just want to finish off by talking about the contribution from the Greens member in relation to the timber industry, saying that it was wrong that money had been allocated in the budget. When I sat down with him to discuss this, he had absolutely nothing. I will conclude my contribution with those remarks.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (18:37): I am also rising to speak tonight on the 2022–23 state budget. But before I do, I am sort of quite surprised at the previous speaker. First we had to endure five or so minutes of self-congratulation and pats on the back for gotcha moments in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, and then we were talking about cuts to aged care and veterans. Well, these are the two areas that were actually the responsibility of the federal Liberal government at the time. Thank goodness they are gone and we can now get onto getting back and improving the lives of those in aged care as well as our veterans by getting proper funding without state governments having to prop up where there are needs and gaps left by federal Liberal governments. But as I said, I am very happy to speak on the state budget.

This is our eighth budget since the Andrews Labor government was elected in 2014, and in the electorate of Thomastown that has been eight years of investing in buildings and people of the electorate. It is a traditionally safe seat, but it is a seat that has received record funding to revitalise and energise the area, demonstrating to residents that they deserve the best and that our children deserve the best to help them thrive and learn and open up opportunities for all. I know of course that it is often frustrating that things do not get done quickly enough—there is not enough being done at the time—but when I look back over the last eight years and the eight budgets that the Andrews Labor government has brought down, there is actually a lot that has been done.

I want to just talk about areas that are very important to residents in Thomastown—things such as education, health and roads—and go through what this budget is offering as well in the context of what has happened over the last eight years. For example, in the Thomastown electorate there are 23 state schools. Out of the 23 state schools, 20 have been either completely rebuilt or completely redeveloped or actually are new schools in the area in the new suburbs. Of the eight non-government schools, a number have received substantial government funds for capital works, and there are also another three

new schools on the way. In this budget when I talk about the three new schools I am talking about allocations of funds for the Wollert Andrew Road primary school that land is being sought for right now and is funded in the current budget that we are talking about tonight. But of course there is also the huge development, the \$26.34 million, that is going to the Peter Lalor Vocational College site, because on that site there is the Peter Lalor Vocational College, there is the Northern School for Autism and there is the U3A seniors group that has done so much fantastic work, particularly during the pandemic, keeping people connected.

The amount of teaching of Zoom skills was incredible as well as now all the programs, whether it is computers, whether it is craft or whether it is book clubs that they do. And in addition to U3A on the site there is the men's shed, and of course again they do so much good work. They do work with the students at Peter Lalor college and the special development school that is nearby. They also do a lot of community work. They get around, they help, they fix things, they make things, and they are including and connecting retired men—and women, because this is a shed that welcomes women into the shed, and they are also on the site.

So this \$26.3 million is a lot of money, and it is going to redevelop the Northern School for Autism. It will also provide new facilities and a new building, which is a pretty unique thing, where the U3A and the men's shed will share the facility. Of course both have their own space within it. This will also mean that there will be a lot of collaboration and working together as two of our seniors groups do very different things but offer a lot of diverse and interesting programs that both members of the men's shed and U3A will hopefully be able to participate in and be involved in.

Then we have—and this, I must admit, has been on the list of advocacy for some time—the next stage of the Merriang Special Developmental School. This school was redeveloped or rebuilt under the Brumby Labor government. Unfortunately it only got to stage 1, because at the time as soon as the Baillieu government came into place further development on that site completely stopped—completely unfinished. So all they had was classes; they did not have any multipurpose rooms, any specialist rooms for art or any other programs.

This additional money, the \$5.32 million, will finally allow the final stage of this school so the students there can have what every other student has in every other state school, and that is programs that allow them to do sports events within a big multipurpose room as well as specialist classes to do art, cooking and other programs such as that. So again, we continue to build in addition to all the supports, the mental health nurses and other supports that are being provided in these schools to actually give additional programs to students that need them and help them with their studies—you know, the breakfast clubs and so on.

Of course we cannot talk about the budget without talking about health. There is this odd sort of argument on the other side about the budget cutting investment in health. That is just not true. Certainly there are other funds required to be spent because we actually did have a global pandemic. Even though the opposition do not necessarily think that that is true or that it really happened, there was one, and additional funds were required to be spent on treating people that contracted COVID, particularly in the early days when there were no vaccinations—and we know who to thank for that. Treatments have now also improved.

This is a budget to help the health system, which of course has been devastated through the pandemic, to build it up again so that we can have, as we always have had, a first-class health system and also support all those health workers, whether it is paramedics, nurses, doctors, those that work in aged care or those that work within the hospitals in other allied jobs. We need to support them and make sure as well that Victorians have the treatment that they need when they need it, particularly when there has been such a devastation of the system because of the pandemic and the backlogs that have been caused due to that global pandemic.

So I want to give a particular shout-out or thankyou to Northern Health and the Northern Hospital. The staff at the hospital there have done such an incredibly amazing job. Not only does it have the busiest emergency department, not only has it had some of the highest levels of COVID and the highest levels of people that are falling very, very ill and require hospitalisation, it has also had to treat everybody else—and there are considerable health issues within the population in the northern suburbs. They have done so much. Then I look, for example, at the work they had to do with Epping Gardens, the private aged care facility under the jurisdiction of the federal government. We do not want to talk about the awful conditions, the most inhumane and terrible conditions, that they left residents in. It was staff at the Northern Hospital that had to go in there, and I understand that many still cannot forget the horror that they saw and require their own medical treatment as a result of how that has affected them and what they saw in that place.

But again, we are investing in the hospital system. If anyone drives past Cooper Street, they will see there are now two towers that make up the Northern Hospital. It actually looks like a hospital now; it is fantastic. There are more paediatric beds as well as general beds, and of course there is the tower for mental health beds at the front of the hospital. Again, this is something that the northern suburbs have needed, and the Andrews Labor is delivering on that need.

We talk also about paramedics and the ambulance and emergency system. The budget that we are discussing today is going to again further fund and boost more paramedics and more ambulances. I know that there is work underway in the Thomastown electorate. There is a new six-bay ambulance station being built right as we speak, and of course that will require additional ambulances and additional trained paramedics. This budget is all about making sure that we speed up and train those people that we desperately need, because one of the issues at the moment is there are just not enough trained, qualified people to answer the demand that there is—not just in Victoria, not just in Australia but really throughout the world. This budget is all about building back our system and making sure that it can do the things it needs to do.

The Northern Hospital, which is also being funded in this budget, has led the pilot on virtual emergency department work, where they are triaging patients virtually. Particularly for older members of the community, they can be at home and they can be triaged to determine where they need to go to get the medical support or the medical treatment that they need—whether it is to the GP, whether it is for X-rays or whether it is that they actually do need to come into the hospital to be admitted and stay there and be treated in there.

There are additional funds for things such as the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund. I know this has been very successful in the past. There are a number of organisations in the Thomastown electorate, and I should give again a special thanks to the St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar church that is currently being built in Epping. They have done so much work through the pandemic supporting not only the families that are parishioners of that church but also others. That is in terms of supporting them and fundraising, and many of the congregation are actually health professionals themselves.

We also have, in terms of health, expanded newborn baby screening to ensure bloodspot screening to test for conditions and disorders in newborns, because the earlier any sorts of conditions are detected, the quicker treatment can be and the better the outcomes are in those situations.

I think one of the important things that is continuing that has been very successful is the Andrews Labor government's record on renewable energy and doing as much as we can to combat climate change, although it is very difficult for just one state. We have much to look forward to from the new Albanese federal Labor government because of course there is a strong commitment to ensure that we have a good renewable energy future and a future for the next generations. So often in the last nine years federally, the young people of Australia have been completely forgotten—they have been completely ignored and they have been considered unimportant. The Andrews Labor government here in Victoria thinks they are very important. We are doing major infrastructure projects to provide jobs and mandating requirements for apprentices. We are, in this state budget, providing further assistance

to ensure that there is proper support for apprenticeships to support our young people in getting apprenticeships, and the retention rates are continuing so they can get their trade and can go off on their own. Of course the Solar Homes program is continuing, and that has been a great program for residents of Thomastown.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:52): I am rising this evening to make my contribution, although it is going to get cut a bit short by the look of the time. But my contribution is on this year's Victorian state budget. Budgets are the main mechanism that a government uses to espouse its values, to put its agenda on the table and to make clear to the public what its priorities are. As a regional Victorian, I represent a fantastic part of the world in Polwarth. From this next election it will be from Torquay through to Peterborough along the coastline and down the Princes Highway through beautiful Winchelsea, Colac and all the way through to almost Terang. It is a wonderful and highly productive part of the world, and of course this budget has left us a little bit cold, as these budgets from the state government generally do.

I guess many speakers from this side of the house have talked about this government's very, very skewed commitment to infrastructure, where all the money is pouring into Melbourne to the exception of country Victorians. The simple facts are—

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr RIORDAN: You would think that the interjecting Minister for Agriculture would actually know better, seeing as she allegedly goes around the country talking to country people, but the facts are quite stark: 25 per cent of people live in the country, and yet this budget again fails dismally in sharing that budget share around the state, with only 13 per cent being spent in rural and regional Victoria. That translates in dollar terms to: if you live in Melbourne, the state is going to throw around \$15 500 per capita your way, but if you live in country Victoria, with vast, underfunded, collapsing, rotting road networks, you are getting about \$7500 per capita. It is a massive discrepancy and one that this government should not be proud of. It is a legacy that country Victorians will be suffering from for a very, very long time.

In the electorate of Polwarth what does this lack of spending on infrastructure mean? Well, it means that for another year the Apollo Bay Surf Life Saving Club has been ignored, and its now very inadequate and run-down facility is going to be left undeveloped. It is a great proposal, the VBOSS centre, the Victorian Blue Ocean Safety Skills Centre, that they want to build in Apollo Bay. This government continues to turn a blind eye to that. They manage to find hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars for arts centres in the heart of Melbourne, where there are already, as best as I can tell, plenty of arts centres, but when it comes to just maintaining basic community service infrastructure, this government goes wanting. Of course the VBOSS centre is not just a surf lifesaving club, it is a whole package for young people to create a safer marine environment for everybody. It was a project in part with the Apollo Bay secondary college too, which has also been ignored in this current round.

But that is not the only one. The Torquay surf club has been ignored again, as has the Lavers Hill school community, where they have got a real issue. They are a very small community that did a lot of fundraising many years ago and built themselves an indoor pool. They need a bit of assistance to keep that pool open and operating in light of all the changed rules around pools, and yet that is not going to happen. So a community that has for 20 years under its own steam kept a great and necessary community service open is now going to find their locals shut out of that swimming pool.

Birregurra football club is absolutely antiquated. The Birregurra football clubrooms were used at the time of crisis during the Christmas Day bushfires. It was a staging centre. The Victorian government came in—swept in in fact—used the facilities to help fight fires and then walked away and left them, and they have still got substandard 1950s-type arrangements there at Birregurra. It is the same at the South Colac football club, one of the largest sports facilities in the Colac region, which supports the

velodrome, Auskick, the local footy club and all sorts of activities in a really prominent part of town, and yet they are still wanting and waiting for some upgrades for their facilities.

But, of course, you cannot talk about cuts to funding and infrastructure in country Victoria without talking about our road network. Sadly, the reality of this budget is that it is around a \$100 million cut overall to rural and regional roads. Already anyone who lives outside of Melbourne knows that the only way they can fix a pothole, a crumbling edge on the road or a bridge that is now too narrow is to put up the slow-down signs, and continually right across the electorate of Polwarth there are 80-kilometre zones where they should be 100—down to 40 at times—and increasingly narrowed-down bridges that are no longer fit for purpose. In fact in the last financial year I have had two public bridges collapse with trucks on them—and that is in this day and age. Imagine. We hear on the news endlessly about that too-low bridge in South Melbourne that collects trucks—the Montague Street bridge—when they go under it. Well, in Polwarth we have bridges that collapse when trucks go over them. Whichever way you cut it, it is simply not good enough.

One of the big charlatan acts in this budget that is really going to upset people across my electorate is that we all remember before the last election this government promised the VLocity trains and an extra service. We had the Premier go to Warrnambool. We had senior ministers appear on the train platform in Colac announcing the VLocity trains. The very next budget after the election they magically disappeared out of the estimates and the forward estimates, never to be seen again. Surprise, surprise, surprise—this budget has again announced the VLocity trains. This government, unlike many other promises where they did not even put the amounts in the budget, have actually put the amount in the budget, just like they did in 2018, but there is a little line at the bottom that says ‘this trains order will be held until such time as the stabling yards are finished’. If you go then to the government’s current website, talking about the upgrade of the Warrnambool line, you can see the stabling yards are not going to be finished until late next year. So methinks that the old vanishing VLocity train trick is afoot again. We have got an election this year, trains announced with a little proviso that they are not really going to happen, so I suspect that this is another promise yet to be fulfilled. We are now at the point where we cannot really believe what the government says. We have to look, as you always have to with this government, to see what they actually do—and what they actually do is announce the VLocity trains for the Warrnambool line and then promptly withdraw the promise.

Cost of living in this budget, of course, cops a hiding, as it does endlessly with this government. We have talked many times about the 42 new taxes and charges. We are also well aware that in another month’s time everybody’s registration, fines and any other costs and charges will increase automatically. This budget has been quite good at continuing many of the government’s commitments and promises but at the expense of local government and ratepayers. That is just a big cost shift that is used regularly in this budget to take pressure off the blowing out budget here. There is no good news in this budget at all for many of the self-funded retirees across the Polwarth electorate—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am required under sessional orders to interrupt business now. The member may continue his speech when the matter is next before the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

LOOKOUT RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION CENTRE

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (19:00): (6366) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with the Lookout alcohol and drug rehabilitation centre committee and explain what they need to do for the Victorian government to fund the much-needed project. The committee has done a power of work over the past six years to establish

this facility and was extremely disappointed the government again overlooked it for funding in the 2022–23 state budget. Once established, the Lookout will provide 20 residential rehab beds and support people with drug and alcohol addictions on their recovery journey with 24-hour care.

The South-West Coast and Mallee were two regions identified as most in need of residential rehab facilities in Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year strategy, released last year. Mildura received \$36 million in the 2022–23 budget for its facility. Now, I do not begrudge that funding announcement because there clearly is a need in that region. However, the Lookout is much further advanced than Mildura. A site has been secured and planning applications approved, which makes it even more disappointing that it has again been ignored by this government. The Mildura announcement will leave south-west Victoria as the only region in the whole state without access to vital residential rehabilitation beds, despite it being recognised as one of the most in-need areas.

Victoria does not have a great track record for providing residential rehab beds. Figures from the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association show that in 2021 the ratio of beds per 10 000 people in Victoria was 0.74. This compares to 2.52 in the ACT. Only South Australia had a lower ratio than Victoria. So our state is clearly lagging a long way behind the rest of the country in providing much-needed residential rehab beds. And yet despite this we have a government that has known about this project since 2017 and simply done nothing. This is the same government that tried to sell its 2022–23 budget as one focused on health and recovery. It seems illogical that the Lookout was snubbed again, given those so-called budget priorities.

Addiction can strike anyone. It does not discriminate. We need to ensure that people who are taking steps to break the cycle of addiction have the access to the support and services they need close to home. The Lookout is ready to go. The community has shown widespread support, with more than \$600 000 raised. This is an amazing effort from a community that understands the need for this service, given the devastating impacts alcohol and drugs have. What the community now needs is a government that also understands the need and is proven to be willing to act. I urge the minister to explain to the Lookout committee what indeed we have to do as a community to get this project and make it a reality.

CLARINDA ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (19:03): (6367) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide information on how the recent budget announcement for Kingston Heath Primary School will benefit students at this wonderful local school. It was a pleasure to join the school community along with the member for Mordialloc and Parliamentary Secretary for Schools at Kingston Heath Primary School earlier this month. We would love to have the minister out to visit at some point to celebrate the amazing investment of \$5.99 million to upgrade Kingston Heath Primary School, giving students modern learning centres and a new oval, because under an Andrews Labor government we will give every child the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In addition, Cheltenham Secondary College will also receive \$430 400 to replace the current portable toilet block in the year 7 village to improve amenity, cleanliness and hygiene, as part of our Minor Capital Works Fund. It was a wonderful result for students in the Clarinda district, and I thank the minister and look forward to his response.

BAIRNSDALE PUBLIC DENTAL WAITLIST

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (19:04): (6368) My adjournment is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to address the public dental waitlist in Bairnsdale. We have had people in the last month who have attended this service needing urgent dental work, and they have been told differing stories about the waitlist. Some have been told two years. More than one other has been told it is four years. But the reality is, whichever one it is, it is a waiting list that is not acceptable. It is not just unique to East Gippsland, obviously, but I raise this on behalf of my constituency. It is fairly common right around rural and regional Victoria, but it was disappointing to pick up the budget

papers and read about a \$22.4 million cut to public dental services. How are we going to get on top of these waiting lists when we are reducing funding? While waitlists have blown out over recent years we need a greater investment to fix this, and that is what I am asking the minister to do.

One of the persons that came into my office two weeks ago now made the comment—quite angry, because they were in pain—that we have cut the public dental budget and we are funding an office in France. That was a comment that was made by the constituent, not me. It is pretty hard to defend that. So I ask the minister what he is doing to address the public dental waiting list in East Gippsland and ask him to also give consideration to those other areas around the state that are facing a similar predicament.

FREE TAFE

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (19:06): (6369) My adjournment is to the Minister for Training and Skills. The action I seek is that the minister provide me with an update on the impact of our free TAFE program on young people across Melbourne's inner north who are looking to access new skills and career pathways. Young people today face very real challenges, challenges that are impacting not only their quality of life but also their hopes for the future. Finding a decent job, owning a home, having stability and support to pursue their passions and aspirations—these are not givens for this generation, and for nine long years under the coalition government young people in Australia have been virtually invisible. Here in Victoria we have a different approach. Labor is working to give our young people opportunity, stability, equality and hope. With huge reforms in youth mental health, more social and affordable housing, better protections for renters and real action on climate change, we are changing the future for our young Victorians. We are investing to drive up wages and address casualisation, and we are protecting workers through reforms like our historic wage theft laws and sick pay guarantee. But one of the most transformational things we are doing is through free TAFE.

We now have over 60 free courses under this program targeted at our state's key skill shortages. These are pathways to secure, decent jobs, jobs that deliver on our nation-leading reform agenda, including in aged care, allied health, nursing, disability, early childhood education, mental health and youth work. Valuing these skills and supporting young people to follow their passions and train for these jobs is all part of our plan to create more prosperity in this state, and since 2019 Victorians have saved more than \$204 million in tuition fees and more than 87 000 people have benefited from starting a free course. Locally we have students at Melbourne Polytechnic learning new skills in building and construction and horticulture right here in our suburbs. The latest course to become free is Auslan. How awesome! This will help more people start a career as an Auslan interpreter and build a stronger, more inclusive Victoria in the process. When this was announced last week it hit home with many people in my community. One local family reached out to share their elation, saying, 'This announcement will hopefully lead to not only greater interest and skills in Auslan in the community but also support families building their ability to communicate with and teach their deaf and hard-of-hearing children'. That is the power of a progressive, committed Labor government. While those opposite have taken every opportunity to trash TAFE and left the sector decimated, we see the value of investing in Victorian skills, so we are getting on with the job of supporting young people to access opportunities, grow our economy and deliver a brighter future for Victorians.

GREAT OCEAN ROAD COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:09): (6370) My adjournment debate this evening is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action that I seek from the minister is that I would really like to take the minister for a tour along the Great Ocean Road to visit the communities that she has inflicted the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority on. This time last week I invited the minister to come down to Peterborough—

Mr T Bull: You going to buy her a coffee?

Mr RIORDAN: I would buy her a coffee, absolutely, member for Gippsland East. I invited the minister last week to come down with me to Peterborough and to talk to the 150 or 200-odd people

that came to the community hall there who were none too satisfied with the way their part of the Great Ocean Road is being treated, but I want her to come and talk to all the other communities, whether they are in Torquay, in Anglesea, in Aireys Inlet, in Lorne and Apollo Bay—all those beautiful spots. It would be a great day out, because the minister does not let anyone on the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority talk to me or to the community unless there are departmental officials accompanying them.

The minister is well used to sending the bigwigs from town down to talk to these wonderful people in their community, so I am sure she could come down as well, and what we will do is just sort of ask the question: why, for example, is this new authority threatening to throw the kids off the skate park on the foreshore at Apollo Bay? It has been there a long time, the community has fundraised it and there is nowhere else to put a skate park, but they want to get rid of it. She can come down and tell the community why the Skenes Creek caravan park is now going to be into its third summer closed because there is no money left to fix it up; she can come and tell that community why that is taking so long.

She can come and talk to the community in Lorne, and she can tell them why a simple plan just to fix up a restaurant and a few toilets is now in its 10th year going nowhere fast and has not been resolved. She can come and talk to the Anglesea and Apollo Bay surf clubs and tell them why they are going to change the contracts that those surf clubs had that provide those wonderful community services and why they are all suddenly going to be paying so much more as community groups—a much bigger tax to the government to keep their surf clubs open.

She can come and tell the Pilates teachers and the other health workers that offer very low-cost, family-friendly exercises on our foreshores in Apollo Bay why they are going to be charged \$200 a week to offer health classes. I mean, that makes no sense. You can go into the botanic gardens for free and do exercise. You can go into the Treasury Gardens and do exercise, but no, we are going to tax them senseless along the Great Ocean Road to do exercise. There are lots of things not going right, and I would love the minister to come with me for a lovely drive along the ocean road to check it out.

HAWTHORN ELECTORATE TECH BUSINESSES

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (19:12): (6371) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy and Minister for Employment. The action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting the Australian headquarters of Xero, located in my electorate of Hawthorn. Xero is one of a growing contingent of successful tech businesses deciding to call Hawthorn home, and honestly, why wouldn't you? I have spoken before in this chamber about businesses like Quest Payment Systems and Compass. They are all at the coalface of the digital transformation that so many businesses are undergoing, and they are paving the way for other startup businesses to join them in Hawthorn. As we move into the digital age it is imperative that we continue to support these businesses making Hawthorn and Victoria innovation hubs.

This government has supported businesses like this with measures like the latest round of the small business digital adaptation program, which will allow our small businesses to apply for rebates to access a range of digital tools. Xero products are an integral part of the suite of tools available to these businesses, and they have often been claimed through these grants. Businesses like Xero allow other businesses and organisations to run better. This reminds me of how Australian tech success story Atlassian has greatly assisted me in running my office.

We saw through the pandemic that nobody supports Victorian businesses like we do. Whilst the Liberal federal government was happy to play politics, allowing JobKeeper to be rorted and then ending it prematurely, we have been consistent in doing everything we can to support Victorian businesses and Victorian workers. Regardless of this, it would be a pleasure to host the minister at this fantastic business headquartered in Hawthorn. We all know that only a Labor government can support our businesses and that only a Labor government can continue to deliver record low unemployment in our great state. These businesses matter. They allow Victorians to access cheap useful goods while providing skilled, stable, secure jobs. I am looking forward to the minister's visit.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (19:14): (6372) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister outline to me how the government intends to further encourage community members who are still reluctant to receive a third and even a fourth COVID-19 vaccination to get that extra protection. Today's figures from the Victorian chief health officer show we had almost 12 000 new cases reported with 16 deaths of Victorians in their 70s, 80s and 90s.

There are almost 70 000 active cases currently in the state. There are 545 cases in our hospitals, more than the number of public hospital beds at some of our largest hospitals. There have been 3268 lives lost, with by far the majority in the last five months. While we are almost at 70 per cent triple vaccination rates across the state, I nevertheless am concerned that it seems to be taking a long time to reach that 95 per cent rate for third doses. I am concerned the community is not receiving a strong health message to help them understand that two doses is not providing sufficient immunity against the current strain of COVID.

In the Shepparton local government area we are at almost 69 per cent of third doses, but in the latest release of vaccination figures for our First Nations people we are seeing a lower rate of almost 55 per cent with more than two doses. There are many vulnerable groups in our community, and of course regional areas are known to have an ageing population. There are those with disabilities who are also vulnerable. I am worried for our First Nations people, who have less vaccination coverage than others, and also that there is a general lack of awareness in our community regarding that need for a third dose. I believe more needs to be done to promote the public health benefits of vaccination on an ongoing basis and that the continuing rate of infection, serious illness and death is because of a lack of awareness across the community. The pressures on our hospital system are enormous, and the health system is in crisis. The virus is rampant in our community, and it is causing these impacts. We see whole school levels at some of our major schools being sent home, because there are not enough teachers to look after them.

We must protect the vulnerable and cannot maintain the position that this pandemic should be treated as if it is over. Steps still need to be taken to inform the public broadly. It is time the Victorian chief health officer steps up to the camera once more to advise Victorians of the current health risks, including long COVID, of the importance of having those third and fourth vaccinations and about access to antiviral medications.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE CHELSEA UNIT

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:17): (6373) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the expected completion of the redevelopment of Chelsea SES unit in Chelsea Heights. Our SES unit do an incredible job of servicing our local community, with dozens of volunteers each and every year servicing our communities in times of flood or accident, and there are a range of other emergency services they support as well. They are an incredible bunch.

Recently we got to celebrate Chelsea SES and all of our SES volunteers as part of Wear Orange Wednesday (WOW). It was a particularly special occasion this year because a very special person in our local community, Kimba Wall, was the ambassador. Kimba has been a wonderful representative in our community for many years. Kimba has been the heart and soul of Chelsea SES along with those volunteers. But this time she became a serving turnout member and is the first serving turnout member that we know of with Down syndrome. She is an inspiration to so many in our community, and if anyone saw those press conferences on Sunday night, she dominated. She was absolutely outstanding; she was beaming. The emergency management commissioner, Andrew Crisp, also was just so proud, but the most proud people were Phil and Maryann Wall, Kimba's parents, who were as proud as punch to see their daughter become a turnout member of the SES. Of course she has been a supportive member for a long time, but to do turnout and be part of that training was really special. So she was ambassador of Wear Orange Wednesday. You could not turn on a TV channel during the news

programs and not see Kimba dominating and in action, and we are so very proud of her. It is one snapshot of a story of many volunteers in our community who give so much.

We are so proud to be part of the \$7 million redevelopment of their new premises, which will support them in Chelsea Heights, there on Ashley Park Drive. It was a long journey to get to that point. We made the commitment some years ago, and we have finally got to the point of construction being underway. Lloyd construction are doing that work on the edge of the Mordialloc Freeway. It is a great position there, and it will set them up for the future. It could also be a regional headquarters in times of need when we have any sort of regionalised event—flooding or emergency events. So I place on record my deep appreciation for the Chelsea SES unit and all the work that they do—the hundreds of calls that they respond to and the support and work that they do with our other emergency services partners and agencies. It was a great chance and opportunity to celebrate them recently. I give a massive shout-out to Kimba Wall—you are an absolute superstar. We love your work, and as ambassador for WOW Day this year we thank you for leading that charge, and we wish everyone at the SES all the very best.

TIMBER INDUSTRY PROTESTS

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (19:20): (6374) I have an issue for the Minister for Agriculture, and the action I seek is that she take action to retrieve the unpaid court costs of MyEnvironment. Last week in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the minister inferred that because MyEnvironment did not have the capacity to pay they should not be pursued. In effect the minister was saying that if you cannot pay your bills, you do not have to abide by the law. This is a disgrace and a kick in the guts to the hardworking taxpayers of Victoria, and it is clearly sending the wrong message. The directors of MyEnvironment at the time of the court decision were Sarah Rees and Steve Meacher, both of them serial litigants and feral green activists whose sole aim is to kill off the native timber industry in Victoria. On behalf of the Victorian taxpayer, Rees and Meacher should be pursued individually. Why should they be allowed to operate outside the law?

More recently, Environment East Gippsland were caught out and then admitted diverting \$336 000 into a trust fund three weeks before commencing legal action against VicForests. The trustees of the subfund are Environment East Gippsland coordinator Jill Redwood, the group's treasurer Trevor Coon and Victorian Greens party founder Linda Parlane. The court, by turning a blind eye to their actions, has conceded that it is okay to act outside the law.

VicForests has won every court case they have been subjected to and had to fund their own costs every time. Worse still, in one case, having won the case the judge still awarded all costs against VicForests. VicForests won its appeal against Friends of Leadbeater's Possum, with the full court of the Federal Court agreeing that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 did not apply to VicForests operations and that Justice Mortimer did not have jurisdiction to hear the matter. How come VicForests had costs awarded against them by the full Federal Court when costs are not ordinarily ordered against a successful party? This corrupt government and the judiciary are running a protection racket for feral green activists who continually act outside the law, and the taxpayer is always wearing the costs.

Recently we had the bizarre action taken in the Wombat forest by feral green protesters and also the Victorian National Parks Association, who have auspiced a campaign to try and stop the salvage harvesting of windblown trees. The salvage operation is being conducted by VicForests at the request of the traditional owners of the Dja Dja Wurrung group and their CEO, Rodney Carter. VicForests will assist with recovery work to restore country in disturbed areas of the forest and contribute to reducing fuel loads and reducing the fire risk to communities. One has to ask the question: are those opposed to the restoration of country, the VNPA and their feral green protesters, actually racist? The minister must step in and send a clear message to feral activists that she will not stand for the taxpayer continually paying the bill for serial litigants who continue to act outside the law.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before I call the member for Broadmeadows, it is unfortunate that the member for Narracan reflected on the judiciary. It is not acceptable in the house.

FAWKNER SCHOOLS FUNDING

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (19:23): (6375) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Education. The action I seek is more funding for schools in Fawkner. Under the Bracks-Brumby governments the state district of Broadmeadows received funding as part of the landmark school regeneration project. Hume Central Secondary College became a light-on-the-hill school in Broadmeadows. This is what I want to achieve for Fawkner, which was outside the state district of Broadmeadows at that time.

Fawkner is one of the most disadvantaged areas of Victoria, and John Fawkner College is anticipating that its social and economic circumstances will be reflected in the state government's needs-based funding. Fawkner is home to a growing multicultural community where lifelong learning for skills and jobs is vital. John Fawkner College is also a significant government school with a committed leadership team. John Fawkner College received \$50 000 to create a master plan for the school in the 2020–21 state budget, as the Andrews government continues to build the Education State. Recent investments in Fawkner include \$7.8 million for Fawkner Primary School and the rollout of the School Shade Sails Fund at John Fawkner College.

Other local investments in the state budget 2022–23 include more than \$17 million for Broadmeadows Special Developmental School, \$8.52 million for Hume Valley School, almost \$500 000 for Belle Vue Park Primary School and another almost \$500 000 for Roxburgh College. An extra \$895 000 in funding will be provided to continue a program to engage students in the Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement's Project REAL, which provides a flexible learning option for local students with significant behavioural complexity. All investments deliver high value and better opportunities in life where they are needed most and are gratefully appreciated by the people of the state district of Broadmeadows.

RESPONSES

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (19:25): The following members have raised matters for action from ministers: the member for South-West Coast to the Minister for Health; the member for Clarinda to the Minister for Education; the member for Gippsland East to the Minister for Health; the member for Northcote to the Minister for Training and Skills; the member for Polwarth to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change; the member for Hawthorn to the Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy and Minister for Employment, I think he indicated; the member for Shepparton to the Minister for Health; the member for Mordialloc to the Minister for Emergency Services; the member for Narracan to the Minister for Agriculture; and the member for Broadmeadows to the Minister for Education. I will ensure that those matters are passed on for action from those ministers at the conclusion of this evening's adjournment debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.27 pm.