

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 25 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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Wednesday, 25 May 2022

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms JM Edwards) took the chair at 9.33 am and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:33): 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.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:34): General business notice of motion 1 to 6 and 40 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 pm today.

Petitions

Following petitions presented to house by Clerk:

POOWONG PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

The petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that the township of Poowong and surrounds has been unsuccessful in seeking access to public transport options to Melbourne.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on the State Government to provide services that stop at Poowong or at the very least initiate a trial to gauge the level of demand.

By Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (357 signatures).

LEONGATHA ROAD SAFETY

The Petition of certain citizens of the State of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the dangerous and confusing state of the main South Gippsland Highway intersection in Leongatha.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly calls on the Andrew Labor Government to fund design and construction of stage two of the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route as soon as possible.

By Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (91 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions be considered next day on motion of Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South).

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

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

Gambling Regulation Act 2003—Report of Independent Review Panel—Keno Licensing Project—Ordered to be published

Land Tax Act 2005—Report 1 July to 31 December 2021 of Land Tax Absentee Owner Surcharge Exemptions under s 3BB

Planning and Environment Act 1987—Notice of approval of an amendment to the Golden Plains Planning Scheme—C100

Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—Documents under s 165AQ on the making of pandemic orders implemented on:

12 April 2022

22 April 2022.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Council's agreement

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:36): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 without amendment.

Members statements

PAULINE SMITH

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (09:36): Today I rise with sadness to speak about Pauline Smith, a Stawell paramedic killed in a head-on collision on the Western Highway on Friday. Pauline dedicated her life to the service of the community. A police officer for many years, in recent years Pauline retrained as a paramedic. It was while coming home from a shift that the accident occurred. Pauline also volunteered her time to Phoenix Animal Rescue Horsham and was an advocate for animal welfare. Ms Smith leaves behind her husband, Stephen, and three children. I extend my condolences to them. I want to express my solidarity with the Ararat SES, the Stawell SES, the Great Western CFA, the Stawell CFA, the Stawell ambulance service, the Ararat ambulance service, the Ararat police and the Stawell police. Attending any fatal collision is traumatic for first responders. When the victim is a colleague and friend, this trauma is amplified many times. One of those first responders called my office on Friday in distress. His message was: how many more? And I also ask: how many more fatalities must my community endure on this unsafe road? The government and the opposition are united in supporting the duplication of the Western Highway to Stawell, and once again I call on the government to act.

AIRPORT WEST TENNIS CLUB

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:37): I rise to acknowledge the Airport West Tennis Club and their strong advocacy over the past 50 years in my local community. I was very honoured to announce \$650 000 recently to build a new pavilion. The club was built more than 50 years ago, with humble beginnings in Ratcliffe hall in Airport West to where it is today in Olive Grove. It is a very important club. In fact my dad did the wiring there when it first began—it is that old. While the wiring stayed, the rest of it has certainly fallen down. I want to acknowledge president Trevor Pepper; our own Robert McDonald, the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; and club legend Lorraine Stainer. In particular I want to acknowledge the women of the club and the life members: Jenny Walmsley, Lorraine Stainer, Merilee Stainer, Margaret Bond, Elaine Boyce, Ann Bellman, Zelda Astell, Margaret Daisley, Alma Morrison and Allen David. It is a really important club, and the women over more than 50 years have been the glue. Whether it has been at the executive level or the club level, they have held this club together through thick and thin, and the new pavilion is a credit to them and all that have been there. In particular I also want to acknowledge the Minister for Community Sport. She has visited the club twice in 12 months, which I think is an outstanding effort for any minister. But I am very pleased to see that the Airport West Tennis Club will get those 21st-century facilities that it deserves, and it will be a powerhouse not only in the local community but on the court for the next 50 years as well.

GIPPSLAND EAST ELECTORATE BUSHFIRE RECOVERY INITIATIVES

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (09:39): I wish to raise a couple of issues in my local community that need addressing that I will be lodging questions on notice about today. The first relates to the replacement of the Cape Conran cabins that were burned in the 2019–20 bushfires, and this is on behalf

of the members of the Orbost and Marlo community. Immediately after the fires there were five of those cabins that survived. The first of the 11 replacement cabins has turned up at Cape Conran, which is good news—finally, after 2½ years. But there are now rumours circling about that of the five remaining cabins that the community was told would be retained, four of them are going to be bulldozed and removed. If those plans have indeed changed, I call on the minister to please inform the community, because the expectation there is that those five cabins will all be retained.

BRUTHEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr T BULL: The second point I want to raise is around the Bruthen Primary School, and this is on behalf of parents of students at that school. There are speed restriction signs at that school, but they are not being adhered to, if you like, by motorists who are travelling through doing far in excess of the 40-kilometre speed limit. The school council has made a previous approach to have the signage upgraded so it is more prominent and can be easily seen. This has been rejected. But something needs to happen before we have an accident there, and I call on the minister to please address this issue and upgrade the signage.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (09:40): Congratulations to my federal Labor colleagues who share representation in my electorate of Macedon. To Catherine King in Ballarat, Lisa Chesters in Bendigo, Rob Mitchell in McEwen and newly elected Sam Rae in the newly formed electorate of Hawke, I am thrilled to continue our great friendships and to continue working with each of you, now as government MPs, in the best interests of the communities we represent.

With the election of an Albanese Labor government I believe we can look forward to a fairer and better future for all Australians. As the Prime Minister has already said, he wants to govern for all Australians, to take all Australians with him as the nation works together to take real action on the real and pressing challenge of climate change. Of course you will not get any argument on that here in Victoria, the renewable energy powerhouse. Home of legislated emissions reduction targets, we know that action on climate change can grow jobs and opportunities and drive down prices. Now, let us get the nation moving.

My hopes for my community include that the vicious attacks on our LGBTIQ Australians will stop as we move towards a more equal future that respects and cares for all Australians regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. Further, I know our government looks forward to working with an Albanese government to do more to end violence against women and to support all women to achieve their aspirations for themselves and their families. I look forward also to the Albanese government leading work on the implementation of makarrata, the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

PAULINE SMITH

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (09:42): I join my colleague and friend from Ripon in sending condolences for Pauline Smith, of former police number 31648, and we send condolences to her family, her husband, Stephen, and her three children as well as all of the first responders who attended the accident and obviously knew Pauline well—that is, the CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, all the paramedics and the SES who attended the scene. Our thoughts are with them for attending such a scene of someone that they all knew and loved from their community.

I worked with Pauline in the Dandenong police station for a few years back in the day, and our first job ever, going out together, was to the body of someone who had committed suicide. That is one of the things in Victoria Police you never forget. I remember saying I had never been to a scene where there was a body when I went out with Pauline, and she guided me and worked with me to go through that. Unfortunately that week we had seven in seven days, which was a very tough week, but I could not think of a better person to share it with than Pauline, who guided me, assisted me and helped me along the way. We also broke a rule or two. We were not to get overtime one night when we were in

court in Melbourne—I can say it now because she definitely cannot get in trouble for it—and we drove down the side of the Monash with our lights going just so we could get back in time for the 5 o'clock drinks in Dandenong. Pauline will be dearly missed. She was a fantastic person, police officer and paramedic and someone that was very special to me in my career in Victoria Police. Condolences to Pauline's family.

SOUTH BARWON ELECTORATE WETLANDS

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (09:43): The Victorian government is asking the Geelong and Surf Coast communities if they would like to see Ramsar status considered for additional wetland areas along our fantastic coastlines. Ramsar wetlands are sites that are recognised under the Ramsar convention as being internationally significant in terms of flora, fauna, ecology or hydrology. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is currently seeking community members' views on extending the boundary of the existing Port Phillip western shoreline and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar sites. The proposed areas for addition are the Karaaf wetlands and parts of Lake Connewarre Reserve that are currently not part of the Ramsar site. I believe that both sites are fantastic candidates for expansion under the Ramsar listing and deserve wise management guidelines and attention provided under the Ramsar convention. On my website I have an example submission that reflects my views on this, and I ask residents to please feel free to borrow my submission and adopt it for their submissions. Ramsar listings are significant, and I believe that the wetlands around the Karaaf wetlands and of course Lake Connewarre deserve these additional recognitions.

THORNTON-EILDON DISTRICT FOOTBALL AND NETBALL CLUB

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (09:45): The Thornton-Eildon District Football and Netball Club has had its ups and downs in recent times and this year are only fielding a women's football team. Not to be disheartened, though, the team is showing remarkable spirit, and their enthusiasm is infectious. Their Ladies Day fundraising event was a ripper. It was very well supported by women locally, and a stellar job by the organisers saw the day—and, I suspect, deep into the night—go off swimmingly. Live music, games, loads of great food and local prizes were up for grabs. Many people and businesses donated vouchers, hampers and giveaways, with all funds going towards the club and the Alice Sloan Trust, which supports young women to grow and develop through outdoor education. The event followed their first win of the season after suffering a couple of very hefty losses. The club spirit was high. I was most taken by one of the young members, Tahnee Heard, who is still at school. She told me that the club was her favourite place. This highlights the difference a good club environment can make to somebody's life. Well done to Jess Slapp, Heather Mason and the committee for a stellar job.

MIDDLE KINGLAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms McLEISH: Middle Kinglake Primary School are to be commended for their student-led Anzac service. It was so professionally run. The grades 4, 5 and 6 students spoke so well, and it was inspiring to see how involved and engaged the kids were with the service. I really liked the thank-you letters, drawings and photos I received from the school students.

YEA HIGH SCHOOL

Ms McLEISH: Teachers should never be underestimated or undervalued, and I was impressed to see the teachers at Yea High School excel in athletics. Congratulations to Jacqueline Dalton, Paris Foster, Rowan Treloar and Will Schwab, who were the winners in the students versus teachers race on athletics day.

VOICES OF CASEY

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (09:47): I recently had the pleasure of attending Voices of Casey's performance at Our Lady of Help Christians Parish in Narre Warren. Voices of Casey is a non-audition community choir that provides a place for people to collaborate and join together in their love of music, community and some very sweet vocal harmonies. The choir welcomes people from

diverse backgrounds and encourages self-confidence and self-belief, with many choir members who are in their later years of life. The theme of this particular performance was 'Colours of life', a varied and beautiful program referring to and drawing inspiration from the spectrum of colours. A creative endeavour, the choir celebrates the joy of music that they know also benefits their mental health and wellbeing. My thanks go to Paulien George, who established the choir and manages it and is a local stalwart and contributor to our community. Her strong work ethic and can-do attitude is appreciated by all of us around her. Voices of Casey, like so many other community groups, kept people together through the pandemic virtually, and it is great to see them back performing live to audiences. I thank the choir for their warm welcome and terrific performance and look forward to seeing them performing again in the future.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr MAAS: I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Cassandra Fernando and Carina Garland, the new Labor federal members for Holt and Chisholm. They are both strong women with great family migration stories and strong connections to their communities, and they will be really great advocates.

WILD HORSE CONTROL

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (09:48): Parks Victoria will use snipers under the cover of dark, thermal imaging and sound moderators to shoot brumbies en masse near Falls Creek. It is a fanatical and ideologically driven crusade that has been years in the making, where all other options are all but ignored. The shooters will carry two rifles. A headshot is preferred, with the objective of shooting whole mobs rather than picking off individuals. If you shoot a mare with a foal, the contract demands you track the foal down and shoot it through the head. Shooters are warned about leaving dead horses near roadways or walking tracks. You do not want the public to be seeing what is actually going on in our Crown reserve.

It has been argued that 60 horses are environmental terrorists, while this government ignores the millions of deer, pigs, cats and dogs destroying our Crown reserve. But you will not release last year's survey of horses because there are bugger-all horses up there. A quarter of a million signatures opposed to all of this are on a petition with the minister, and an independent poll had 91 per cent of people saying no to shooting. Now, what did your Animal Justice Party patsy over in the other place do when he signed up to the dirty little deal he has made? What have you done to keep his mouth shut? There are options—traditional methods of roping, running, mustering and rehoming—but they are all deemed inhumane, shooting not so much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. Can I remind members about the use of unparliamentary language.

ANZAC DAY

Ms WARD (Eltham) (09:50): Again, thousands from our community stood in silent witness at the Eltham Anzac Day dawn service to remember and commemorate the sacrifices made by those who have served as defence personnel. It was the first Anzac Day in recent times we have all been able to share in person. I would like to acknowledge everybody who volunteered their time to make the day so special. Thank you to the students from local schools who woke up very early and stood in the cold to lay a wreath on behalf of their school, including several students who shared their talents with us: Emma Ludwick from Eltham College; the Suara choir from Eltham College; and Kiara You, Maddie McVeigh, Jess Butterworth and Claudia Dixon from Catholic Ladies College.

Thank you to Corporal Madeline Winnett for her service. She spoke honestly about her experience as one of the first women to join the Royal Australian Infantry Corps in the ADF and of her time helping to evacuate people from Kabul as part of the non-combatant evacuation operation in 2021. I would like to take the chance to thank guard commander Corporal Simon Marshall; the president of the Montmorency Eltham RSL, Glen Ferrarotto; the president of the Rotary Club of Eltham, Sally Squires;

and all of their support teams for all of their work in ensuring our Anzac Day commemorations in both Montmorency and Eltham are so special. Lest we forget.

DIAMOND CREEK MEN'S SHED

Ms WARD: Men's sheds are amazing places that provide the community with not just a place to make something but a place to connect and support one another. They are places that provide mental health support, friendship and a sense of community, such as the Diamond Creek Men's Shed, which has held its 10th birthday celebrations. This event not only celebrated what had been achieved over this time by all involved but also reflected on the important role our men's sheds play. Added to that we had the pleasure of being entertained by their own band, OC/DC. The celebrations also acknowledged the efforts and contributions of the following with life membership: Barry Backman, Gary Burke, Ross Isaks, Norm Osborne, Ken Park and Brian Sedgman. It is the contribution of these members that has helped to build the wonderful men's shed in Diamond Creek, and our community is incredibly enriched by the amazing work that they do for us.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE WHITEHORSE UNIT

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (09:51): I was delighted to attend the Whitehorse State Emergency Service presentation night recently, with presentations being made to members for service awards, including long service. One member, David Rowlands, received an award for an amazing 25 years of service. Former unit controller Anthony Tregenza was awarded the VICSES life membership award in recognition of his outstanding service over many years. I congratulate all the award recipients and thank all the Whitehorse SES members for their wonderful volunteer service to our local community and beyond. We also make a special note of all the family members who share their related SES member with the broader community at any time of the day and night and thank them also for their sacrifices.

HOLY SAVIOUR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr ANGUS: I recently had the great pleasure of visiting Holy Saviour Primary School in Vermont South to catch up with principal Steve Evans. I was pleased to hear from Steve about the challenges being faced by the school as well as all about the exciting plans and opportunities for the future of this vibrant local school. The school captains, Isabella and Josh, kindly took me on a school tour, and I was able to drop into many of the classrooms and see the school in action. My thanks go to principal Steve, Isabella, Josh and the school community for having me along.

WEEDEN HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr ANGUS: Last evening I was pleased to attend the open night at Weeden Heights Primary School in Vermont South. It was great to catch up with many members of the school community and see the school on display, including various musical performances. Well done to all the staff, students and the broader school community on organising this terrific event.

FOREST HILL ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr ANGUS: The recent state budget was again a great disappointment for residents of the Forest Hill district, with schools and clubs that are desperate for infrastructure funding being once again ignored and schools that have not asked for any funds receiving funds. It shows just how political this government is.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (09:53): Like so many of us here in this chamber I spent the weekend just gone working very hard on the booths to help elect an Albanese Labor government. It was absolutely fantastic to be out and about in my local community, talking to voters—voters who were very enthusiastic for change and wanted to see a Labor government elected after nine long years of

having the Libs in power. I am very pleased to say that they got their wish, with the Morrison government being emphatically defeated by all sides of the political spectrum.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate my federal colleagues Joanne Ryan and Tim Watts on being re-elected to serve our community in Lalor and Gellibrand respectively. I look forward to continuing to work together for Wyndham. I also want to congratulate my dear friend Daniel Mulino, member for Fraser, on his re-election and give a very big shout-out to the wonderful Jana Stewart, who will be representing Labor in the Senate.

For my community in Wyndham this election was a game changer. We have been short-changed for nine long years by the federal Liberal government, who have had no vision whatsoever for Melbourne's west and no plan for the many, many challenges that we face in our growing community. I am looking forward to the Albanese Labor government delivering the things we need, like the \$57 million Wyndham WestLink, finally connecting Tarneit to Wyndham Vale; a Medicare urgent care clinic for Wyndham; funding to help Mossfiel Primary School and Tarneit Senior College; and a childcare plan to benefit thousands of families in my community. With Labor in government in Canberra, the horizons for us in the west have never looked better.

PROFESSOR DAVID LINDENMAYER

Dr READ (Brunswick) (09:54): About six weeks ago in this place the member for Narracan accused Professor David Lindenmayer of quoting his own work in questionable peer-reviewed papers and of being a scientific fraud. There is nothing wrong with members of Parliament disagreeing with people who are better trained and qualified than we are, especially when there are experts on opposing sides of a debate, but it is wrong to accuse someone of scientific fraud when there is no evidence that this has occurred. The member for Narracan may not know what scientific fraud is nor how seriously it is taken within the scientific community. He therefore may not know that people making such an accusation must send evidence of data manipulation to the journal in which it was published. This is followed by an investigation and often a retraction by the journal. The member for Narracan may not have published many peer-reviewed articles, so he may not be familiar with the process. He would not know that scientists working in an area are usually required to cite their own work as they build upon the knowledge in their field of research. I want to take this opportunity to express my admiration for Professor Lindenmayer. Professor Lindenmayer has published more than 872 peer-reviewed articles in national or international scientific journals. He has published 48 books and is among the most highly cited researchers in the world. The *Australian* newspaper lists him as the leading conservation and biodiversity expert in the nation. We are lucky to have him.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr EREN (Lara) (09:56): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate Anthony Albanese for becoming the 31st Prime Minister of Australia. Also I congratulate the entire federal Labor team for their hard work and dedication, which has clearly resonated with Australians. As a boy who grew up in public housing, just like Albo, it is a proud moment for everyday people when an egalitarian society decides opportunity should be for all regardless of socio-economic background. Compassion is back in federal government, where it should be.

But I particularly want to talk about my best friend, Richard Marles. Some say there are no friends in politics, but I am lucky enough to have a true friend in Richard. We have been involved in politics for a long, long time and have helped each other through the highs and lows that are associated with politics, but I must say this is the most significant political event in my life. I am so happy to see Richard become Deputy Prime Minister. This is not only good for the Geelong region, it is good for the state and indeed for the nation. Richard is a decent, honest, hardworking, articulate, diligent and committed person. I could easily go on because he is truly one of the best, but that is Richard in a nutshell. I would also like to congratulate Richard's wife, Rachel, and his children, Sam, Bella, Harvey and Georgia. Without their support none of this would be possible. Congratulations to all of you for this fantastic outcome on Richard's elevation to the role of Deputy Prime Minister. It truly could not

have happened to a more deserving person. I am very proud to be an Australian. Australians voted for decency; for that I thank them.

BAYSIDE CHARITY GOLF DAY

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:57): On Monday this week I was very pleased to practically support and fundraise for the Sandringham Hospital by participating in the Bayside charity golf day at none other than Royal Melbourne Golf Club, Australia's number one ranked golf course, located within my electoral district of Sandringham. This historic event was first organised by the Black Rock Sports Auxiliary in 1952, some 70 years ago, to raise important and much-needed funds for our local hospital. Even though I had a shocking day on the scorecard, with a handicap of only 18 afforded to me, I enjoyed connecting with my local community during the day for a very important local cause. I would like to thank and acknowledge the Black Rock Sports Auxiliary and Beaumaris Rotary as well as the Bayside charity golf day committee, chaired by the great and well-respected Graham Ludecke OAM, Bayside council and of course Royal Melbourne Golf Club for continuing the legacy of this great day and for supporting such a worthy cause that is dear to every heart in the Bayside community.

As I have spoken about many times before in this chamber, Sandringham Hospital is so much more than bricks and mortar on Bluff Road. It is the caring heart of our local community, and it deserves to be funded, it deserves to be respected and it deserves to have a positive, bright and optimistic future to serve not just the current community of Bayside but the future community of Bayside with renewed purpose and vigour. I support the Sandringham Hospital and so does my community.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (09:59): What a weekend. A huge congratulations to Peta Murphy for retaining her seat of Dunkley and achieving a swing towards her of 4.2 per cent. Congratulations to Mark Dreyfus for retaining his seat of Isaacs, and of course congratulations to our new Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese.

Over the last couple of days I have had many local constituents ask me whether I am overjoyed with the weekend's election result. Yes, I am very happy, but I also feel this great sense of relief, as though some enormous weight has been lifted off our collective shoulders. It is as though Australia can now re-emerge from the darkness—no more fear, no more division, no more prejudice or bias or deceit. Together we can now move forward into a new era: an era of opportunity and possibilities; an era of courage and conviction as we work on a national plan for renewable energy and serious action on climate change; an era of compassion and respect and fairness and kindness; an era of ideas; an era of progress across so many areas that impact us, like child care, kindergarten, infrastructure, health, education, and skills and training; an era of honesty and national integrity; an era of embracing difference and celebrating diversity and of supporting our LGBTIQ communities, our multicultural communities and of course women; and an era in which we give full recognition to the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. I am looking forward to working in collaboration with a federal Labor government to deliver for all Victorians.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (10:00): Hawthorn hosted the two weeks of pre-polling in the federal electorate of Kooyong. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet many of my constituents and receive feedback and suggestions for the future. Indeed to the often long queues I cheerily proclaimed, 'Welcome to the Labor seat of Hawthorn, where after nearly four years the sky has not fallen in and there is no sign of the dreaded gridlock, as warned by the Liberal propaganda machine'. One is used to Liberals having access to hefty campaign funds for advertising and paid assistance, including some carrying billboards, if you please, on their backs. Josh Frydenberg appeared to have well over \$2 million at his disposal. Refreshingly a second group led by Monique Ryan as independent appeared on the scene with large numbers of volunteers and corflutes. Whilst I have a real problem with

unlimited expenditure on campaigns, it was heartwarming to witness the emergence of a second group with similar material resources. I congratulate Monique Ryan and commiserate with Josh Frydenberg in second place, our own Peter Lynch in third and the other eight who put their hats in the ring. It was a great day, and I just think of that person who saw all of those teal people and said, 'Who are these people?'. Indeed.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (10:02): I also want to join my friend the member for Hawthorn in acknowledging what an outstanding day Saturday was and to congratulate Albo and the entire federal Labor team, in particular Sam Rae, the new member for Hawke, and re-elected members Bill Shorten, Maria Vamvakinou and Rob Mitchell. This was a terrific result. Finally we will see this state recognised by the federal government. It is a terrific outcome for my local community and of course people right across the country.

DIGGERS REST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr J BULL: I was also delighted last week to join the Minister for Education and staff and students at Diggers Rest Primary School for a \$13.4 million announcement to upgrade and modernise this wonderful local school. It was terrific to be there with the Minister for Education and to acknowledge the incredible work of teachers and staff and everybody that works incredibly hard.

VICTORIAN VOLUNTEER STRATEGY

Mr J BULL: I had the opportunity last week to join the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers at C Care in St Kilda to launch the Andrews Labor government's *Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022–2027*. This is a strategy backed by a \$1.3 million investment, all about re-engaging the incredible volunteers right across our state, across thousands of sectors and organisations, and those that do work within local communities. I want to acknowledge the minister's work and the work of C Care.

IDAHOBIT

Mr J BULL: I also had the opportunity last week to attend Sunbury's first pride flag-raising ceremony—terrific for the local community. I congratulate everyone involved.

PETSTOCK

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:04): I wish to congratulate PETstock on the opening of its 200th store in Ballarat, 31 years after opening the family's first retail store on La Trobe Street, Delacombe. PETstock is a 100 per cent proudly Australian family owned and operated company founded in Ballarat by the Young family and built on humble beginnings in regional Victoria. PETstock was born in 2002, 11 years after the Young family took ownership of Ballarat Produce in 1991. Brothers David and Shane Young built the business on family values and a passion for pets. The PETstock story is not only a family success story but a Ballarat success story. PETstock's colourful striped logo is easily recognisable, and the company is a household name. In 2013 PETstock celebrated the opening of their 100th store in Ballarat, an incredible achievement by any measure. Despite all the challenges of COVID, PETstock has continued its rapid growth over the last few years, opening a new store every couple of months, and within less than a decade the number of stores has now doubled. Significantly PETstock's 200th store was recently opened on Creswick Road, Ballarat. This is now the fourth PETstock in Ballarat. PETstock now employs 3000 staff across 200 sites; 68 of these are in Victoria. Ballarat is where the business started, and I am thrilled that PETstock's support centre and flagship store still operate there. Well done, PETstock.

GAYLE CORR OAM

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (10:05): I rise to pay tribute to the wonderful Gayle Corr OAM, who was remembered in a wonderful memorial service at the first post-COVID gathering at the Arthurs Creek Mechanics Institute, which was really Gayle's second home along with the Arthurs Creek and

Strathewen fire brigade. It was a beautiful event, together with the Corr family—Pat Corr, sons Nick and Chris and their partners and grandchildren. It was beautifully MCed by Peter Nankervis. Sue Aldred spoke about Gayle's contribution to the Stringybark nursery, which they together worked to establish after the terrible fires of Black Saturday. Stringybark nursery have donated the most wonderful plants, and a plaque was unveiled in memory of Gayle with the garden.

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (10:06): I am pleased to rise to speak a little on the November 2020 inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities by the Legislative Assembly's Environment and Planning Committee. There are some 72 recommendations in this report, mostly relating to community action on climate change. While most of them that I have had a quick look at seem sensible, there are some that I have some concerns with. But I want to talk more broadly about the issues of climate change and how they need to be tackled in Victoria and things that were touched on in this report but not necessarily gone into in great detail.

I appreciate the need for a transition to a cleaner energy future, but that needs to be balanced by energy reliability and affordability. We saw the people of Australia speak on the weekend in large part about issues of concern to them like climate change. Indeed there was not a clear message, if you like, in that people like my colleague the federal member for Gippsland, Darren Chester, who I think has a very moderate position on climate change but also backs our gas, coal and electricity-producing industries in Gippsland, achieved a 5 per cent swing to him on a two-party preferred basis. Whilst there was concern about the issue in some of the inner-city seats, there is a growing divide. What we need to do, I believe, is to actually bring that divide together and bring the climate change debate back to a sensible centre to stop the extremes on both ends of the debate: to stop people saying every time there is a storm that it is climate change, to stop people saying that if you support wind energy then you are a raving green leftie. We need to actually bring this back to a sensible debate.

What I want to talk about briefly today is the importance of that orderly transition, particularly in electorates like mine. Gippsland South is the home of the Longford gas plant, which produces about 90 per cent of Victoria's natural gas supplies. Of course, I am right on the edge of the Latrobe Valley's brown coal mine, which still produces a huge amount of our electricity. I mentioned the need to balance both energy reliability and affordability, and it is pertinent given this morning the front page of the *Herald Sun* has a story about the Essential Services Commission approving a rise in electricity prices of 5 per cent this year. That is a \$60 per year increase for most residential households, and this is something that I think is overlooked, particularly by those Greens members who sit to my left. They proclaim regularly the need for social justice, the need for addressing the cost of living, but they also want us to shut down brown coal tomorrow. They want us to shut down gas tomorrow. We saw that yesterday with the member for Melbourne asking the Premier to literally stop all gas exploration and cancel those permits that have already been issued.

That would be disastrous. For a couple of the reasons I will just go to the March 2022 Australian Energy Market Operator gas statement of opportunities, which highlights that there will be a need for gas for a long time. It says that in the short term we are going to have shortfalls as soon as winter next year, which will be a significant issue, and in the longer term there will be a need for gas to continue in peaking situations to deal with what they call VRE, variable renewable energy. Until we have things like Snowy 2.0 and until we have additional supplies from Tasmania, we are going to still have that issue of variable renewable energy, and we will need both baseload power production and gas peaking opportunities.

In my own electorate of Gippsland South, with the Bass Coast oil and gas deal, the oil is just about gone and the gas is getting harder and more expensive to get, but there is still a significant supply there

and a significant amount of interest in investment in exploration as well. Likewise we have the Golden Beach energy project, which will provide gas production briefly but will then be used as natural storage under the sea. That is a project that I support and that needs to be looked at.

We have great opportunities in hydrogen coming forward too, including from cold hydrogen projects. Yes, we need a transition, but we do not need government, state or federal—and a warning to the new federal government—intervening on ideological grounds to shut down industries in our regions.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Report on the 2020–21 Budget Estimates

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (10:11): I refer to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the budget estimates 2020–21 and the contribution from the Treasurer as the Minister for Economic Development on how Victoria is trying to strengthen economic performance with a range of mechanisms. I want to concentrate in this contribution on the vision, the plans, the partnerships and that we now have our best opportunity ever with the election of an Albanese government. I have long pursued—for more than decades—coordinating the three tiers of government, business and civil society to deliver greater results and better opportunities where they are needed most. The strategies have been outlined in *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope* and *Building Smarter Cities: Stronger Communities*—and I am very happy to raise that I gave this report directly to Anthony Albanese when it was done in 2018. So here is the opportunity to actually make sure that we get these things done. The need is vital and urgent. We have seen in the federal election what has happened. We have had a well organised, highly funded strategy to go after safe Liberal Party seats, and it has had a devastating effect. You have seen that there is no Liberal-held seat overlooking Sydney Harbour. That is what happened to the Sydney-centric government. You have seen the foundations of the Liberal Party right here in Victoria being wiped out, and this is the threat that is now being revealed.

I want to acknowledge that well-respected former assistant secretary of the Victorian ALP, now pollster at RedBridge Group, Kos Samaras, has identified that these results are an issue for both big parties. We are delighted that Anthony Albanese is the Prime Minister of Australia, but let us not ignore the real and present danger that is there for both major parties. If there is a well-funded, well-coordinated campaign that goes after these issues, it can have a huge impact. I will just quote what Kos Samaras says:

All it takes is for the system to be stressed, and a once large vote, in any seat, gets washed away ...

Without any stress, Labor's primary vote in many of its safe seats got cut down to mid 40 primary.

All it will take is a well resourced alternative, that is not Liberal, just like the teals, and these seats will wash away.

I am directly quoting him here:

What we have seen from the federal election is clear evidence that the movement of voters away from the two major parties continues to gain momentum ...

Labor was not immune from such an effect, with their star candidate Kristine Kenneally rejected by the people of Fowler, with voters choosing a community focused candidate ...

Now, we know that there is a threat on the horizon. We do not know how significant it will be, but we know that it is being harnessed against the Victorian Labor government. I want to really say that this is the opportunity for the Labor government to step up again and highlight the massive investments that have been made into these communities, but we must make it big picture and grassroots. You have to connect to the people who feel disconnected, whether that is real or not. It has been a strategy that has been used right through America since Richard Nixon. You saw the rise of Donald Trump; this is the subtext to all of this. I refer to yesterday's events in the Liberal Party here, where Bernie Finn was expelled. Well, Bernie Finn stood in the other place with a President Donald Trump tie on before the last US election. So the forces are at play, they are going to be harnessed, and this is an issue that we must address.

The point is that the Victorian Labor government has made huge investments, but the local people, particularly in these communities, must know how it impacts them. We are about to come to a moment where we have got the Liberal Party federally and in Victoria saying they do not want to go down this line, but we have seen it before. It was the chain reaction of race, rights and taxes—that is used to divide. The UAP are out there doing this, and this is the clear strategy from the conservative side of politics. It is brutal and cynical, and it must be addressed. So do not ignore these issues. Now is the time to take action—from the Victorian government, that is what I am calling for—and to actually make sure that the communities feel that the investments are there. There have been huge investments. But how do you make that happen? That is what I have driven with the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0 and the comeback strategy. Broadmeadows is the prototype. Here is how we can do it. This is the blueprint to win the next Victorian election.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (10:16): It is a pleasure to rise to make some comments on the inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities. We have heard a few people today talk about this report, and I am pleased to be able to report on some of the local activity that has been happening in my electorate for a number of months—not just a number of months but a number of years. I am very, very happy to say that I have been working with my community on some of these things.

My interest in this area started some time ago. In fact in the last term of government our leader gave me the portfolio of renewables as a specific portfolio that no-one had actually had before. It got me the opportunity to talk with the likes of Kane Thornton from the Clean Energy Council to learn about some of the innovative projects that were happening overseas and also happening here in Victoria about tackling climate change and looking at real solutions, like adopting renewables and renewable hubs and being able to feed that through in a whole range of different ways—community solar, community input into ensuring both off-grid and microgrid supply. There are a whole range of opportunities in this space.

One of the things that this report talks about is ensuring that communities have real engagement in tackling climate change. That is actually twofold, and one of the things that I want to specifically highlight today is education. There is a really great bit of work that is being done activating a whole range of people to become aware and to ensure that they advocate for climate change targets, and we need to do more of that. But the flip side, where I think we can do a lot more work, is around educating people in what they do every day. That is something that I am really keen to do locally, and I would like to see the government do more in terms of some of those education programs, whether it be in schools or whether it be in community organisations.

I point to a local group, the JCN, the Jewish Climate Network. Eytan Lenko, Joel Lazar and Josh Blode have been working with me around some of the things that they have been doing locally in their community. Whether it be in the schools or whether it be in the community organisations, they have been looking at programs to create a zero-emissions community project. That is where the community comes together to see what they can practically do in reducing emissions, which is a fantastic initiative. They are getting out and about and educating people about this, and we need to do more of it.

But there are very basic things that we can do even in how we tackle our recycling and our rubbish. There is still that issue where so much recycling ends up in landfill because people do not know what they are putting in their bins. In our electorate we are going to a fourth bin. It is great that we are doing a lot of the separating and the hard work at the home, but it does not make a bit of difference if people actually do not know what they are putting in those bins.

Our landfills are starting to fill. One of the policies that we have been talking about on this side is zero waste to landfill and ensuring we look at turning that kind of stuff into energy, which is another really innovative way of being able to tackle the issues around not being able to rely on coal-fired power

stations but to transition into other fuels and to other energies. So we need practical solutions and we need to advocate for those practical solutions, and I am certainly a strong believer in that.

Can I also give a big shout-out to PECAN, the Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network. Now, I have been working with PECAN for just on four years now on the Green Line project. This is creating a linear park around the likes of Balaclava and St Kilda, where you have got areas where you do not have the opportunity to do planting and you do not have the opportunity to be able to have the local community take more responsibility and pride in those areas at the moment. What we need the government to do is release some of that land and give the community access to that land, whether it be done through Metro or done through VicTrack, to ensure they can actually do some planting and ensure that they can use the land that at the moment is unsafe, unsightly and most importantly not able to be treasured, and harness the environmental opportunity around it. These are great local community groups taking real action on climate change. We need more education around this. We certainly need to get more people on board, and we need practical solutions like New South Wales have done and like Tasmania have done to ensure we lead the nation when it comes to climate change.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Commonwealth Support for Victoria

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:21): I am very pleased to again speak on the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee report on the inquiry into commonwealth support for Victoria. We considered various issues associated with the inadequacy of commonwealth support for Victoria, including but not limited to Victoria's share of federal GST funding and the expiration of the no-worse-off GST guarantee. I know previously, Acting Speaker Connolly, you have been a member of the committee and you know what a great committee it is. Both sides of the chamber worked very effectively, and it was terrific to work with our chair, the member for Lara; our deputy chair, the member for Narracan; the member for Euroa; the member for Ferntree Gully; the member for Northcote; and the member for Geelong—all members who are proud Victorians who recognise we are being ripped off by these changes that were put in place by the federal coalition government to suck up to Western Australians to get their votes at an election. That is what this GST reform was about. It was about trying to win over WA votes so they could win them in a federal election. Well, I am very happy to say that the people of Western Australia will not be bought. They were not bought on Saturday night even though they are going to get billions and billions of dollars—

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am a bit confused about which committee report the member is referring to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Connolly): The member is referring to the inquiry into commonwealth support for Victoria. There is no point of order.

Ms ADDISON: Thank you. I will continue talking about how the commonwealth is ripping off Victoria with the expiration of the no-worse-off guarantee. What we know is that from our inquiry there were 10 findings and seven recommendations, and the evidence that was received by the committee shows that the new GST distribution arrangements pose a significant risk to Victoria's finances if the no-worse-off guarantee expires and the arrangements remain unchanged. These GST reforms need to be reversed, and it is in every Victorian's interest. Previously I have raised concern that the loss of revenue will be significant, with the flow-on for future Victorian governments to cut public servants, impose new taxes and incur more debt. What this loss of funding could mean is funding for 9000 teachers gone, 9200 police gone and more than 10 000 nurses gone—all because the commonwealth government wanted to suck up to Western Australia. What we have done with our findings is we have looked at a number of issues about how the GST distribution reforms harm our state as well as how the commonwealth could support Victoria better, and we came up with a number of recommendations about how the commonwealth could be supporting us better. I really want to focus on the recommendations of our committee, of which there were seven. Recommendation 1 says that the Victorian government should:

... work with other adversely affected states and territories—
and, let me say, that is every state and territory except WA—

to advocate that the Australian Government revert to the former equalisation arrangements for GST revenue distribution.

I think what we want to do is we want go back to what we used to have. Recommendation 2:

That the Victorian Government work with other adversely affected states and territories to advocate that the ... no-worse-off guarantee beyond 2026–27 until the inequity created by the new equalisation ... is addressed.

This is really important. Recommendation 3 also says that we work with all the other states and territories adversely affected:

... to advocate that the legislated Productivity Commission review, or another independent review, of the new equalisation arrangements be conducted as soon as possible with input from the states on the review's terms of reference.

I know that many, many Victorians have a lot of ideas about how a commonwealth government could better support Victoria, and our committee, after hearing evidence from experts—economic experts across the country—came up with a number of recommendations about how the federal government could support Victoria. Recommendation 4 was that the Victorian government should:

... drive collaboration between itself, the Australian Government, Infrastructure Victoria and Infrastructure Australia to develop common priorities for infrastructure investment in Victoria based on evidence indicating which projects will deliver the highest net ... benefits.

This is a good recommendation for Victoria and all Victorians.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Report on the 2020–21 Financial and Performance Outcomes

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (10:26): I am pleased to rise this morning to make a contribution in relation to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's *Report on the 2021–22 Financial and Performance Outcomes*. I note that this report was tabled in this place in April this year, and it contains 134 findings and 36 recommendations. I particularly wanted to focus my contribution today on chapter 2 of the report, which is entitled 'Financial and economic performance'. This particular chapter in my view gives a very good summary position of where we are in the state of Victoria at this point in time.

I want to turn subpoint 2.2.1, which deals with the revenue, and that talks about the fact—it is there for all Victorians to see—that the total revenue has gone up by 8.9 per cent and is now at record levels. We can see that from that and over the page in figure 2.1, which breaks down the split of the record taxation revenue that is coming in here in the state of Victoria. And we can see just from these particular numbers that stamp duty is up by 4.6 per cent, payroll tax is up by 6.5 per cent and other taxes are up similarly as well—as well as obviously grants revenue is up as well. That is showing us what we have been saying and what all Victorians have known for a very long time—that we are living at the highest taxing time in Victoria's history under this particular government.

If we turn over to page 12 of the report, subpoint 2.2.2 deals with the expenses, and again we can see there that the total expenses are 17.1 per cent higher than the previous year. That says to me and should say to all Victorians that this government has got absolutely no control over the expenditure side of its financial statements. And that is a great concern because in these difficult economic times we want a government that is restrained, that is managing these matters well, but rather what we are seeing is one that is basically running at a level that is clearly not sustainable. In particular it notes on that page that employee expenses accounted for 34 per cent of the total expenses, with \$30 billion in 2020–21, which was 10.4 per cent higher than in 2019–20. So right there we can see that that is an expense that is running completely out of control—10.4 per cent higher than the previous year, despite the fact that there obviously were challenges and there were additional personnel involved. But we can see and the committee notes that at 30 June 2020 the Victorian public service workforce consisted of approximately

270 000 full-time equivalent employees, and that excludes COVID Quarantine Victoria. That is an extraordinary situation—and particularly so when we see that as a result of those additional people more people are getting paid more and we are getting less services.

We have currently got various crises here in the state of Victoria, not the least of which are the ambulance crisis, the 000 crisis and the whole hospital and health sector crisis. What that tells you is that we are not getting a good return on investment, so there are clearly some structural problems. There are clearly some fundamental problems that this government has presided over, bearing in mind that it has been in office almost eight years and clearly with the Premier in charge for that time, and of course for three years before that he was the Minister for Health, so he has had his hands on the levers in the health sector for that time and we are seeing appalling results for the community here in Victoria.

Figure 2.2 on page 13 shows in a graphical form the matter that I have just been referring to. We can see there very clearly the dramatic increase in employee expenses, which is something, as I said, that should be of significant concern to all Victorians. Paragraph 2.2.3 talks about the net result and says that the 2020–21 financial result net operating balance was a deficit of \$14.6 billion, compared to a deficit of \$6.5 billion in the preceding year. So we can see there that we have got things deteriorating significantly from the bottom-line position as well, and that is a result of the out-of-control expenditure that I just mentioned. But also it is despite the record levels of taxation, so we can see that we have got a government that is not managing the finances of the state very well, and that has now become clearly apparent in the recent budget papers. I will have more to say on that at another time, but I commend the report to members. It is very informative and contains some very sobering financial data, but it should be read by all.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (10:32): It is extraordinary to be lectured on health policy by Mr Ivermectin over here, but I rise today to make a contribution on the Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations. I would like to first acknowledge my colleagues on the committee, many of whom worked tirelessly to ensure a high-quality inquiry and subsequent report. That committee was chaired by you, Acting Speaker Connolly, and the members for Yan Yean and Box Hill are to be commended for their outstanding work. I thank too the member for Mornington for doing all of the heavy lifting for the coalition solo, but with his help and sound advocacy we have produced a bipartisan report on this important public policy area. I would also like to thank the stakeholders who contributed to the inquiry process, including the local councils, residents and ratepayer organisations, friends of parks groups, environmental groups, development and planning organisations, universities, healthcare peak bodies, water corporations, government and state authorities, and members of the community who participated in the public hearings or made a submission. This work is frequently unheralded, but it is challenging and time-consuming work and deserves to be acknowledged. Citizen and stakeholder engagement directly with Parliament is a very important part of our democratic system, and it should be valued and it should be encouraged. So to all of those who participated in this inquiry directly or indirectly, I say thank you.

Victoria's population is expanding. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, DELWP, provided population projections in its submission to the inquiry which indicate that overall the population of regional Victoria is expected to grow by 47 per cent by 2056, while the population of Melbourne is expected to grow by 84 per cent and Geelong 86 per cent. For Melbourne that means we are looking at a jump from about 5 million—it was 4.9 in 2019—to 9 million in 2056, 9 million people.

We know that growing populations bring many challenges, and these are the kinds of challenges best faced by a Labor government. The Andrews Labor government is already preparing Victoria for this growth by creating jobs and building for our future. We are building schools, hospitals, housing and vital transport infrastructure. Indeed this year's budget invests \$2 billion to build new hospitals and deliver upgrades to health services right across every corner of the state. We are also building 100 new

schools and upgrading 36 special schools, and that means that we will have delivered a significant, a major, upgrade to every single special school in the state of Victoria since we came to government. I want to thank the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, who is at the table, for his outstanding work in delivering that very important round of upgrades. The Andrews Labor government has already committed \$5.3 billion to the Big Housing Build, which will deliver 12 000 or perhaps 14 000 new homes for Victorians—14 000 homes. The Suburban Rail Loop is creating 8000 jobs for Victorians and delivering a 90-kilometre rail link, which will link every single major rail line, from the Frankston line all the way around to the Werribee line, via the Melbourne Airport.

Labor governments do not just meet the challenge of population growth. We rise to the opportunity. The future of Victoria's environmental infrastructure is another opportunity that we will invest in. To clarify, when we talk about environmental infrastructure, we mean public open spaces such as parks, reserves, sporting fields, public forests and bushland, botanic gardens and wildlife corridors as well as beaches, rivers and lakes. Effective long-term planning will be vital to ensuring we are adequately providing new open space for communities as well as protecting and innovating the use of existing spaces. A good example is the green decking that we installed above the rail trench of the new Union station. Integrating the provision of new green open space into transport infrastructure projects, as the Level Crossing Removal Project has done so well, is one way the Andrews government is ensuring that we are futureproofing our suburbs.

Having accessible and open green spaces in and around our suburbs is not only important for our community's health, be it physical or mental, but these spaces also provide the grounds for important biodiversity within Victoria's ecosystems. Particularly, our report highlights that green space reduces wind speeds and improves air quality in urban areas, which are impacts that had near universal acknowledgement from stakeholders as being positive. And the creation of more green spaces is particularly crucial, as you know, Acting Speaker Connolly, within the suburbs west of the CBD, where a lack of urban canopy has seen a 3-degree difference in temperatures compared to those in the traditionally leafy eastern part of Melbourne. It is a terrific report. I thank you for your contribution to it, Acting Speaker, and I encourage everyone to take a look.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (10:36): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notices of motion 1 and 2, government business, today and request that they remain on the notice paper.

Bills

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

Statement of compatibility

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (10:38): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (**Charter**), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022 (the **Bill**).

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

Overview of the Bill

The Bill amends a variety of Acts. It introduces, most relevantly, reforms to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (**ETRA**) designed to strengthen the ability of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (**VRQA**) to act as an integrated sector regulator, and to modernise the framework for the access, use and disclosure of the Victorian student number (**VSN**) and related information on the Student Register.

Human rights issues

Power of Secretary to authorise access to, use and disclosure of VSNs or related information

Clause 49 of the Bill replaces section 5.3A.9 of the ETRA. Section 5.3A.9 sets out the powers of the Secretary to authorise access to, use and disclosure of VSNs and related information. ‘Related information’ is defined in section 5.3A.1 of the ETRA, and includes a student’s full name, date of birth, gender, and their date of enrolment by an education or training provider, or registration for home schooling (and date of cancellation, where applicable) (ss 5.3A.4(1) and 5.3A.7).

The Charter rights to privacy and protection of children, summarised below, are relevant to this clause.

Section 13 of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. An interference will be lawful if it is permitted by a law which is precise, accessible and appropriately circumscribed, and will be arbitrary only if it is capricious, unpredictable, unjust or unreasonable, in the sense of being disproportionate to the legitimate aim sought.

Section 17(2) of the Charter provides that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in their best interests and is needed by them by reason of being a child. This right recognises the special vulnerability of children. The scope of the right is informed by article 3 of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

By expanding the Secretary’s power of authorisation and repealing the requirement to publish notice of an authorisation in the Government Gazette, clause 49 engages, but does not limit, the above Charter rights, for the reasons set out below.

Expansion of Secretary’s power to authorise persons to access, use or disclose VSNs or related information

Existing subsection 5.3A.9(1) of the ETRA exhaustively lists the persons and bodies that the Secretary may authorise to access, use or disclose VSNs and related information. Clause 49 of the Bill removes these limits, allowing the Secretary to authorise any person, body or class of persons or bodies to access, use or disclose VSNs or related information. In addition, new section 5.3A.9(2) adds four purposes for which the Secretary may authorise persons to access, use or disclose VSNs or related information: i) to ensure students’ educational records are accurately maintained; ii) as required or authorised by or under law; iii) for a purpose prescribed in regulations; and iv) for a purpose specified in a Ministerial Order. Last, new section 5.3A.9 does not retain a prohibition on the Secretary authorising the disclosure of personal information relating to an individual student (previously in subsection (5)).

Expanding the Secretary’s power to authorise access, use and disclosure of VSNs or related information reflects a greater interference with the right to privacy of students, as the VSNs and related information include personal information of individual students. That information must be provided to the Secretary in order for a student to be allocated a VSN and, therefore, to access education in Victoria (ss 5.3A.4, 5.3A.7 of the ETRA). The interference with privacy is amplified by the fact that, in many cases, the personal information of children (who are entitled to special protection under section 17(2) of the Charter) may be made more widely available.

An interference with privacy authorised under new subsections 5.3A.9(1)–(2) is, in my opinion, lawful, as the criteria under new section 5.3A.9 are accessible and precisely formulated. Whether an interference is arbitrary will depend on whether, in all the circumstances, it extends beyond what is reasonably necessary to achieve the statutory purposes.

Clause 49 of the Bill serves four principal purposes. First, to permit persons who require access to VSNs or related information to perform their roles to access the information expeditiously and without unnecessary restriction. This may include, for example, IT contractors whom the Department of Education and Training have engaged to develop and maintain departmental IT systems. Although this is a permitted purpose under existing subsection (2), these persons are not presently listed under subsection (1), such that they cannot be authorised to access, use or disclose VSNs or related information.

Second, to allow access to student information (e.g., regarding enrolment and attendance) by children’s lawyers, the Youth Justice Division of the Children’s Court, and the Department of Justice and Community Safety in order to support a child’s re-engagement with the education system during, or after, court

proceedings (e.g., in the context of sentencing and bail applications). Currently, a court order may be required for these persons or entities to access information relating to a child's education history.

Third, to permit inter-departmental committees to access student information when considering young people who have been identified as being at a high risk of offending, where this poses a serious threat to public safety, health or welfare.

Fourth, to permit IT contractors to draw on VSNs or related information to ensure the quality of education-related data on other systems (e.g., to verify a student's identity), and to facilitate cloud-based systems managed by third-party providers.

Importantly, a number of privacy safeguards are included in the ETRA and in the Bill. First, new section 5.3A.14 (inserted by clause 53 of the Bill) provides that the Secretary must not use or disclose a VSN or related information to any person or body, except: to an authorised user in accordance with an authorisation, as required or authorised by or under law, or in the exercise of any other function, power or duty under Part 5.34 of the ETRA. In granting an authorisation under section 5.3A.9, the Secretary is a public authority who is subject to the obligation in section 38 of the Charter to give proper consideration to, and to act compatibly with, human rights. This reduces the risk of any particular interference with privacy being arbitrary. New section 5.3A.9A(a) (inserted by clause 50) provides that the Secretary must also have regard to any guidelines made under new section 5.3A.10A(2)(a) (inserted by clause 51) before giving an authorisation.

Second, clause 52 of the Bill inserts new sections 5.3A.10A, 5.3A.10B, and 5.3A.10C into the ETRA. New section 5.3A.10A(1) requires the Secretary to make guidelines, including with respect to: the manner in which an authorised user may access, use and disclose VSNs or related information for a purpose specified in new section 5.3A.9(2); the storage and destruction of VSNs and related information; any prescribed matter; or any matter specified in a Ministerial Order. New section 5.3A.10A(2) provides, in addition, that the Secretary may make guidelines with respect to other matters, including with respect to notification of the making of an authorisation and reporting requirements for authorised users. Guidelines must be published on an appropriate internet site as soon as possible after they are issued (new section 5.3A.10A(4)). New section 5.3A.10B provides that an authorised user must comply with any guidelines issued by the Secretary.

Third, with respect to the new purposes in subsections 5.3A.9(2)(g)-(h) for which an authorisation may be granted, regulations and Ministerial Orders are legislative instruments and must undergo a Charter assessment (including for compatibility with privacy rights) before they are adopted.

Fourth, section 5.3A.10(1) of the ETRA (as replaced by clause 51 of the Bill) states that an authorised user must only access VSNs or related information in accordance with Division 3 of Part 5.3A of the ETRA and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (PDP Act)*. In addition, new section 5.3A.10C (inserted by clause 52) provides that the PDP Act applies to the handling of personal information or unique identifiers by an authorised user (who is not an organisation under the PDP Act or subject to the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988*) as if the user were an organisation within the meaning of the PDP Act.

In my opinion, the expansion of authorised persons to 'any' person, combined with the expansion of the purposes for which authorisation may be given and the repeal of the prohibition on disclosing individual student personal information, are reasonably necessary to achieve the legislative objectives. The safeguards described above ensure that any interference with privacy is confined to what is necessary to achieve the legislative objectives. I do not consider that any less-restrictive means (e.g., specifying additional authorised users in subsection 5.3A.9(1)) would achieve the objectives. On balance, in my opinion, clause 49 does not authorise an arbitrary interference with privacy.

Repeal of gazetting requirement

Clause 49 implicitly repeals section 5.3A.9(3), which means that the Secretary is no longer required to publish notice of an authorisation to access, use or disclose VSNs or related information in the Government Gazette. This is relevant to the lawfulness aspect of the right to privacy, which requires any restriction on a person's privacy to be authorised by a positive law that is sufficiently precise and accessible to allow persons to regulate their conduct.

As described above, new section 5.3A.10A(2) provides that the Secretary may issue binding guidelines prescribing notification requirements in respect of an authorisation. The guidelines must be published on an appropriate Internet site as soon as possible after they are issued.

Moreover, in exercising the power to authorise persons to access, use and disclose VSNs or related information, the Secretary will be required to give proper consideration to, and to act compatibly with, human rights (s 38 of the Charter). To the extent that any contemplated authorisation under new section 5.3A.9(1) might interfere with the privacy of persons to whom the information relates, the Secretary must give proper consideration to the privacy rights of those persons under section 13(a) of the Charter. That exercise will include consideration of whether the proposed authorisation is 'lawful', in the sense that it is accessible and precise.

In addition, Information Privacy Principle 1.5 in Schedule 1 of the PDP Act requires an organisation (e.g., an authorised user) which collects personal information about an individual from someone else (e.g., the Secretary) to take reasonable steps to ensure that the individual is or has been made aware of the matters listed in Information Privacy Principle 1.3, which includes information about to whom the organisation usually discloses information of that kind.

These protections ensure that any authorisation which interferes with privacy will be accessible. Therefore, I am satisfied that any interference with a person's privacy as a result of an authorisation will be lawful.

VRQA's power to issue notices to produce

Clause 62 of the Bill amends subsection 5.8.10(1) of the ETRA, as inserted by section 76 of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021*. Relevantly, the clause replaces the word 'necessary' with 'relevant', such that the power of the VRQA to issue a notice to produce is enlivened where it reasonably believes that a document or information is *relevant* for one of the purposes listed in subsection 5.8.10(1). The objective of the amendment is to support the ability of the VRQA to regulate the Child Safe Standards as an integrated sector regulator.

This amendment engages the right to privacy in section 13(a) of the Charter because a notice to produce may require production of private documents of persons who have no association with a school or relevant entity, on the basis of the lower threshold of 'relevance'. In my opinion, however, any interference with privacy is lawful and non-arbitrary, such that there is no limit on the Charter right.

In particular, even though clause 62 enacts a less stringent threshold in subsection 5.8.10(1) of the ETRA, the VRQA may nevertheless only issue a written notice under subsections 5.8.10(2)(a)-(d) where the relevant document or information is 'required' for the prescribed purpose. This constrains the scope of the power to what is 'required' to achieve specific legislative purposes.

In addition, as a public authority, the VRQA is subject to the requirement in section 38 of the Charter to give proper consideration to, and to act compatibly with, human rights when exercising its power to issue a notice to produce. This operates as a further constraint upon any interference with privacy.

The Hon. James Merlino MP
Minister for Education

Second reading

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (10:38): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

I am pleased to be introducing the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The Bill proposes various amendments to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Education Act), to the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (CWS Act) and to the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021* (CWS Amendment Act).

The Bill will amend the Education Act to:

- clarify and modernise the powers, functions and governance arrangements of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFE Board);
- remove adult education institutions as a category of providers of adult, community and further education (ACFE) and confine the provisions relating to adult education institutions to AMES Australia;
- modernise the framework for access, use and disclosure of the Victorian Student Number (VSN) and related information on the Victorian Student Register (VSR);
- provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with greater discretion on whether to conduct a compliance audit of a registered training organisation (RTO);
- clarify in line with the original policy intent that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to people who are of compulsory school age, including to ensure those entities are subject to the Child Safe Standards (CSS) under CWS Act;
- allow the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member of the Board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership.

The Bill will also amend the CWS Act as amended by the CWS Amendment Act to:

- ensure that a person, body or school registered in respect of a foundation secondary course or foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the CSS;
- allow the VRQA to continue to use and disclose information about complaints in accordance with existing provisions in the Education Act and *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (PDP Act).

Finally, the Bill will amend the Education Act as amended by the CWS Amendment Act to:

- lower the threshold for the VRQA to issue a notice to produce;
- allow the VRQA to issue notices to comply to schools, school boarding premises and RTOs.

ACFE Board

The Bill will implement recommendations of the Review of Governance of ACFE in Victoria (ACFE Governance Review) by removing barriers to effective governance to help the ACFE Board meet its goals and aspirations in the Ministerial Statement on the Future of Adult Community Education in Victoria 2020-25 (Ministerial Statement). These amendments will support the objectives of improving access to, and quality of, post-secondary education and training for Victorian learners.

The Bill will substitute outdated, repetitive functions of the ACFE Board to address recommendation 4 of the ACFE Governance Review, including to reflect the current remit of the ACFE Board under the Ministerial Statement. The Bill will also repeal a redundant provision requiring the Board to have regard to advice of Regional Councils and substitute the requirement for the ACFE Board to have 12 members with a requirement to have between 8 and 12 members. This is consistent with the approach to membership requirements for other authorities in the Education Act.

The Bill will also modernise other provisions relating to the ACFE Board, including by requiring the ACFE Board to have sufficient “governance” expertise, rather than “management” expertise. The Bill will provide that the General Manager of the ACFE Board is to be employed under the *Public Administration Act 2004*, rather than under the Education Act, and will specify that Regional Councils consist of between 5 and 9 members.

AMES Australia

The Bill also implements recommendations of the Review of AMES Australia to better enable AMES Australia to fulfil its functions relating to settlement services, employment services and vocational education and training for multicultural communities. The amendments will ensure AMES Australia remains a sustainable organisation that is well positioned to continue to deliver public value and meet the needs of Victoria’s multicultural communities for settlement services, vocational education and training and related services.

The Bill will tailor provisions relating to adult education institutions specifically to AMES Australia. The Bill will also better align the governing provisions in the Education Act for AMES Australia with the provisions for TAFE institutes, which:

- recognise the commercial nature of the services AMES Australia provides;
- provide for the CEO to be a member of the Board of AMES Australia; and
- reflect that there is no longer a direct relationship between the ACFE Board and AMES Australia.

The Bill will better target the objectives and functions of AMES Australia, including by specifically referring to services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The Bill will also specify circumstances in which AMES Australia may engage in activity on a commercial basis and that AMES Australia has the powers conferred under the *Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987*. The Bill will require that the Minister and members of the Board of AMES Australia must endeavour to ensure that members include persons with knowledge of, or experience in, the education needs of, and services required by, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the Victorian community.

VSN

The VSN was introduced in 2008 as a unique identifier assigned to all Victorian students. VSNs are held in the Victorian Student Register (VSR), which is maintained by the Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) under delegated authority from the Secretary to the Department. The VSR records limited information about students under 25 years of age who are enrolled with an education or training provider or registered for home schooling. The information collected in the VSR includes a student’s VSN, full name, date of birth, gender, date of enrolment and date of cancellation of enrolment from an education or training provider.

Under Part 5.3A of the Education Act, only certain bodies and persons, including Department employees (excluding contract workers), registered school and training providers, the VRQA, and the VCAA, are permitted to access, use or disclose VSNs and related information recorded in the VSR. Further, an

authorisation to access, use or disclose VSNs and related information must be for one of the prescribed purposes, which include:

- monitoring and ensuring student enrolment and attendance;
- ensuring education or training providers and students receive appropriate resources;
- statistical purposes relating to education or training;
- research purposes relating to education or training; and ensuring student's education records are accurately maintained.

Since the introduction of the VSN over a decade ago, the list of authorised users and permitted purposes has not kept pace with operational and technological change within and beyond the Department. The current regime for accessing, using and disclosing VSNs and related information has not been able to accommodate new requirements for user groups and use cases as they emerge.

Consequently, the Department and associated education and training providers have increasingly been unable to carry out critical functions using the VSN, which is still considered the most effective mechanism to ensure quality of student data, as a proof of identity tool.

Due to the narrow list of authorised users and permitted purposes to access, use and disclose VSNs and related information, the legislative environment governing the use of the VSN is out of step with how information is managed and exchanged in contemporary society. Requirements for access to the VSN under the current legislation are highly restrictive and limit authorised users from using the VSN as intended to:

- improve capability to verify student identity and monitor student journeys through the education and training system
- identify areas for improvement in Victoria's education and training system
- analyse trends and anticipate the needs of students.

These constraints inhibit helping students who stand to benefit most from a unique identifier that improves the collection and analysis of timely and accurate data about education in Victoria.

As the body with governance responsibility for the VSR, the VCAA routinely receives requests for VSNs and related information from law enforcement bodies to support investigations or justice proceedings. While some information sharing schemes (like the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme) override the Education Act to enable the sharing of VSNs and related information with Victoria Police where the threshold for sharing under those schemes is met, these schemes do not cover disclosing VSNs and related information with federal police (who routinely request access to VSN information) or disclosing information to law enforcement if the subject in question is no longer a child. Similarly, under Part 5.3A, the VCAA (and any authorised user) is unable to disclose VSNs and related information to any law enforcement body in instances where a request is not required or authorised by or under law.

To address these constraints the Bill will provide greater flexibility for persons and entities who may be authorised to access, use and disclose VSNs and related information in the VSR and expands the purposes for which VSNs and related information can be accessed, used and disclosed. These amendments will facilitate more accurate reporting to the community on the state's education and training system.

The Bill will ensure that VSNs and related information will be regulated in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles in the PDP Act and any guidelines issued by the Secretary to ensure that VSNs can be used as intended for their primary purposes. Those purposes include monitoring student enrolment details, verifying student identity and providing data for strategic insights into the movements of students, including identifying students at risk of disengaging from education or training.

VRQA compliance audits

The Bill will seek to align the VRQA's approach to conducting compliance audits of RTOs under the Education Act with the approach of the national VET regulator: the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). ASQA has discretion to decide whether to conduct a compliance audit when considering an application for registration or re-registration of an RTO. The Bill will give the VRQA greater flexibility to consider whether an audit is necessary as part of an application for registration or re-registration of an RTO. This will reduce regulatory burden on RTOs and allow the VRQA to focus on RTOs posing a greater risk when determining when to conduct an audit.

VRQA as integrated sector regulator of the Child Safe Standards and other consequential amendments

From 1 January 2023, the CWS Act will be amended by the CWS Amendment Act to make the VRQA the integrated sector regulator of the Child Safe Standards. The CWS Amendment Act implemented a number of recommendations of the 2019 Review of the Victorian Child Safe Standards, including making the VRQA

the sole regulator of the child safe standards in relation to the entities that the VRQA already regulates, including schools, school boarding premises and RTOs.

The Bill amends the CWS Amendment Act, and the CWS Act and the Education Act as amended by the CWS Amendment Act, to ensure that the VRQA's regulatory powers and functions are adequate to perform this expanded role including by:

- allowing the VRQA to continue to use and disclose information about complaints in accordance with existing provisions in the Education Act and PDP Act, which would otherwise be limited by the proposed new information sharing provisions proposed to be inserted into the CWS Act by the CWS Amendment Act;
- lowering the threshold for the VRQA to issue a notice to produce to be consistent with the existing thresholds for other similar information gathering powers available to the VRQA;
- allowing the VRQA to issue notices to comply to schools, school boarding premises and RTOs, in addition to the other entities that are subject to the Child Safe Standards which the VRQA regulates, to ensure a consistent suite of regulatory tools available to the VRQA in the regulation of the Child Safe Standards; and
- clarifying in line with the original policy intent that post-secondary education institutions and post-secondary education providers may provide education to people who are of compulsory school age, including to ensure those entities are subject to the Child Safe Standards (CSS) under CWS Act;

The Bill also makes other consequential amendments:

- to the CWS Act to ensure that a person, body or school registered with respect to a foundation secondary course or a foundation secondary qualification is subject to the reportable conduct scheme and the Child Safe Standards; and
- to Schedule 2 to the Education Act to allow the Minister for Education to appoint an acting member of the Board of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, which was established by the *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership) Act 2021* on 1 January 2022, in line with the other statutory authorities set out under Schedule 2 to the Education Act.

In summary, the amendments in this Bill are mainly technical in nature and seek to make important improvements to a number of components of the Government education and training system established under the Education Act.

For these reasons, I commend the Bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:39): I move:

That this debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 8 June.

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

Statement of compatibility

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (10:40): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022:

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (**Charter**), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill 2022 (**Bill**).

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

Overview

The Bill amends the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 to strengthen the enforcement framework for timber harvesting safety zones so as to reduce the risks to public safety and disruption of timber harvesting safety zones and to better deter activities that create risks to public safety in timber harvesting safety zones.

It achieves this by:

- Increasing penalties for existing offences
- Expanding what is a ‘prohibited thing’ in a timber harvesting safety zone
- Providing appropriate search and seizure powers for prohibited things; and
- Creating a framework for banning notices.

Human Rights Issues

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

- Freedom of movement (section 12); and
- Property (section 20).

For the following reasons, I am satisfied that the Bill is compatible with the Charter, and if any rights are limited, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified having regard to the factors in section 7(2) of the Charter.

The measures in the Bill are designed to improve the enforcement framework to better manage the safety risks presented by protest activity in timber harvesting safety zones. Timber harvesting safety zones are intended to be closed, controlled spaces in which the safety risks inherent in work involving heavy machinery can be safely managed. The protest activities targeted by the Bill create an unacceptable risk of serious injury or death for workers, authorised officers and the protesters themselves.

Banning notices

Section 12 of the Charter provides that every person within Victoria has the right to move freely within Victoria and to enter and leave it and has the freedom to choose where to live. The Bill engages the right to freedom of movement by providing a framework of banning notices. The framework for the banning notice regime closely mirrors those of the Wildlife Act 1975.

An authorised officer or a police officer who suspects on reasonable grounds that a person has committed or is committing a specified offence may give the person a notice banning the person from any or all specified timber harvesting safety zones for a period specified in the banning notice which does not exceed 28 days.

The officer may only give the banning notice if he or she believes on reasonable grounds that giving the notice may be effective in preventing or deterring the person from continuing to commit the specified offence or committing a further specified offence, and where the continuation of the commission of the specified offence may give rise to a risk to the safety of any person or may hinder or obstruct a person engaged in timber harvesting operations in a timber harvesting safety zone.

It is an offence to contravene a banning notice.

A banning notice may be varied or revoked by the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions or a police officer of or above the rank of sergeant. The information to be provided within a banning notice is prescriptively outlined in the Bill, so a person handed a notice can know their rights, how to avoid breaching the notice and that the notice may be varied or revoked.

The banning notice regime provides an additional enforcement tool, which is only available where a person has entered a timber harvesting safety zone and an officer suspects on reasonable grounds the person has committed or is committing a specified offence. The effect of the notice is to ban a person from an area they have no lawful reason to be, and where their continued presence is an unacceptable risk to safety.

Given the narrow application of the banning notice and the safety risks being managed, I consider any limitations on the right to movement are reasonable and justified.

Search and seizure of prohibited items.

The bill engages the right to property at section 20 of the Charter by providing for the search and seizure of certain property within timber harvesting safety zones.

The Act already prohibits in timber harvesting safety zones certain things which can be used to disrupt timber harvesting such as bolt cutters. The Bill expands the prohibited things to include polyvinyl chloride (PVC) metal pipes, to reduce the chance of this equipment being used to prolong protest duration in ways that risk harm to protesters and contractors and reduce the likelihood that protesters will place themselves in hazardous areas that risk the safety of both protesters and contractors.

The Bill creates specific search powers (new section 88A) to allow Authorised Officers and Police Officers to search and seize prohibited things in timber harvesting safety zones where the officer believes on reasonable grounds that a person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit an offence against the Act or the regulations.

These powers go no further than necessary to adequately manage the safety risks these items create for protesters, Authorised Officers and Police Officers, Search and Rescue personnel, and timber harvesting workers within the timber harvesting safety zone. The power is limited to searches of vehicles, bags, containers and other receptacles. It does not permit body searches. There is no valid reason for unauthorised vehicles to enter and remain in a timber harvesting safety zone.

Any seizure is subject to the existing framework for the return of seized items (section 88), retention and return or forfeiture of certain seized items (section 89A), a right for a person to recover a seized item and compensation (section 90) and arrangements for forfeiture to the Crown (sections 91 and 92).

The new search and seizure power is a relatively narrow tool which is only enlivened within a timber harvesting safety zone. It is specifically targeted at managing the risk presented by prohibited items and in those zones. For these reasons I consider that any limitation on the right to property is reasonable and justified.

Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Agriculture

Second reading

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (10:41):
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

All Victorians deserve to have a safe working environment. Forestry workers, like other workers, are entitled to be mentally and physically safe as they go about their work regardless of how people may view that work. This same principle applies to authorised officers and police officers as they go about performing their duties.

The Sustainable Forests Timber Amendment (Timber Harvesting Safety Zones) Bill will deliver safer workplaces for Victorian forestry workers and authorised officers and police officers assisting in these workplaces, by making a set of targeted reforms aimed at reducing the use of dangerous forest protest tactics in Timber Harvesting Safety Zones (THSZs) and closing existing gaps in the law which allow them to occur.

Since the announcement of the Victorian Forestry Plan in late 2019, not only has forest protest activity increased in Victoria but protesters have developed dangerous new tactics to deploy at these protests. These tactics are continuing to evolve. These activities create an unacceptable risk to the safety of workers, authorised officers and police officers and the protesters themselves.

As a result, this shift in protest tactics has had a significant and detrimental impact on the mental health of some native forestry contractors and their families who are placed at risk of hurting themselves or others by these tactics.

This government supports the right to protest. However, this right does not extend to putting the safety of others at risk or harming them physically or mentally. The Bill therefore contains a set of targeted reforms aimed at reducing the most dangerous forest protest tactics and closing existing loopholes which allow them to occur.

Importantly, these reforms are limited in application to Timber Harvesting Safety Zones (THSZs) which are relatively small, restricted areas where forestry activities are being undertaken and are inherently dangerous for members of the public to be due to, amongst other things, the use of heavy machinery. Active THSZs are identified in the forest by signs on roads which may provide access to the THSZ and via notices on VicForests' website and members of the public are excluded from them for safety reasons.

The three most common and dangerous tactics which have emerged in forest protests in THSZs are:

- The erection and occupation of 'tree-sits' at hazardous heights. These 'tree sits' have been built at heights where falls can cause death and with structures that are intentionally built to collapse if they are attempted to be removed.
- Protesters locking onto or attaching themselves to active timber harvesting machinery. Due to the nature and size of this machinery this can cause significant safety issues.

- ‘Black wallaby’ tactics, which involve camouflaged, masked protesters running in and out of THSZs and back into the surrounding bush. This can cause significant safety issues as it can be very hard to detect their presence.

This Bill aims to reduce the use of each of these tactics and to deter the development and deployment of further dangerous tactics by:

- Increasing penalties for most offences related to THSZs;
- Expanding the scope of what things are prohibited in THSZs;
- Providing for search and seizure powers within THSZs;
- Explicitly providing for offences for obstructing or hindering authorised persons and machinery in THSZs;
- Providing for banning notices which ban individuals from THSZs under certain circumstances.

The Bill increases penalties for various offences related to THSZs, including hindering, obstructing or interfering with authorised officers, threatening or abusing authorised officers, entering or remaining in THSZs and failure to comply with various directions in relation to THSZs. This broadly aligns with reform trends in other jurisdictions aimed at addressing dangerous forest protest behaviour.

This will have a deterrent effect on protesters and will help reduce the overall number of protesters committing these offenses. The increases align with an increased acknowledgement of the importance of workplace safety matters, particularly relating to the psychological safety of workers and the need to deter dangerous behaviour in workplaces such as THSZs.

The Bill expands on the definition of prohibited item, to remove more items used in dangerous protest tactics from THSZs and does this in two ways.

Firstly, it directly prevents the possession of PVC and metal pipes, which protesters use in locking themselves onto each other protesters or machinery, in THSZs. These types of pipe have been deployed to prevent the use of bolt cutters to easily and safely break the locks or chains attaching protesters to each other or machinery, rendering the chains dangerous to remove.

Secondly, the Bill provides the Governor-in-Council with a power to prescribe further prohibited items that are banned in THSZs. This allows the legislation to be more responsive to the continued evolution of forest protest tactics by allowing for additional items used in future protests to be banned.

A related reform addresses the search and seizure of prohibited items in THSZs. Even though individuals are currently prohibited from being in possession of a prohibited item in a THSZ, authorised officers and police officers do not currently have the power under the Act to search vehicles, bags, containers or other receptacles for prohibited items or other items used in or about to be used in the commission of an offence.

The Bill addresses this deficit by creating a specific power allowing officers to conduct searches for prohibited items or items that the officer reasonably believes have been or are about to be used in the commission of an offence, where that officer reasonably believes that someone is in possession of them. This power has been narrowly crafted, only being able to be exercised in a THSZ and not extending to body searches. This minimises the risk of it unduly interfering with the rights of protesters.

The Bill also corrects another shortcoming of the current legislation. Currently, the offence of intentionally hindering, obstructing or interfering with timber harvesting operations does not always address individual offenders if they aren’t considered to be interfering with overall harvesting operations.

The Bill amends the offences related to interference with timber harvesting operations to explicitly include interfering with a person who is engaged in timber harvesting operations or with timber harvesting machinery being used in a THSZ. This will ensure that the offence is fit for purpose to address interfering with the work being conducted in a THSZs.

The Bill also includes a framework for the issuance of banning notices which will enable more immediate and effective action to be taken to prevent forest protesters from repeatedly engaging in protest activity and placing themselves and others at risk of death or injury.

The banning notice framework is modelled on similar notices that can be issued under Division 2 of Part 7A of the Wildlife Act 1975. Once issued, a banning notice will ban an individual from entering one or more THSZs for a period of up to 28 days.

Banning notices will only be able to be issued when the officer believes on reasonable grounds that the banning notice will prevent or deter the person from continuing to commit an offence or from committing a further offence or believes that the continuation of an offence may involve or give rise to a risk to safety of any person or hinder or obstruct a person engaged in timber harvesting operations in a timber harvesting safety zone.

In each instance, a banning notice can only be issued when an authorised officer or police officer believes on reasonable grounds that the person has committed or is committing a specified offence. For a banning notice to be valid, an authorised officer must provide evidence of their identity, and in the case of a police officer, proof of identity and official status will be required (unless they are in uniform).

Each of the reforms contained in the Bill will reduce the risks and harms that dangerous protest tactics have been causing and continue to cause for forestry workers, authorised officers and protesters alike.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:41): I move:

That this debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 8 June.

CASINO AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Statement of compatibility

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (10:42): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022:

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

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

Overview

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

Human Rights Issues

The human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill are the right to: protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 10);

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

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

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

Casino and gambling inspectors

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

further safeguarded by existing provisions in the VGCCC Act which require inspectors to be of good reputation, with regard to character, honesty and integrity and to undergo criminal records and probity checks before they can be appointed as an inspector.

Liquor inspectors

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

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

Section 13—Privacy and reputation

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

Casino and gambling inspectors

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

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

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

Establishing the Victorian Liquor Commission

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

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

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

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

Section 24—Fair hearing

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

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

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

- the Commission is bound by the rules of natural justice (section 172W) and that specified inquiries be heard in public (section 172Z); and

- Commissioners must have certain skills and experience, including legal qualifications and experience in the health sector (section 172G).

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

Section 25—Rights in criminal proceedings

The Charter provides:

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

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

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

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

Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Second reading

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (10:43): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Bill will allow the Minister to provide high level directions to the VGCCC to ensure the regulator's overarching priorities are consistent with the Government's. This new direction power will allow the Minister to issue written directions on matters of general application, relating to the VGCCC's objectives or functions. To preserve the independence of the regulator, the ministerial powers expressly exclude making directions on any specific regulatory functions of the VGCCC. In the interests of public transparency, ministerial directions, including a statement of reasons, will be published in the Victorian Government Gazette.

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

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

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

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

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

I commend the Bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:43): I move:

That this debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 8 June.

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 RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:44): As those listening intently yesterday to this contribution will know, I was cut short by 7 minutes 10 seconds. There is no good news in this budget at all for many of the self-funded retirees across the Polwarth electorate, because this government is addicted to gobbling up the benefits of years of hard work that so many self-funded retirees across my electorate have put into small property purchases, small commercial investments—things that they worked hard for to buy to sustain their retirement. This government has now become totally addicted to land tax. Land tax now is completely out of control.

In fact I had to deal with one particular constituent in my electorate who had operated a small farming enterprise in a beautiful location in the Otway Ranges, with views in the distance of the sea, only to find out that after her husband had died and she no longer kept 50 or 60 cattle on that property that this government has now deemed it land taxable. It is no longer an agricultural enterprise. For her and her husband's pride and joy, something that they had had and built since the Ash Wednesday bushfires in 1983, this government presented her with a backdated \$853 000 tax bill. Now, the property is probably worth only marginally more than that. She has no capacity to pay that. But this is what this government is doing, and increasingly the hardworking constituents of my Polwarth electorate who have a small factory or a couple of shopfronts or things that they rely on to be self-funded retirement investments—people who want the dignity of having their own control over their retirement—are continually being overtaxed and charged by the government. And this budget offers no relief; indeed this budget just continues the trend. We see skyrocketing receipts being used to prop up the overblown budgets and the out-of-control projects here in Melbourne, and it is so many of the hardworking self-funded retirees in my electorate that in fact enable this government to do that. On the financial attack that continues on Victorians, that is one critical sector that is very important in my community.

But the overall fundamentals of this budget do not go well at all for Victoria's future and do not go well for not only older Victorians but Victorians of the future, who will inherit the debt. We have learned in recent weeks that the debt now has ballooned completely out of control. In only eight short years this government has taken the debt from around \$20 billion to heading north of \$110 billion, with the forward estimates now predicting \$160 billion, \$180 billion, and that is if things do not continue to blow out of control with rising inflation. But what that means is that Victorians now are carrying a debt equivalent to Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. This is a huge mountain of debt. It is equivalent to 26 per cent of the state's economy, and it is a noose around Victoria's neck that will prevent it from being able to invest in the things that we will actually need in the future—the things that we will need in our growth suburbs, the things that we are going to need in rural and regional Australia to cater for the growth in those areas. And we have seen unprecedented growth, which this budget does so little to support.

One of the biggest shortages we have is land supply. This government continues to keep a lid on land supply. It is not working with local government and councils to fast-track land release in so many of our regional communities. Of course across the Polwarth electorate towns like Colac, Winchelsea, Camperdown, Terang and others are wound up for years and years in order to get simple planning approvals through that will allow them to create the land supply that will allow new homes and houses to be built. And as Shadow Minister for Housing I am continually bombarded by community groups, private individuals and others who want to do more for the housing crisis—the housing affordability crisis, the housing supply crisis—but just cannot get there.

One of the great concerns that we saw outlined in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee earlier this week was some of the stats around housing and housing affordability, which this budget does not do much for. The government has trumpeted its \$5 billion investment into government housing, which is an amount of money it set aside now nearly two years ago, and the government is still touting the fact that it is going to build 12 000—in fact the member for Burwood announced today it is going to be 14 000—homes under this program. Unless this government budget is a magic pudding—many out there believe it is actually a magic pudding, but this magic pudding is managing to build now 2000 more homes with the same amount of money from two years ago when the minister himself admits that costs in the housing sector have increased by up to 35 per cent right across the spectrum, whether it is construction materials, labour supply, availability—

A member interjected.

Mr RIORDAN: Steel is up 60 per cent. All sorts of materials have increased dramatically. In fact the Big Housing Build provider that the government has contracted, among others, is in deep negotiations with this government on how it can continue to provide the houses it has promised at the prices it had originally said. This budget is full of fantasy. It is wanting to build magically even more homes than what was initially quoted two years ago when these homes are in fact costing so much more.

One of the other great disappointments that this budget has revealed to us in housing is that people are now waiting 16 months on public housing registers and lists. That is up from 10 months a couple of years ago, which was not something to be proud of, and it is now well more than double what the waiting lists were when we were in government back in 2014. So despite the government's rhetoric on public and affordable housing, it is simply not delivering. It has not released the land to allow private sector and other investors to create more homes. They have allocated money in a ham-fisted way that is seeing inflation gobble up its true value, and as we stand today this government is poorly underachieving on its ability to provide the homes that Victorians will need, particularly country Victorians.

The budget that was handed down this year is a budget that Victorians can be duly sceptical of. We have talked about how the trains were promised four years ago for the Warrnambool line. They were put into the budget and taken out after the election. We expect to see trains put into this budget and then taken out again after the election, because this government talks big and delivers little.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (10:51): I am pleased to contribute to the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, the 2022–23 Victorian state budget, and I commend the Treasurer and his team for their leadership and hard work in bringing together all the contributions of my colleagues in the Labor caucus—our engagement with community and stakeholders and our community service organisations and the significant work that has gone into setting further foundations and support across the community as we not only work our way through the recovery from the pandemic but set the tone and the investments that are going to shape the future for so many Victorians.

I would like to start in relation to some of my portfolio responsibilities and the significant investments that continue the work of the government for some of the most vulnerable people in our community, particularly around my work as Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The budget provided some \$146 million to replace and refurbish beds at many of our public sector residential aged care services.

Of course we provide very significant residential public sector aged care services across Victoria. Most of those services that we provide are in rural and regional Victoria, and in the breakdown of some of those figures in particular we are seeing an investment of \$34.64 million at the Camperdown hospital campus for 36 beds to be replaced. That is going to be a really important outcome for the people of Camperdown. I know that they welcome that.

There is a \$62.84 million redevelopment at Mansfield District Hospital. That is 72 beds to create a co-located facility. The old Buckland House will be refurbished for hospital use—a really significant investment for the Mansfield community. We are putting a stake in the ground and saying to those Mansfield community families, ‘We want you to be able to stay in your community if you need aged care residential support. Your family can be in the town, be close by and know that you’re going to be in a modern first-rate facility’. It is a huge investment for the people of Mansfield and surrounds.

At the Mornington Centre there is an \$800 000 investment to develop a 60-bed facility that will include 30 aged-persons mental health beds and a 30-bed specialist dementia unit. Beyond that there is a very significant investment of some \$45.36 million at Orbost regional hospital. That is going to include refurbishment and a new 38-bed facility. It is going to combine Lochiel House and Waratah Lodge and replace 38 beds. The \$45.36 million redevelopment at Orbost regional hospital is welcomed by that community and is a very significant investment in public sector residential aged care services. It is part of a \$146 million package right across the state, particularly in our rural and regional communities.

There is also funding of \$1.52 million at Bright so that we can do the planning to replace Hawthorn Village, which is a 40-bed facility. There is also planning money of \$1.66 million for Heywood so that we can replace Heywood nursing home; that is about a 45-bed facility. So we will do the planning work, we will put the flag in the ground and notify those communities that the further investment is being considered for the next budgets, but the planning work will be done there. And the capital investment work on those other sites is about to begin.

I also wanted to touch on the \$271 million across child protection and family services, which builds on the \$1.2 billion that we allocated to support at-risk children, their families and carers. Since 2014, 1180 child protection practitioner positions have been funded by our government. We support that child protection workforce, and I want to commend them. Right through the pandemic, every day our child protection practitioner workforce was out there looking out for and supporting vulnerable children and keeping families strong and kids safe. I want to commend them for their work. There is also the investment of \$5.7 million across a range of initiatives to attract and retain those workers. There are so many great opportunities across the health and human services workforce because of the investment from our government, in particular around child protection and family services. There has been more than \$71 million to support existing demand for residential care, \$19 million to improve support for our most vulnerable children and nearly \$13 million to continue the care hub trial, which provides wraparound support for children who have entered care for the first time.

I also wanted to acknowledge a particular commitment that has been welcomed by kinship and foster carers: a \$5.8 million new help desk service that will provide better support for our carers navigating an array of supports available for them. When they need to organise all those life administrative matters—Medicare cards and other services and supports for the people they care for—we are going to have that carer hub there that is going to support them, that new carer help desk, so that we can support our kinship and foster carers to get through the maze of paperwork and other administration that is really important to support the young people that they care for. We have prioritised that service as something that will help them. It takes a bit of pressure of the workload of our child protection practitioners too, keeps them focused on their very important work and provides a very long-term and clear support for the priority of our kinship and foster carers. I am very pleased to work with them on co-design and make sure that that carer help desk is effective and meets their needs.

I also want to touch on a couple of other key matters. One is the Change Your Reactions public education campaign that will continue to improve and lift the attitudes that people have towards and

their understanding of Victorians with autism—and not only that, but the disability state plan, which we launched just recently. There are more than 1.1 million Victorians who identify as having a disability, and we are going to back our investment of that plan with \$15.1 million in this budget. There is also further funding around our Changing Places initiative, which is about providing appropriate disability-supported services and amenities for toilet facilities around many places in Victoria. This helps the tourism economy and helps provide opportunities in rural and regional Victoria so that more families and carers and people with a disability can travel around the state and know that the facilities and supports that they need are available to them.

I did also want to touch further just on a couple of other elements in relation to our child protection and family services, in particular that under our Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program our authorised Aboriginal community controlled organisations have an opportunity to actively work with children's families and with community and other professionals to develop and implement our child's case plan and achieve their permanency objective in a way that is culturally safe and in the best interests of the child. And at the end of April 2022, 102 Aboriginal children were currently authorised to the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, VACCA, and 87 Aboriginal children were authorised to the CEO of the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative, BDAC. The previous state budget had made funding for our ACAC, Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care, ongoing, and it will support the authorisation of up to some 396 Aboriginal children and young people by 2024. Our government continues to work alongside our Aboriginal community controlled organisations and community service organisations to support Aboriginal self-determination. Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care recognises that the needs of Aboriginal children are best met by Aboriginal community services that are culturally attuned, and we want to make sure that we help support them to build their capacity to care and support more Aboriginal children in Aboriginal care. We are very committed to that ongoing work.

Can I also take the opportunity to perhaps touch on a couple of investments locally in my Ivanhoe electorate and particularly the Waratah Special Development School—\$6.81 million. I want to pay tribute to Jenny Wallace, the long-term principal there, who retired just in the last week or two. Of course Waratah Special Development School provides services right across the northern suburbs. It is based in Bellfield. It was built in large part by a Rudd government investment, and to add the further expansion of that service in Bellfield is really important to families right across the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

There was funding for the Good Samaritan Inn project in Ivanhoe, and I want to pay tribute. There is \$11.2 million for several family violence refuges and crisis accommodation, but for the Good Sam Inn project in Ivanhoe, as part of that project we are going to see \$1.7 million in capital investment for those 10 units that are going to provide great support for women and children experiencing family violence and homelessness. I want to commend my Ivanhoe community, who fought hard in the planning processes to get that through council, and council for supporting that project and for making sure that there is an opportunity through the Good Sam Inn in Ivanhoe. It shows a lot about the values of my community and the values of our church services and our communities there to put to good use community facilities. Let us invest in them, let us make them fit for purpose and meet some community needs right now for women and children experiencing family violence. The fact that there is this funding allocation and also some ongoing funding of \$1.6 million over four years and further recurrent funding of \$484 000 ongoing I think is just a real commitment, and I know people fought hard in my community to deliver that project. We are pleased to be able to support it with that funding. It is going to make a big difference to the lives of women and children fleeing family violence, with so much of that connected to homelessness, and those 10 units are going to go a long way to changing lives and saving the lives of young people and vulnerable women in my community.

We also have for Macleod Park pavilion \$1.5 million, and Banyule City Council is going to match that—so \$3 million down there at Macleod Park. And for the record: yes, my daughter, who turned 10 yesterday, is enjoying her football in the under-11s at Macleod Junior Football Club. For a very long

time they have been patient out there, the Macleod juniors that play at the Macleod Park facilities there. I think the last plaque there is from when I was on Banyule City Council back in 2005, so more than enough time has passed for us to uplift our investment there, particularly around change rooms for men and women and for boys and girls. It is the junior football ground up there, so the \$3 million—\$1.5 million from us, matched by Banyule—will see a great redevelopment for all the young families with young children and a community space there at Macleod Park. That really comes off the top of previous investments in the senior club down at De Winton Park that we have opened in the past couple of years.

For Rosanna Primary School there is nearly half a million dollars for some minor capital works that we need to do. It will go a long way to some of the work I think we would like to further do with the school long term on the final part of the redevelopment of their administration and classroom wings, but this will go a long way to addressing some immediate concerns. For my old school, Viewbank College, there is half a million dollars to upgrade and refurbish canteen and toilet amenities and the like. It is a big school. It is a great school. We have previously spent around \$11 million there on the redevelopment in our first term in government of the performing arts centre and classrooms at Viewbank College, and so I am really pleased that these minor capital works have been provided for in the budget so that we can continue to prioritise the day-to-day activities that are really important at Viewbank College.

Further to all of that there is obviously a range of other investments in my electorate. Of course time does not permit me to get through them all on this occasion, but I did want to just touch lastly on a couple of other things I think more broadly are really important to the community and I know have been responded to well through other cost-of-living matters, such as the quarter of the billion dollars that is being invested in this budget for households to access the one-off \$250 power saving bonus. That is a direct support that will also help them find the best deal on their power bills. We have provided a lot of support to people in more recent concessions support that has been provided through the member for Mill Park and Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change around some of those power saving matters. They have been hugely successful and welcome in the community.

I did want to touch on the work we provided with the Premier's leadership on the free RATs for people with disability and their families. It has had a huge uptake and is something that I am really proud of and pleased to see through great leadership from our government.

I think it is also important to touch on the fact that there has now been a total of \$1.6 billion of new funding that has benefited Victorian Aboriginal communities, including \$400 million in this budget alone, off the back of that \$1.6 billion of new funding since we were first elected in 2014.

I am pleased too about some of the other elements that were outlined in the budget, particularly some of our forecasts that show that at 4 per cent the statewide unemployment rate is now at the lowest since current records began, and the regional unemployment rate is even lower, at 3.2 per cent. Employment in regional Victoria has increased by some 80 000 people since November 2014. But can I just say in closing to the people of the Ivanhoe electorate that they have not only made very clear to me their priorities over the time I have represented them in this place, but have worked together with me to deliver on every one of the commitments that we have made, and we have resourced those. I want to pay tribute to those in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Department of Health and the work that people have done day in, day out to support vulnerable people in our community and put them first and provide great support to them. I look forward to our continued work together.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (11:06): I rise to speak on the state budget here in Victoria. I want to highlight why this budget is more spin than delivery than any budget I have actually seen, even from Labor. I note that the member for Gippsland South is here. It started off when you went to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) and saw the questioning from the member for Gippsland South to the Premier about Melton hospital. It was highlighted to the Premier that instead of having funding amounts over the five years to construct the hospital, which their media release had stated, it

had ‘to be confirmed’, ‘to be confirmed’, ‘to be confirmed’, ‘to be confirmed’, ‘to be confirmed’, with no funding. Then when the Premier tried to justify it by reading in the footnotes, the look on his face when he realised the footnotes did not even state they were going to build the Melton hospital—and it is not in the state budget.

But luckily there is an alternative, and that alternative is on 26 November when Victorians, and particularly those in Melton, will have an opportunity to change government. With a change of government we have guaranteed we will put the money in the budget to build Melton hospital, because they have been misled by Labor for too long. It is time they had some positive news and got the hospital underway and constructed to service the growth happening out there in Melton. That is essential.

On growth areas, I represent—and proudly represent—a growth area in Gembrook, and I hope to represent the growth area of Berwick after the next election. I would love to be out there and still representing that area. One of the things from this budget that we know this government will do if they are re-elected on 26 November is increase taxes on first home buyers and homebuyers throughout my electorate. As we have grown we have seen land tax increase and we have seen the new windfall tax come in, which is going to impact on land prices all the way across the state. Developers want to get on with what they need to do and have land availability. That is how you reduce prices. It is about supply and demand, and the supply dries up when the government fails to act.

Not only that, we have seen increases on trades and tradies—already and on top of the cost increases they have had because of timber, steel, employment and labour. All of these costs are impacting and get passed on to, eventually, the final person, which is the homebuyer, and that is unfair. There is an alternative. From 26 November, if we have a Liberal-Nationals government here in Victoria, we will get rid of the tradies tax. We will reduce that so tradies can get on with what they want to do, so tradies can get on and build your house without having to put extra costs on every single time they come out and do work for people here in Victoria.

On the Clyde North police station, the government promised, put out media releases and even recently came into this place to brag about the fact that they were going to deliver the Clyde North police station, which they promised would be ready, open and operating by November 2022. But every resident in Clyde North I remind of this: the government has now admitted they have not even signed contracts for land. They have not bought land in Clyde North to build the Clyde North police station, and they are now saying, ‘We might build it before the 2026 election’—‘We might’.

I will stand here today and say with a change of government—you have got an alternative—we will build the Clyde North police station. There are too many residents down there and too many stories about increases in crime, about people feeling unsafe in their homes, to not have a police station in one of the fastest growing areas in the state.

When I travel around my electorate and I speak to businesses, what are they after? They have had support; they have had assistance from federal and state governments. They want to get on with their business and operate normally, and they want certainty. At every business throughout my electorate I have gone to and talked to about it, they have wanted the certainty of no more lockdowns. They want a government who can come out and say, ‘We’re going to let you operate. Any chance or change we have in the COVID pandemic, we’ll be working with you to ensure that you can continue business’. We want to make sure that they have got the certainty so they can invest in the future, so they can get the staff they need to increase and grow their businesses. It is essential to the services and businesses throughout the Gembrook electorate and the future Berwick electorate.

The 000 crisis here in Victoria, this budget and the Ashton report have all highlighted one thing. Every time the Victorian government have come out and said it is COVID, we now know from their own report that in 2016 Victoria Police, the fire services and ambulance services had all gone to government and said, ‘000 is causing delays. We need to fix it. 000 is creating issues with people calling in, and we are not getting our services out on time’. That was in 2016. The Ashton report, the government’s own

report, said this continued through up until COVID, and then when COVID hit there was no plan for how to deal with the surge capacity that they were going to need within 000. And what have we seen? We have seen up to 21 people die because of the failures of the government with the investment, the training and having people available in 000 and in our health network—an absolute and utter failure.

During the two years of the COVID period, when we were at the peak, of which the Premier will say, ‘That’s the reason we have had all the issues’, they cut staff for ambulance call takers at ESTA—2.3 full-time equivalent staff less over that two-year period than there were between 2016 and 2019. The Premier said they had met every target in ESTA since 2016—‘each and every target’ was what he said here in this place, and then when we came out with his own annual reports that said that was not the case, he doubled down, misled this place again and said that they met those targets every time. When your own reports are coming out saying you have not, that is a problem.

There is an alternative: a change of government on 26 November. We have already committed; we will make sure the 000 service works. We will have the staff required to answer your calls. We will ensure we will work with the unions, staff, management, whoever it takes, to ensure that we can change the training, change the operations and the structure so when one group—police, ambulance or fire services—are quieter and another has a surge, staff can transfer across through systems so every call is answered within that 5 seconds, because that is what Victorians deserve. That is what everyone deserves.

When it comes to Victoria Police, the Police Association Victoria were calling for more police—1500—and this budget has only delivered 502. That is one-third of what the request was from the Police Association. There are staff shortages throughout Victoria Police. Laverton North police station has been closed for eight weeks. When asked at PAEC, the government could not tell us how many 24-hour stations were not offering customer service—front counter service—for an 8-hour period or more in the last eight to 10 weeks. They could not let us know how many were closed. And now we are hearing today that Victoria Police are being called out more and more for the mental health crisis we have got here in our state.

Now, I have worked on the van. You go out and you support the paramedics here in Victoria when required for someone who is agitated or violent or when there are safety risks. But now they are being called out to more and more mental health emergencies and mental health cases because there is a lack of ambulances and they have to then transport them to a hospital. This is taking vital resources from Victoria Police off the roads. We have committed—26 November—that we will work with the Police Association Victoria to ensure that we can get the police back out where they need to be, protecting Victorians. We will rebuild the service to make sure that we can work with people on the road and have vans where they need to be, protecting people and preventing crime here in the state.

Beaconsfield railway station—I have campaigned for Beaconsfield railway station for a long time, and the failure to put money in to upgrade that station is appalling. We are not asking for a new, modern, super railway station; we are asking for minor upgrades at the moment and some cover so people do not have to wait out in the sun and the rain. At the moment people living with a disability have to walk or go in a wheelchair down to the other end of the train station to get onto a train or off the train. It does not matter the temperature, if it is bucketing down rain or 40 degrees, they have to wait with no cover at the other end of the railway station, and that is simply just not fair. It would not take much to make sure there is cover down that end of the station so people living with a disability have the same protections from the environment that everyone deserves when they go to a railway station.

The toilets are closed. We have asked for them to be opened for a long time. The government’s answer was: ‘It’s not a manned station. You can’t have the toilets open because it’s not a manned station’. Yet in Hallam they managed to put toilets onto a platform at an unmanned station only 12 months before they knocked the station down and rebuilt the whole station. To be honest, we would be happy to take the second-hand toilets and put them down. We have already got the plumbing there. Put them at the Beaconsfield station because people are already highlighting the issues of having no facilities at the

Beaconsfield railway station. An alternative, on 26 November, is that we will ensure that those people living with a disability at Beaconsfield railway station are treated fairly, and we will have toilets opened at that railway station.

FRV and CFA—we know there was a campaign from the government to form FRV by merging CFA and MFB, and we now know that it was more about the political spin than outcomes that they aimed to achieve. Point 1: the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), after you have merged the two systems, still has a division A and a division B, effectively MFB and CFA. An extra staff member at Vermont on a day shift cannot go across to Boronia, just 11 kilometres away, if they are one short. Boronia has to get someone from the division B contract, not division A. That means Boronia—and this has happened—has had a person travel from Warrnambool to come and do overtime in Boronia whilst a person at Vermont is a spare on the shift and cannot literally travel the 11 kilometres to support them.

We have seen in this EBA—because it is so poorly written in the cost impact—positions where you can travel up to Mildura from Pakenham to do overtime and you get 650 kilometres assistance for your travel and you get overtime rates for 6½ hours for your travel. You get that on the way up and the way back for a night shift. If you are doing two night shifts, you get that four times—up, back, up, back—even though there are only 10 hours between the shifts and you would not be able to travel back. What is worse, there are occasions where this has happened, and the person getting all of those allowances and overtime hopped on a chartered plane and flew up at the expense of FRV and still got all those allowances. It is such a poorly written document, and it is still creating the division that this government promised to fix. It is actually worse; the division in there now is worse. And until you have one EBA that covers all, you are never going to see changes. It is costing Victorians a fortune. On that, we asked in the parliamentary committee hearings what community safety outcomes have improved to justify a \$915 million budget, up from \$600 million. The answer? ‘We’ll have to take that on notice’, because no-one has any idea if there are any improvements.

Let us have a look at the one improvement that should happen, structural fires confined to room of origin. The actual for 2020–21 was 83.9 per cent. The expected outcome this year is 78 per cent. They are now getting to fires and they are going outside the room of origin, which is the key point to clarify and justify what fire services do. Also, the response times are dropping from 85.1 per cent when they reach their target to 81 per cent across Victoria. That is an increase in the amount of time it takes to get out to protect Victorians. We are spending more money for worse outcomes. This is not the firefighters’ fault; this is simply an error of the government in the way they have set up FRV. We will fix it. FRV needs to make sure that they can get out the door on time, every time, and we will work with whoever it takes to put community safety first. This budget is highlighted by the fact that it is more spin and no delivery, not just for my electorate but for all the services across Victoria.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnait) (11:21): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and speak on this year’s Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. I cannot start my contribution today without reflecting on the member for Gembrook’s contribution and the beginning of his speech. It makes me so angry that I feel almost as red-faced as the jacket I am wearing today. For him to stand in this place and talk about growing communities and our Andrews Labor government not delivering for growing communities—well, let me tell you about my growing community in Wyndham. We have the equivalent, just like the member for Cranbourne talked about this morning, of four classrooms full of kids being born each and every single week. That is about 110 kids being born each and every single week. This government has spent billions of dollars in Melbourne’s outer west—billions. We have spent \$1.8 billion on western roads upgrades, and we are not stopping there. There is still more work to do. But to stand here and say that communities like mine have a choice on 26 November—let me tell you about my community over the last nine years of a federal coalition government and what they delivered in the City of Wyndham: absolutely nothing. Nine years of nothing. Not one project did they deliver, let alone the funding that they ripped from this state.

During the federal election that has just unrolled in the City of Wyndham—the Liberal candidate, what did he offer voters? The Libs running in Gellibrand and Lalor, what did they offer? They offered

nothing. They did not have one policy. It was something that the newly re-elected federal member for Lalor and I were talking about—not one policy, not one local commitment announced. Imagine that—a guy running to be a federal representative of one of the fastest growing corridors in this country and not one local commitment. Thank God that the newly re-elected member for Lalor has received a commitment that the Albanese Labor government is now going to build a \$57 million WestLink to deal with the traffic in one of Melbourne's fastest growing municipalities. Not one thing was delivered under a federal coalition government over the last nine years, and now you have the member for Gembrook saying, 'Well, people in growing communities have a choice on 26 November'. Based on what? Based on what their mates have delivered over nine years of a federal Liberal government or what the Victorian Liberal Party think they can deliver for our growth areas, Melbourne's outer west and Melbourne's western suburbs? There is nothing that they will deliver, because the last time they were in government they delivered nothing for people in Melbourne's western suburbs. Let me tell you, come 26 November people will remember that, and they will also remember the billions and billions of dollars worth of infrastructure alone—the bricks and mortar alone—that is going into Melbourne's western suburbs.

Just on election night I was driving to the newly re-elected federal member for Fraser's afterparty. We were driving through Footscray and my son said, 'Oh, my God, Mummy. What's that?'. It was all lit up. Do you know what it was? It was Footscray Hospital under construction. It was massive, and it was wonderful to be able to say to my son on the way to an election victory party for the federal member for Fraser, 'This is what Labor governments do, not only in Victoria but in this nation'. That is why it was so important on the weekend to finally have an Albanese Labor government elected.

Now I have got that out of my system I want to talk about the incredible budget that has just been handed down. This is the fourth budget and the fourth time I have stood in this place and talked about the many, many wonderful things that the Andrews Labor government is delivering for all Victorians and in particular my part in the outer west, in Tarneit. I have to say, in reflecting on the budget this year, it suggests to me that Victoria is successfully bouncing back. No-one here in this chamber would dispute that the past couple of years have been extremely tough, very, very tough, on Victorians, but what we are seeing now—and I have said all the way through this global pandemic, this one-in-100-year health crisis—is constantly the resilience of Victorians shining through. On this side of the house we have time and time again stood here in our darkest moments talking about that resilience, which is what helps Victoria stand apart from other states and makes us such an amazing, amazing place to live and raise our kids. As of today Victoria's economy is 8.7 per cent larger than where it was when we were re-elected in 2018, and unemployment is at 4 per cent, a record low. In regional Victoria the unemployment rate is 3.2 per cent, a full percentage point below the national average.

But there is still so much more to do. Like the Premier and the Treasurer have said, now is not the time to wind back spending, right when we see and we know that it is working. Unlike those opposite, we on this side of the house know that harsh, slash-and-burn policy of savage cuts and winding back on services will do nothing to help Victorians' resilience. It is not going to benefit our economy, not one bit, and I say this for my community. If this is the opposition's approach, then it is communities like mine in Melbourne's outer west that will pay the price of an austerity-focused Liberal government here in Victoria. That is something communities like mine will think about and reflect upon by the time we come to the election at the end of this year, because as much as people have been hurting over the last few years, we cannot and we will not go back to the paralysis that defined that previous Liberal government last time they were in power.

I want to take a lot of the time that I have got left today to talk about our record investment in education, because it is record spending that we are doing in the heart of my community, and I truly believe that this is one of the Andrews Labor government's greatest achievements and greatest legacies. In 2018 we committed to Victoria's reputation as the Education State. I always laugh about that, because in my house we talk about the Education State a lot. My mum lives way up in northern New South Wales, and when she talks about the education my Emily and Leo get here in Victoria she always refers to us

as the Education State, as I think she really does truly believe my kids will be receiving a better education down here in Victoria than they would have received in New South Wales.

Over 100 new schools over eight years and a slew of school upgrades and improvements is what we have been getting on and delivering. Tarneit and Wyndham in particular have been among the proudest recipients of this commitment. In this term alone seven new schools have been built in Wyndham, including three in Tarneit. It seems like a lifetime ago, I have to say, that I opened the first of these schools. We had Dohertys Creek P–9 College in Trug, then we went on to Davis Creek P–6 in Tarneit and then I was able to open the beautiful Garrang Wilam P–6 in Truganina. Just this year Dohertys Creek P–9 opened their doors to students in years 7 to 9 for the first time. It was a very proud moment for me personally because this is a wonderful school and parents really wanted to see that second stage delivered. We funded it, we built it and it is now open.

But we are not stopping there. Another two primary schools are set to open in Tarneit next year. In the last budget we funded land acquisition for a new primary school and a new high school in Tarneit, and I am very pleased to say that both these schools, Tarneit North primary school and Riverdale secondary school, have received construction funding in this budget and are going to be opening their doors to students and families in 2024. But they are not the only ones, I am very pleased to say, because in Trug \$41 million has been allocated towards building the junior campus for Truganina North secondary school and additional funding will see a brand-new primary school, Truganina North primary school, also built at the same site. Both will now open their doors in 2024. Tarneit, the suburb, is an incredibly fast-growing postcode, and right beside it, less than a kilometre away, sits the almighty Truganina, growing just as fast.

The last two schools in particular have been a major triumph for my community, with land purchased in Elements estate last year that would have otherwise become housing, and my community did not want to see that. It was land that was set aside for an independent school, and they could not find a purchaser. The developer was going to go ahead and put more houses on that site, and this is a really big site—because remember that we are going to have an onsite kinder, a primary school and the junior campus of a massive high school. This is a really big site. A lot of houses would have been built on this site. I am very, very, very thankful to the Minister for Education for not only listening to my advocacy but, more importantly, listening to the voices of families in my electorate—listening to the families and people in Melbourne’s outer west. I am very pleased to be saying that not only will these families in Elements estate and Truganina be getting their secondary school at the site but they will have the primary school, which is going to be brought online years and years and years ahead of schedule, and we are also going to get that onsite kinder, which will just be next door or there on the site of the primary school.

You see, in my community—and I am sure this is the case in growth suburbs and growth corridors all across this state and all across this country, which the member for Gembrook, if he really understood what it was like to be a member of a growth community, would know—more and more people are saying that we need to try and get ahead of the curve; we are in catch-up mode, and we need to get ahead of the curve. And to get ahead of the curve means governments have to listen to communities, they have to invest and they have to fund projects not just for the here and now but also for the future forecasted population, which is what those opposite failed to do for four years the last time they were in government.

In 2010 we knew that there would be a population boom here in Melbourne and indeed in my community in Wyndham, and yet what did they do for the four years they were in power? Absolutely nothing. In fact not one new school was built in my electorate. The first school that was built when we came to government was two years after—they had nothing on the shelf—and we opened that school two years after coming into government, in 2016. That is what the Victorian Liberal Party will deliver for people in these growth corridors, and that is what they will fail to deliver for families in Melbourne’s outer west. I am very proud to tell my community time and time again that we have built more schools in Wyndham than anywhere else in Victoria. Ten have been built over the last six years

in Tarneit alone. So when I saw this number 10 I thought, 'I kind of feel like we're missing something here', so I went and did a recount. Isn't that a wonderful problem to have—to have to recount your schools because you have so many. When I did the recount I realised, 'Yes, indeed, we are missing one school', and that is because we do not have an open date yet. And that is because in this budget we announced land acquisition for another primary school for Tarneit in the fast-growing Tarneit North, which will be Riverdale North primary school. In coming years that too will be open to deal with the four classrooms of kids that are being born each and every single week.

In the 90 seconds that I have left, based on our population growth and the number of kids being born some of the things that we need to make sure of are that, yes, our schools, our roads and our rail are all able to keep up with our growing community, but we also need to make sure that our health services and health infrastructure can cope with our growth. That is why I was very, very pleased to see that this budget delivered \$109.6 million for a doubling of the capacity of the emergency department at Werribee Mercy Hospital. This is very much needed. It is the second upgrade that we have undertaken. \$109.6 million—that is government delivering for people in Melbourne's growing communities and in Melbourne's outer west. Werribee Mercy is a much-loved hospital for people in my community. That is because a lot of us are going there and having our babies—110 babies are being born each and every single week in my community. That is significant investment on top of the billions of dollars that we are injecting into Wyndham alone and Melbourne's outer west. I am very proud that this government is delivering for families in my community. We will continue to deliver through this budget, and if we are lucky and privileged enough to be re-elected in November this year, I have no doubt that the Andrews Labor government will continue to deliver for people in Melbourne's west.

Mr Dimopoulos: Here comes the negativity.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:36): Yes, member for Oakleigh, I am going to start with negativity. I normally would say it gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the budget, but I have done 7982 days of Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), or so it seems, and so unlike most members of the house I have probably just about had enough of the budget. But having made that comment, I am actually going to start with some of the positives that are delivered by good local members who advocate for their community. In spite of a Labor government that is only focused on metropolitan Melbourne, sometimes we do get a few things. There are a couple of good things that I certainly am excited about in the budget, one being the Yinnar Primary School—\$7.3 million for Yinnar, which is going to be a new part of my electorate. I suspect the government forgot and did not realise that Yinnar is not in the electorate of Morwell anymore and in fact is now in the electorate of Gippsland South, but I had already written to the Minister for Education about this issue and I was very pleased to see that funding.

There is \$3.7 million for the South Gippsland Specialist School, and I was interested to hear some of my colleagues comment yesterday that Heather Braden at South Gippsland Specialist School, like when I rang her, had no idea that there was funding coming—there was no particular project—but of course was very, very grateful, so that is good. With the Sale and District Specialist School, which was initially funded by us in government—we actually did fund schools when we were in government—and topped up by the current government, we will have two excellent specialist schools in Gippsland South.

There is money for an overtaking lane on the Strzelecki Highway between Morwell and Mirboo North, which I am a bit perplexed about given the lack of availability of spots to put one in. There is already one good, long one there, funded by my predecessor Peter Ryan.

The McLoughlins Beach jetty—and I will give credit to the Minister for Ports and Freight on this one because this is an issue that has been going for a long time—has seen a big community campaign from the McLoughlins Beach community, which is not a wealthy community and certainly not in any way, shape or form advantaged and yet has fought very hard for this and has finally achieved \$1.5 million to rebuild that jetty. That is the good.

But of course even in my electorate there were plenty of other things that were missed out. For five years now I have been campaigning for Foster Primary School to have a full rebuild. We took that to the last election, and there has been nothing in the last four budgets now. There are the Coal Creek bends on the South Gippsland Highway and likewise what is known as ‘kamikaze corner’ in the middle of Leongatha, which is a debacle and requires stage 2 of the Leongatha heavy vehicle bypass to address the intersection there, which is really a very ordinary intersection. There is no money for that.

Sale College received planning money last year, but we have heard nothing since on what is actually happening with the consolidation of Sale College onto one campus, preferably a greenfield site. There was an early flurry of activity, but there has been nothing since and certainly no funding announced in this year’s budget.

The member for Gembrook and others have mentioned CFA brigades. After seven years of campaigning, the CFA board has indeed identified capital spending for Yarram, Foster and Mirboo North stations, but there is still not a single cent coming from the Andrews Labor government to support those upgrades that are crucially needed for our volunteers.

And of course the perennial one, the Traralgon bypass—we finally, finally got the Andrews Labor government to commit funding to match the federal government funding for the Princes Highway duplication between Traralgon and Sale. That is now well and truly underway, the final three stages of that important project, which leads us to the next important project on the Princes Highway through Gippsland, and that is the Traralgon bypass. The government did provide some funding for community engagement and further planning back in 2017, and it has gone nowhere. Nothing has happened since then, and to be honest it is an issue that the people of the Valley and eastern and central Gippsland now treat as a bit of a laugh whenever you mention the Traralgon bypass, because it has been on the drawing board for decades and nothing has happened. There is certainly no further movement towards it in this year’s budget despite the fact that there are 10, soon to be 11, sets of traffic lights going through Traralgon, huge congestion for the people and businesses of Traralgon but also huge delays for people like me and people in my electorate heading further east. Yet there is nothing there for it.

I want to turn now to the bigger picture, and as said, I have had plenty of time perusing the budget papers over the last couple of weeks in my role as a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I want to talk a bit about the spin that goes with this budget. This budget is a budget for an election campaign. It is not a budget to address the issues that Victorians need.

I will start with health, because it is most critically the most important issue already. We have got a health crisis in this state. We have got an ambulance crisis and a 000 crisis, and the government papers over things to make itself look better. I will start with the claim that there is a \$12 billion investment in this budget for health. Let us have a look at it. In budget paper 3, pages 54 and 55, there is \$3.5 billion of that supposed \$12 billion investment there in the 2021–22 column. So these are significant funds, but they are funds that have already been spent. The Premier tried to argue back at me, ‘Are you suggesting, Mr O’Brien, that we need to go out and revaccinate people? Because that is money that was spent on vaccination programs and the like’. Well, exactly, Premier. But you are now counting it towards your \$12 billion investment in the health system: \$3.5 billion of that so-called \$12 billion has already been spent. I might add—and the budget papers confirm this at note (a) and note (b)—that almost all those 13 line items in 2021–22 are 50 per cent funded by the commonwealth. So it is spin to suggest that there is an enormous amount being spent this year, because there is the first \$3.5 billion of it that has in fact already been spent in 2021–22.

We can then turn to assets, and I will not go to into it in detail, because others have as well. The Barwon women’s and children’s hospital and the new Melton hospital both have TBC there. Everyone will jump in and say, ‘Oh, but you’ve got to look at the total estimated investment at the end’, so \$1.5 billion supposedly for those two projects listed there as TEI, which means it is not actually in the budget papers. I can give you an example. If you go back to 2016–17, there was a similar project listed in the assets for the health department for a new proton beam therapy project. It was in the budget papers, it

was all TBC with a TEI at the end and it never happened. So it is very easy to get out there and say that we are spending all this money on health, but in fact there is \$5 billion of that proposal that is not actually in the budget papers or has already been spent.

I want to go on to highlight some of these things. If you go to budget paper 3, page 220, which is the output summary for the Department of Health, there are a hell of a lot of brackets in the final column. We know what brackets mean; brackets mean reductions in funding. That is cuts. One of the ones most particularly that I mentioned in the PAEC hearings is a \$24 million cut to dental services. If you go to page 239 of budget paper 3, it shows that because of that \$24 million budget cut there will be 44 000 less Victorians this year getting dental treatment through the public health system—44 000.

I thought it was quite telling that when I raised this with the Premier in the budget hearings the best he could do was point to budget cuts by the federal coalition government in 1996. That was the Premier's defence on these. That is all he had. And I must say when he came up with that I thought, 'Well, that's as good as it gets from us'. The Premier—

Ms Ryan: I was 10.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The member for Euroa was 10 when that happened. I think I did reply to him, 'What happened under the Fraser government, and what happened under the Menzies government?'. I mean, for the Premier to be trying to defend himself by going back to 1996—that is 26 years ago—just shows how much focus the government has on politics at the expense of outcomes. That is a significant cut that will hurt Victorians who are in need of public dental services.

We can go through the budget papers, and I would venture to suggest that I probably know these papers better than most people, perhaps with the exception—maybe not—of the Treasurer. But—

Members interjecting.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I know them pretty well. Yes, I absolutely know them pretty well. From listening to those opposite making their commentary on the budget, they certainly have not actually picked up the budget papers. It is very easy to get your briefing pack from the Premier's office—all the nice things in your electorate and all the talking points about what it is. Have any of them actually opened up the budget papers and had a look at what they say?

I mentioned health—page 220, the health output. The revised figure from 2021–22 to the budget this year goes from \$27 billion to \$25 billion. That is a \$2 billion cut overall to the health budget. It is there in black and white.

Mr Eren: It's federal.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, it is not federal. It is the state budget papers, member for Lara. Have a look at the budget papers.

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions—there is a 31.2 per cent, \$80 million cut from the regional development budget. I think the member for Murray Plains would tell me it was a 50 per cent cut on last year. Is that correct? So that is two years in a row of massive cuts to regional development spending. And on that, the government that supposedly has a commitment to my region and to the Latrobe Valley Authority gives the Latrobe Valley Authority \$7.5 million out of that. We discovered last week that \$5 million of that goes to continuing to pay the public servants. There is no grant money left for anyone to try and establish new businesses and new industries in the Latrobe Valley. We have now been told that some of the money has been given for the new CEO, the former Labor candidate for McMillan, to develop a transition plan. Well, hallelujah! Here we are five years after the LVA was established and now, just now, they are being asked to develop a transition plan for Latrobe Valley. That is just a disgrace.

We can go through other parts of the budget. The agriculture portfolio has been cut \$46 million on last year. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning—this is one that is interesting in the

context of the weekend's election—a 16 per cent cut to climate change programs and a 36 per cent cut to Solar Victoria. So all of the spin we have heard—

Ms Ryan: That's \$100 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. These are actually in the budget papers. You could open them up and have a look—I could even tell you: page 168, members opposite—because you need to have a look at some of this stuff because it seems that you are just taking the spin.

We see housing assistance on page 197—a 19.5 per cent cut. We see the Office for Disability—a 50 per cent cut. We heard in the public hearings on Monday the minister fluffing around with his papers, and eventually he told us that that was a mistake, that in fact some money for the Office for Disability was put in a different line item. It makes you wonder: can you trust anything in these budget papers, because there are so many mistakes?

Then the one that is particularly close to my heart of course is the road asset management budget, which again had a 4 per cent cut. When our roads are at their worst after two wet years and two years of cuts by this government to road asset management, it is disgraceful that the government is not putting more money into this.

But there is a bright light. If you turn to page 313, never fear, because the Department of Premier and Cabinet has got an 18.5 per cent increase in funding for itself—so the Premier's office itself. More public servants, less boots on the ground but more suits in Treasury Place to look after the Premier—an 18.5 per cent increase and the cuts just highlight how badly this government has got its priorities wrong. I think if you want to know anything more about that, have a look at the front page of the *Herald Sun* this morning—

Mr Dimopoulos: Oh, yes, a reputable paper, that one.

Mr D O'BRIEN: with the 'Hospital bedlam' story, where people from the Australian Medical Association, a nursing and midwifery training organisation and the hospitals association—all of them—highlight how this government is failing Victorians in a crisis. And if you actually happen to read it, member for Oakleigh, you will find all the comments talking about how this was a problem before COVID and how wrong it is for politicians and the Premier and the Minister for Health to say 'This is just COVID' and 'We are struggling to cope because of COVID'. Have a look at it.

Mr Dimopoulos: Mate, I'm not going to read the *Herald Sun* and pretend it is fact.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, open up the budget papers and you might learn something. This is a budget of spin and for an election, not for the people of Victoria.

Mr EREN (Lara) (11:51): I am delighted and pleased to speak to the house today in relation to the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. I feel like offering some cheese and crackers to the member for Gippsland South for all the whines that he did through that contribution. It is nothing but whining and whingeing, and it is all doom and gloom. We have heard it all before. Every budget for the last eight budgets we have heard the whining that goes on. For what it is worth, it is in good hands. It is in great hands under the Treasurer and of course the Premier and all of the other ministers that worked so hard to present a budget under difficult circumstances, and that is exactly what has happened over the last couple of budgets in relation to COVID and dealing with COVID.

One thing we have learned through this period is that our health and wellbeing is the most important thing. I think COVID has taught us that. And look at our track record of investments. Of course when we look at public health there is no government like our government that invests in public health. And the same goes for public education. We are the party that leads the way in terms of understanding the needs of everyday Victorians and when you consider the investments that we are making strategically.

I listened to 3AW this morning. Danny Hill was on, and Neil Mitchell was pressing him to obviously raise concerns about what is going on. I totally get the angst that is associated with some of the services

in relation to ambulance services, and my heart bleeds for those people that are affected by it, the deaths that are occurring as a result of it. But one thing that Danny Hill did say was that the ambulance response times were at their worst—these are not my words, this was Danny Hill saying it—after the 2014 election and between that time of 2010 and 2014 and were at their best in 2019, the best response times. Again, these are not my words, this is Danny Hill saying it. And he said obviously COVID has had an impact. Now, Neil Mitchell did not know what to say to that except to say, obviously, ‘What can be done about it?’.

What can be done about it? We have got an action plan and a track record in relation to dealing with difficult circumstances in relation to health and wellbeing. So when you listen to the opposition, they are not disputing the fact that \$12 billion is being invested; they are disputing the fact that some of it has already been invested. It is not a matter of the delays that are occurring. It is not of our doing. When they were in government it was their choice to cut back on these services. It was not our choice. It was a choice of obviously dealing with the once-in-a-century pandemic where not only emergency services but ambulance service officers were being affected by COVID. So there was a shortage in relation to people in those highly skilled areas who were sick themselves and being exposed to COVID and obviously had to be treated accordingly, and other associated issues.

Now, I just want to get back to this: as a state, prior to COVID, for what it is worth, this was the best state, and it still is the best state when you look at it in terms of jobs growth, in terms of economic growth and in terms of being the sporting capital, the major events capital and the arts and culture capital—all of these things that make us a great state in which to live, work and raise your family. Of course the announcement of the Commonwealth Games is a massively big deal, particularly in the regions. It is going to boost the economy. It has already created so much excitement in the regions, and I know that the 18 members of Parliament that represent the broader regions in Victoria are indeed very excited, like their constituencies are, in relation to it.

I just want to get back to my electorate. I have seen massive investments in my electorate. For all the talk that goes on about some electorates that are blessed with having a huge majority in terms of two-party preferred, I am one of them. Some call it a safe seat. I do not see any seat as a safe seat. But there have been strategic investments not because of the area of constituency and how they vote but on the basis of need. That is a fair government, and now it is going to get fairer, obviously, under an Albanese government, because we have been denied so much funding. I know from the committee reports that we have handed down under the Economy and Infrastructure Committee—it is a bipartisan report that we handed down, which includes members of the Liberal and National parties—we all collectively agreed that we were not getting our fair share of the GST revenue. That report is still there.

The Morrison government certainly denied us a lot of funding, and hopefully with the new Albanese government that will be rectified to a certain extent. It would add value to our investments in this state and add value to the extent of their listening to what the state government is saying about where they would like their investment. It was no good saying they have allocated—apparently they have looked for this—the \$4 billion that they were claiming was for the east–west. I do not think it is there. They were talking about the east–west, but we never went to an election with an east–west promise. We went to an election with removal of level crossings. We had a target of removing those level crossings, and we were unanimously voted in at the last election, from what I know.

Of course, in dealing with some of the federal issues and trying to play politics, wedge politics, look what happened to Josh. I think there are a number of seats in Kooyong and Goldstein and other areas where they have actually realised that talking down their own state does not work for them. Talking down the state in terms of how we are dealing with COVID does not work for them. So if members of the opposition would like to continue with that trend of talking down the state, by all means they are welcome to it. It has not proven them right so far, and we have seen that through the federal election.

My electorate over the past few budgets has done quite well. The early parenting centre, the children’s rehabilitation centre and the acute mental health beds, all in the McKellar Centre, which is in my

electorate, show millions of dollars worth of investments happening in the areas of need. I am also pleased that the drug and rehabilitation centre in Corio is now operational with 30 beds. Those people that are dealing with addiction can now be treated with a 24/7 nurse on site. They are things that we need, and these are happening in my electorate. I am so pleased about that.

So looking at some of the issues relating to the budget, I just want to point out that the Victorian budget 2022–23 will invest over \$12 billion to put patients first with a pandemic repair plan for more staff, better hospitals and obviously first-class care. Our health workers have copped the brunt of COVID, and they still continue to do so. It is still amongst us. COVID is not gone. COVID is still here. Our healthcare workers have been on the front line—there is no question of that—of this pandemic, and we know how important it is that we support them going forward and into the future.

We are backing our healthcare workers with training and the extra pair of helping hands they need so that they can give you the best of care, and obviously that is very important. That is why the budget is delivering funding to train and hire up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses. We will provide 1125 new registered undergraduate nursing positions and 75 new registered undergraduate students in midwifery roles over the next two years. We are also recruiting up to 2000 expat and international healthcare workers through a global workforce recruitment drive.

That is one of the challenges I think everyone is experiencing right across the nation, these shortages of staff. As much as governments invest money into health care, if we do not have the staff then it becomes extremely difficult to implement some of these strategies and policies that we have to deal with COVID and the recovery from COVID. That demand is right across the nation, and demand for emergency services is at an all-time high. Our 000 call takers and dispatchers are dealing with unprecedented call volumes, and as I said earlier, even the ambulance union agrees that our response times were the best ever in state history in 2019—up until COVID, obviously. But it was the worst between 2010 and 2014, and that was by choice of the opposition, or then government, to make those cuts to those crucial areas.

That is why we are delivering another 90 paramedics, which means that we have added 790 extra paramedics to the workforce since we came to government. To help our frontline workers reach Victorians who need help faster we are investing \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase 000 call-taking and dispatch capacity for 000 services, including ambulances, and training more operators to allocate calls across the state. This budget invests in regional health because regional health obviously matters to many of us, including my electorate.

Again I go back to the point of dealing with some of those issues with emergency services, particularly the ambulance services. You wish you had a magic wand where you could just say, ‘Let’s just implement the \$12 billion of investment that we’re doing now—voila!’. It does not happen. The opposition can play the politics on this, and they continue to do that. They were probably hoping that it would work leading up to the federal election. It did not work. I think people understand and are pragmatic about how these things work. They need time to be implemented as we go forward.

As much as the member for Gippsland South denies the fact, we have made the commitment of \$500 million to the Barwon women’s and children’s hospital redevelopment so that new parents and young kids can get the world-class paediatric treatment and specialist care they need without having to travel to Melbourne, which is obviously very important for not only the environment—you do not have to travel in your car or have congestion issues relating to coming into Melbourne—but also getting the services you need at the location that you live in, which is such an important part of what we do as a government.

This budget delivers better cancer care for patients in Geelong, with a new radiotherapy linear accelerator for Barwon Health. We are also providing \$9 million to regional women’s health services and a further \$11.5 million to deliver group parenting sessions to support families with children

struggling with their mental health, because no matter where they live, every Victorian and their family deserve the best of health care, and that is what this government, the Andrews government, is doing.

My electorate of Lara has been a big winner in this state budget. We have committed some \$16 million towards a very important road in my electorate which is very congested. The Lara suburb is growing. It is bursting at the seams with population. The Geelong region generally is the fastest growing regional area in the nation, and obviously associated with that come congestion issues. So there is \$16 million funding towards upgrading the six-way intersection with traffic signals to improve safety and connectivity for local families. Nelson Park specialist needs school has \$6.4 million, that wonderful school, to replace relocatable buildings with new permanent ones at Illinois Avenue in Corio. Hamlyn Views School will also benefit from a \$1.27 million investment, upgrading old playgrounds and basketball courts to give kids better sporting and play areas. There is \$3.5 million for the Geelong Project education support program for kids at risk of falling behind across Geelong, so no young person is left behind. We are bringing the Commonwealth Games, as I mentioned earlier, to the regions and obviously the associated excitement with that and the investment that will happen over the next three to four years to accommodate those games. This is a good one, too: we know how important pets are to our health and wellbeing, and we are providing Cherished Pets in Geelong with \$465 000 in funding so they can provide additional boarding facilities and critical wellness care for cats and dogs, which is so important. And we are providing a one-off \$250 payment to all Victorian households that use the Victorian Energy Compare website.

There is so much to this budget. Again, it is a wonderful budget, dealing with the issues at hand—dealing with healthcare needs, dealing with our education system, dealing with policing issues, dealing with all of those issues that matter to Victorians. I commend this to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Ovens Valley, can I acknowledge the Honourable Kay Setches in the gallery, a former minister in the Cain and Kirner governments.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:06): I am pleased to rise and make a contribution on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and a budget that, as we know, is largely focused on Melbourne. As we hear those on the other side, on the government benches, talk about what a great budget it is, in some respects for them it is, because many projects and infrastructure are being built in Melbourne and are an advantage to them. But certainly in regional Victoria there are some massive gaps, some massive holes, and we see the waste that is going on in Melbourne. The budget is about waste. The Andrews government continues to throw money around like a drunken sailor on project after project and cost blowout after cost blowout. The overruns and stuff-ups are just mind boggling, and this budget continues that.

If Victorian families ran their family budget just like the Andrews government does, they would be bankrupt. No business, no family, can waste money day in, day out without it coming back to bite them on the backside somewhere down the track, and this will happen to Victoria somewhere down the track. We have been on this wilful, reckless, irresponsible spending frenzy for years, and there needs to be some financial understanding that we cannot go from the debt we have—\$167 billion—and not be accountable somewhere down the track, particularly when interest rates rise. And there is no end in sight.

Victorians need to be able to live within their means. As I say, every family, every business and every community group have to. You simply cannot spend more than you make year after year. Where will the Andrews government's ministers be in 10 years time while hardworking Victorians are left paying the bill? The Andrews government's ministers will be retired in luxury while Victorians pick up the tab. Low interest rates have certainly supported Labor's insatiable appetite to spend, to think big and to want to be visionary, but what will happen when interest rates go up? There is no vision there. As I say, a normal family, a normal business will say, 'There comes a time when we've got to just pull back a bit. We just need to rein things in a bit. We need to be careful, and we need to tighten the belt

and make sure that we are not overcommitting what we can afford'. There are two things that Labor cannot do. They cannot stop spending, and the other thing they cannot do is they cannot remember. I guarantee that none of them, not one of those ministers or backbenchers, will be able to recall down the track how Victoria got into this mess. They simply will not remember. But the rest of us will, and we will be left carrying the can.

Victoria needs to recover and rebuild. Victoria needs to say that our dreams and visions and opportunities for the future are great, but we also need to maintain what we have got. Maintenance is the cornerstone of everything, whether you have got a vehicle, whether you own a factory, whether you have got a piece of equipment or whether it is your own family. If you do not maintain what you have got, it slips away very quickly. It does not matter whether it is your lawn mower, car or bicycle, one day it will let you down if you do not maintain the infrastructure that you have got. And that day is coming around very quickly. Victoria's road maintenance, cut; Victoria's 000, failing; Victoria's healthcare system is in crisis, Victoria's education system is damaged and teachers, nurses, ambos and police officers are screaming out saying, 'Our system is broken'.

The federal election results just in demonstrated beyond doubt that people care about the environment, and the message is loud and clear—and I support that view. I genuinely hope that the federal government works within its means to ensure that in the future our children and grandchildren and generations to come can all live in a stable environment and a sustainable environment. While the climate concerns will be addressed—I feel sure that will be the case—we will be left to fix the roads, we will be left to fix the 000 crisis and we will be left to fix our kids' education. But who will be there to provide for the elderly? Well, certainly not the Andrews government and certainly not the silent backbenchers that continue to spout what is going on in their electorates but are not putting their hands up to support all of Victoria. It is all 'What's in it for me?'.

Who will clean up the financial mess of the unfinished projects, those half-baked schemes? Well, we will have to. Whether or not it is the Liberal-Nationals backbenchers like me, people will still be here to try and clean up the mess that has been made by the wilful and reckless spending. We know there has to come a time to steady the ship, finish the task at hand, regroup and bring debt under control. Victoria's debt is unsustainable. On the current interest rates we can tread water. We can do that while interest rates are like they are, but when the interest rate goes to 7 per cent—I am not even talking the 17 per cent that we all saw once upon a time—we will all be in a world of pain. In places like Victoria with massive debt we are all going to be spending far too much money on debt interest compared to what we are on infrastructure. There comes a time when we need to look out for the future. If it gets too hot in the kitchen, where will Labor be? Well, again I say, they will not be able to recall how we got into this mess. We need to recover and rebuild, and Victoria needs to take financial control and financial responsibility, and we are not getting it at the moment. We are getting excuses and we are getting denial. Victoria, as I say, needs to steady its ship and get its finances under control before it is too late.

There was a vote for climate change in the federal election, and Victoria needs to change as well. We simply cannot rely on those who got us into this mess to get us out of it. Sadly, many on the government benches cannot even see the mess we are in. As has been mentioned by other speakers in this chamber, they have not even read the budget papers. They have read the section that suits them, but they do not understand what that means to all of Victoria. Regional Victoria is home to 25 per cent of Victorians, and yet in the budget we were short-changed again, with a litany of cuts in road maintenance, health, dentistry, agriculture spend and regional development.

Let us start with health. While the government brags about the \$12 billion spend in health, my colleague the member for Gippsland South mentioned that, of the \$12 billion, \$5 billion has already been spent, and if you home in a little bit closer you will find there is only \$1 billion going to regional Victoria. So that is not a quarter. That is certainly not a quarter of \$12 billion in any language you speak—\$1 billion is just not enough.

There is a \$24 million cut to dentistry. I had a lady come in from Myrtleford just the other day. She waited three years to get a filling—three years. She finally got the filling, and a month later it popped out. Now, I get that; that is what happens—sometimes fillings pop out. She went back to see the dentist again and they said, ‘No, you’ve got to wait three years now to get that filling put back in’. How can we expect these wait times to be reduced if you are going to cut another \$24 million in funding out of dentistry? The public system needs to remain strong. We are simply wasting far too much money on projects that need to be built but can be built over time. Not everything has to happen today, this year or next year. We have got to live within our means.

There is a further \$47.8 million cut out of agriculture. Again, we have got a junior minister who simply either does not stand up for her portfolio or just does not care, but another \$47.8 million is cut. So with programs like our fruit fly program in Cobram, Shepparton and Mooroopna, the government spout that fruit fly is a shared responsibility between the government and the broader community, and then they go and take \$2.5 million out. As I say, you cannot listen to what Labor says, you have got to look at what they do, and there is another example. The fruit fly in our region starts in the towns. The farming communities do a great job of controlling it, but certainly it starts in a veggie patch in Cobram or a plum tree out the back of Berrigan or Barooga, and all of a sudden it is on farms. It is a shared responsibility, but the government cutting another \$2.5 million just does not help that.

Regional development—major cuts there. Again the junior minister just does not stand up for the portfolio, and again we are lacking investment in regional development. Childcare services have been cut. Road maintenance has been cut. In the last two years \$240 million has been cut out of the roads maintenance budget. Now, just imagine how many roads we could build around Katamatite, Tungamah, Telford, Greta and those sorts of communities. They do not expect the world. They are not after a new highway. They are not even after bitumen roads, some of them. They just want the roads that they have got maintained. What we really need is that investment in maintenance, as I said earlier in my contribution.

Then there are the overruns and the waste and the stuff-ups, like I said before. There is \$28 billion in overruns on some of the programs that are being run primarily in Melbourne—that is \$28 thousand million that is being overrun. And if that is not enough—to have those projects being overrun, over cost and over time—the Minister for Water has flagged that another desalination plant could be on the cards. Now, that is just ridiculous. We hardly use the one we have got. Again, this is a project that is just pandering to those who tell the government what needs to be done, primarily the union movement. They say, ‘Well, we’ve got to keep these projects going’, and I just cannot believe it. You cannot manage the projects you have got. Why do we start looking at new projects? I am sure they will never learn. They will not learn. But the only way they will learn is when they lose government because they are just not responsible enough.

It is one thing to build shiny new statues like a second desalination plant—another white elephant to go in Victoria’s great sanctuary of white elephants that we have—but you must maintain what you have got. You have got to maintain your health, your hospitals, your schools. Support your nurses in substandard hospitals. Support your teachers in substandard schools, and the students of course. Do not just give us excuses; give us our fair share. Give us a guarantee that you will invest in regional Victoria. Give us a guarantee that the maintenance will be done and not just overlooked.

Spend more money in towns like Cobram. Cobram District Health is failing. We need \$20 million to \$30 million just to maintain what we have got and keep the services going for that community. Yarrawonga Health is another example. Services are being cut all the time. We need an investment. \$20 million to \$30 million at the end of the day is a drop in the bucket compared to what is spilt here in Melbourne. Bright aged care—yes, we have got \$1.5 million to start to do some plans for Bright aged care. We committed to that in 2014, and here we are now still waiting, waiting, and all we have got is some money for some draft plans. How long is that can going to get kicked down the road in the wait for Bright aged care? Bright is the largest town in Victoria that has no aged care facilities. We need to invest in country communities rather than the waste in metropolitan Melbourne.

What is wrong with doing a feasibility study on Big Buffalo? Let us find out if Big Buffalo could assist our quest for renewable energy. I am not suggesting we build it; I am suggesting we do the feasibility study. There is federal money there to do it, but again the Minister for Water and the Premier have refused to do it. All I am asking for is a feasibility study to look at how we can get a better return from renewables. There are plenty of opportunities there, but it is an investment outside of Melbourne. It is very hard to try and convince the government that we can do anything outside of the tram tracks of Melbourne. If it was within the Melbourne precinct, I am sure it would have been looked at and more than one feasibility study would have been done already.

The Andrews Labor government will go down in history as the greatest neglecters of regional Victoria. I have got no doubt about that. In every budget we have seen—we have had eight years of opportunity. Every year we wait and hope that they will invest serious money in regional Victoria, and they do not. They continue to look at other projects. At the same time they have emasculated the CFA—ripped its heart and soul out to replace it with FRV—and that is a very, very sad state. Our volunteers in regional Victoria are despondent. They are dropping off, and I have major concerns. When we do get more bushfires, which we hope we never will get but we know will come one day, where are we going to get the firefighters? The volunteers who support our communities day in, day out—I do not know where they are going to come from, because the numbers are dropping off because they really have been given a hard time. They have been a target for this government, and we will pay a huge price for that.

So Victoria is in bad shape. We do need to rebuild and recover under good solid leadership, and certainly a Guy-Walsh government would do that in November with some financial management to try and get the books back in the black. As I say, it is one thing to keep spending and wasting money left, right and centre, but it is another thing to even start talking about ‘No, we’re going to build more projects’. We cannot finish what we have got, we have not done it properly, we have wasted and we have overspent, but we are going to continue to do it. The definition of ‘budget’ is ‘an estimate of income and expenditure for a set period of time’—pretty much saying that is a guess. It is an estimated guess, and Victorians are sick of the guessing that goes on by this government because they get it wrong every year, every time, and then we pay the price because the debt goes up. We are heading towards a \$167 billion debt, which is just unheard of—a debt that we are going to struggle to support on today’s interest rates, let alone interest rates into the future. I will leave those comments there. I think this budget could have done a lot more in regional Victoria.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:21): I am delighted today to rise and speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. For my electorate of St Albans this is a budget that delivers where we need it most. It is investing in health, education, children and families and, most importantly, creating much-needed jobs. There is no doubt we have seen the last two years of the pandemic creating challenges for our health system. Let me say, our healthcare heroes have really gone above and beyond every day in caring for and supporting people in St Albans. It is no surprise that I am absolutely passionate about Western Health and Sunshine Hospital and the amazing work of our healthcare heroes each and every day. That is why this budget will invest \$12 billion to boost health funding. This is something that is much needed not only for the electorate of St Albans but across the west. We have also seen a massive demand for emergency services. It is at an all-time high, there is no doubt about it, and it is across the state. Every day there are thousands of calls through 000, and people want to know—they expect and demand—that when they do call there is help on its way. That is why this budget will provide and recruit more 000 call takers and, most importantly, invest over \$333 million to increase the capacity, given the challenges, of the 000 services. This includes our ambulances and of course training more operators to allocate calls across the state.

The paramedics and ambulances will receive a further \$124 million boost, and we know why. It is clear that our healthcare services are at their peak and there is pressure. Our government has continued to invest and provide the best hospital facilities that we can think of. Just recently we officially opened the multilevel emergency department at Sunshine Hospital. This is the government that actually built the Joan Kirner Women’s and Children’s Hospital. When we were elected to government in 2014 we

had to repair Sunshine Hospital because it was left neglected by the previous government. Now we see in St Albans a health precinct. We have Sunshine Hospital delivering first-class health services to the people of the west; Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, which is so popular that we are getting requests outside the catchment from mums-to-be who want to deliver their babies at Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital; and we also have across the road, due to the confidence in St Albans and the confidence in our local health economy, an actual private hospital being built as I speak.

We are the government that builds hospitals; there is no doubt about us. Whether we are building Footscray Hospital down the road or Melton hospital to the north, there is no doubt about us. When it comes to the health and wellbeing of the west, the Andrews Labor government has delivered and will continue to deliver in the gaps to fill the pressure points and of course ease the pressure on our nurses, our doctors and our call takers. It is across the system—it is a chain reaction—and that is why we will create a further 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses and 400 new call taker and dispatch staff members. Again, not only are we addressing and investing in health but we are also creating jobs and putting patients first. I do have to say a massive thankyou to all our healthcare professionals, including our local GPs as well, working hand in hand together to make sure that the health and wellbeing of our communities is always addressed.

Of course this is the eighth budget for me, and I have to say I am enormously proud of the work that we have done in relation to investing in education. Education is one of my passions in St Albans, because it is so critical for students and children to get the best start. And it starts with our education system—whether it is kindergartens or primary schools and then leading onto secondary, tertiary and uni, this is the path to future jobs but also, most importantly, a path to a better future. We have seen for Victorian students we going to be investing \$277 million into senior secondary pathway reforms, and this is extremely big for St Albans. This will replace the old VCAL system with the new VCE vocational major and the Victorian pathways certificate. Students who choose this pathway will be able to choose from 12 different vocations, and that is really important because the way things were in the past when I was going to secondary college at Kealba High School have certainly changed. Most importantly, I know that families will be looking at this and seeing that this is another saving, because we will be paying for the learning materials of VET students and saving families up to \$1000 per year. Not only does this program open the door to brighter futures but it also creates, as I said, vital jobs and pathways to careers.

Our government is also investing \$87.9 million to strengthen the teaching workforce. This includes professional development programs for existing teachers as well as funding for study opportunities because everything changes and learning opportunities change as well, and that is why we need to keep up teachers. This sector needs to keep up with those changes as well. We need to make sure that our kids have the best opportunities available to them regardless of their postcode, regardless of their ethnicity and where they live. They get it equal—it would not matter if you lived on the other side of town. The best education from day 1 is what this budget and what the previous budgets have all been about.

I want to thank the Minister for Education. In 2014 when I was elected I made a commitment that we would invest in every school in St Albans, and let me say, we have. We have invested in every school, and we have rebuilt most schools in St Albans, including Jackson special school and including Furlong Park School for Deaf Children. These are two schools that had never seen this sort of funding in the past, and it is thanks to the Andrews Labor government that we have been able to invest in schools. And I say it again: it is not about a seat in the west; it does not matter where you live, nor your ethnicity or whether you have come from a multicultural community—we invest everywhere, and that is why I am so proud and I am so thankful to the Minister for Education for all the work that he has done.

I was just so amazed when I called up St Albans Heights Primary School and spoke to Effie Sultana, the principal, and informed her that the school had been successful with \$13.4 million to modernise a school that was built back in the 1960s and 70s. There were tears—tears from the principal, tears from the leadership group—to say, 'Wow. We never thought that we would get funding'. Now they are just so blown away by the fact that this is going to create learning spaces, a performing arts centre and also

the opportunity to improve their oval so they can have more sporting activities for kids. This is what is happening in areas such as St Albans, and I want to thank Effie. She has been outstanding, and I have just learned today that they have received an award for excellence in their school. It is a school like many schools in St Albans that is reaching for the stars, because we have been the government that has been knocking at the doors of schools and actually providing much-needed funding.

And it did not start this year; it started in 2014. This changes the morale and confidence of school communities, whether it is St Albans Heights Primary School or St Albans Primary School, which received close to half a million dollars this year, or Monmia Primary School in Keilor Downs, who are building their STEM building—and works are about to begin for that. Across the electorate of St Albans we have seen an investment in education, and it has been an amazing boost not only for the school community, the students and the teachers but for the wider community, because our school buildings are actually used by community groups as well, and that is really important—like St Albans East Primary School, where we have language programs being run on the weekend. Now they have better facilities where they can have more participants each week, and that is something that I know my community is really passionate about—a second language and keeping their mother language alive. The Minister for Education has also been quite passionate and dedicated to making sure that there are language programs across St Albans, and St Albans East is one.

So there are many, many investments, and I do not have much time, but this is a much-needed budget that delivers for families. It delivers for St Albans, and it delivers for our multicultural communities. We will see over \$6 million to our multicultural communities. Multicultural communities in St Albans are the tapestry and the rich essence of people coming together where we share our cultures, our languages and our faiths. I am really proud of that, and we need to continue to support these multicultural community groups so they can continue to celebrate, and not only celebrate but share with the wider community, whether it is festivals or places of worship opening their doors each year. We see it with our mosques across St Albans or our Indian temples in St Albans who have also received funding in this budget. This is about making sure that communities come together and celebrate and share one another's culture. So this budget invests in our multicultural communities.

Of course my most favourite part is all these projects, and there are so many that I would need many, many hours to talk about. But we know for Victorians across our state how important it is, and I know how important it is for St Albans families, to have a secure job like these projects create. Since we were elected 560 000 new jobs, including more than 80 000 jobs in regional Victoria, have been created, and we have a plan to create close to half a million further jobs in the future. This is about targeting and making sure that every project across the state creates local jobs. Take removing the level crossings—we did that successfully. The minute we got elected in 2014 the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings were removed. We are seeing the Fitzgerald Road level crossing being removed at the moment, which has created hundreds of local jobs.

This is a budget that delivers to families and to patients. I know it has been a tough two years. It is time now to lift our communities. We need to lift our communities and really be able to start the repair. As I said, this is responding directly to the challenges we face, and we have a proven track record when it comes to delivering. Our government has not wasted a moment. I certainly have not wasted a moment. We will continue to put our communities first, we will continue to deliver and, most importantly, we will continue to make great investments in our local communities.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (12:36): I am pleased to rise today to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, the Victorian state budget. I note at the outset that the budget papers are entitled 'Putting patients first'. I think the correct title for this year's budget should be 'Putting Labor first' or 'Putting Victorians last', because we can see—all Victorians, the more they look into this—and as we heard last week at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearings, this is another disastrous budget in a whole range of ways for all Victorians. We can see that we have got a big mess financially, and the government has provided no way for us as Victorians to get out of this particular

mess. Certainly they are not showing any leadership in that way. It has not got a realistic plan to secure the financial future of all Victorians.

I just want to refer to the government's own plan from one of the PAEC reports from April 2022. It was a four-step plan, and step 1 was 'creating jobs, reducing unemployment and restoring economic growth'. That included a whole range of metrics, and the government has basically failed on all of those. Step 2 was 'returning to an operating cash surplus', and that is arguable. It is certainly not going to happen in the short term. It may happen in the longer term. Step 3 was 'returning to operating surpluses', and we can see clearly that that is a typical Labor pipedream. I will go into more of that in a moment. Step 4 was 'stabilising debt levels'. Again, we can see that is another delusional Labor matter that they are aiming for. It is certainly not going to be achieved, and I will go into the evidence of that shortly as well.

We have got the dubious honour in Victoria of being the highest taxing state in Australia, but I suppose when we know that we are getting a budget from a government that we know history will show clearly—and does show clearly—just cannot manage money, that is there for all Victorians to see. We have got record levels of debt. We have ongoing infrastructure costs and blowouts; if I get a chance, I will talk about some of them later. We have got public sector wages out of control. And most importantly for all Victorians, we have got outcomes and service delivery results that are far from satisfactory. In fact they are quite disastrous. I could spend hours talking about this, but I will just touch on a few of them.

For a start we have got the ESTA 000 crisis, and that is the absolute nightmare that we have heard about many, many times in this place—the situation where calls to 000, emergency calls, are in the first instance not even being answered. Probably like you, Deputy Speaker, I can think of nothing worse in a time when you need an emergency service, whatever that might be, for the call not to be answered in the first place. Secondly, if you happen to want an ambulance here in Victoria, good luck. We know that we have got the worst waiting times on record, and tragically for Victorians and particularly tragically for the families and friends of those involved we have had 21 Victorians who have passed away as a direct result of not having a prompt response from an ambulance.

That is an absolute crisis that is continuing to dog the Victorian community. I was talking to a constituent the other day, and their child is an ambulance paramedic here in Victoria. They have got down to such a critical level that they are being accompanied by a member of the army. I am also aware that there are members of the SES out accompanying ambulance officers. So they are going one-up to all kinds of jobs. That is evidence clearly that we have got a far-from-ideal system here in Victoria, and that is costing lives.

I reflected in this place the other day that in recent weeks we had a family situation where we needed an ambulance. The wait was 1½ hours, and then the estimated time at the hospital to wait in the emergency department was a further 5 hours—and that was probably on a good day. So it is something that the government has just failed to address. It has been coming for a long time, and they continue to make excuses, but it is something that, for the sake of all Victorians and the health, safety and wellbeing of Victorians, must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The overall issue of ambulance ramping continues. That is a daily episode. You do not have to look very far or wide to see ambulances ramped at your local public hospital, and every van you see there is one less that can respond to a 000 call, should there be one. So we have got a health system in complete crisis. We have got hospitals overloaded and unable to cope. We have got code yellow, code orange, code brown—we have got code disaster. It is just a serious issue for all Victorians, and that is one area of the community that you want to be operating well should there be a case of dire need.

We have got at least 90 000 Victorians on the elective surgery waiting list, and that includes the pre-waiting waiting list—that is, just the ones that are actually in the system. The government keep saying that is going to be rectified and keep saying they are putting money into it and all this sort of thing, but the bottom line is that people are not seeing the outcomes. They are not getting their surgeries earlier,

and many, many people out there in the community—many of my constituents and, I am sure, many of yours, Deputy Speaker—are suffering in pain and in complete discomfort and are dislocated from perhaps their work situation and other essential elements in their life through the fact that they cannot get their ailment attended to. So that is something the government must just really look at as a matter of priority.

In the whole justice system—we cannot really call it that anymore, because for many people it is not a justice system—we have got court backlogs in some cases up to years. As the old saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied. We have got people in remand that will be in remand for longer than their ultimate sentence. We have got people in remand that will be found not guilty. We have got all kinds of delays—we have got these sorts of matters. In fact I was talking to someone the other day, and a friend of one of their children has been charged with a very serious offence. That young man has got that hanging over his head. It has been hanging over his head for a number of years, and that prevents him as a young man from pursuing job opportunities, from applying for jobs and from looking at courses, careers and all that sort of thing, because that matter has not come before the court. That is a practical example of a nightmare for this young person and of course for the alleged victim, for the witnesses and for anybody else involved in the countless thousands of cases that have just jammed our system. The government has not provided a pathway forward for those matters to be addressed. We have got multiple-year waits in VCAT, and that is another issue. Many people in the community generally would be familiar with the processes of VCAT and the fact that those delays have got very significant implications for everybody involved in that system as well.

We have got a crisis in the mental health area, and the Parliament's pandemic management committee heard evidence, led by experts including the state's chief psychiatrist, just a couple of weeks ago. I watched much of that evidence, and it was very distressing to hear about some of the matters that he was referring to and the fact that particularly for young people, who he was referring to at that time, but also for other people there are dramatic increases in eating disorders, suicidal ideation and self-harm as a result of the pandemic.

It is interesting that a document has just come out—and a press release has been issued today by one of my colleagues—that surveyed 20 000 young people at the height of the lockdowns in 2021, finding nearly half of Victorian 15- to 19-year-olds reported mental health problems as a result of COVID-19. So the government like to tell us what a great job they have done with all these matters and particularly in relation to COVID, but I think that there are all kinds of unintended consequences. The government has been blind to many of those, and we have got a mental health crisis out there in the community as well. My office, like those of many of my colleagues probably on both sides in this place, has been inundated with phone calls from distressed parents and other relatives in relation to the wellbeing of the young people in their world. This is something that the government has got to address.

Many of these issues are caused by staff shortages, yet the most ridiculous thing is that the government continues to sack people pursuant to the vaccine mandates. So we have got a situation where people are needed desperately, whether they are teachers, whether they are nurses or whether they are other healthcare workers. I have spoken to many, many of them in all those categories and other medical professionals that have been sacked because for whatever reason they have not wanted to comply with that, yet the government continues to sack people when they are so desperately needed. So the government needs to really just get rid of those, end the mandates and give people the opportunity. They can be subject to RATs, they can be subject to PCR testing and so on, but they need to let people get back to work so that they can service the needs of the Victorian community, because it is just costing people and causing all kinds of harm in our community. That is a matter that the government could fix today if it had the will to do so, and I urge the government to review this. It is a futile mandate. It is just quite ridiculous. I have spoken on it many times in this place. It makes no sense. It is illogical and makes no sense at this stage of the cycle in the pandemic.

We know financially we have got a precarious situation. I just want to touch on some of the numbers in the budget. Tax revenue just continues to go up. In the 10 years of Labor it has gone up 75.9 per

cent, running way ahead of inflation and wage increases. We have got deficits as far as the eye can see, and I touched on that earlier. We have got the revised deficit for 2021–22 of \$17.6 billion. We have got that decreasing over the forward estimates. But the reality is that history shows clearly that the forward estimates put out by the government are usually nothing more than fanciful guesses, and they will always end up much, much worse. That is not me saying that; that is what history will show. So these figures here that show a shrinking deficit and then ultimately a surplus in 2025–26 are just fanciful in my view.

If we look at employee expenses, this is an area that should be of concern to all Victorians. We have got a staggering increase of 77.9 per cent in employee expenses over 10 years. That is now going to be up around \$35.4 billion, just an extraordinary situation, and the question really for all Victorians is: are we getting value for money? I have talked about the deficiencies in various areas, but then we look at the Premier's own personal office, where he has got hundreds of staff. He has got spin doctors left, right and centre. This government has got spin doctors in every department, and there is no shortage of employees in those departments. But they are not on the service delivery end, and that is where this government should be ashamed of itself for just spinning to all Victorians rather than servicing the needs and solving the problems of all Victorians.

If we look at net debt, this is probably the most sobering aspect in my view in the budget. We can see that in 2015–16 the net debt was \$22.3 billion. That was the actual. It is now estimated in 2025–26 to be \$167.5 billion. That is a 751 per cent increase over 10 years. What a staggering situation that is, and the serious problem for all Victorians, of course, is that there is no plan to pay it back. We have got a window at the moment where interest rates have been at record-low levels. That obviously cannot continue. We have already seen the first blip up on interest rates in recent weeks. I am not an economist, but I am certain that that will continue to increase, and then the government will find itself in trouble as it tries to roll over some of that debt. So that is a shocking situation.

We have got in terms of the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022 a concerning situation in my view in relation to some of the statutory offices. We have got the Auditor-General's office only getting a meagre 2.6 per cent increase in their funding, we have got the Ombudsman only getting a meagre 3.2 per cent increase in their funding and most concerningly to me and probably to all Victorians is the fact that the IBAC is only getting a 3 per cent increase in its funding. We all know from reports and from evidence we have heard in this place and other places the fact that if there was ever an agency that needs more funding, it is IBAC, because they have got so much work to do here, and much of that work is to do with members of this place or associated with this place and the other place. So it is a shocking neglect of duty, in my view, for the government not to be funding IBAC properly. They have obviously got a vested interest in doing so, so that clearly investigations are potentially truncated or not undertaken at all, many of which are going into their affairs.

Just in conclusion, for the Forest Hill electorate, again I have had many, many schools that are sorely in need of funding that have dipped out once again. We have had some funding for some special schools, which was good, but many of the schools in the Forest Hill district that have had ongoing needs for many, many years—and they are well documented; I have spoken about them exhaustively in this place—have again been neglected. Also many clubs, many other associations and many other community groups that have had legitimate funding applications have missed out, so it is a very disappointing budget from a macro point of view and a very disappointing budget from the Forest Hill residents' point of view.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (12:51): I might cheer things up after that contribution from the member for Forest Hill, because I am delighted with this year's budget. It continues the Andrews Labor government's transformational investment in Melbourne's inner west, where we are rebuilding schools, we are getting trucks off local roads, we are planting trees, we are building cycling infrastructure and of course we are building the magnificent new Footscray hospital. But this budget for Footscray focused on another thing, and it is something I am very passionate about, which is the arts. The budget delivered \$8.7 million to Footscray Community Arts. Everyone in Melbourne's

western suburbs, the inner west and perhaps across Melbourne in the arts and creative communities knows that Footscray Community Arts is Australia's leading community arts centre. It has a fascinating history. It was established by unionists and artists with an overarching philosophy of access for all, and the roots of its establishment date back to the 1870s when the building was used as a piggery on Footscray's Maribyrnong River. Going from a piggery to a community arts centre was not an easy or an obvious journey, and it may not have happened if the building had not been threatened with demolition in 1976. The campaign to save it united historians, artists, unionists and other community leaders, and every day that has passed since we have been enriched by their success. The site is and always has been a beacon for workers.

Discussion of Footscray Community Arts Centre has to pay reference to two incredible people who helped to establish and preserve it, and those people are George Seelaf and Paddy Garrity, two absolute legends of the west and of the union movement. Paddy Garrity recalled George explaining to him that unions need to understand that their role goes beyond wages and conditions; it is about quality of life and culture. His insights were true then, and they are true today—that the arts are for everyone. Community arts centres offer so much locally. Footscray Community Arts collaborates and cultivates relationships with artists from a number of communities, including First Nations people, the LGBTI community, CALD communities and of course artists with a disability. Footscray Community Arts I think is the only community arts centre in Australia that is an NDIS provider—artists with a diverse range of experiences and perspectives whose work deserves recognition and support. This great history of the Footscray Community Arts Centre marks a new chapter now. A new history is beginning with the largest investment in its history being awarded this year by the Andrews Labor government.

What will be delivered complements the work that is going on along the Maribyrnong River, with a \$12 million investment from Maribyrnong City Council and the West Gate Tunnel Project to transform the Footscray wharf and waterfront. Those works are nearly complete. The \$8.7 million in this year's budget will help transform the outdoor spaces at Footscray Community Arts with all of the electrical equipment that they need. We will have a covered amphitheatre and performance space, and it will really maximise all of the performance spaces we have in the outdoors, which is so important in this COVID era. Of course it has also been the home of the Laneway Festival, which I think brought so many people from across Melbourne to Footscray Community Arts.

I have a vision for Footscray's arts precinct. I want Footscray and the inner west to continue to be a place of arts incubation, collaboration and equity of access. From the Cotton Mills to Kindred Studios to the Dream Factory, the Waterside Metal Art Studio, 100 Story Building, Wrangler Studios, who do so much work with the push for under-age gigs, the Hotel Westwood, Laneway Festival and Pride of our Footscray, Footscray is the place in Melbourne for creative industries and live music. That investment has been supported by the Go West Festivals Fund in this budget—\$2.4 million to make sure that we bring the best festivals Melbourne has to offer to Melbourne's western suburbs, supporting local venues and local artists to participate in festivals like Rising, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and Melbourne Fringe. It is an absolutely exciting package for the arts and creative industries in Footscray.

I want to thank the member for Essendon and Minister for Creative Industries for coming with me to Footscray Community Arts on two or three occasions to meet with the CEOs there, Robyn and Daniel, and to have a look, to understand their vision and to of course deliver on it in this year's budget. That has been complemented just this week by some live music grants for Footscray. I think there is \$115 000 going to local live music venues, including Kindred Studios, Hotel Westwood and Pride of Our Footscray. Throughout the pandemic we have supported these organisations as live music venues to keep going. I know that Mat from Pride of Our Footscray has said to me and has also had the opportunity to say to the Treasurer a couple of weeks ago that government support throughout COVID has saved that venue. They are able to throw open their doors again, and this support will help get local musicians back on stage in Footscray.

There is also a really terrific investment in this year's budget for McAuley Community Services for Women, who are well known in Footscray as a family violence refuge and agency. They provide very important wraparound services to women in Footscray and the western suburbs. They are receiving funding to redevelop an unutilised refuge in Sunshine. I just want to take this opportunity with the short amount of time I have left to acknowledge the work of Jocelyn Bignold, the CEO of McAuley Community Services, who is well known to everyone in the sector but should be well known to all Victorians. She has had her work recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia, and she is someone who literally saves lives in our community. To have her work and the work of McAuley Community Services acknowledged in this year's budget just reflects how well regarded they are.

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): I rise to update the house that today I will again answer questions for the portfolios of health, ambulance services and equality; the Minister for Public Transport will answer questions for transport infrastructure and the Suburban Rail Loop; and the Minister for Regional Development will answer for Aboriginal affairs, women and prevention of family violence.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. Australasian College for Emergency Medicine president Clare Skinner has said about Victoria's health crisis:

We can tell you that this is not just a Covid-related problem.

The reality is Covid has only exposed cracks that were pre-existing in the system.

Does the Premier stand by his statements that the crisis in Victoria's health system, the crisis in the 000 system and the crisis with ambulance dispatch, all of which have cost people their lives, are only due to COVID?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I have never made any such claim.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: I thought this was a serious matter of life and death—it is a laugh now. What you have put to me is wrong, and instead of playing political games we are going to get—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, you can laugh all you want, but we do not laugh at our nurses, we do not laugh at our ambos, we do not laugh at our doctors, we do not laugh at patients. We are there to provide support in record terms to provide better care. Those opposite can deny all they want that we are in the midst of a one-in-100-year event; they may have missed that. It is real, and proof positive is as follows: if what is put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is accurate, how then did we go from the worst ambulance response times recorded—that would be just after we took over in 2015—how did we go from that position, one that was by choice through cuts, to then delivering the best ambulance response times ever recorded just before COVID? We repaired the damage done by those opposite, and we will repair the damage done by this virus.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:03): Last night the health system declared a code orange, meaning that yet again Victorians cannot get the emergency health care they need at the time that it is required. Can the Premier explain why the 52nd code orange over the last year has been declared?

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I will call the Premier when the house comes to order.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:04): You asked the first question; you seem to have forgotten the way you constructed it. The Leader of the Opposition put it to me that my contention is that the only trouble, challenge or difficulty in the health system, ever, is related to COVID. I have never made that call—ever. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I know and understand pre pandemic, during the pandemic and after the pandemic that if you think there are easy days in our health system, that is wrong. Our health professionals work every day in challenging circumstances. If you were not at war with them, you might know that.

A member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Unprecedented demand? Would that perhaps be part of why you call a code? Thousands of staff away sick—would that be why you would call a code, perhaps? If these things are not obvious to you, then you have got no place ever running the health system.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: So if a one-in-100-year event lasts for two years, it is not a thing? Honestly, these people want to run the health system. They want to run the health system. You cannot even run your own party. Goodness me!

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:05): I am very pleased to update the house on work that the government is doing to make sure that every Victorian can get the skills they need for the job they want. That is very important, and of course that was not always the case, when we had TAFE smashed to smithereens. I wonder who might have done that—no-one sitting on this side. We know that vocational education and training is absolutely critical and apprenticeship pathways are an important part of that. It is not just about saving TAFE, making TAFE free, making it better than ever; it is also about making sure that there are employment opportunities and pathways as well. Our Big Build projects are worthy in and of themselves. They are transforming our city and our state, they are creating jobs, but they are also embedding skills that workers will carry with them for a lifetime of productive contribution to our economy and to communities.

Last week we announced 300 new building and construction sector apprenticeships and traineeships through Jobs Victoria by mid-2023—

Mr Cheeseman: Jobs for young people.

Mr ANDREWS: Exactly. Jobs for people who are highly committed and passionate, the skills they need, making a contribution over their entire lifetime—a job and a career. It is absolutely fantastic. We met one such apprentice, Nadia, last week. She is studying for a certificate III in carpentry and working on the Victorian Heart Hospital project in Clayton. Whether it is TAFE, whether it is local procurement, whether it is the Big Build and the skills guarantee and the attainment embedded in those projects, we are backing every worker to make their full contribution.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. Last week Ambulance Victoria evidence to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee showed that while code 1 ambulance arrivals within 15 minutes should be at 85 per cent, they are now arriving within 15 minutes only

between 50 and 60 per cent of the time. These arrival times are deadly and have potentially cost 21 Victorians their lives. How many Victorians have to die before the Premier gets ambulance response times back to where they should be?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:08): I thank the member for Brighton for his question. There are a number of points that I will make. Firstly, I am pleased at his acknowledgement that it is not for him or anyone in this chamber to determine the cause of death of anyone. That is the work of the coroner, and we should let the coroner get about that work without political interference from those opposite. To assert that you are the coroner, you are politically interfering in the work of the coroner. That is important. I acknowledge and welcome that the member for Brighton now seems to realise that. I am very interested in his references to code 1 lights-and-sirens response times within 15 minutes. They were—and he raised this measure, Deputy Speaker, just before we get a point of order about this not being relevant—at 84 per cent. In fact in excess of 84 per cent of code 1 call-outs were responded to within 15 minutes in late 2019—best response ever. Let us go back three years before then, shall we?

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: You want to talk about ambulance response times? Every day and twice on Sundays, mate—every day if you like. And they were by choice. There was no pandemic in 2015. There was no pandemic in 2015, there was no one-in-100 year event in 2015, there were not 3000 or 4000 people calling ESTA every day in 2015. They chose an ambulance crisis. Who would do that?

Instead, since 2015 we have recruited hundreds of extra staff and invested hundreds of millions of extra dollars. In partnership with our paramedic workforce we have repaired the damage done by choice by those opposite, and we are equally committed to repairing the damage that this COVID pandemic has done, whether it be in ambulance response times and performance, elective surgery throughput and wait times, emergency department presentations—the list goes on. All of those challenges are not 100 per cent but are manifestly impacted by a one-in-100-year event, and anyone who cannot see that has no business ever being in charge of running the health system.

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:11): Prior to the pandemic the Andrews government changed ambulance emergency call-out classifications to disturbingly move things like stroke and cardiac heart problems from a code 1 emergency ambulance dispatch to the lesser code 2 and 3 classifications, which now have an average response time of 44 minutes. Why did the Premier allow this to happen to stroke and cardiac victims?

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I assume you are interested in the Premier's answer.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:11): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I completely reject the way in which the member for Brighton has described these matters. It would not be clinical advice and other well-established processes in terms of classifications—oh, no, it would be me or the health minister doing that work, wouldn't it? That is point 1.

Point 2, do not hold your breath waiting for anyone in this government to be lectured about response time standards. You refused to release response times. You refused to release the very response times you now pretend to care about. Maybe that is why you were so appalling by choice when you were in government. You cut the budget. You chose the worst response times. We repaired your damage, and we will repair the damage of this pandemic.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:12): I rise to update the house about the how the Andrews government's reforms are giving all students the skills and training they need to be job ready. Our 2022–23 budget is investing \$69.4 million to expand our highly successful Head Start apprenticeship and traineeship program into every government secondary

school in Victoria. From 2023 every government secondary school student will have the opportunity to sign up to a Head Start apprenticeship or traineeship, getting paid on-the-job training whilst completing their VCE at school. The Head Start team have already signed up 1400 Victorian businesses to deliver opportunities for students, and they will deliver even more.

In terms of the new VCE vocational major reforms I can advise the house that work is underway right now at all government secondary schools and many Catholic and independent schools to develop local VET clusters. At the same time the TAFE network is developing an indicative offer for what vocational pathways they can provide and where in response to schools demand. By the end of term 3 each cluster will have a plan to deliver over the coming years universal access to the core offering of vocational pathways for every student in Victoria.

All of this work is supported by \$13.5 million in the recent budget, including jobs, skills and pathways coordinators supporting every school. It is an investment rather than a cut, which is absolutely what those opposite would do if they had the opportunity. We all remember the VCAL coordinators—a \$48 million cut to VCAL coordinators at the same time they destroyed TAFE. Only Labor, only the Andrews government, is providing opportunities for every government secondary school student, every Catholic secondary school student and every independent secondary school student.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:14): My question is for the Premier. On 12 May, 15-month-old Lawson Walter suffered a seizure at home in Girgarre. His parents were forced to drive him to Kyabram hospital as they dialled 000, which rang out three times. At Kyabram hospital Lawson stopped breathing and was turning grey, so they also rang for an ambulance to transfer him immediately to Shepparton. After 30 minutes an ambulance arrived. Lawson stopped breathing four more times before reaching Shepparton hospital. Lawson's family or the hospital rang 000 seven times before an ambulance was able to attend. Is this an example of the world-class healthcare system the Premier says country Victorians currently have?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:15): I thank the member for Euroa for her question. If the member for Euroa provides to me the details of that case, I will ask Ambulance Victoria as well as the health department and any relevant local health services to respond to both me and any family members who have not been contacted—they may well have been—and indeed to furnish a response to the member for Euroa. And I do hope that the details are provided to me. After yesterday's question time I returned to my office and indicated that there might well be some further matters that would be forwarded to me and I would like urgent attention to be provided to those, having given a commitment to the member for Rowville about a matter that he had raised. I was then informed that of about 50 cases that have been raised with the government in this place and the other place, I think less than 10 of those matters have actually been referred to the government.

So I would ask the member for Euroa: with the greatest of respect, I will provide you with a full, comprehensive and detailed answer, but I would like you to—I do not think it is too much to ask—please provide us with the details, and we will follow that up if there is anything we can do for that family, who have been through a lot. I apologise if there has been distress—of course there has been distress caused to that family—but please provide the details. If the cases are good enough to raise, then surely, if it is not about the politics and it is about the patient, let us all work together and get the best response we can for that family and for that patient. If you provide the information, I will give you my commitment that the department, my office, the minister's office and indeed the health service will do everything they can to respond to that case and any other case you raise, including the 40-odd that you have not provided to anybody in the government.

Members interjecting.

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

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:17): Premier, I am raising it in Parliament to do exactly that, which is what I thought Parliament was actually for. This is just another example of a health system in crisis under the Premier's watch.

Members interjecting.

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

Ms RYAN: This situation is totally unacceptable. Does the Premier have any intention of saying sorry to Lawson; his parents, Tamika and Ashley; and the traumatised health staff for the system failures that have allowed a situation like this to occur?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:18): Again, with the greatest of respect to the member for Euroa, she must not have been listening to my first answer. I in fact did offer an apology to that family, to that young patient, and in terms of staff—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: I have just offered an apology—that is twice, three times I think now—to that family. Of course—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, I am being questioned about whether I have apologised by this lot over here. The record will be very clear: I have, and I am absolutely sincere in saying that no-one wants to see that occurrence, that stress and anxiety, that difficulty for any Victorian family. In terms of staff, the best thing you can do with staff is to support them with the funding and the resources they need. That is what we have done every budget, every year. It is what we will do if we are honoured to deliver the next budget. The same cannot be said of those who cut every time they get the chance.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RURAL AND REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (14:19): I rise to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting training and skills throughout regional Victoria. We are acutely aware of the importance of training and skills to the future of the agriculture industry, the backbone of so many of our rural and regional communities. That is why we are making significant investments in our agricultural colleges through our \$50 million agricultural college modernisation program. This program is delivering upgrades at agricultural colleges including Longerenong College near Horsham, Melbourne Uni at Dookie, South West TAFE in Glenormiston and Marcus Oldham College just out of Geelong.

We know how important it is to provide training and education relevant to the needs of industry and meaningful opportunities to young people who want to pursue careers in agriculture, and that is why the member for Buninyong is leading our government's future of agriculture training in Victoria review—and I thank her very much for her work.

The Andrews Labor government saved TAFE from the cuts and neglect of those opposite. We are building the skilled workforce that regional Victoria needs, not just in agriculture but across a range of sectors where we are looking for skilled workers, and of course that includes nursing, community services and early childhood education. Key to this has been removing financial barriers to training with the introduction of free TAFE, and the results of this speak for themselves. There has been a 22 per cent increase in free TAFE enrolments in regional Victoria since 2018. Those opposite did not invest in regional TAFE. They padlocked our TAFE colleges. Unlike those on the other side, the Andrews Labor government will always support our TAFE system.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Mildura, can I acknowledge in the gallery former ministers the Honourable John Pandazopoulos and the Honourable Andre Haermeyer, and former Deputy President Khalil Eideh—lovely to see you.

MILDURA ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:21): My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. The Mallee is not exactly well served when it comes to public transport. We are the only major regional centre in Victoria without a passenger train service. It was taken from us by the Liberal Party in 1993 and has not been restored by any successive government since. When it comes to denying the state's most isolated region this most vital essential service the big parties are united. The government is already very clear about my views on passenger rail, but it is not just public transport between Melbourne and Mildura that is a problem but transport within Sunraysia too. The 2022 budget contained money for bus reviews. Mildura's bus network has not been reviewed for 20 years. Will the Mallee be receiving any of those funds?

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:22): Thank you very much to the independent member for Mildura. She is right—I think it was closed by the Kennett government about 29 years ago while the National Party stood silent in the party room. It is a very good question, and it is actually very good to have the independent member ask a question on public transport because she understands the opportunity that comes when it comes to building back better—because we do know, if I can just tell the independent member, coming out of COVID we have seen public transport, particularly buses, being one of the most resilient forms of public transport.

A member interjected.

Mr CARROLL: I will come to you in a minute, shadow minister. We have seen it become one of the most resilient forms of public transport. For the first time in our history, whether it is Melbourne, London or New York, bus patronage was higher than rail patronage, and that is why the last state budget invested \$109 million in buses. But more than that it is very important, and the independent member acknowledges her region, in addition to the closure of the railway line, is a region that needs to have better bus service improvements. That is why—and we have got some members from the Brumby government here—we are the first government since 2006 that has released a dedicated bus plan that focuses on all of Victoria and puts unprecedented investment of over \$500 million in buses. But more than that too, it is vitally important that we use this opportunity coming out of COVID to ensure zero-emissions buses, on-demand buses and those services that you highlight. The independent member asked a very specific question about bus service reviews, and I commit to working with her and Mildura Rural City Council to ensure whether it is students going to Latrobe University in Mildura, whether it is students going to Sunraysia TAFE, whether it is elderly members of her community getting to the hospitals and the precincts, that they have ample opportunity. So I welcome working with the independent member for Mildura. We are very committed to implementing our bus plan. We do see a great opportunity—

A member: Keep going.

Mr CARROLL: Keep going? I will keep going, considering you changed the railway to Mildura and we are investing in it. It is vitally important. Let me just while I am speaking—

Members interjecting.

Mr CARROLL: say the regions are very important, because under this government we are going to roll out zero-emissions buses—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Barwon is warned.

Mr CARROLL: in the shadow minister's electorate, which is vitally important too.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Warrandyte, you are very close.

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:25): Mildura is a growing city. We recently heard about a family who moved to a house near Sixteenth Street, which is just 10 minutes drive from Mildura CBD, and the family were shocked to discover that they were unable to access a bus service within a 15-minute walk from their house. The lack of bus services is a significant barrier to work, education and community participation. If the government decides to review our bus network, how will the community be consulted?

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (14:26): I thank the independent member for Mildura, and we will work with the local community. Obviously a 15-minute walk to a bus stop is way too long. We identified this in the planning—that we want very much for it to be every 10 minutes. It is vitally important, though, that you also consider, when it comes to buses, that they do have a benefit-cost ratio—for every \$1 invested, returning \$5 to the local community.

The independent member for Shepparton has equally been a great advocate for bus services, and we are very keen to work with the local independent member and very keen to give the independent member for Mildura a detailed briefing on our bus plan and what it means when it comes to supporting her community getting to either La Trobe University or Sunraysia and the shops and hospitals—to ensure that we really squeeze the lemon and have a very bright future for buses, because on this side of the chamber we realise that buses can go where rail cannot and— *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: AUSLAN TRAINING

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (14:27): I would like to update the house on the Andrews government's commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive and more diverse community in Victoria through the addition of Auslan to our signature free TAFE program. In the budget this year, we announced the investment of some \$4.8 million to add Auslan diploma and advanced diploma level qualifications to the free TAFE course list from next year.

Auslan is a unique Australian language used by our deaf and hard-of-hearing community using visual forms of communication. The past couple of years have shown us just how vital Auslan interpreters have been in keeping the community safe and communicating with all Victorians. Auslan interpreters are also critical in many day-to-day settings, including education and supporting our deaf and hard-of-hearing community in arranging medical, legal and financial appointments. Supporting students to complete a diploma of Auslan or the advanced diploma of interpreting will boost the interpreter workforce, providing greater connections for Victorians who are deaf or hard of hearing and creating a more inclusive Victoria. It will also help careers and jobs for Victorians who will join the 100 000 Victorians who have benefited from our free TAFE program since it was introduced back in 2019. Free TAFE is a policy that reflects the values of the Andrews Labor government and stands in stark contrast to those opposite who—can you believe it—removed Auslan as a TAFE course altogether.

I want to give a shout-out to Rosanna Golf Links Primary School in my electorate, a regional deaf facility school where every child in the north there learns Auslan at school. For the 1.1 million Victorians who identify as having a disability in our state, the Andrews Labor government has made its priorities clear around disability and the broader community: the state disability plan, \$15 million in the budget; advocacy funding, \$1.8 million in the budget; and \$326 million for those major upgrades in this budget to 36 Victorian special schools backed by the Andrews government, the only government that is going to support inclusivity and support people in Victoria.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:29): My question is to the Premier. Ambulance ramping returned last night at the Royal Melbourne and Austin hospitals. Can the Premier advise how many ambulances were ramped and how many Victorians were denied the immediate hospital care that they sought?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:30): I would need to refer the question to either those hospitals that the Leader of the Opposition has raised and/or Ambulance Victoria in order to provide—well, there are moments in time, obviously, throughout an evening and then there is the whole evening, and ambulances turn up and go every minute of every hour. It is a dynamic environment. It is called an emergency department. They do not have, ‘Oh, we only take X number of patients per hour’. It is a 24/7, open-all-the-time dynamic environment. Those who have spent some time in and around this part of the health system or even have any common sense would know and understand that, so it is rather difficult to provide a concise answer to the Leader of the Opposition. If I can relevantly add anything after making inquiries with the agencies I have just cited, I will.

As for the denial of care, every nurse, every ambo, every doctor and every member of a very big clinical team is not about denying care, and on their behalf I refute that. They are about providing the very best care in a situation where there are a couple of points that are inconvenient for the narrative of some but are facts nonetheless. We have more patients needing care than we have ever seen. And why is that? Well, because for the best of reasons many people have not received the primary care that they perhaps ought to have got last year and the year before. They deferred for the best of reasons. No-one is having a go at them, but for the best of reasons they perhaps did not get the primary care—that is not run by the state: primary care—that they ought to have got in order to be as well as possible.

There are also many, many people whose conditions have deteriorated because of absolutely critical restrictions to our health system for the safety of those who were time critical and needed that care and could least afford to have our health system overrun. It is, after all—although you would not know it from listening to some—a wildly contagious disease. Then of course the other factor for which there is never any recognition from those opposite is that today, right now, there are hundreds and thousands of staff—paramedics, nurses, doctors, every member of the team; every team across the state is experiencing this—who cannot report for duty because they are sick. They are superhuman in the work that they do, but they are not immune from this virus, and they are the last people who are going to come to work sick and potentially make others even worse. I reject the criticism of our health workers in this question.

Mr R Smith interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Warrandyte can leave the chamber for the period of an hour.

Member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:33): There were also considerable queues at the Sunshine Hospital emergency department on Monday—stretched queues into the car park—with sick and injured people queueing in the cold because the emergency department was at capacity and overflowing. Mildura hospital was also on a code yellow with limited capacity. I ask the Premier: how many Victorian hospitals have declared a code yellow in the last month?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:33): I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to the answer I gave to his substantive question. In terms of ramping and pressure in our emergency departments, I again make the point—although there will be precious little recognition from those opposite because it does not suit their political narrative—that we are in the midst of a global pandemic. That means we have got less staff. We have not got all the staff we need because thousands of them are sick, and we have got more patients than we have ever seen. Those two things mean there is pressure—absolute pressure—on the system. One can only wonder: imagine if you were not putting money into the system and instead you were cutting funding, or put it another way—imagine if this virus had turned up in early 2015, not early 2020, before we had repaired the damage done by choice by those opposite. We will not be lectured by those opposite, who cut every chance they get.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RENEWABLE ENERGY TRAINING

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:34): I am pleased to update the house on how our government is delivering on the jobs of the future and how we are skilling up Victorians for the energy transition. Last month I joined Minister Tierney, who announced that the course in working safely in the solar industry will be added as a free TAFE short course from 1 July this year. This will give electricians, plumbers, solar PV workers and battery installers the skills they need to install PV and solar hot-water systems safely.

And the question is: why is this so important? Because we are creating more jobs in this sector, which requires more Victorians having the skills to be able to fill those jobs. Creating the jobs means creating the skills for people to be able to fill those jobs and to be able to do them safely. To date 4500 solar workers have completed this training, with the course now being expanded to 12 TAFEs, including seven in regional Victoria. Through Solar Victoria we are also investing \$11 million to deliver comprehensive training and workforce development programming, ensuring that the industry is safe and can support the success of the Solar Homes program, which has just ticked over a whopping 200 000 installations—200 000 families now have solar panels on their roof, saving money.

We are helping Victorians to skill up to be part of the clean energy revolution, and this jobs revolution is going from strength to strength. You only have to have a look at our offshore wind energy strategy, which of course will create 6400 jobs between now and when we actually build these projects, which requires more people with the skills necessary and creating those skills now to fill the jobs that we are creating through these very, very strong targets. 24 000 jobs are being created between now and 2030 as part of our renewable energy ambition and revolution. We have more and more young people and those transitioning from other jobs wanting to be part of it. This is what is called living in Victoria under a Labor government.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I raise two unanswered questions: one lodged on 8 June last year—can you believe it?—5885, was due to be answered on 7 July and was about visitors being able to visit loved ones in care; and 6174 was lodged on 2 December and was about housing and child protection. These are two very important issues.

Constituency questions

WARRANTYTE ELECTORATE

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:37): (6366) My constituency question today is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I have been contacted by local resident Gail Carlton, who has raised the condition and safety aspects of Heidelberg-Warrandyte Road, which turns into Yarra Street in Warrandyte. As the major arterial for entering and exiting the township of Warrandyte from the west, this road is in desperate need of upgrading. The limited street lighting along the road is also a concern, particularly with Warrandyte High School and local sporting grounds being in such close proximity, and the cyclists on the road also face safety issues due to the lack of lighting. I would ask that the Department of Transport complete an audit of the road quality and safety aspects, followed by the necessary works to ensure all users of the road are safe.

TARNEIT ELECTORATE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (14:38): (6367) My question is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services. For my community of Wyndham, Werribee Mercy Hospital is the absolute linchpin of our local healthcare services. Folks in my electorate know that the needs of the growing Wyndham community have often meant that Werribee Mercy struggles to keep up with the demand for services in our community. This is something that our government has recognised and, since being elected in 2014, resolved to address, with \$85 million invested in the previous term to expand the hospital's acute facilities. In late 2020 our government invested more than \$4 million to undertake detailed planning for Werribee Mercy's future expansion. On budget day this year we saw the vision for that expansion become a reality, with a \$109.6 million commitment to upgrading Werribee

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Mercy's emergency department, effectively doubling it. This is a much-needed investment for my community, so my question for the minister is this: how will this investment benefit Wyndham families who rely on the services at Werribee Mercy Hospital?

LOWAN ELECTORATE

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:39): (6368) My question is to the Minister for Resources. In 2019 I wrote to the then minister to raise concerns of Mirranatwa Landcare Group regarding the Victorian government's release of local ground within the Stavely Arc to the right to be considered for a minerals exploration licence. The response from the minister assured the local community that:

Ground within the Victoria Valley (including the Mirranatwa region) was exempted from this release and the exemption is expected to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Given this commitment by the government, locals have been surprised to see recent activity by a mining company in the Victoria Valley. I therefore ask the minister: why is mining activity being undertaken in the Victoria Valley when just three years ago your predecessor committed that this region was exempt from mining activity for the foreseeable future?

BUNINYONG ELECTORATE

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (14:40): (6369) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I understand the minister is aware of the recent truck accident in Buninyong, and I am very pleased to note that Regional Roads Victoria are acting quickly, with new signage to be installed within the month. I note that \$23 million in safety measures have been put into the road between Buninyong and Clarendon, and I thank the minister for this work in protecting the safety of the people of Buninyong. My question is: could you please advise what further traffic-calming measures are being considered to ensure the safety of the people of Buninyong?

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (14:40): (6370) My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, when will the government fix the life-threatening delays patients are experiencing at the Monash Medical Centre? Adrian, a resident in my electorate of Rowville, was rushed to Monash by ambulance with a severe headache and vomiting on 2 May. Adrian also has prostate cancer. Adrian's wife insisted doctors perform an MRI, but after misdiagnosing Adrian with a migraine, he was discharged four days later. By the following Tuesday Adrian was so ill his GP saw him at home and immediately ordered an MRI, which showed Adrian had had a stroke eight days earlier. Why are our hardworking medical and nursing staff under so much pressure in our hospitals? The Andrews government has had two years to prepare for COVID outbreaks, yet Monash Medical's patient treatment times are among the worst in the state.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:42): (6371) My question is to the Treasurer. How are the people of Broadmeadows benefiting from the landmark Victorian first home buyers grant? The reason that I raise this is the suburbs of Broadmeadows and Dallas are among the best bets for first-timers to enter the housing market in Melbourne or regional Victoria. That was reported in Canstar's inaugural *Bright Starters*, featured recently in the *Herald Sun*. It considers the most affordable quarter of the market with potential for price growth in Victoria. I want to congratulate the Victorian government and the Treasurer for the Victorian first home buyers who are being supported with millions of dollars in grants and concessions each week to help them realise their dreams. In the first three months of the year 10 000 stamp duty exemptions and concessions totalling \$185 million were approved across the state and first home owner grants of \$10 000 paid to 3500 homebuyers. The total of more than \$220 million follows a record benefit of \$1.1 billion shared by Victorian— (*Time expired*)

SHEPPARTON ELECTORATE

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (14:43): (6372) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. We have become acutely aware over the last two years of the impact that the pandemic has had on mental health for the whole community and in particular for young people. This has been exhibited in a number of ways, including an increased presentation of eating disorders and even suicides. Molly, a young constituent of mine, has raised her concerns with me about access to mental health services. In the Shepparton district there are no inpatient facilities for children and adolescents. The closest option is at Eastern Health in Box Hill. With the significant investment of \$163 million for a new mental health unit at Goulburn Valley Health announced in the recent budget, can the minister advise whether there will be a capacity in that new mental health unit for inpatient services for children and adolescents who need such services in their own town?

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:44): (6373) My question is for the Minister for Workplace Safety in the other place. Will the minister please advise how the Victorian sick pay guarantee pilot scheme for eligible casual and contract workers will benefit workers, businesses and families in my electorate of Wendouree? I recently spoke to a young woman who is casually employed in the hospitality industry. Due to illness she was unable to work a number of her rostered shifts, which meant she received no income. Around one in five casual and contract workers work more than one job to earn a living, many without access to sick leave and carers pay. With the introduction of Victoria's sick pay guarantee, what benefits will this scheme provide her and the many other Victorians who work in insecure jobs across the eligible industries? I invite the minister to join me in Ballarat to promote how the Victorian sick pay guarantee will provide a better and fairer outcome for casual workers and other insecure workers.

FOREST HILL ELECTORATE

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (14:45): (6374) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport, who I note is at the table. Minister, what is the status of the government's review of bus routes 735, 765 and 902, which travel through the Forest Hill district? Last September a constituent raised with me the issue of gaps in the bus services along Canterbury Road in Forest Hill, in particular the section of Canterbury Road between Springvale Road and Brentford Square in Forest Hill. This gap in the service means that local residents, many of whom are elderly, have to walk a considerable distance in order to catch a bus. This is not feasible for many residents. I wrote to you in September 2021 about this issue, and you replied in October 2021, stating in part that you had asked the Department of Transport to consider the request for a review of the bus routes, as noted, as part of future network planning. However, I and my constituent are yet to hear anything further about this review or how the issue raised with me by my constituent will be resolved. The simple proposed solution is to run one or two services a day along the section of Canterbury Road that is currently not serviced by buses. Minister, I look forward to hearing back from you again with a resolution to this important but easily solvable local issue.

BOX HILL ELECTORATE

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (14:46): (6375) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask the minister: when are construction works scheduled to begin on the \$6.6 million upgrade at Kerrimuir Primary School in Box Hill North? Despite a student population of well over 500 the school does not have a gym or an indoor multipurpose space and has often had to have school assemblies on the asphalt courts outside, even in the rain. It is not just about a gym and indoor space for the school, it is also for the broader community. There is a lack of basketball courts in the Box Hill electorate, and this is going to provide a much-needed space for all of those basketball clubs that are in our electorate. I want to thank the school council president, Craig Fegan, and principal Michael McLean for driving this project, and I look forward to the minister's response.

Bills

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

*Second reading***Debate resumed.**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Footscray is not here for the call, so the call goes to the member for Rowville.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (14:47): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and I thank the clerks for the heads-up about what was going to happen. Can I firstly congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his budget reply, because it was well thought out. He had been through the numbers, obviously, with the Treasury team, and it made a lot of sense in terms of how he was going to reply to it and set the direction in terms of where the opposition stands.

From my point of view it is a typical Andrews Labor government budget—massive debts, massive deficits, massive cost blowouts and, can you believe it, a pathetic promise to have the budget back in black within four years. Now, if it were true, most people would go ‘That’s just fantastic’. We have got this massive amount of debt and these massive deficits coming up over the years. If we could believe that the budget was going to be back in black in four years time, we would say that is almost a miracle. But you just cannot trust Labor. You cannot trust them. I am sure there is not even a person on the backbench that actually believes that we are going to be back in black in four years. There is probably not one Labor MP on the backbench that would possibly believe, under the policy settings that they have, that we would be back in black in four years.

I actually was going to go on and talk about the debts and the deficits, but I am going to switch tack because of what has happened in my electorate over the last few months. It is just devastating that the health system can be in such a diabolical mess. How ironic is it that the Labor government, the defenders of the health system, the defenders of the education system, can get the planning and the funding so very wrong for our health system? It is just so unbelievable. I mean, listening to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings—and the PAEC system is a very good system because it allows the opposition and others to be able to go through, line by line, with the minister—on health issues, for example, in the case of the Minister for Health. But confirming that 21 people have died waiting for an ambulance is something that you would never believe would happen in this state or this country. Twenty-one people have died waiting for an ambulance.

You hear about situations overseas, but for this great state to have that situation is just unbelievable. Even today we have a situation where minister after minister and even the Premier are saying it is all about COVID-19. But where is the role of government? I mean, the government’s job is to protect us, to provide good-quality services. In fact I would say it should be providing the best quality services in the world. The government’s job is to plan, to fund and to deliver, and on the response in case of an emergency, what has the Andrews Labor government been doing when obviously there were red flags up all over the health system months and months and months ago? When you question the Premier about the red flags, it goes to the funding for the health and ambulance system.

The fact is that a minister or the Premier can get up here and talk about how much funding and how many extra people they put into the ambulance system. The member for Lowan hears it all the time, and the member for Lowan does the work in the Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee. We get told how many extra people they have put on, how many billions they have put into the system. The point is it has not worked, so it is a fat lot of good saying how much money we have put in or how many extra ambulance officers or nurses. The fact is it has not worked, because people are dying. The planning was not done, and it is now over two years since COVID hit.

Let us look at the health system. I had the great privilege of being a minister for emergency services. I was talking to a former ESTA board member a couple of days ago, and he made the point—and it is a very, very good point—as a former board member for ESTA, that the idea of having a board for ESTA is to give that independent advice and to be able to go to government. If you are going to have time constraints, if you are going to have a time requirement—KPIs for when someone rings in on 000 and it has to be answered by a certain time—which is what should happen, then obviously the executive and the board at ESTA have to work out how many call takers you need. You factor in long service leave, superannuation and sick leave, and in the case of COVID you work out just how many people are going to be away, but you make sure that you have the people in place—the training, the training, the training. As he pointed out to me, the budget preparation goes to the Treasurer and goes to the minister. The Department of Treasury and Finance check and double-check all the numbers. If the government make the decision that they are not going to put in that amount of money, then obviously ESTA cannot make those KPIs.

So someone has failed in this process. Is it the board members at ESTA, or is it that the board members did all the hard work—which is what I suspect—to say, ‘We need this number of call takers in order for us to comply with the government’s requirements for picking up the phone in a number of seconds to ensure 000 is going to work properly’? We really need to know. Was it ESTA who failed, or was it that the ESTA board did the right thing—gave the documentation to the minister and gave the documentation to Treasury, who were able to work through it and say, ‘We agree. This budget must be fulfilled in order for ESTA and 000 to be able to fulfil those KPIs’? Someone failed and someone failed poorly on that.

In regard to the health situation and the breakdown of the health system, it is just awful. The government says, ‘No, we haven’t cut money, we’ve done this’, but you just go through those numbers and you just worry. You ponder over whether the money is getting to the front line of the health system. Is it getting to the health system? I have had that dreadful case in my electorate. A pregnant woman in my electorate could not access the maternity services at the Angliss Hospital in Ferntree Gully because the lifts had broken down. The woman, who was about to give birth, had to travel 27 kilometres to Box Hill because the lifts were not going to be fixed until June. This is Victoria; this is not a Third World country. And this was not before that woman in labour at the Angliss was strapped to a stretcher to be carried down a stairwell. I mean, just how absolutely dreadful and degrading is that?

And there was the situation that I raised yesterday with the Premier about my constituent—that is the cancer patient that we had from Rowville being 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 the day care ward—which was brightly lit, can you believe it—for a further 24 hours. His wife pleaded with staff that her husband needed an MRI. Her husband needed an MRI, and the situation was so dire that after a while he was sent home again with no follow-up care—and I do not blame Monash Medical Centre one little bit. The hardworking staff there do a phenomenal job, but they are overwhelmed and that is not fair on them. In this case he was sent home. He was sick again, and the GP called for an MRI and it was found that he had had a stroke eight days earlier—a stroke, can you believe it, eight days earlier? Even when he went back to the Monash Medical Centre he was still stuck on a trolley out in the ambulance waiting area. It is these situations that are just absolutely devastating. We still need to know what the government is going to do to fix the health system rather than just telling us over and over and over again ‘We’ve got more staff; we have more money’ because it is not working. It is not working, and we cannot afford for more people to die waiting for an ambulance. The situation that the member for Euroa spoke about today just must be devastating as a parent. Again we thank every single nurse, doctor, support worker, ambulance driver and paramedic. They do an incredible job, but the situation at the moment is so dire they need support, and they need it big-time.

Can I just go to my local electorate of Rowville, and what a phenomenal electorate it is. But when the Premier said the Andrews Labor government are going to govern for all Victorians, it does not matter

which way you voted, I think what he meant to say was ‘We’re going to govern for all Victorians except for people in Rowville’ because it seems to be that nothing happens in Rowville. For eight years nothing has happened in Rowville. Our schools are just left behind. We have the Scoresby and Rowville secondary colleges receiving nothing from the \$1.6 billion the government is spending on school upgrades. There is no funding at all for those great primary schools—Carrington, Heany Park, Karoo, Knox Gardens, Wantirna South, Knox Park, Lysterfield, Park Ridge, Rowville and Scoresby primary schools. These are great schools, but for goodness sake, you have got to give the principals, the support staff and the hardworking teachers a chop out. And then the state has some responsibility in the Catholic school system, with St Joe’s, St Jude’s and St Simon’s. There is no doubt that the students in Knox deserve a better go, and I hope that the anger in my electorate towards the Andrews government about what they have done—or have not done, more importantly—to the people in Rowville is going to be remembered.

The Scoresby CFA—how much longer do we have to wait for a new fire station? We have been waiting and waiting and waiting. Our roads get congested over and over again. I guess one of the really big issues for us is the east–west link. The incoming Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, has promised \$4 billion in the budget to make sure that it is their contribution to continue with the east–west link—that is, that people from my electorate can go up EastLink into the tunnel to get to the other side of town. I have made this point over and over again. You should be able to have a ring-road in a city as sophisticated as Melbourne. We do not. But the east–west link would fix that—having a ring-road.

My last point before my time expires is that there will be no funding whatsoever towards Rowville rail. The federal government promised \$475 million and Labor has said that they are going to do a tram plan from Caulfield to Rowville, but we still waiting. Of course nothing is going to happen. It is just one of those throwaway lines. A journo says, ‘What’s going to happen about the situation of people in Rowville?’. They are going to have a tram plan or a trackless bus—a trackless bus. It was good today to hear that the Labor government have now realised that buses can travel where trams cannot and where trains cannot, which I thought was a great revelation. But the fact is we need funding for decent public transport out to Rowville and we need movement on the Rowville rail plan. We need it to happen. We need spades in the ground for this to happen. We have a massive, growing population, and they deserve the Rowville rail to start and to start soon.

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (15:02): I am really pleased to stand here as the member for Mill Park and of course minister for those portfolios. I am really pleased also to make my contribution to this year’s budget. It delivers real change and investment right across our state, and I am really pleased that communities such as mine again are not forgotten. In fact they are very much at the centre of the investments that we are making on top of previous ones in previous years.

Through this budget we are investing \$12 billion to put patients first, with a pandemic repair plan so that we can have more staff, better hospitals and first-class care. This includes funding to train and hire up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses. Really importantly, the Northern Hospital play such a vital role in terms of the services they provide for that broader northern suburban community out where my community is, and I know that a share of this will be very much valued and appreciated by them. It is important that we keep investing in our health system. We know, of course, that the pandemic has meant that we have had to invest further, and we continue to do that.

We are also investing \$333 million to add almost 400 new staff to increase the 000 call-taking and dispatch capacity and delivering a further 90 paramedics to help our frontline workers deal with unprecedented call-out volumes. We are investing in education to make sure every student gets access to the opportunities they deserve and to be their very best. Locally, in my community, I am absolutely delighted that Merriang Special Developmental School will receive \$5.3 million for a much-needed upgrade but also to complete the master plan at one of their campuses, delivering the final stage of the schools master plan at the Lalor campus and modernising the junior campus in my electorate in South Morang. This is one of the 36 special schools we are upgrading in this budget, because students with

special needs deserve the same opportunities as every other student in our state. This funding will mean that every single special school in Victoria will have received funding for a major upgrade since we came to government. Every child, every student, deserves every opportunity to achieve their best in life. This is a really special part of the budget for me, and I am really pleased that it is being delivered.

As the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I am really proud to say we are ensuring that every family gets the chance to get out and enjoy our natural environment, by continuing to invest in suburban parks across Melbourne. My community is also seeing investment of about \$400 000 towards the Farm Vigano master plan. The Farm Vigano precinct is within the Plenty Gorge, which is such a special place within the outer suburbs of northern Melbourne. It will provide improvements to walking paths, viewing platforms, seating and signage to communicate the cultural significance of the property and to conserve the heritage stone walls.

Victoria is certainly leading the country in the transition to a renewable energy economy. Since we were elected in 2014, 55 projects providing almost 4000 megawatts of new capacity have come online and are providing clean energy to the grid. Of course it is not stopping there. We have got five new renewable energy projects, large ones, that are under construction, and this will provide even more power. When you do this, you actually reduce power costs, and that is why Victoria today is leading the country in terms of putting that downward pressure on power costs. Thanks to the leadership, we are creating more jobs in renewables than any other state, and last year we delivered the largest annual increase in renewable generation of any government ever.

We are also helping Victorian households tackle the cost-of-living pressures. Today, like every day, Victorians are finding it really difficult to manage cost-of-living pressures. We will have a new \$250 power saving bonus from 1 July; it is a one-off payment. It will be available to every single household in Victoria from 1 July. That comes on top of the existing \$250 power saving bonus that is available until the end of June this financial year. That is available to those most vulnerable in our community with concession cards. So if you are among the most vulnerable in our community and if you have not got your power saving bonus, you can get online now, before the end of June, claim \$250, and from 1 July get back on and claim another \$250.

This is all established through our Victorian Energy Compare website, which we established in 2015. It is the only truly independent energy price comparison tool on the market. I know that people in my community are absolutely appreciative that they can actually get onto a website that they can trust, that is independent and that does not have any particular bonuses or favour any particular energy companies and offers. We have made the energy retail businesses provide all of their market offers to us so that they can all be on this independent, free website that people can inspect. Typically when they go on the website, seven out of 10 Victorians can be saving money by switching or ringing up their energy retailer and saying, 'Listen, you're charging me too much. I want some savings'. So \$330, on average, can be saved. This is a really important tool that Victorians have really taken to because it works for them; it is in their favour.

We are also providing targeted support, with \$9 million for critical energy affordability support services and one-off assistance for Victorians who need it the most. It is vital that we keep an eye on and keep delivering for those people who have got the hardest task of being able to get on top of their cost of living. That is what Labor governments do, and in the fine tradition of Labor governments this budget delivers plenty in that regard.

We are working to futureproof our electricity network against extreme weather caused by climate change by providing \$10 million for microgrids and standalone power systems. We are kickstarting our offshore wind energy industry with \$6.8 million to undertake the planning and policy development to deliver our nation-leading offshore wind energy targets, which will see us bring online 2 gigawatts of new power—cheap power, affordable power—by 2032, with first power in 2028; 4 gigawatts by 2035; and 9 gigawatts by 2040.

Victoria is the envy of every other state in the country. We have got the ambition, we have got the drive and we will create the first offshore wind energy projects in the country. Importantly, as we do that, we will be creating almost 6500 jobs by building those projects. It is really critical for us to appreciate the value of that because we are talking about good, highly skilled jobs that are ongoing jobs. That really does tell you that there are significant jobs in the new energy sector that will help to sustain many, many communities right across regional Victoria. That is part, of course, of the creation of 24 000 jobs by 2030 that is currently underway to fulfil the obligations that we have set ourselves to reach 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. These things do not happen by accident. They happen when you have got a plan, you have got a vision and you invest in the job creation programs and the industries that are of the future. We are doing that. Not tomorrow, we are doing that today and building on that after today too.

Now, later this year we will have an offshore wind energy implementation statement, on which we will consult and which will really be about maximising the jobs creation, driving that record investment and delivering social outcomes from this new industry. We will also be working with traditional owners to develop a new model of engagement with renewable energy projects that can deliver on their aspirations for self-determination and importantly economic independence. We have allocated \$4.2 million to bring online more renewable energy through our second Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) auction, and this will play a key role in meeting our goal of powering the entire state government with renewable energy by 2025.

Leadership needs to occur by example, and we are absolutely doing that by leading the way through examples set by government. We will provide \$8 million to support mandatory training for electrical workers. This is really critical because we need to keep ensuring that, as the energy system transforms and new technologies come in, Energy Safe Victoria has the opportunity as the regulator to be able to design new programs and new courses in conjunction with the industry and the unions to ensure that we renew foundational skills that keep workers safe when working with electricity and of course think through what those new skills are that need to be developed up for this sector.

Finally, we are investing in renewable hydrogen through the \$10 million Hume Hydrogen Highway initiative that will see us deliver Australia's first hydrogen highway between Melbourne and Sydney. I was very pleased to have joined the state minister for energy in New South Wales to announce this really critical project. This will really help to drive up or create the demand for renewable hydrogen for heavy transport.

The Solar Homes program is going from strength to strength. We continue to invest in this nation-leading program that gives savings to Victorians who have joined the program. We initially thought that they would be saving \$890 a year every single year. On average they are now saving more than \$1000 every single year off their energy bills by participating in this program. This budget delivers funds for a further 64 000 rebates, and also there are more rebates for battery storage systems. Of course importantly we continue to fund rebates for rental households installing solar PV systems, and we still have the availability of an interest-free loan for part of the installation costs and the up-front costs. So we are working for everyone when we continue to build on these programs.

Solar Homes customers, as I said, are saving significant dollars. 1700 battery rebates will also be made available, bringing the total number of battery rebates to 5200, and there are other significant initiatives that are supported by this budget. A total of \$384 million has been paid in rebates since the Solar Homes program started in August 2018, and the Solar Homes program will make up one-eighth of our 2025 VRET target of generating 40 per cent of our energy from renewable energy sources. The Solar Homes program has already abated 1 140 000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

This is real action on climate. We do not talk about it, we do it. We get on and do it, making sure that we do not leave any Victorian behind. Whatever the size of their wallet is, whatever the size of their bank balance is, whatever their housing situation is, we are absolutely there for them so that they can get the benefits of the journey to decarbonising our energy system. In total the program will reduce

the state's carbon emissions by almost 4 million tonnes while we are creating 5500 jobs, so there are benefits all round here.

We have also invested \$560 million to protect our precious biodiversity since coming to government in 2014. This is the largest ever investment by a Victorian government, creating 250 000 hectares of biodiversity protection through new national parks—land set aside for that—including 65 106 hectares in central west, 96 000 hectares of immediate protection area and 90 000 hectares of old-growth protection. In this budget we are supporting the Yorta Yorta traditional owners with \$5.8 million to support the continuation of the joint management plan for Barmah National Park.

There is so much here that I could talk about. I am running out of time, absolutely, but we have got \$16.5 million for our heritage icons on public land, including Werribee Park Mansion, the Point Nepean forts and lighthouses at Cape Otway, Cape Schanck, Point Hicks and Wilsons Prom. These sites are important for our local tourism industry, and works will create nearly 200 jobs.

We are also investing \$14 million in a package for forestry contractors, who will be employed to collect seeds vital to reseed forests after major fires. We know that there will be more bushfires in our future due to the devastating effects of climate change. We need to be prepared to regenerate our forests in the aftermath, and this is what this really important investment goes towards. Wildlife will benefit from further funding, as will other parts of public land in terms of our coastal and marine environments. I am running out of time—there will be extra funding for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, which is a very important part of our coastal community, and certainly more by way of fire. This is a budget that I commend wholeheartedly.

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:17): I rise today to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. Sadly, the Andrews Labor government's 2022–23 budget is a complete and utter disgrace. It is despicable that they have released a budget with so much spin and deception in its title, 'Putting patients first', when on their watch we are in the midst of the worst health crisis Victoria has seen and the ambulance union, the police union, the Australian Medical Association and many medical experts are all saying our health system has been flailing and failing for years—and years before COVID. Do not take that from us, take that from the experts and the health workers.

The Premier and his tired eight-year-old Labor government are putting healthcare patients last. In fact they are putting Victorians last. They are putting Victorians in my local community last. And it is simply astonishing as you read through the budget papers—flick through the budget papers and look at the pages in black and white—that many of the Andrews government's headline announcements do not actually have a single cent of funding allocated to them.

The Melton hospital is a case in point. It is a stark example, something that Labor announced in the lead-up to the 2018 election and have just reannounced simply because they have not done anything about it. It does not have a single dollar allocated to it. It is in black and white in the budget. There is not a single dollar allocated in this budget to the Melton hospital. The budget papers just state 'TBC'—as the Premier advised us at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, to be confirmed. There is not a single dollar. Also the Moderna mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility, in my portfolio of medical research—something that would be of great benefit to our state and the nation—does not have a single dollar allocated to it in the state budget. It is there in black and white. It is just a blank space in the budget papers. It is simply astonishing.

This state budget unfortunately represents a troubling picture for our economy and completely ignores my local community. Under this budget our children and our grandchildren will be saddled with billions and billions of dollars worth of Labor's debts for decades to come. The Andrews Labor government has no plan for how any of this money will ever be paid back. Victorians will yet again suffer another annual budget deficit, this time of \$7.9 billion. The Andrews Labor government will plunge Victoria's net debt position to a staggering \$167.5 billion by 2025–26. That is a record debt for Victoria, and it is a shocking legacy for this Andrews Labor government. That means that the Premier

has taken Victoria's debt level to that of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia combined. To put that into some perspective—\$167 billion is a massive number—Labor's record debt represents \$25 000 for every Victorian, or \$100 000 for a household of four. It represents 26 per cent of gross state product. That is a significant number. Every Victorian will have a \$25 000 bill to pay to help this Andrews Labor government get out of its shocking debt. It is more than double the debt target of 12 per cent that this Labor government promised Victorians at the last state election would never be exceeded. They gave an election commitment that they would not exceed the 12 per cent debt target, and they have failed. It is just another broken election promise by this arrogant Labor government, who cannot prepare, cannot plan and has no credibility when it comes to business continuity or planning for the case of an emergency.

Now, just like that is the broken election promise of no new taxes. That is another broken election promise, no new taxes. Premier Andrews and his Labor government have introduced not one but 42 new or increased taxes, forcing up the cost of living for Victorians. And do not think that the Premier will stop there. I mean, alarm bells are really ringing for every Victorian because the only way that the Labor government is ever going to have any chance of paying down this debt is by taxing Victorians more, and this Labor budget has shown us in the budget papers, again in black and white, an increased tax revenue by \$10.8 billion in this budget alone—more than pre-COVID levels.

The Andrews government, as we know and have heard many, many times, has lost its AAA rating, and that is something that this government cannot blame on COVID. It is because of their terrible mismanagement of the state's finances. The Andrews government lost its AAA rating, and that was a rating was achieved by the Kennett government back in the mid-1990s and was held until a couple of years ago under this government. Credit agencies only just after this budget was handed down are warning yet again that there will be ongoing downgrades to Victoria's credit rating due to this disastrous budget management under the Premier. John Manning, vice-president of Moody's credit rating agency, said about the budget impact:

We expect Victoria's debt burden will not stabilise before the end of fiscal 2027, further increasing negative pressure on the state's rating.

The S&P Global Ratings analyst Rebecca Hrvatin also gave a damning assessment of this budget, stating:

The state's debt levels are likely to soar past 200 per cent of operating revenues by fiscal 2024 due to historically high infrastructure spending, exacerbated by rising inflationary pressures and some project-related cost overruns ...

Cost budget blowouts under this Andrews Labor government—some \$28 billion is what we know. I think Victorians know that really it will be much higher than that. By some miraculous accounting this Labor government assures Victorians we will reach a budget surplus by 2025–26. I mean, it is an absolute joke, but there is absolutely no detail and no explanation in the budget papers as to how this will be achieved. They just put a line, and after all of the misleading that this government have done they just expect Victorians to believe what they are saying. But they are pulling the wool over Victorians' eyes again. They say they are going to reach a budget surplus—no detail, no credible steps on how that will actually be achieved.

This Labor government has no plan for how it will repay that \$167.5 billion of debt, and nor is there any mention of how much interest Victorians will be slugged for these never-ending debts. It is clear that the debt will be at least that much and will certainly be higher. Perhaps it will reach \$200 billion by the end of the 2020s, which will be a sad legacy of the Andrews Labor government, and it will be really demonstrated by their reckless spending and mismanagement of our finances—of Victorian taxpayers dollars.

The only thing that this Labor government really knows how to do and seems, sadly, to excel in is spend and waste. They spend, waste and mismanage everything. Spending by this Labor government will rise to \$90.7 billion by 2025–26, with public service wages to rise by \$5.3 billion this time to a

whopping \$35.3 billion. The public sector will continue to bloat under this Labor government, in fact with an increase of over 18.5 per cent in the Department of Premier and Cabinet's public servants—so more suits in the Premier's office and less money for Victorians in the healthcare crisis, while Victorians will be taxed more to pay for it. Where is all the money coming from? I am really concerned that our grandchildren will still be paying for the debt legacy of the Premier.

Revenue received from taxes under this Labor government will soar from \$23.6 billion this year to \$35 billion in four years time. Labor will just keep taxing Victorians more to fund its reckless spending and its budget blowouts on major toxic soil projects like the Metro and West Gate Tunnel projects. Motorists will see their vehicle registration taxes increase, with the Labor government hoping to net \$2.3 billion in a registration fee tax hike, and struggling businesses will be forced to pay even more in payroll tax with credits being wound back. Property owners will be hit with \$603 million more in land tax, and new homebuyers will get sluggish with \$1.5 billion in stamp duty and land transfers.

The greatest and most immediate challenge for Victorians is health. The state budget reveals a disturbing \$2 billion cut to Victoria's health system. You can look in the budget papers, it is in black and white: a net \$2 billion cut to health at the worst possible time. That is despite ambulances ramping at hospitals every day, over 50 code oranges called in the last 12 months, police enlisted to perform ambulance duties, hundreds of calls to Victoria's fatally flawed 000 emergency call system being left on hold, unanswered, and tragically 21 Victorians dying whilst on hold with 000. These issues stem back to 2016, well before the COVID period. Nearly 100 000 Victorians are on the surgery waiting list and over 151 000 Victorians are on public dental waiting lists. It is a terrible legacy of the Andrews Labor government.

Our community will recall back in April 2020 being sent into lengthy lockdowns by the Premier, when he told us the lockdowns were in order to prepare the health system. Regrettably Victoria's health system remains in crisis. Our amazing healthcare workers have done a tremendous and outstanding job, but they are exhausted. We still do not know what happened to the \$1.3 billion that was promised for 4000 staffed ICU beds. Unfortunately the Premier's state budget is putting patients last. The Premier got us into this mess; he is not the person to get us out of this mess. He simply cannot be trusted to get us out of this mess, and the budget is absolute proof of that.

That brings me to my local community, the beautiful electorate that I represent. For the Evelyn electorate this budget was incredibly disappointing. There is not one dollar allocated to upgrade any roads to address safety or congestion, or to duplicate the rail track between Mooroolbark and Lilydale. The removal of the Lilydale rail boom gates has resulted in not one but two additional sets of traffic lights on the main street, causing traffic chaos. The Deputy Premier promised our community that this would slash congestion times. Well, local residents are avoiding the area because the traffic is worse.

Just drive out to Lilydale and have a look for yourself. The traffic pressures are crazy. It is causing traffic pressures elsewhere in Lilydale and causing local traders to lose customers. The half a billion dollars spent on removing the Lilydale and Mooroolbark level crossings has not resulted in any improvements in commuting times or reliability or frequency of train services. You still have to wait 25 to 30 minutes for a train from Lilydale.

Further, it is astonishing the Andrews Labor government has again refused to commit to the duplication of Maroondah Highway in Coldstream and fix the dangerous Killara Road intersection, and that is despite being gifted \$20 million in federal funding over three years ago. Now what our community will be closely watching and judging is that the Premier does not try to convince the new federal Labor government to redirect this \$20 million promised in the 2019 federal budget away from the Coldstream community to patch up his losses in city-based projects.

Now, the point of difference could not be clear enough: a change of government this November to a Victorian Liberal government will get the Maroondah Highway–Killara Road, Coldstream, project done. We will fix that dangerous road. Additionally, we have pledged \$5 million to upgrade the

dangerous stretch of Warburton Highway between Douthie and Peters roads in Seville East if elected this November. Only a Liberal government, when we have a change of government in November, will get that done.

Sadly for our community there is nothing in this budget from the Labor government for health in my community, for mental health services or for social housing. Public housing waiting lists are absolutely skyrocketing under this Labor government. In fact it was devastating to see there is a cut to funding, or an end of support, for Lifeline, Kids Helpline and Beyond Blue because the Andrews Labor government has said that these programs are no longer necessary. It is astonishing. Disappointingly there is no set allocation in this budget for ongoing storm recovery funding through the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges to help a community still devastated from the June 2021 cyclonic storms, and there is nothing to support Yarra Ranges Tourism, the regional tourism board, to recover after the pandemic.

There is only one shining light, and that is \$2.5 million to upgrade the facilities at Coldstream Primary, which I have raised in Parliament many, many times. It is a terrible budget by this Labor government.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional Development) (15:32): I am very proud to rise today to speak on these appropriation bills and this fantastic budget for rural and regional Victorians. Our government knows that strong regional economies are vital to the overall economic health of our state. It is something that we have lived and breathed since we were first elected in 2014, and that is why this year's budget brings our total investment in regional Victoria to \$36 billion—that is \$36 billion, more than five times what was invested by the coalition when they were last in government. And it is why, despite the significant impacts of the global pandemic on regional economies, right now the regional Victorian economy is rebounding strongly. Thanks to our government's record investment since 2015 and COVID support of \$13 billion our regional unemployment rate is the lowest in the country at 3.2 per cent, and that means that there are 81 900 more regional Victorians in jobs than there were seven years ago. So this is great news and certainly something to celebrate. Total employment across regional Victoria now exceeds pre-pandemic levels.

We continue to see Victorians move to our regions. Importantly those that have moved over the last couple of years are staying, and they are staying because of the opportunities that have been created by this Andrews Labor government. It is our investments in schools, our investments in hospitals, in kinders and public transport, all of these investments are making rural and regional Victoria an even better place to live and work. This year's budget builds on our record investments in the regions with a further \$5.7 billion, including \$2.6 billion to turbocharge regional Victoria's preparation for the Commonwealth Games. This point is important because I have read specious claims from the opposition that this year's budget somehow represents a cut in funding for ag and regional development. The fact is that the \$5.7 billion we are investing in regional Victoria in this year's budget is three times more than the average regional budget of the previous coalition government. As usual, the opposition is misrepresenting the facts. This year's budget follows the record \$8 billion that was delivered to regional Victoria in the 2020–21 budget. That was a stimulus budget, you will recall, as a direct response to the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

In agriculture the Andrews Labor government has made investments of \$3 billion since 2015–16, which have grown the value of our food and fibre industry to \$17.8 billion compared to \$13.4 billion when the member for Murray Plains was in government. That is a 32 per cent increase in the value of our agricultural industries. What did the member for Murray Plains do when he was the minister for agriculture? Well, let me tell you. We had four long years of inaction, chaos and cuts to frontline services. When the Liberal-National Party were in government, they chose to slash funding by half and to cut vital frontline biosecurity staff by 42 per cent. They chose to close regional agricultural offices in Ararat, St Arnaud, Birchip, Ouyen, Camperdown, Cobram and Kyneton. They chose to axe more than 500 jobs from Agriculture Victoria. They chose to give up on the eradication of the Queensland fruit fly.

In contrast, this government is delivering the funding that is needed to support the continued growth of our agriculture sector. One of the initiatives that I am most proud of that has been funded in this year's budget is \$12 million to the Grains Innovation Park in Horsham—

Ms Kealy: A glasshouse.

Ms THOMAS: to build a new glasshouse complex and business innovation hub. What we are doing in Horsham is absolutely state of the art. We have a fantastic facility there, and it is a pity that the local member wants to talk it down. She says it is just a glasshouse. She must never have been there, because it is the epicentre of grains and pulses research in the nation. And can I tell you that last week I was at an alternative proteins conference where they were very, very interested in collaborating with the Victorian government because of our research into grains and pulses. The work that I saw is about working with protein-rich field peas, lentils, fava beans and so on so that we can deliver these protein-enhanced beans to the rest of the world, because the world will be crying out for protein.

Let me tell you this, Acting Speaker, if you do not mind—

Ms Kealy interjected.

Ms Green: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am finding it really hard to hear the minister on her feet. I would ask you to ask the member at the table to pipe down.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood): It may have something to do with the minister actually facing away from you, but I do ask the member at the table to also tone it down a bit.

Ms THOMAS: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. The point is that Horsham is a very vital facility and will be at the leading edge of agricultural research in Australia, and that is helped along by the investment of this Andrews Labor government.

In regional development we are investing a further \$30 billion in our Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF). This flagship fund was established under the Bracks government. John Brumby, a fantastic minister for regional development, established this fund.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Ms THOMAS: Excuse me, Acting Speaker. Could you please ask the member on the other side to pipe down, because I am trying to talk to the budget, and she has not stopped—

Ms Kealy interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood): Order! Could I ask the minister at the table to ignore the interjections, but could I also ask the shadow minister at the table to tone it down a bit, please.

Ms THOMAS: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. RJIF of course is celebrating 20 years of fantastic projects right across rural and regional Victoria, and indeed I was very pleased that it was the Liberal coalition government that maintained a commitment to RJIF. This has continued now for 24 years and has helped invest funding into thousands of projects right across rural and regional Victoria. I am proud that since 2015 \$700 million has been invested through the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. The current round, as we speak, has seen 110 grants awarded, totalling \$116 million across the three streams of RJIF. The Regional Infrastructure Fund, which is one stream of RJIF, enables local communities to tell us the projects that are most needed in their communities and enables community-led responses to social and economic challenges. We can see these investments over successive rounds really build on success.

I wanted to give you an example in Timboon and Port Campbell, where I recently had the pleasure of visiting. We know that the town of Timboon is a beautiful town and has lots of tourist appeal, and in fact over successive rounds of funding our government has supported the community of Timboon to really put themselves on the map as a visitor destination. But one of the things that this has done of course is create greater demand for housing in that region. So what have we done in response? We

have provided support to local government to enable them to unlock more land for housing development in Timboon and indeed close by in Simpson, the point being that under our watch and the strategic investments that we make under RJIF we are really bolstering some of the smallest towns across rural and regional Victoria and we are seeing the rural and regional economies continue to grow. Of course Timboon Fine Ice Cream were able to tap into this tourism market. When I was in Timboon I might say I did have an ice cream, and if you have not had Timboon ice cream, as they say, do yourself a favour—absolutely fabulous. So we have been very pleased to be able to support Timboon Fine Ice Cream, Berry World and so on. These are just examples of the way in which over time the cumulative impact of the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund through its three streams has really boosted regional economies.

I might also say, again just building on the example of what is happening up there on the south-west coast—and if only the member for that region were here to hear all about the great investments that the Labor government is making in her electorate, I am sure she would be thrilled—\$6 million for the revitalisation of Port Campbell town centre is yet another example. \$4.5 million from the Regional Infrastructure Fund will go towards the Twelve Apostles trail, which will link visitors and locals to Port Campbell with a 20-kilometre bike and walking path. So, again, it is this cumulative impact of strategic investments in infrastructure, partnering with the private sector. This is what is delivering jobs and real outcomes in rural and regional Victoria.

I did want to touch on the various elements of my portfolios in my response today, so it would be remiss of me not to talk about animal care and protection. A couple of really great initiatives announced in this year's budget include \$600 000 for Victoria's first ever, maybe Australia's first ever, pet census. Now, you might ask why you would need a pet census. Well, let me tell you this: it is not just dogs and cats that people have as pets, and we need to better understand the pets that people have, the drivers for them in choosing those pets and the social impact of having a pet. We know under COVID many, many more people chose to have a pet for companionship, to take out walking and so on. So pets play a really vital and important role in our lives. We know from council data that we have got around 600 000 dogs registered and we know that we have got around 215 000 cats registered, but we suspect that there are many, many more pets out there. We need to do the census in order to understand what pets we have got and how government can better develop policy to support pet ownership here in Victoria.

Of course the cat management strategy is another very important investment. This is \$1.3 million over two years to develop a 10-year strategy. This was an advocacy priority of the RSPCA, and it stems from the RSPCA's desire to see a couple of outcomes. One is we want better animal health outcomes for cats and kittens. We all know that cat that is partially owned. That is the cat that people might feed out in the street, but we know it is not registered, it does not receive veterinary care, it fights and gets injured and it can cause a real nuisance in neighbourhoods. Not only that, but it does hunt and kill wildlife. So through the cat management strategy we want to see a greater focus on registration of cats, people taking responsibility for cats, getting cats desexed, containing cats and so on, so that both cat lovers and wildlife lovers can live harmoniously together.

In addition to that we have also invested in the Ballarat Animal Shelter. This is \$11.5 million, which I will tell you up-front is a lot of money for an animal shelter, so I really wanted to better understand this. Now, I visited the current Ballarat Animal Shelter. This shelter has more than 2000 pets through a year. And the member for Wendouree is in the house; she was there with me. It has more than 2000 pets and animals a year, and it services many surrounding local government areas: Hepburn, Pyrenees, Golden Plains, Moorabool and so on. It is also the workplace for more than 20 people, and I can tell you: the current shelter is in an old abattoir, and it was dreadful. I have never been to a worse animal shelter. So I am very proud that we are investing in building a new animal shelter to service the Central Highlands region and those surrounding shires and of course creating a safe and appropriate workplace for those employees of the City of Ballarat that deliver these vital animal

services to the city and surrounding shires, not to mention the many volunteers who work there every day. This is a fantastic budget for the people of rural and regional Victoria.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (15:47): I also rise to address the appropriation bills for this year. There is a lot of material to cover, and I will do my very best to do so in the time that I have allocated to me. In the time that I have had the great honour and privilege of representing the wonderful electors of the Sandringham district, covering Beaumaris, Black Rock, Mentone, Cheltenham, Highett, Hampton and Sandringham, I have every year prior to the budget being delivered by the state Labor government submitted to the Treasurer a Sandringham district budget submission. In that district budget submission I have sought to identify for the Treasurer areas of need in my community. I did that again this year, and I fully intend during the course of this contribution to outline in some detail some of those requests. I am not one to give away the punchline so early in the piece, but it is not good news for the people of my area. It is not good news for the people of my community. There was a lot that I asked for on behalf of my community, and frankly not much was delivered.

I would like to start with a positive, though. Way back in 2021 on 23 April I wrote to the Minister for Education, the member for Monbulk, on behalf of Sandringham East Primary School, and I asked him to consider completing the stage 1 redevelopment works of that primary school. Although I have no record of a response being received from the education minister at the time to that request, I am pleased to advise that in this budget there was some \$3.85 million committed to Sandringham East Primary School for the purpose of those works. Interestingly about \$100 000 of that \$3.85 million was allocated in the immediate budget, with the remaining majority of \$3.84 million allocated in forward years. But that is a win for Sandy East, that is a win for my community and I am pleased to have been part of the advocacy on behalf of my community that achieved that result for Sandy East primary school.

The other win for my community was of course the Hampton Pier. Those who are currently in the chamber and those who are viewing this at home or reading it at some point in the future will know that I have been a strong advocate for the rebuilding of Hampton Pier. It has been a community-led, community-driven campaign for the last two years. I was privileged to work alongside some pretty formidable community members in fighting for the rebuilding of Hampton Pier—I am talking about John Barton and Graham White, those great members of the Hampton Sailing Club and the Sandringham Yacht Club as well. Money has been allocated in this budget for the rebuilding of Hampton Pier, and that in my view is a great community win—a great community campaign that was led and a great community win. Disappointingly it took two years to do so, but we finally got there.

There are a number of other things I asked for in this Sandringham district budget submission—for example, a major upgrade of our Sandringham Hospital that would give the hospital renewed purpose in serving my community for this generation and the next. It was in 1964 that the hospital was founded and commenced serving my community, and it was in 1985 that I was born there—and not much has changed since. For that reason alone I believe that the Sandringham Hospital needs a renewed vigour, a renewed purpose to serve the next generation. But do not take my word for it; recently it has been pretty well ventilated in that wonderful newspaper the *Age*—in fact only last week, on 16 May, ‘Surgeons resist government plan for Sandringham Hospital’. I will quote briefly from that article:

“The plan proposed has significant flaws; it is based on the transfer of sick patients who require urgent surgery from one campus to another,” the surgeons said to management in a letter seen by *The Age*.

“This is, on basic principles, dangerous, allowing delays in treatment, problems with handover and results, puts even more stress on Alfred theatres and is expensive.”

The surgeons are particularly concerned about the risk that cases of “general routine surgery” may be delayed due to the need to do more acute cases.

An internal workplace dispute has also arisen, with the group of surgeons raising concerns about having to reapply for their jobs in the unit.

And it goes on.

Look, this is a time when you do not need to be a Liberal member of Parliament, a Nationals member, an independent, a member of the government or interested in politics whatsoever to recognise that there is a health crisis in this state. When you have got surgeons—good surgeons—at Sandringham Hospital who need to reapply for their jobs because of some sort of workplace realignment to suit government purposes, to suit Alfred Health’s purposes, it is just simply not good for football, it is not good for patients and it is not good for my community. What we need at Sandy hospital is a serious injection of funds there to give that hospital renewed life and renewed purpose to serve this generation and the next—and that is something that I and the Liberal opposition are deeply committed to delivering.

Further in my budget submission I requested \$10 million for stage 1 funding and urgent maintenance and development of a master plan at Mentone Girls Secondary College. Linda Brown is the principal there. She is a wonderful principal, a wonderful educational leader, and it is a wonderful school. It is the only girls-only state secondary school in the southern region of Melbourne—the nearest would be Mac.Robertsons Girls High—and it would be so wonderful for that school to receive \$10 million. I requested \$10 million for stage 2 redevelopment of Sandringham College, and I pay tribute to their wonderful principal, Amy Porter, and the school council president, Andrew Barlow, who are magnificent advocates for their community. I asked for \$1.5 million to repair and reconstruct a hall at Beaumaris Primary School, and I pay tribute to Sheryl Skewes, their principal. It is a wonderful school, and they desperately need a school hall. Also I asked for \$1.5 million for the construction of a school hall at Beaumaris North Primary School, and I again pay tribute to Sherril Duffy, the principal at Beaumaris North Primary School, who is a wonderful advocate for that school. I am sad to say that those four education requests were not delivered upon in this budget.

I asked for greater protections for the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and the preservation of the vast majority of the former Gas and Fuel land in Nepean Highway, Highett. I asked for an upgrade of the pavilion and change room facilities, specifically the development of female change room facilities, at the Trevor Barker oval, and I pay tribute to the Sandy Zebs CEO, Marcus Ashcroft, on his advocacy for that. I asked for \$400 000 for the immediate restoration of Beaumaris Bay pier and the installation of access infrastructure for disabled snorkellers very close to Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron, and I pay tribute to their commodore, Les Sabo, for his advocacy there as well.

On road safety, I asked for an upgrade of the pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Childers Street and Warrigal Road. Mentone Primary School acting principal Ken Burgen, the attendant who helps kids cross that road every day and St Pat’s primary school principal Tim Noonan have come to me saying that this is critically important, and that has not been delivered in my community.

The removal of the Highett Road and Wickham Road level crossings in Highett—I mean, those in the chamber now know that I have been an ironclad, rock-solid advocate for the removal of those two level crossings. We have had Cr Steve Staikos, the mayor of the City of Kingston, who has stood next to me together with Cr Jenna Davey-Burns—

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr ROWSWELL: Well, Minister for Agriculture, we should not have to wait for federal dough for this. This is a state issue, and it should be fixed by the state. If the Labor government cannot recognise that this needs to be fixed by the state Labor government, then my goodness we have lost our purpose. Well, they have lost their purpose and they have lost their direction.

There are many other things that I asked for as well. I have only got 5 minutes to contribute to this debate, Deputy Speaker, and I welcome you to the chair. I do want to just address two final matters in the time I have available to me. At a former time, when I served as the Shadow Minister for Energy and Renewables, I was pleased to spearhead a policy that would unlock an additional 1800 megawatts of renewable energy capacity for Victoria. That would be enough to power some 2.4 million homes and small businesses. That would mean affordable, cleaner power and lower emissions for every

Victorian. But it would also mean bringing more renewable energy onto the power grid, and carbon emissions as a result would be further reduced by a minimum of 13 per cent, helping us meet our legislated emissions reduction targets of net zero by 2050. I was thrilled on behalf of the coalition—on behalf of the opposition, the Liberal-Nationals—to spearhead a policy which meant the unlocking of an additional 1800 megawatts of renewable energy that would power 2.4 million homes, that would reduce our emissions by a further 13 per cent and that would help us further reach our legislated emissions reduction targets of net zero by 2050. Do not look at what Labor says on this policy area; look at what they do.

In the final moments that I have to contribute to this particular debate on the appropriation bills, I would like to also draw attention to the need for appropriate funding for integrity agencies. As the deputy chair of the Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee, a position that I have held since I was elected to this place in 2018, I have time seen time and time again, frankly, the Labor government continually underfund integrity agencies in this state. That is deeply concerning to me.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Grievance debate

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That grievances be noted.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (16:01): Victorians deserve to know and trust that their government has integrity. But I grieve that in Victoria we have a Premier who amended the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Act 2011 to make it weaker, who has refused to give IBAC and the Ombudsman the financial resources they require and who has personally appeared before IBAC in secret sessions, definitely twice and probably three times. Integrity in government matters. As Shannon Deery said in the *Herald Sun* on 16 May:

Is something rotten in the state of Victoria?

With our Premier involved in at least two corruption probes, it's a fair question ...

because

... so often where there is smoke, there is fire.

And the smoke clouding the Andrews government is becoming thicker and thicker.

If we think about all the ways in which this government's integrity can be legitimately called into question, we can think about the red shirts affair, where almost two dozen MPs, including several ministers, were embroiled in a scandal that misused taxpayer dollars to pay for political campaigning. I note that the red shirts inquiry has not gone away and that in fact the Ombudsman has been asked to have another look. That of course was the scheme that the Ombudsman described as an artifice, and I will have more to say about that. Former Labor MP Adem Somyurek of the other place summarised that red shirts affair, and he said:

... (Labor MPs collectively) acted corruptly, and then we—

that is, Labor MPs—

did not co-operate with the Ombudsman's inquiry and the various police investigations because the Labor Party lawyers told us not to ...

There is a reason—

he said—

why red shirts does not go away and that is because it was wrong, and we knew it.

By contrast, the Liberal-Nationals have already released significant policy in relation to what we would do differently in government, particularly in relation to funding IBAC and restoring its powers, and I will have more to say about that as we go.

Moving first to the red shirts inquiry—and I note, by the way, that there remains a motion on the notice paper in the other place in the name of Mr Davis that specifically goes to the issue of Mr Lee Tarlamis of the other place and notes that he was implicated directly in the Ombudsman's report into the red shirts rort scandal. It notes that he was a member of Parliament nominating field organisers for employment as casual electorate officers in 2014, and it goes through a series of adverse findings against Mr Tarlamis. In fact it offers him a half-hour opportunity to explain to the Council what he did, but Mr Tarlamis has not taken up that opportunity.

A member: What a surprise!

Ms STALEY: Yes, indeed. If we go to the Ombudsman's report on the red shirts, we can note that there were a number of MPs—many were not named—but most of them are no longer in the Parliament; they have retired. However, there remain a few who are here. We have Gayle Tierney of the other place, who spent \$20 559 of her electorate office budget—taxpayers money—improperly; Lee Tarlamis, who spent \$19 931; the now minister Anthony Carbines, who spent \$8823; ongoing minister Lily D'Ambrosio, who spent \$5364; a former Attorney-General and continuing minister, Martin Pakula, \$5354; Cesar Melhem, \$3538; John Eren, \$2358; and Shaun Leane of the other place, \$2358.

I note specifically that the Ombudsman goes through the ways in which Labor MPs breached the guidelines. She says:

Clause 9 of the Members' Guide prohibits the use of Electorate Officers for the Member's 'political or party duties' ...

And she concludes:

Nineteen ALP Members of the 57th Parliament breached this provision ...

She says:

Clause 8 of the Members' Guide prohibits transfers of the Electorate Office and Communication Budget ...

between electorates. She found that this was breached by the following members, who are continuing members: the member for Mill Park, the minister; John Eren; and Nazih Elasmr of the other place.

I now turn to who the workers were—who the actual red shirts were—and of the list of names that the Ombudsman so helpfully provides us on page 63 only the member for Buninyong went from being a red shirts worker to being a member of Parliament. She was of course paid by a former member for Ripon, Mr Helper, to work not in Ripon but in Buninyong, and she then became the member for Buninyong. She did 70 hours work illegally. I well remember that it was reported in the Ballarat *Courier*:

Buninyong Labor candidate Michaela Settle is believed to have been one of 17 people spoken to this morning by police in regards to an ongoing investigation.

While it would be wrong of me to use a prop, there is a photo very available on the internet that shows Ms Settle going into the police station that day. She was clearly interviewed by police in relation to the red shirts rorts. But then of course all of the Labor MPs refused—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Ripon, I would ask, if you are not quoting from a document, that you refer to members by their correct titles.

Ms STALEY: Sorry, the member for Buninyong was clearly photographed. She was at that point the candidate, but she then became the member. She was interviewed but then—of the members who said that they would cooperate, none of them did. They still to this day refuse to cooperate.

I will move on because I have quite a lot to cover in my remaining time. I now move on to Operation Richmond, because of course this government does not have integrity.

Ms Green interjected.

Ms STALEY: To be honest, member for Yan Yean, if you must come to Ripon—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Ripon, through the Chair.

Ms STALEY: Sorry, Chair. If the member for Yan Yean must continue to come to Ripon, could she at least behave with some decorum? We are all getting a bit sick of it. If we now move to Operation Richmond, this is the first—

Ms Green: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Ripon has made a comment that I have been to her electorate and misbehaved. I take offence at that because I have not misbehaved in her electorate. I have not drink driven or been pulled over by police or anything like that. So I ask her to withdraw that comment.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is a matter for debate, member for Yan Yean, on that point of order.

Ms STALEY: Thank you. So we move to Operation Richmond, which is the first of three IBAC investigations that involve members of the Labor Party. Operation Richmond's original focus was into the dealings between the United Firefighters Union and its state secretary Peter Marshall and Labor, but apparently the terms have widened. This one, of the three, has been the most secret. In fact we only found out about it because of another court action that meant that IBAC wrote to the witnesses and said that they were no longer bound by confidentiality agreements. We then found out that the Premier was among those understood to have been interviewed, and he is the one who has repeatedly said that the secrecy provisions mean he cannot say anything about it. The IBAC Commissioner has said he can say something about it, and he could certainly say something in this place if he chose. But he is hiding behind a made-up process, because it is one of three. That is the one we are not sure he has appeared at. That is the one we are not entirely sure about. And of course the reason we have not seen that report yet is that the people involved in it keep taking IBAC to court to try to suppress it. Eventually it will see the light of day.

Then we move to Operation Sandon. Sandon is about Mr Woodman and corruption in relation to a planning scheme amendment. Many, many Labor MPs, including the member for Cranbourne, including the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and including, could I say, the Deputy Premier, have been involved in and named by either Mr Woodman or Mr Staindl, who is known to be a long-time Labor Party supporter. The Premier has appeared at this one too about corrupt dealings. This is about corrupt and improper attempts to change a planning amendment. The Premier has appeared there.

Then we come to Operation Watts. Operation Watts is about branch stacking in the Labor Party. As the *Age* reports:

Premier Daniel Andrews has been secretly grilled by Victoria's anti-corruption watchdog as part of an investigation that has found the Labor Party's culture is rotten and encouraged the serious misuse of public resources.

The anti-corruption agency:

... interviewed 26 witnesses, including the premier, in private and seven witnesses in public hearings.

A draft has been leaked:

"The evidence adduced enables the conclusion that these practices—
that is, branch stacking—

have been approved or condoned by party leadership for decades," IBAC concludes.

Who would be the party leadership in this state? That would be the Premier, who on more than one occasion has told us he takes responsibility for everything that happens under his government. IBAC's report went on to say:

... Labor's "organisational and leadership culture" must undergo further change if necessary reforms to stamp out corruption are to be effective.

So, having dealt with three IBAC investigations that all go to Labor Party sitting MPs, including ministers, plus the red shirts inquiry, the only thing that we can conclude is that this party, Victoria's government, is lacking integrity. There are deep, deep questions of corruption at every point.

And what do we find when in fact people try to question that in parliamentary committees? We have a protection racket run by Ms Shing of the other place. In two cases Ms Shing has refused to allow questioning to continue. I particularly want to mention the one in which the member for Rowville attempted to ask Commissioner Redlich a question and that was shut down. That question went to the Premier's office. Now, Ms Shing's spouse is the Premier's chief of staff. There is a clear conflict of interest—an absolute conflict of interest—and Ms Shing should have excused herself. Here we go, shutting it down.

Mr Dimopoulos: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member does not have the privilege to malign people who are not here to defend themselves. It is a disgraceful comment that she just made.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms STALEY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and thank you for ruling that there is no point of order. He is just trying to shut me down. And that is the problem with this government: they lack integrity, they will not answer for their failings—

A member interjected.

Ms STALEY: That is true. But their tone and their approach are arrogant. They have been in power too long, and it is time they went. *(Time expired)*

LIBERAL PARTY

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (16:16): I rise to grieve for if the Liberal Party of Victoria was ever to govern this beautiful state. I want to begin by taking a note from the Treasurer's speech in which he outlined what our investment will deliver to the Victorian people by the end of the budget period.

The year is 2026. The Commonwealth Games are on in our regions, with excited tourists on our streets and buzz throughout the state. We are catching trains through the Metro Tunnel, marvelling at its five new underground stations, before we emerge into a bustling, lively city. The state budget is back in surplus. Seven thousand healthcare workers have been trained and hired so that when our children and our parents need the best care we know they are in the safest hands. The new Footscray Hospital is open, and Melton hospital is taking shape. The West Gate Tunnel is easing traffic in Melbourne's west, and apprentices are hard at work building the Suburban Rail Loop. Our reform of Victoria's mental health system makes it one of the best systems in the world. We are producing Australia's mRNA vaccines right here in Victoria via the Australian Institute for Infectious Disease in a world-leading biomedical precinct—again, right here in Victoria. We are producing test kits for viral infections right here in this state and supplying them around Australia and internationally. Victorian students are walking through the gates of 100 new schools, and 85 dangerous level crossings are gone for good, including eight in my community. 2026 will see this government deliver more schools, more level crossing removals, more healthcare workers, more hospitals and more jobs, because we do what we say and we say what we do.

We can imagine, however, what the year 2026 might look like under the Liberals. \$3.8 billion has been cut from mental health supports. The workforce is overwhelmed and underpaid. Schoolteachers have been instructed not to teach a Safe Schools platform. Students experience bullying across the

state. There is no funding available for psychological support in schools. Instead the Liberals have opted to fund Tony Abbott's antiquated chaplains in schools program again in some hope of praying away the gay. Bernie Finn's new men's first party is an essential part of the coalition's minority government. This conservative coalition sees them relitigate safe abortion access zones, conversion therapy and voluntary assisted dying. What a coalition government lacks in vision they make up for in division. The Liberals' sole major infrastructure project, the east-west link, has made sure that Victorians are billions of dollars poorer. Without any significant public transport infrastructure project other than that one, it does nothing to reduce congestion in Melbourne. The Suburban Rail Loop—investment has been cut, severing the outer suburbs' chance of infrastructure that is for their needs and accessibility to major transport and other services around Victoria. Oh, and five hospitals have been either sold off or closed to honour a portrait of Jeff Kennett.

This is not just speculation, it is extrapolation. How do we know this? Well, the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus refused to commit to supporting the funding outlined by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. When funding commitments passed the house, the Leader of the Opposition lamented:

What I find astounding are the excuses that then follow to try and justify it: 'Oh, but it's for this. Oh, but it's for that. Oh, but it's for this' ...

... This is not Argentina under Perón; not everyone can live off the government.

No, not everyone, unless you are the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus. Just the Leader of the Opposition and his entitled caucus can live on the public purse, and they do. They protest with all the tact of a Jaguar bursting through your front fence, and a publicly funded Jaguar no less. The Shadow Minister for Mental Health called a commitment to a funding stream for mental health, a specific commitment to mental health funding, 'unnecessary'. Their leaders and members have formally promised to amend gay conversion laws if elected and remove Safe Schools from the curriculum and have campaigned against safe access zones for abortions, all on the public record. They have undermined confidence in investment in the Suburban Rail Loop and called for the scrapping of airport rail to Werribee. In doing so they undermine opportunities for private sector investment in this major infrastructure project, limiting the incredible opportunities that co-investment would bring. They have promised to hold up every major transport project through this audit they are proposing, effectively a public show trial, when all the public want is for us to get on and deliver infrastructure projects. That is what the public voted for, and that is what the public expect.

We do not have to go too far to remember that not only in their four years between 2010 and 2014 but under the Kennett Liberal government 17 hospitals were closed down in Victoria—17 hospitals. Ten thousand hospital workers lost their jobs, including 3500 nurses, and 1400 beds were removed from Victoria's hospital system. It is in their party room today that a portrait of Jeff Kennett hangs high. This is not just speculation, it is extrapolation, and there is no moment worth extrapolating on more than when we most needed them, when Victorians most needed bipartisanship in the pandemic—as was expressed by the South Australian Labor Party and as was expressed by other opposition parties around the world. When we most needed unity and support, what did we get from them? Scores of Liberal MPs, some of whom are in the chamber right now, came out to rile up a group of misled, vulnerable Victorians, who then turned violent against police and vandalised our shrines. They were complicit. The Liberal member for Warrandyte encouraged this group to not just direct their frustration at the medical advice but at the crossbenchers considering that advice. In the name of democracy they are entitled to sit there and consider that advice. No, no, he went for them, naming them directly to the public, to the sounds of jeers and boos. Those crossbenchers—and some have come out publicly after that—would go on to receive threats to themselves and their families amongst the torrent of abuse that followed.

When the former Prime Minister and former Treasurer were backgrounding against and attacking the state's health experts and when then Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Josh Frydenberg, then Treasurer, were backgrounding against our healthcare workers and those on the pandemic front lines, the Victorian Liberals were cheering them on, because they are Liberals first, as the Premier says, and

Victorians second, and I even wonder if they are Victorians second. This is not just speculation, it is extrapolation. That trend will continue if they are to form government. They will continue to sell off services, ignore our outer suburbs and obsess over themselves, like they did yesterday, instead of delivering for Victorians. The Liberals do not have a vision, they just have division. Last election they ran on a slogan 'Make Victoria safe again'. Safe from what? Who does the whistle blow for this time? Is it the gays? Is it the trans kids? Is it the Africans? Is it the refugees? Who does the whistle blow for? Make Victoria safe from whom? This is what they are about. They are about divisions—African gang race baiting, led by their headkicker in Queensland, Peter Dutton, on the wireless barking down lies about Victorians being afraid to go out to a restaurant, afraid to leave their homes. This is a man who wants to become the leader of their federal party, the alternative Prime Minister of this country—Peter Dutton, who walked out on the apology to the stolen generation because he was too scared to face the past; Peter Dutton, who has publicly stated he opposes same-sex marriage; Peter Dutton, who mocked the flooding of the Pacific Island nations whilst campaigning to prevent action on climate change; Peter Dutton, who referred to the Biloela children as 'anchor babies' because that is all he saw in that tragedy of a human story.

At the last election they tried to tell us we were not safe from migrants. At this federal election we were not safe from trans children and adults. Somehow we were going to be overrun in sporting contests from schools right through to the elite level. They do not have a vision; they just have division. They tried using trans kids as a political tool, but it did not work on Australia, and it will not work in Victoria. They do not have a vision; they just have division. Their updated policies are too often outdated. By the time they decide to change a policy it is about 10 years too late. The outdated policies on the other side are too close to some of their members' hearts for them to change at all, and we saw some of the repercussions of that yesterday.

They are an absolute outfit that does not belong anywhere near government. On climate change they are 10 years behind. They are still debating Safe Schools. They are still fighting over conversion therapy internally. They have not begun to turn their minds to how to support insecure modern work. Every bit of legislation we have passed in this Parliament, whether it be portable long service leave or anything that tries to protect gig economy workers, they have voted against. This is not leadership. This is not addressing the concerns of a modern economy and a modern Victoria. Leadership is doing what you say and saying what you do, being up-front with your policies even if it is not politically popular. We took over Safe Schools, as an example, when it became almost toxic because of the awful narrative of the Liberal Party of Victoria and Australia. We said, 'No, don't worry about it. We will continue funding it' when the commonwealth pulled out. Be up-front with your policies and your values. They do not know who they are, so how can we know? How can the Victorian community know who they are?

I can count—and I will say at the outset this is me having a look at, frankly, just the surnames of those colleagues on the other side of the house, so I may be wrong; I put that at the outset, but I am not far wrong—only two of their members, two out of 30, who hail from outside the United Kingdom. Only two out of 30 hail from outside the United Kingdom in their heritage—two out of 30 in the most multicultural state in Australia. How is that even acceptable for any organisation, let alone the alternative government of Victoria? In contrast, who are we? We are a group of people who are committed to a value set that is consistent with the community's value set. We are a group of people that has diversity both in—

Mr Newbury interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Well, it is true. Tell me it is not true.

Mr Newbury interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Mr DIMOPOULOS: Sorry, Deputy Speaker. We have a diverse caucus with over 10 languages spoken between us, over 50 per cent women in cabinet and almost 50 per cent women in our caucus. We are a government, we are a people, we are a values-based organisation that believes in climate change. There is not one of us that denies that. The minute even one person denies that, you stymie the action that that huge public policy issue deserves.

Probably the best way to describe who we are as an outfit compared to—in fact there is no comparison. Who we are as an outfit is best described by an example that the Premier raised in question time today. The Premier and I were at the Victorian Heart Hospital, in my electorate, on the grounds of Monash University. That is not just a hospital; it is a story that we have to tell about our government, a story where we have employed more doctors and nurses than any government previously despite the reduction in funding federally because of the formula adjustment in terms of hospital growth—number one. But it is not only the doctors and nurses, it is actually the build that procures local content in that build, creating a chain of work through the economy, both local and bigger employers and construction companies. But it is not even just that. As the Premier said today in question time, it is Nadia and many others like her who we met that day, who get a chance to train to become apprentices in whatever field—carpentry, building, major construction. And again it is not the end of the story. Nadia gets to train in a free TAFE environment, along with her colleagues and her peers. And then after the heart hospital, as the Premier said on that day, finishes construction at the end of this year, Nadia and her peers have an enormous pipeline of other projects.

So not only do we develop the workforce that a modern Victoria needs, not only do we develop the health care that a modern Victoria needs, but we provide an entire circle around it in terms of the skills we need, provided for free, and local content to create economic opportunities and jobs in Victoria. That is the story—one of many of this Labor government—something that is creative, something that is bold and something that when you look back, you think, ‘How could we have done it any other way?’. But they do not have that imagination, they do not have that courage, because of, frankly, who they are and what they stand for. That is why I grieve should they ever, ever lead this beautiful state. That is why I grieve for the lost opportunity of a Liberal government in Victoria. Thankfully we had a change of government in Canberra, which will be a match partner in terms of our values and a match partner in terms of our investment in infrastructure, recurrent funding in our hospitals, recurrent funding in our schools and in every other major public policy area, including mental health, where the feds, this time, squibbed it. A tiny part of the investment that we have put in for Victoria they have put in for the whole country.

MEMBER CONDUCT

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (16:31): I rise to grieve for the loss of integrity and Westminster accountability under the current government, but before I get into the details I just want to highlight how offended I am at the suggestion of the member for Oakleigh about categorising members of the opposition based on their surnames. This lecture comes from a government that constantly tells us about race and the need to avoid racism, and it stands up and says that we are something because of our surnames. How extraordinary that is. Member for Oakleigh, you should reflect on your commentary on that. That is just outrageous.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Gippsland South, I have reminded members repeatedly this week not to use the term, ‘you’. You are reflecting on the Chair, and I ask you to direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The member for Oakleigh just basically said this side of politics is no good because of our surnames and made some assertion that 28 out of 30 of us were from the United Kingdom. How the hell would he know? How would he know who our mothers are and if we have got ancestors from different parts of the world? That is just a disgraceful thing that the member for Oakleigh just said, and I am frankly quite offended and disappointed in him that he would say such a thing. And it goes to the integrity of this government. The integrity of this government, as the member for Ripon

has outlined, has been besmirched for the last eight years time and time again, starting with the red shirts riot that no-one has ever paid any consequence for, an issue that the Premier of the day constantly said there was nothing in. When it first came up, he said, 'This is something that all parties do'. Then when the Ombudsman's report came out and referred to it as an artifice, the Labor Party was forced to pay back \$380 000, but who ever took responsibility for it? No-one. No-one was ever charged.

Now we have got not one, not two, but three Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission investigations into the conduct of this government, or touching on it very, very closely. The member for Ripon again has outlined them: Operation Sandon, where the Premier has now been interviewed, involving John Woodman and the City of Casey. We have got Operation Watts, basically started by a member in the other place, Mr Somyurek, which is a deep investigation into branch-stacking activities and how that cuts across misuse of public resources, and I suspect there is a lot more to that one than we have heard so far from the public hearings. And of course there is Operation Richmond, involving the United Firefighters Union. Now, we know that the Premier has been interviewed twice on Operation Sandon and Operation Watts. We do not know what has happened with Operation Richmond, but I think you can bet your bottom dollar that they have had a very, very close investigation of the Premier with respect to what happened with the UFU, what happened with the dispute over the enterprise bargaining agreement back in 2015–16 and what has since happened with the merging of the CFA and the MFB into Fire Rescue Victoria.

I am sure that Jane Garrett, a member in the other place, and many others could tell us some more. We look forward to hearing what IBAC will in fact say, because so far there has been no accountability and there has been no transparency from the government on these issues. The Premier time and time and time again uses the line, 'I will not give a running commentary on an investigation that is underway'. Well, it is very clear that the Premier is running from commentary on all of these investigations.

He tried that with the famous Coate inquiry back in 2020 into the mishandling of the hotel quarantine program, an inquiry I say is still one of the things that frustrates Victorians most, because for that monumental failure that was the hotel quarantine program that employed security guards to look after the hotel quarantine program, no-one was ever found responsible for that decision. That is one thing that really sticks in the craw of Victorians that I talk to, time and time again. We had the Premier's 'no running commentary' at that time despite the fact that the Honourable Jennifer Coate herself came out during the inquiry and said it was not a court of law and there was no reason why the Premier and his ministers could not comment publicly on what had happened with that program while her inquiry was going on. Then we actually had the Premier called before that inquiry, and what did we hear constantly about the decisions made about that? 'I don't recall. I don't recall'—time and time again. We had this decision made appointing private security guards to supposedly manage a highly sensitive hotel quarantine program, and we never got to the bottom of who was responsible for it.

I remember as a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee asking these questions of the Premier in August 2020. The Premier—I had to remind him—had actually asked PAEC to undertake an ongoing inquiry into the government's handling of the pandemic, and he tried that on at the start. When I asked questions about that, he said, 'Well, Mr O'Brien, there is another process at play. I'm not here to answer that'. It just goes to the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability and integrity that this government produces, and that is why I grieve for Victorians and grieve for integrity and Westminster accountability from this government.

Indeed as much as it was the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions that was responsible for the procurement of those security guards, we never saw an admission or any accountability from the current Minister for Industry Support and Recovery. We never saw any accountability from the Premier. People will say—and I know Jon Faine likes to say—Jenny Mikakos lost her job. Well, Jenny Mikakos quit because she was not supported by the Premier in his evidence, not because she took responsibility for it but because there was a dispute between her and the Premier. I remember at the time it was extraordinary that days after the Minister for Health had quit the Premier confessed he had

not even spoken to her—someone he had worked side by side with for 20 years. That Coate inquiry is one of the examples of where the integrity and accountability of this government had gone missing.

And we have seen it since. IBAC obviously has currently three operations, as I said, underway into or surrounding the activities of the Labor Party and this government. We saw, as the member for Ripon indicated, a member in the other place, Harriet Shing, shutting down questioning of Robert Redlich when it came to actions with respect to the interviewing of the Premier in relation to some of those inquiries. It was, I think, very brave and appropriate of Commissioner Redlich to come out after that incident where Ms Shing stepped in at the so-called Integrity and Oversight Committee and actually shut down the questioning, cut the feed and stopped that line of questioning and say basically that IBAC can speak for itself—it can answer those questions or choose not to if there is any perception of sub judice or anything similar. More strength to his arm for doing so.

I touch briefly on the stacking of the public service, and it was outlined in some detail in an article in the *Age* nine months ago titled ‘The chosen few: how Victoria is really governed’. It is an instructive piece on what has happened under the Labor Party in this state. There are a number of comments in there that tell the true story. Here is one quote:

These are not career public servants seconded for a period into a minister’s office but career political operatives and Labor loyalists inserted into the public service in decision-making jobs.

The Age has identified more than 30 senior public servants who served as advisers in the Andrews government.

That goes right to the heart of the Westminster system and the issues of accountability and a frank and fearless public service. The article has a number of interesting quotes, and I just wanted to share one too from a public servant who spoke about this:

“A lot of us feel uneasy about it,” he said. “You also feel ungrateful to complain because this government has doubled our executive ranks. There is money coming out of everyone’s ears in the public sector at the moment.”

So the government is putting in its people and it is buying them off. That is what the message is in that, and that is a shame for accountability and the Westminster system in this state.

I want to go back to IBAC because I want to mention a little bit about the way the Premier and his ministers conduct themselves when it comes to being interrogated, particularly on matters of budget. We have seen it in the last couple of weeks in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, where the Premier and his ministers will say to me and to my colleague the member for Brighton and Mrs McArthur in the other place what is white is black and just completely deny the facts in front of them. It goes back and is a nice tie-in to IBAC. At the end of November 2020 in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee budget hearings, I was questioning the Premier on the cut in funding to IBAC in that year’s budget papers. It was quite clear: in budget paper 3, page 384, under ‘Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission’, the 2019–20 budget was \$44.2 million, the 2019–20 actual was \$46.6 million and the 2020–21 budget was \$42.2 million. There is a bracket there: a 4.5 per cent cut in the IBAC budget at that time. I asked the Premier to read it out, and it stumped the Premier because he could not actually do so without confirming what we had been arguing, that there was a cut in the IBAC budget. I asked him to read it out:

Mr D O’BRIEN: Okay then, Premier. Let us go to allocations then, the column further to the left, which is the 2019–20 budget.

Mr ANDREWS: Yes, which I have just taken you to.

Mr D O’BRIEN: Yes. Which is what? Can you tell me what the figure for that was for last year’s budget allocation?

Mr ANDREWS: Well, it is there for you to see ...

The Premier would refuse to even acknowledge what was there in black and white, and he went on to attack me. He said:

The table speaks for itself ...

He went on to say:

Your active misinterpretation of those ... papers is what is at play here, and we will have none of it.

'I am so cocky I will just deny what is there in front of me'. We have seen it again in the last couple of weeks. I read out the budget papers—page 220 of budget paper 3, the health department outputs, a cut of \$2 billion from last year to this year. The Premier said I was completely wrong, that it is not there. The Minister for Health said I was completely wrong, it is not there. When I asked the Premier about a \$24 million cut to dental services and how the budget papers actually revealed 44 000 fewer Victorians would get public dental treatment because of his government's cut, the Premier denied it and said I was wrong. I knew I had him. I knew I had the Premier angry and annoyed that we had actually identified the reality of the budget when he pulled out a reference to the federal coalition's dental programs in 1996, some 26 years ago. That is when I knew the Premier was not prepared to put up with the truth getting out, when he reached back several decades to try and find a counterpoint to the argument.

Likewise, there were a number of these instances in the last few weeks in PAEC. The higher education budget has been cut by \$117 million and the minister told me straight out, black and blue, 'That is not true, Mr O'Brien'. Well, there it is. It is in black and white in the budget papers.

I said this earlier in my contribution on the appropriation bills: I invite all members of the government to actually have a look at the budget papers. Do not just read what the Premier's office gives you. Actually have a look at what is in there and see what they say, because you will be surprised to find how many areas in this year's budget are cuts. The Premier and his ministers lack the integrity to acknowledge what they are doing and accept the facts of what is happening in this state.

There are good people on the other side. I have no doubt that there are good members of Parliament in the Labor Party, but they do not speak up—they do not speak up when these issues come to the fore. It is a great pity for the people of Victoria. There is a lack of integrity in the Labor government of this state. There is a lack of accountability in the Labor government of this state. Something smells with the government of this state, and that stench will only be removed with a change of government this November.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Ms HALL (Footscray) (16:46): I grieve at the thought that the Liberal Party might one day have the opportunity to lead this great progressive state and the impact that that might have on Victorian women and on climate change action. It is the Wednesday after a federal election where the women of Australia in particular made their voices heard loud and clear. The women of Australia did not want a bulldozer who wandered around Parliament House with a pet coal rock mocking the science of climate change. The women of Australia did not like being derided by conservatives as 'doctors' wives' when in fact they were the doctors. The women of Australia did not like being told that they should be grateful that they were not shot when they protested that they had had enough of the violence and gender discrimination that exists in this country, including in Australian Parliament House. The women of Australia had had enough of a Prime Minister who could only relate to the experience of women through the prism of being a father or a husband. It was the women of Australia who were the lifters, not the leaners during the last two years of this global pandemic. It was largely women who worked in the caring industries like aged care, who put their wellbeing and their lives on the line every single day to protect others. Our efforts to protect those essential workers during the pandemic were met by calls of those opposite to open up.

The Victorian Liberals' response to the federal election this week in essence has been to say to Victorian women, 'Women of Victoria, be cool. Don't worry, we've gotten rid of Bernie'. For 23 years they have turned a blind eye. After 23 years of support from the Victorian Liberal Party, only now, on the Tuesday after an election where the women of Australia spoke so strongly about issues that are

important to them—about being heard, about action on climate change—have they decided to wrap things up for their number one bloke in the western suburbs. This is just one of their problems when it comes to women.

We should never forget how Mr Davis in the other place described the family violence royal commission as a lawyers' picnic. They will not commit to all 227 recommendations. We have invested \$3.5 billion in tackling family violence because we know that one woman dies every week at the hands of a partner or ex-partner. The Liberal candidate for Melton, formerly the member for Burwood, refused to show any respect in this place when Australian of the Year Rosie Batty came to speak to Parliament. I am pleased to note that the communities of Melton and Burwood now have proud allies of women representing them.

Looking across the chamber today in question time, I noted that there were four Liberal women. I genuinely mean this, it must be lonely being a woman in the Liberal Party. Women make up more than 50 per cent of our cabinet. Our women's caucus is made up of 34 women who shape policy, drive change and represent their communities with distinction, and in the Labor movement we have acknowledged that there are structural barriers to women advancing in all parts of society—that glass ceilings are real. That is why we introduced affirmative action many years ago. I believe that it was Minister Hutchins who helped drive that reform in the Labor Party, and we are better for it.

Ms Green: She had some help.

Ms HALL: She had some help, member for Yan Yean. Lots of women in the Labor movement organised to make that change. But over in the Liberal Party they support a merit-based system. On 11 September last year the Leader of the Opposition said:

I am being dragged towards that—
position of quotas—

... I still think we have a chance to change a few things in the current preselections or we will need to look at other mechanisms.

We do not have enough women in State or Federal Parliament. I don't make any excuses for that. It is something the Liberal Party in Victoria needs to address.

A few months later at the December party conference the Liberal Party conference refused to endorse quotas. So here we are, the Wednesday after a federal election where the Liberal Party have been decimated and their 'net zero is dead' friends seem a little bit in a flap about climate science at the moment. We know that that is a very serious issue, but of course it is a complete joke to their future leader, Peter Dutton, who thinks that the impact on our nearest Pacific neighbours is hilarious.

The Victorian Liberals do not have a clue where they stand. I am glad the member for Brighton is in the chamber. Perhaps he can give us an indication of where the Liberal Party stands, because Mr Davis again on 8 March on ABC radio in an interview with Ali Moore tried to clear things up:

Ali, look, I would be very quite clear on this, that in fact every time a bill going through laying out targets has gone through the Parliament we have supported or not opposed it ... If you want to go and check the parliamentary record, you will find that the decisions and the government's targets have been waved through the Parliament by the opposition.

Ali Moore said:

So Victorian Liberal Party policy is to support net zero emissions by 2050. Is that correct?

Mr Davis:

That's my understanding, yes.

And then Ali Moore notes in the interview that the opposition has not put out any media release or official policy statement to this effect, and *Hansard* also shows that Mr Davis personally voted against

the Climate Change Bill 2016 in 2017 along with the Shadow Minister for Energy and Renewables, Craig Ondarchie. This mob cannot be trusted to act on the devastating impacts of climate change.

Mr Newbury interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Brighton.

Ms HALL: I look forward to reading the member for Brighton's various positions on climate change policy, though I did note that Mr Finn said yesterday that he has been announcing policy willy-nilly, so that is an interesting insight into the policy process in the Victorian Liberal Party.

As I said, the Victorian Liberal Party cannot be trusted on climate change. The women of Victoria know that. They know that pretty well in Kooyong, in the member for Brighton's neighbourhood. They have failed to publish their policy online, not a single media release about it, just one rogue MP announcing his views in the *Age*. The simple truth is if the opposition had its way, we would not have had any new solar farms or wind farms in Victoria. We would be missing out on all the incredible benefits delivered by renewables, because when those opposite were last in power, when the Leader of the Opposition was the planning minister, his planning reforms effectively cancelled every wind farm in the state. We should have perhaps suggested to him that he could put them in Footscray, because he did whatever he wanted in Footscray, like he did down at Fishermans Bend. There were some rules for some parts of the state and other rules for other parts of the state—but I digress.

They have also voted against every important piece of renewable energy and climate change legislation that has come to this house, be it the Victorian renewable energy target, Victoria's Climate Change Bill or the National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment Bill 2020, which gave us the power to build the Victorian Big Battery. At the last election the Liberal Party promised to keep smashing our renewable energy industry, promising to scrap the Victorian renewable energy target, wanting to make the state's power contracts fund a new gas power station and paying Hazelwood to stay open. They also voted against setting a fair price for solar generated on people's rooftops. They are a party of climate change deniers and sceptics who do not care about tackling climate change or building the jobs of the future. When it comes to climate change the Liberal Party are wreckers.

The actions we take today on climate change are more important than ever. Here in Victoria our climate has already warmed by 1.2 degrees Celsius since reliable records began in 1910. We are already seeing reduced rainfall, more bushfire danger days and longer bushfire seasons. And if we follow a high-emissions scenario into the future, one led by the science sceptics over there, we can expect to experience double the number of very hot days in our state by the 2050s.

The Andrews Labor government has been proud to lead on climate change from the day we were elected. We have demonstrated the transition from a highly carbon-intensive economy to one that has cut emissions by 25 per cent since 2005 while growing our economy. Through our transformative Climate Change Act 2017 we have made it our goal to achieve net zero emissions in Victoria by 2050—that is the one the opposition voted against. We were one of the first jurisdictions in the world to take this vital step. We also developed Australia's most robust approach to developing new targets, with a legislated requirement to set new interim targets each five years that would ratchet up action over time. And what did the Liberals do? Every step of the way they would vote against these reforms, standing in the way of the most important changes and indeed the most important piece of climate change legislation in any state in the country.

In May last year we released our climate change strategy. This strategy represents a fork in the road for our state, putting forward real ambition, respecting the goals of the Paris agreement and embracing the opportunities of a low-carbon future. As part of this we have set targets to cut Victoria's emissions by 28 to 33 per cent below 2005 levels by 2025 and by 45 to 50 per cent by 2030, based on 2005 levels. These targets reinforce Victoria's position as a climate leader and provide a strong contribution to the global action required to avoid dangerous climate change. The Andrews Labor government is

leading the way in Australia, delivering the most rapid rate of decarbonisation of any major jurisdiction in the nation.

I go back to the 23 years that the Victorian Liberal Party have supported Mr Finn. He had the number one spot on the ticket in my community, and his electorate office is just down the road from mine. I have spoken about his contribution to Victoria and to public discourse over the years since my election. Just going to something that Mr Finn said—and this was well before the Victorian Liberal Party decided to wrap him up—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Footscray, if you are referring to someone in the upper house, you need to say that they are a member of the upper house.

Ms HALL: My apologies, Deputy Speaker. A member for Western Metropolitan Region a couple of years ago said—and the Liberal Party stood by him at the time that he said this:

The election of President Trump in the United States was a clear, unequivocal statement from the people of the United States that they think climate change is nonsense, and that they have had enough. Indeed Australian people are saying exactly the same thing. They are saying exactly the same thing—that they have had enough of the carry-on that we hear from the extreme Greens and indeed from the climate change industry. Those in the climate change industry might not be green at all, but geez, they are making a lot of money out of it! They are doing very nicely out of the caper indeed, and that is what it is.

Yet the Victorian Liberal Party continued to stand by their man, saying he was the best choice for the Liberal Party in my community, out in Footscray. And so this—and many other reasons that I have set out in my contribution today—is why I grieve for the Victorian Liberal Party ever leading the great state of Victoria.

MEMBER CONDUCT

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (17:01): In 2018 Victoria sent the strongest possible message in this place. It sent a message that we on this side of the chamber heard. My first words in this place were that I had heard that message. On Saturday Victoria sent the federal Liberal Party just as strong a message. In part the community was saying to the federal government and the federal Liberal Party that they did not accept that the Prime Minister had not responded to certain inappropriate behaviour. That is one of the chief reasons why Scott Morrison was toxic. But he is not the only person who in this state is toxic. The only person in this state who is as toxic as Scott Morrison is the Premier of this state. The difference between the former Prime Minister and the Premier is that while the Prime Minister did not act as he always should have—and that is a fact—the difference between the Prime Minister and the Premier is that he is the cause of inappropriate behaviour. He is the cause of inappropriate behaviour, he is the centre of corruption, he is the centre of bullying against women and he is the central denier of responsibility for 801 deaths and 21 ambulance deaths.

Mr Carroll: On a point of order, Acting Speaker—I think it is standing order 118, ‘Imputations and personal reflections’—referring to the Premier as ‘the centre of corruption’ and the cause of bullying, I just ask if you could reflect on that, and I seek some guidance as to if that is out of order.

Mr NEWBURY: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, this has been a wideranging debate where a member of the other side used an opportunity to reflect on people’s families. The suggestion put by the Minister for Public Transport is silly.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): I am not going to rule a point of order out of order because it is allegedly silly, but I will seek some advice, having not been in the chair earlier. It appears to me that the member’s comments are in conflict with standing order 118, and I would ask you to confine your remarks.

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you. Sorry, Acting Speaker, what did you say? Did you say to continue?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Bear in mind that we could have another point of order if you—

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you. The Premier has been a part of corruption investigations in this state.

Mr Carroll: No. I am sorry, Acting Speaker—

Mr NEWBURY: Well, he has been. He has admitted he has been a party to—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Order!

Mr Carroll: No, no, no. His exact words—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Order! The minister on a point of order.

Mr Carroll: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, under standing order 118, ‘Imputations and personal reflections’, the member’s exact words were, ‘The Premier has been part of corruption in this state’.

Mr NEWBURY: Investigations in this state.

Mr Carroll: No, no.

Mr NEWBURY: I said ‘investigations’.

Mr Carroll: No, no. Happy for Hansard—you said, I heard it very clearly—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Order! Minister, through the Chair, please.

Mr Carroll: The member clearly said the Premier has been part of corruption in this state, and I seek a withdrawal.

Mr NEWBURY: I did not say that. I said ‘investigations’.

Members interjecting.

Mr NEWBURY: That is right. It was not a personal reflection on you.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): The minister cannot ask a member to withdraw on behalf of another member, but can we please—

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you. Thank you.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Member for Brighton, can we please have some regard to standing orders or this is going to go on.

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you, Acting Speaker. When the Premier was asked about corruption investigations that were occurring, his words included things like ‘I’ll not give a running commentary’, ‘I’ll not be making comment’, ‘I’ll not be making comment about these matters’, ‘Let me make it clear: I’ll not be making comment’, ‘Sorry, I won’t be making comment’, ‘I’ll not be making comment about these matters’ and the list goes on and on and on. The Premier has hidden behind ‘due process’ and ‘a right time and place to comment’ and uses each of those tactics to deflect answering questions. The worst instance of that behaviour took place in the Premier’s evidence before the hotel quarantine inquiry, where almost 30 times the Premier said he did not recall who was responsible for almost 800 deaths. He did not recall. I had never heard the Premier use the words ‘I do not recall’ until that testimony, let alone almost 30 times, but I have been found more recently to be wrong, and I will admit it to the chamber. I had never heard the Premier use the words ‘I do not recall’.

A member: He couldn’t recall it.

Mr NEWBURY: He could not recall. But I found another instance. When asked whether the Premier gave his personal mobile phone number to corrupt John Woodman, guess what he said? ‘I could not recall’. So he said it again, this time when dealing with a crook. You do not want to stand up and check whether or not John Woodman is a crook—a Labor identity is a crook. The Premier used the words ‘I do not recall’ when asked whether he provided his mobile phone number to property developer

crook John Woodman. I stand corrected; he has used the words twice: once when it comes to 800 deaths and another when it comes to a phone number.

Mr Southwick interjected.

Mr NEWBURY: I say to the member for Caulfield, thank you. The member for Caulfield has actually found another instance where the Premier could not recall. I must confess I had not found this instance. The Premier said he could not recall whether he had any communications as part of IBAC's Richmond inquiry. Thank you, member for Caulfield; I was wrong again. The Premier could not recall who was responsible for 800 deaths, he could not recall whether he gave his phone number to a crook and he could not recall whether he had spoken to a union boss as part of a corruption investigation. The only thing that I can be certain of is every time I hear the Premier say 'I do not recall' I must confess I question whether or not he is telling the truth, because the only time he cannot recall is when he is being asked about deaths and corruption—and he cannot recall.

I said earlier, which was cause for some consternation in the chamber, that the Premier had been involved in a number of corruption investigations—questioned, whatever language you want to use. Labor are very quick to stand up and try to pull the cord whenever these issues are raised. And what were those instances? I referred to 'Dumpling' Dan having dumplings with the property developer as part of Operation Sardon and him not being able to recall whether he had passed his phone number. I mean, he was not the only one, was he? He was not the only one involved in that investigation. Gee, there are a lot of people from that side of the chamber who are part of that investigation, including the Minister for Health, who was renting his property to the centre of the corruption investigation, renting his property in Main Street, Mornington.

Ms Green: Acting Speaker, I make a similar point of order to the one that was made by the minister at the table, the Minister for Public Transport—that if the member for Brighton wants to man an attack on another member who happens not to be here, he should do that by a substantive motion.

Mr NEWBURY: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the Minister for Health put out a statement confirming that he was renting a property to John Woodman.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): That is part of the debate. The issue is not beyond the bounds of debate, it is a matter of established fact.

Mr NEWBURY: Well, I mean, when the minister puts out a statement, who are we to second-guess him? He put out a statement confirming that he was the landlord—the landlord for John Woodman the crook. But I will correct the record in that he has sold the property. The minister has sold the property, I understand. He sold the property to one of the largest contractors to the Department of Health. So I correct the record—he is no longer the landlord. He was the landlord for about 15 years—at least 15 years. He had been the landlord for the whole time he was in Parliament, until of course the issue was raised by me publicly. Until that point he was the landlord. So it is not just the Premier who has been involved with John Woodman. The Minister for Health was his landlord. So Operation Sardon goes right to the heart of the Labor Party, and at the head of this investigation is the Premier.

It is not the only IBAC investigation that Labor are involved in, is it? Previous speakers have spoken to Operation Watts, where we heard evidence that Labor staffers were leaving their offices en masse to head down to Labor headquarters to do numbers—taxpayer-funded staff en masse. I mean, we do not know how many ministers' staff were involved in that, do we, Minister for Public Transport? It is a shame the Minister for Health is not here; I could ask him the question. How many staff were leaving these offices en masse on taxpayers dollars to go down to Labor head office to do numbers for the Labor Party?

Operation Watts I think was covered in quite some detail by one of the former speakers, who also spoke about Operation Richmond—three investigations that go to serious corruption, serious misuse

of taxpayer dollars, behaviour that the Premier has been on the record as having been investigated in relation to. He has been questioned in relation to it, but we do not know any more. I look forward to his public comments at some point when he can let the community know that he does not recall what happened, because that will be the next thing, won't it? We know that in relation to Operation Sardon he did not recall, when it came to Operation Richmond he did not recall, and I am sure when it comes to Operation Watts—let me take a guess—he will not recall.

What I found most offensive perhaps in most recent days was the Premier's behaviour over the recent ambulance deaths. Ambulance Victoria confirmed that 21 deaths occurred between October and March—we know at least 18—and in that time the government did not act. In that time the government did not put any money into the problem. The government did not make any major funding commitment in that time. Over six months people were dying because of a crisis in the ambulance system, and the government did nothing. They did nothing, including for children.

And what did we see yesterday from the Premier? A Premier who tried to deny the number of deaths. He denied them. He debated in this place whether or not 21 people had died—confirmed by Ambulance Victoria. I have never seen such a disgraceful display of behaviour, behaviour that I would expect from a weird backbencher, perhaps. But a Premier standing up and trying to deny the number of deaths in testimony before a parliamentary committee was abhorrent. It was abhorrent behaviour from the Premier, and he refused to use the word 'sorry', refused to say sorry to any of the families involved. The Premier and the Minister for Health both have blood on their hands. They both have blood on their hands—

Mr Carroll: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, under standing order 118, imputations and personal reflections—I just might read it out for the member:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on the Sovereign, the Governor, a judicial officer or members of the Assembly or the Council are disorderly ...

and I say that is disorderly.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Minister, I think we all know what standing order 118 provides, and in this case I uphold the point of order.

TAFE FUNDING

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (17:16): I am joining the grievance debate today to grieve about the state of the TAFE and training system that was presided over by the coalition between 2010 and 2014 and the neglect also by their counterparts in Canberra. I grieve because in the unlikely event that they were to take the government benches at the November election I have no doubt that they would gut TAFE again, just at a time when this community has never needed training more than it does. The former Liberal and National Party government left quality by the wayside. My recollection is that during those four years when they made quite a mess of TAFE there were two ministers at the time. One was Peter Hall, a former member for Gippsland in the other place, a member of the National Party who we understood had threatened to resign from cabinet because he was so appalled by the cuts to TAFE that the government had applied. But the trappings of office and the white car must have kept him in there, because he did not follow through with his threat to resign. Then he was succeeded by the member for Ferntree Gully, who presided over this broken system.

When we came to office the fact is that the TAFE and training system in Victoria was in a terrible state and its reputation had hit rock bottom. Not only were many students from disadvantaged cohorts who were enrolled in VET courses when we came to government being exploited by unscrupulous training providers, but many students from disadvantaged backgrounds had struggled to enrol or had left courses because that mean-spirited coalition had gotten rid of community service obligations. The community service obligations—and there was funding for those—were to provide additional support for disadvantaged learners. And I see the member for Clarinda is nodding his head, because he knows that particularly students of non-English-speaking backgrounds who needed assistance with

interpreters and translation of material; those with disability, whether it was mobility issues or others, who might have needed assistance with note taking; women fleeing family violence—all those things were gotten rid of because the coalition just did not care and did not value TAFE. Not only was the government system gutted, the TAFE system, but the private training system was just running amok. You had private training providers that were not delivering quality training at all, and some of them were not delivering training at all. They were cruising through public housing estates and other places where disadvantaged people live and offering them free laptops and other incentives to join up to courses, establishing loans and then not delivering the courses. Then these people were saddled with debt and never got the courses.

The cuts of over a billion dollars from TAFE decimated the reputation of the entire training sector. Twenty-two TAFE campuses and facilities were closed across our state. I cannot even remember all 22, but I know in my own community the Greensborough TAFE was closed. The gates were locked and that was it. One of the reasons that they gave for closing it was they wanted to redeploy some of the funding to set up a Melbourne Polytechnic campus in Prahran to buttress the political future of the then member for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown. But they also said that there was no public transport to the Greensborough campus when in fact they had cut over a thousand bus services in the Yan Yean electorate, particularly servicing the Greensborough TAFE. The Greensborough TAFE serves students in Nillumbik, in Banyule and in Whittlesea. It was a regional facility and it was gone. The TAFE at Lilydale was closed—Ararat, Stawell, numerous sites across Gippsland, Glenormiston. I mean, seriously, the National Party and the dairy farmers of the Liberal Party allowed Glenormiston agricultural college to be closed. I never would have thought I would see it, and they would have been absolutely irate if a Labor government were to do it, but that was how they treated their own. Two thousand four hundred TAFE teachers and staff were sacked. A good friend of mine, Jeannie Taylor, who lives in Doreen, had worked at the Greensborough TAFE forever. Her career was cut short. She had to retire early.

In 2015, just after we came to government, there were over 100 000 less students studying in government-subsidised courses at TAFE than there had been just four years previously—100 000 less students studying courses that could lead to great jobs and careers and support skill shortages in the Victorian economy. They all say they are great economic managers—we heard all about it from their Canberra friends throughout the election campaign—but they gutted TAFE. I remember the bicycle industry coming to see me. They cut the bicycle mechanics course. It was the only course. There was not even a course in New Zealand. It was the only course in Australia, and they cut it at a time when year in, year out—and the Minister for Public Transport at the table knows—there are more bicycles being sold than cars. There are actually jobs and there is a need. They cut that program.

When it came to TAFE finances under those opposite, it was a disaster. In 2013 and 2014, when I was in this place, Auditor-General's reports into TAFEs tabled in Parliament epitomised the crisis that TAFEs were in. The Auditor-General reported a significant decline in the financial stability of the sector, with immediate financial challenges causing five TAFEs to be rated with a high financial sustainability risk assessment. As the Auditor-General said, this continued the pattern of deterioration. The reports highlighted the deteriorating decline in the financial sustainability of the TAFE sector under the watch of those opposite. Again, in 2014, the Auditor-General raised further alarm bells at the declining financial situation of TAFEs. By this stage six TAFEs had a high financial sustainability risk assessment. There was only one TAFE in the whole state with a positive assessment, and the Auditor-General was clear on why this was the case, and that was because of reduced funding from the then state government.

The previous government not only gutted TAFE but did not invest any capital. They made no capital investments in TAFE projects at all nor in equipment. They also were not maintained. TAFE facilities were left to crumble. By the time we came to government the TAFE and training sector was on its knees thanks to the shambles of the previous coalition government. So what did we do when we came to office? We rescued TAFE. And I am really pleased to see the Albanese government have come in

and are adopting a lot of the policies that we have, because nationwide we need to invest in our young people. We need to invest in people who are working in industries that are going through transition—the coal industry, the resources industry. We need people trained in the energy industries of the future.

We have huge hospitality shortages. Because we are expanding kindergarten to three-year-old kinder there are shortages in childcare and kindergarten workers. So we have put a whole lot of courses on the free list to address the shortages in our economy. There are now 60 courses on the free TAFE list and ongoing consideration of new courses that are added as skill shortages come up.

From 2022 we added certificate IV in veterinary nursing, certificate IV in leisure and health, certificate III in IT, certificate IV in training and assessment, certificate III in supply chain operations, certificate IV in work health and safety and certificate IV in outdoor leadership. And in this year's budget, as the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers just spoke about in question time today, we announced that the advanced diploma of Auslan has been introduced to the free TAFE course list—unlike those opposite, who actually cut Auslan from TAFE.

Free TAFE is a testament to this government's commitment to access and inclusion, and what we have seen since we have introduced free TAFE and rebuilt TAFE from the ground up is 59 per cent more women in free TAFE courses and 49 per cent more students with a disability in free TAFE courses. Fifty per cent more unemployed people are taking up free TAFE, and 46 per cent more people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background are taking up free TAFE. Free TAFE is giving more Victorians access to the skills that they need for rewarding careers on our Big Build projects and crucially, in the health and social services sector, in aged care. Those in Canberra are completely blind to the absolutely critical shortage that we have had in aged care. They ignored the findings of their own royal commission and are just completely blind to the crisis in that sector. We are training people in health and community services and in agriculture, as the Minister for Agriculture talked about in question time today, and also in mental health so we can deliver the new workers that we need to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. These are all areas where there are significant jobs available to start a new fantastic career.

I want to talk about the investment that we have made in capital. Since 2015 we have invested over \$3.2 billion in Victoria's TAFE and training system, including \$77.7 million to support apprentices and trainees through Apprenticeships Victoria, \$167.3 million to support adult community education and \$457 million in capital works so those courses can be delivered in quality buildings. Then we have employed those trainees on those projects. Recently I went with the Minister for Training and Skills, in my role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria, to observe the new TAFE and Warrnambool City Council library that is being built. I would say that library has the best view of any library in this state, and it is being built by and for apprentices and trainees. It is a magnificent project.

In addition, we reopened the campuses that were locked by those opposite. Swinburne Lilydale was reopened—\$20 million. It is now called the Box Hill Institute Lilydale Lakeside campus. In my local community the Melbourne Polytechnic Greensborough campus has reopened as a health and community service campus, particularly supporting aged care and mental health workers, at a cost of \$10 million. The Bendigo TAFE Charleston Road campus has been expanded with \$7.8 million; Chisholm Institute in Frankston, \$25 million; Holmesglen Institute, Moorabbin campus, \$8 million; Federation University Ballarat, a new industry hub, \$5 million; Glenormiston reopened for training in 2017, \$2 million; the Gordon Institute, Geelong campus rejuvenation, \$5 million; Berwick campus of Chisholm Institute, the centre for health, \$10 million; Federation University Ballarat, a new industry hub, \$5 million; Victoria University Sunshine campus, skills building and innovation hub, \$10 million; Box Hill Institute Nelson campus, an upgrade as part of the modernisation project; RMIT Capitol Theatre reactivation, \$2.5 million; Geelong City and East Geelong campuses master planning for the Gordon Institute, \$500 000; TAFE Gippsland, Morwell campus redevelopment, \$35 million; TAFE Gippsland, Port of Sale campus redevelopment, \$25 million; Melbourne Polytechnic, Collingwood campus redevelopment, \$40 million; South West TAFE, Warrnambool campus, \$16 million, which I have already discussed; and the Bendigo TAFE redevelopment, \$60 million.

We have invested across absolutely every part of this state in TAFE to undo the damage of those opposite. This government backs TAFE. We are not in the business of cutting funding and hanging them out to dry, we are in the business of investing in the future of Victoria by delivering the skills and training needed to drive our economy forward. We created Apprenticeships Victoria to support and grow apprenticeships. We established the Victorian Skills Authority to provide a holistic understanding of the skills and training needs for Victoria. We set up the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery to support TAFE as a network. We have developed higher apprenticeships and traineeships to support career pathways in the social services sector, and we continue to invest in apprenticeship support officers to ensure Victorian apprentices are supported to completion. And there is the Big Build—it goes on. We look forward to working with the Albanese government to further grow TAFE, and we grieve if those opposite were to be in charge again.

MEMBER CONDUCT

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:31): If the fish rots from the head, then the tail and the whole lot of it has been absolutely rotted to the core by the Premier and this government; it is absolutely smashed when it comes to this government that cannot be trusted. We have seen from the weekend the real importance of integrity, the real importance of a government that you can trust. Well, this is a government that cannot be trusted, that has failed each and every time when we have had anti-corruption investigations, three of which have had the Premier at the front and centre of these inquiries. This is a government that is an absolute mess when it comes to trust and corruption and honesty and integrity, and it is certainly not fit when it comes to ensuring that Victorians' futures are secure.

Five years ago—it just came up on my Facebook memories—I posted something about a graphic that sums up the week in Parliament in Victoria:

Daniel Andrews backs roting MPs but fails the CFA ...

with a photo of the former Deputy Speaker, Don Nardella, the then member for Melton, who was using his entitlements to fund a second home like it was his own money. I mean, seriously—over \$100 000 just out of the taxpayers fund and into his pocket. That is what was being used, and of course we had the Speaker also embroiled in this some five years ago. Do you think a government would learn? Do you think they would learn?

We also had the Ombudsman look at the roting that was taken on back in 2014, the roting that was taken on by field organisers. Again this government—and it was termed the red shirts—would use staff in their electorate offices that should be picking up the phone, servicing constituents in need of help, but instead they were utilising them to run their operation into another term of government, ignoring the constituents that needed help the most. I am going to come back to that in a minute, because this was an offence that was repeated by ministers during a pandemic. A government that claimed they cared during a pandemic used ministers—instead of having them on the end of the phone trying to help people—to try to service their own want for re-election, ignoring those constituents. In this instance that the Ombudsman looked into from March to November 2014 we had five current ministers embroiled in this. It was then Gayle Tierney, \$20 000; the member for Ivanhoe, \$8000; the member for Mill Park, \$5000, the member for Keysborough, \$5000; Shaun Leane, \$2300—a total of \$387 000 of taxpayer money was used for their own purposes.

That is what this government is used to. Labor is used to taking other people's money, taxpayers money, and using it for their own purposes. They cannot be trusted, they do not care, they really use the fund of the taxpayer like it is their own. And history repeats, because you would think back then that they would have learned from their mistakes, but the Ombudsman has done reports and IBAC have done reports into repeated behaviour.

I want to say at the outset: when a business goes into administration they have pretty much failed. What happens? You bring someone into that business to take over because you do not trust the directors anymore and it needs to be managed all the way through to either being wound up or sold

off, and guess what? We have the Labor Party at the moment in administration. They are in administration because they cannot trust their own members and their own MPs in terms of running the show. We had that investigation where the federal ALP made an extraordinary intervention into Victorian branch stacking back in June 2020, when Labor's national executive appointed Steve Bracks and Jenny Macklin as administrators of the Victorian branch and suspended all state committees as the party continued to grapple with the damaging fallout of the Adem Somyurek branch-stacking scandal. The suspension of voting rights in the state branch until 2023 was expected to be amongst the measures implemented as the party grappled with the fallout. This is a government that is broke when it comes to integrity. This is a government that has failed Victorians. If they do not trust themselves, how can Victorians trust them?

When we saw the number of independents on election day one of their key platforms was integrity and trust. Here is a government and a Labor Party that do not trust themselves to even run the preselections to put those members into this Parliament to then go and represent constituents. I mean, seriously—when I was talking only a few weeks ago with some of my constituents and explaining that actually the ALP in Victoria are under administration because they do not trust themselves, and the members that have been preselected to run in November have had to be done by a captain's call because the members do not trust themselves to be able to elect people, they could not believe it. They just could not believe it.

Well, the show goes on. We have seen the Premier grilled by IBAC, by the anti-corruption commission, at least twice and possibly a third time. We have heard the member for Brighton tell us here in this chamber today that not on one, not on two but on three occasions when the Premier has been grilled about important information he just could not remember. He could not recall. I mean, seriously, a Premier that cannot recall these important elements? Go all the way back to hotel quarantine where 801 lives were lost during that time, an important time—forget about the contracts that were not awarded through any process, the Premier literally just giving contracts to people like we have seen with the security firms that have gone broke, that were not even fit for purpose in New South Wales but ended up taking on contracts here in Victoria. You would think the government would do their homework to see whether these security firms were actually fit for purpose. Oh, no—this government just kept handing out jobs for their mates. But forget that—when the Premier was grilled about hotel quarantine and was asked about the private security guards and who appointed them, over 30 times he said, 'I don't know who made that decision. I don't know'. 'I'm the Premier, the buck stops with me', we have heard many times in this Parliament, but he could not recall who actually made the decision with hotel quarantine.

But that is not all. The Premier was grilled by the anti-corruption commission over Operation Sardon. This was again about his association with property developer John Woodman, who is currently under investigation for alleged corrupt land deals. Again the Premier said, 'I don't recall having discussed anything with him', when Mr Woodman, the land developer, had gone out for a \$10 000 dumpling lunch at the Flower Drum with the Premier. It was reported that during his evidence before the secret hearing as part of Operation Sardon, the agency's two-year investigation into allegedly corrupt land deals in Casey, the Premier recalled the Flower Drum luncheon. He remembered having the lunch—of course he did—but said he had no recollection of Mr Woodman or his associates raising any matters with him. Oh, they just went in for a feed for about 10 000 bucks. I tell you what, it must have been a pretty good feed.

Then the third time the Premier said he could not recall any communications with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) boss amid an anti-corruption probe—this is back in 2018—into the firefighters deal. This is really interesting, because the Premier said he could not recall whether he had ever exchanged texts with the United Firefighters Union boss, Peter Marshall. Now, I wonder how many other members of Parliament can recall whether they have ever texted someone. I mean, surely he would have remembered this. And what happens with his texts? Do they go in some secret delete button? I mean, I tell you what, this is a Premier that is constantly hiding, being secretive and before

more IBAC inquiries than hot lunches. I mean, this bloke, fair dinkum, have a look at his form. It just keeps on going.

As I said, it is very important. Integrity goes to the heart and trust of any government. If you do not have integrity, you do not have anything. Forget about all the rest. Forget about when it comes to infrastructure and all the wonderful things. If you have got a dodgy government, the rest is secondary. The one thing that I can certainly say—one of the key things that we can be proud of—is that the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission was started here in Victoria under a Liberal government between 2010 and 2014. We were the ones that funded it, we were the ones that put it in place, and we are the ones that have been calling each and every day for more funding for IBAC, more funding for the Ombudsman and more funding for the Parliamentary Budget Office.

And what does this government do when it comes to transparency? ‘Oh, no. We’ve got more important issues to worry about’. All of these agencies are screaming for more money so they can do their job, and this government strangles them, because you know what? If they have got no money, they cannot do the job. Show me the money; that is what they need. Show me the money, and give these integrity watchdogs the opportunity to do their job. If you have got nothing to hide, then why not give them the money so they can do their job. Why not do that? Mr Davis in the other place has been asking for that. He has put motions to the chamber. Again, many of those crossbenchers have voted them down. I mean, integrity is at the core, and this government has failed when it comes to that. They failed with red shirts. They failed with IBAC. They failed with the UFU and the deals with the UFU.

We are talking about another element of integrity. A second element that was spoken about during the election was women. I mean, how many women, including Jane Garrett and many of those in the CFA, were bullied, intimidated and pushed out during that period, and all for Peter Marshall and his mates? I mean, seriously, all for Peter Marshall and his mates—and we still do not know what Peter Marshall has got on this government. We still do not know. We are still waiting. What has he got on this government? Because when it comes to secret dodgy deals, I cannot remember when there have been three current IBAC investigations—three—on a government.

Ms Staley: Because never—

Mr Newbury: Never happened before.

Mr SOUTHWICK: It never ever happened. And the Premier has been there at least twice, if not a third time. And then, if that is not enough, we have an IBAC Committee in which we try to get to the bottom of things, and the member from the other place, Harriet Shing, cuts the feed when we start to talk about the Premier and start to quiz what happened in terms of all of these things, whether he was there, whether he gave evidence and what happened when it comes to some of these corruption inquiries. They cut the feed.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Order!

Mr SOUTHWICK: And again I am being cut now, because the truth hurts.

Mr Carroll: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I seek your advice, because I am having a look here at *Rulings from the Chair*, and there is a section here on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. It says:

Matters before IBAC, where an individual’s actions are under review, should be treated as other matters before commissions and subject to sub judice conventions.

I think Ms Shing was right to do what she did, and I seek your advice if it is appropriate, then, for that member to be raising it in this context in the lower house.

Ms Staley: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the event that the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party referred to did not occur at IBAC, it occurred at a parliamentary committee hearing.

Mr SOUTHWICK: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask you to rule the point of order out of order in that I very clearly said that this was a committee hearing which was on the public record. It was a committee hearing, and I ask you to rule the point of order out of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): I will seek advice. The matter was before a parliamentary committee. You cannot talk about individual orders, but when you are talking about matters on the public record, that is fine. So it is in order.

Mr SOUTHWICK: This government are crooks, they are liars and they are corrupt.

OPPOSITION PERFORMANCE

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:47): I join this grievance debate to grieve that those opposite, should they prevail in November—and we certainly hope that they do not—plan on taking the axe to this government's infrastructure program. It is absolutely in some ways a pleasure to follow the last two speakers from the opposition because they are two speakers who saw the Liberal vote collapse in the booths in their electorates; they are Goldstein-based electorates. I do wish them well for their remaining six months in this place. I would like to quote from their website. Their website says—and you might want to listen to this, member for the ultra-marginal seat of Caulfield:

As part of our *Recover Rebuild* plan, a Matthew Guy Liberals and—

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): Order! Member for Sunbury!

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I understand it is a very wideranging debate and I am very happy to hear what the member for Bentleigh has to say, but I do think that the member should show some respect and address members by their correct titles.

Mr STAIKOS: Given the imputations that have come from that side about members of this side of the house over the last couple of hours, that is a bit rich, but I will carry on. I was quoting from the website of the Victorian Liberal Party:

As part of our *Recover Rebuild* plan, a Matthew Guy Liberals and Nationals Government will:

- Commission an urgent, independent audit of all of Labor's capital projects over the value of \$100 million ...

What does that mean? We have heard about these audits before when those opposite come to government. Those opposite plan on wielding their famous axe when it comes to every single level crossing removal, when it comes to the Suburban Rail Loop, when it comes to the North East Link, the West Gate Tunnel and when it comes to all sorts of important infrastructure projects of this state. And this is a government that has embarked on a very ambitious infrastructure agenda, one that we on this side are extremely proud of. I have already listed some of them, but we can add to that the Metro rail tunnel, we can add to that Melbourne Airport rail and we can add to that a whole host of major road upgrades, hospital upgrades, new hospitals, new schools and upgraded schools. You name it, we are doing it.

I grieve that all of this will be put at risk should those opposite prevail in November. Because those opposite are not builders like Labor governments; they are wreckers. They have opposed our infrastructure agenda at every stage, and if they take office, this state will never achieve its full potential. Since 2014 this government's infrastructure investments have supported or will continue to support more than 191 000 jobs, and there is a total of \$184 billion in new and existing projects underway to transform the way people move around this great state. The latest budget papers show that government infrastructure investment is expected to average \$21.3 billion a year over the budget and forward estimates, reflecting the continuation of the Big Build in the important areas of health, housing, education, transport and cultural precincts.

In the latest budget we committed to a further \$6.7 billion in our capital pipeline, including \$2.4 billion in public transport initiatives, \$993 million in roads and road safety initiatives and \$32 million in dedicated ports and freight initiatives. In the area of transport alone this government has invested more than \$97 billion in planning, building, operating and maintaining Victoria's transport network since being elected in 2014. The latest budget continues this track record, with \$3.5 billion invested across the transport network to get people home sooner and safer to spend more time with their families.

Now, I mentioned the metro rail tunnel just before. When I first ran for Parliament in 2014, despite the metro rail tunnel being, in Infrastructure Australia's opinion, the most urgent public transport infrastructure investment that could possibly be made, the last, lazy Baillieu-Napthine government had shelved it. It had shelved the metro rail tunnel, and that was a major issue when I was campaigning to unseat the Liberal member for Bentleigh of that time. Thankfully we picked the metro rail tunnel up off the floor as soon as we came to government. It will be open in 2025. For my community it will completely transform our access to public transport, because it will actually mean—and we are right in between the Frankston line and the Dandenong line—pretty much a turn-up-and-go system, one where if you are on the Dandenong line you will go straight through the new metro rail tunnel and be connected with currently disconnected parts of the city, like the hospital precinct at Parkville, like the University of Melbourne. If you are on the Frankston line, every single service will go straight through the existing city loop. This is an important investment, one that would not have been made, a project that would not have been undertaken, had they—those opposite—not been turfed out at the 2014 election.

But what have we seen since the 2014 election? We promised in 2014 to remove 50 level crossings. Those opposite said that was a pipe dream, that it was never going to happen. Well, we have now removed 60, and among the first of those 60 were the three in my electorate, at Bentleigh, McKinnon and Ormond. Early works got underway in 2015. The major works got underway in 2016. Those opposite campaigned against those level crossing removals. Georgie Crozier from the other place, who is the person who has been campaigning against—well, undermining—health advice, the shadow minister against health, spent all of 2016 marching up and down Centre Road, Bentleigh, petitioning against level crossing removals. I mean, what planet are these people on?

Then we got to the 2018 election. They decided, 'Well, we've got to try and replicate some of the political success that the Andrews Labor government has had when it comes to level crossing removals'. They decided to release a \$5 billion intersection removal policy. Remember that? They announced it and then it just died. It just died after that. They announced it once, and then it just died.

Even though there were two such commitments in the Bentleigh electorate, my opponent of the time, Asher Judah, who is now pretending to be a local in the seat of Ashwood, never campaigned on those intersection removals. Can I just say he probably figured out that removing the intersection of Nepean Highway and South Road might be a bit dicey, because when you start digging at Nepean Highway you might just collide with the rail trench at Moorabbin station. It was such a badly thought out policy, and no wonder as soon as they announced it they did not campaign on it. Goodness help this state if those opposite ever were in charge of major projects. They were not in charge of any major projects when they were in government. They did not commence a single major project. Perhaps their opposition to major projects under this government is because if they end up in government they are not going to be capable of leading any of them.

Now I would like to turn to the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL). Now, why do we need the Suburban Rail Loop? We need the Suburban Rail Loop because Melbourne is one of the great cities of the world. Melbourne, like Tokyo, like London, is a great city of the world, and Melbourne by 2050 or thereabouts is going to be the size of London, so we need an orbital rail network. But it is yet more evidence that those opposite have no vision that they have actually committed to scrap the Suburban Rail Loop. Can I just say, following the election result on Saturday, the Suburban Rail Loop is now a major project that the people of Victoria voted on not once, in 2018, but twice, with the election of the Albanese Labor government, because the Albanese Labor government has committed to an initial \$2.2 billion in Suburban Rail Loop east, from Cheltenham to Box Hill. Which federal seat is Box Hill

in? Chisholm. Did we win Chisholm on the weekend? We did win Chisholm on the weekend. In fact we won Chisholm well on the weekend, and I congratulate Carina Garland on her election as the federal member for Chisholm.

This is a project that will be the biggest rail project ever built in this state. It will transform our transport network, ensuring our state has a rail network on par with the great cities of the world. It will cut public transport travel time by 40 minutes on average for one-way trips. It will alleviate congestion by removing more than 600 000 daily car trips from the roads; it will carry more than 430 passengers each day, freeing up thousands of seats on existing train services; and it will support up to 8000 direct jobs during construction. But there is an added benefit to this, and that is that through the SRL precincts we will develop Melbourne for the future. We will decentralise Melbourne. We will work with communities right across the Suburban Rail Loop precincts to plan for the future. There is a huge opportunity cost for not delivering population-serving infrastructure like the Suburban Rail Loop—a cost that a Liberal government would force Victorians to pay. I should also mention they are still committed to building the east–west link. Now, the east–west link, in their own business case, showed a loss of 55 cents in every dollar invested in it. The Suburban Rail Loop has a benefit-cost ratio of \$1.70, yet they try to tell the people of Victoria that it does not stack up. Well, it does stack up.

I would have hoped that those opposite would have heeded the message sent to them by the people of Victoria on Saturday. It is clear they did not. It is clear by their rhetoric they did not. This week I have heard them talk about CFA, talk about red shirts and they have probably been talking about African gangs and sky rail—remember the anti-sky rail debate?—all of this rubbish. Well, do you know what? They are campaigning like it is 2016. I have been a member of this place for nearly eight years. These are arguments that were prosecuted day in, day out in this chamber way back in 2016. They got their behinds handed to them at the election in 2018, and we are committed to making sure the same happens in November 2022 because the people of Victoria cannot afford a government of little Trumps. That is what they have been. Throughout the pandemic they have behaved like little Trumps.

They have not heeded any message that has been sent to them. The member for Brighton started his contribution saying—

Mr Rowswell: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I hate to take the wind out of the sails of the member for Bentleigh, but I take personal offence at being referred to in that way.

Mr Fregon: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, it was a collective reference. I believe that is in order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Morris): There is no point of order.

Mr STAIKOS: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. It was a collective reference, but given the member for Sandringham raised his head, I would also get him to have a look at the booths in the Sandringham electorate within the seat of Goldstein and maybe use the next six months productively.

Question agreed to.

Bills

APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (18:01): In the 2 minutes and 21 seconds that I have remaining I would like to return to a number of things that I was referring to earlier. Firstly, the importance that this side of politics, this side of the house, places on matters of integrity. As I was saying before the grievance debate, as deputy chair of the Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee, a role which

I have occupied since 2018, I have consistently been a voice for greater funding not only for the Victorian Ombudsman but also for the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. Budget after budget after budget has delivered less funding for those integrity agencies, and I have been a strong advocate internally at the committee table and in this Parliament for greater funding for those integrity agencies. It is only right and proper that the Victorian people expect those who they elect to high office to act with integrity, and those integrity agencies are there for a reason. I implore the Victorian government to adopt the proposal put forward by the Liberal Party to increase the funding to integrity agencies, including the Victorian Ombudsman and IBAC.

In conclusion, I, as I have done since I have been elected, every year, every budget, write to the Treasurer on behalf of my community presenting to him the Sandringham district budget submission. On 17 May this year I received a response from the Treasurer. It highlighted that, as you will appreciate, every budget contains a number of announcements, some of which are statewide and benefit all Victorians, but what is in it for Sandringham? On page 2 there are references to the 2015–16 budget, the 2021 budget and the 2020 budget but rarely a reference to this budget. The Labor government says it governs for all Victorians, but in this budget it has failed my community.

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) (18:04): It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the appropriation bills and to reflect on another great Labor budget, the Treasurer's eighth budget. There have been many contributions already made, including many magic pudding contributions from those opposite where they decry the lack of spending here, there and everywhere and in the next breath tell us how the government are a bunch of spendaholics with no ability to rein that spending in and how they would be so much better at financial management than this government have proven to be. These things are never quite as simple as those opposite would like us to believe, and they also tend to believe that there is no reckoning when you simultaneously advocate for both more and less spending.

I want to focus on a number of areas of the budget. Of course the cornerstone of the budget is the enormous health investments that are being made both in terms of pandemic recovery and in our hospital system more generally, but I want to focus on some of the contributions to my own electorate and also to my portfolio areas. It is undeniable that we are in a budgetary era where there are constraints, given the extraordinary amount of money that we have had to spend, for instance, in business support over the last two years, but also in shoring up the health system and otherwise. But I was very pleased to join the Minister for Water in Dingley just the other day to announce the \$24.8 million contribution for the Dingley recycled water scheme. There was a lot of excitement from the local golf clubs, both public and private, but beyond them it is a pipeline that will deliver thousands of megalitres of recycled water to 46 sites, including a range of local sporting fields and local businesses such as nurseries, market gardens and otherwise. And that was certainly very welcomed by those businesses, but also by the community more generally, who will benefit from that extra recycled water that will be available to the parks and the sporting fields in the region. It has been already a pretty dry start to 2022, and we need to be prepared for drier periods ahead.

There has also been support for Athol Road Primary School—and a shout-out to that great school in my electorate—with new accessible toilets adjoining the school's inclusive education learning area, which is currently being installed; more money for bike parking facilities at stations, including Springvale and Noble Park; and upgrades to the change rooms and amenities at the Serbian Sports Centre in Keysborough. So for those businesses, cultural institutions, schools and public transport offerings in my electorate this budget has been very, very welcome.

Beyond that I want to talk about how this budget has once again contributed to this government's record in terms of job creation and economic recovery as we emerge from the worst elements of the pandemic. We have seen over the last 12 months or so wonderful investment decisions being made by corporate Australia, whether it has been Qantas's decision to move large parts of their heavy maintenance line to Victoria, or to ensure the maintenance of the Jetstar head office in Melbourne,

with support from the Victorian government, or the decision of Hanwha to set up in the Geelong region and benefit there from the decision of the commonwealth to award the Land 8116 contract for howitzers to that company in that location. I will digress at this moment and say that, with the election of a new commonwealth government, we are very hopeful that Land 400, phase 3, which is currently in contest between the Hanwha bid in Victoria and the Rheinmetall bid in Queensland, will now be hopefully more likely to be awarded to what I would say is the best bid, that being the Hanwha bid, and we will certainly be engaging with the new defence minister, whoever that might be, on that matter in the days to come.

The decision of Nissan Casting to make additional investment in its plant in Dandenong and the headquarters of Worldline, a wonderful company which also made the decision to invest in Melbourne—all of that is a part of the recent developments. But in this budget the Victorian Industry Investment Fund, which is supporting companies in key sectors like health, food production, advanced manufacturing and business services, will just continue that trend that we have seen of great Australian and international companies investing here in Victoria.

We have also provided support for the defence sector to invest in all sorts of professional development, internship, funding and research led by the Defence Science Institute. We have seen already the great defence primes and others that are based here in Victoria, whether it is Hanwha down at Avalon, whether it is Thales and their Bushmasters and Hawkeis up at Bendigo, SYPAQ with their new drones and other types of unmanned flight that operate out of Fishermans Bend, Marand Precision Engineering who have been involved in the joint strike fighter project for many, many years down at Moorabbin, or indeed a company like Elbit Systems from Israel, which is setting up its R and D headquarters down here in Melbourne as well. We ought to be the national headquarters of the defence sector. We have the best skills, the best advanced manufacturing. What we have not always had has been the political will from the commonwealth to place defence orders here in Victoria. One could be forgiven for thinking that other considerations have sometimes come into play, and hopefully those days are at an end.

We have also continued our investment in all of the stimulus that has been so welcomed by not just the business community but by the consumers that have benefited from that stimulus—our support for the City of Melbourne through the revitalisation fund; the recovery fund; the Melbourne Money project that we have co-contributed to, giving people rebates to dine in the CBD; the travel vouchers where we have just released another 150 000 of them; another round of the small business digital adaptation program; the business mentoring recovery and resilience program; the support we have given to tenants through the commercial tenancy relief scheme and the consequent support we have provided to landlords as a result of that.

All of that funding continues through this budget, and it adds to the more general support and stimulus being provided to not just the CBD but the surrounding suburbs through the return of our major events—the Formula One Grand Prix, the biggest F1 grand prix ever seen in the world. The fact that when Melbourne reopened *Hamilton*, *Harry Potter*, *Moulin Rouge!* were all here ready to go to bring life back to the night-time economy—the only city in the world outside of London and New York where you can see those three shows at once, an incredible achievement for Melbourne. The fact that we have got a world title fight this weekend, a Bledisloe Cup coming, a Manchester United game, world quality basketball—you name it. Melbourne and Victoria are putting on events that are bringing life back to the city, and that funding, including the funding that we have got recurrently now of \$100 million a year for the Major Events Fund, is ensuring that that is all possible—and that is before we talk about the fact that we have secured the President's Cup in both 2028 and 2040.

In terms of my trade portfolio, we have had a lot of commentary from the opposition about the decision of the government to open a trade office in Paris in the European Union. It is as if those opposite have failed to comprehend that Brexit means that you can no longer really run your European trade and investment operation from London.

Mr Southwick interjected.

Mr PAKULA: Well, the member for Caulfield might be looking for a job in November.

Mr Wakeling: You're going to Paris.

Mr PAKULA: I take up the interjection from the member for Ferntree Gully. On one level those opposite seem to have accepted the need for an office in the EU, because in March of 2020, when the member for Malvern was the leader, they released a blueprint that said there should be an office in Brussels. By November of 2020 that commitment had disappeared. So they know there should be an office in Europe. They thought it should be in Brussels. Now they are not sure it should be in Brussels, but they are not saying where it ought to be.

Members interjecting.

Mr PAKULA: Well, you know, I could spend my time talking about Mr Greiner, who is in New York, Mr Brandis, who is in London, and Mr Olsen, who was in New York. We are not the ones who send our mates overseas. That is confined to your side of politics. As I said at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, the last political appointment to an overseas office was in fact Michael Capel, and we reappointed him because he has done a bloody good job. But there are no political appointees in any of our overseas offices, as you well know or ought to know.

But the fact is the opportunities in the EU are enormous, and not just because the former commonwealth government managed to make an enemy of France—not just because of that—but because we have companies invested in Victoria, like Saint-Gobain, like Engie, like BDO, like BNP Paribas, like Air Liquide, like Alstom. With the fact that Emmanuel Macron has shown throughout the Russia-Ukraine conflict that it is now France that is taking the lead in the EU, the trade opportunities are enormous and the investment opportunities are enormous. The point I would make is that they are not opportunities for the government, they are not opportunities for politicians, they are opportunities for Victorian businesses to trade, to export and to benefit from investment. So that is a very important contribution, particularly in light of the work that the New South Wales government is doing, trying to cut Victoria's lunch in these overseas markets. We have benefited for a long time from a lack of competition in these overseas markets, and those days are over. They are over. They are very aggressive, our interstate competitors, and we need to be equally alive to that and equally aggressive.

In the time I have left it would be remiss of me not to focus on the regional Victorian Commonwealth Games—a \$2.6 billion commitment over five years to take the games to Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, the Latrobe Valley and beyond. Now, I have noted some commentary from the Premier of WA today forming the view that he thinks that is a waste of money. Let me be very clear: we do not think so. We think leaving a legacy investment in regional Victoria is well worth doing. We think improving the sporting and health outcomes for regional kids is well worth doing. We think building sporting infrastructure in regional Victoria is well worth doing. We think building housing infrastructure in regional Victoria is well worth doing. We think taking the most beautiful parts of our state and broadcasting them to the commonwealth—to India, to the UK, to Canada, to the South Pacific—with the visitation dividend of that, is well worth doing. So we are more than confident, we are more than comfortable, that this investment not only is a smart financial investment but is going to leave a legacy and a dividend for regional Victoria for decades to come of which this Parliament will be able to be proud.

Rather than going into anything new with 20 seconds to go, I will simply make the point that this is yet another great Labor budget brought down by the Treasurer, the member for Werribee. It is one that he is rightly proud of, it is one that we collectively are rightly proud of and it is one that sets our state up for recovery, for resilience and for a great future.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (18:19): It is great to have the opportunity to join this debate on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. This is

my 16th budget, and it most certainly will be my last. Of course for eight of those budgets I was associated with the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), along with the minister who spoke just a minute ago for four of those years. Six of those years were either as chair of the committee or as deputy chair of the committee. And frankly I think that is probably enough exposure to the budget and the budget process for anyone. Probably Treasurers and Assistant Treasurers have more exposure, but for ordinary members of the Assembly that is more than enough. It also needs to be said, though, that the landscape has changed enormously since 2006.

2007 was of course John Brumby's final budget as Treasurer before he was moved up the ladder to become Premier later on that year. It was probably one of the last, if not the last, responsible Labor budgets that we saw. I will come back to the numbers because clearly those numbers have changed enormously, but it is not only the numbers that have changed. Transparency in the budget process has been significantly diminished. When Steve Bracks was Premier he had a very strong commitment to the PAEC process. He put extra money in; he felt that there was not enough money going in under the Kennett government, and he was probably right, frankly. He put extra money in, he made sure the committee was resourced and he was very, very keen to facilitate the process. Unfortunately what we see now is that while the number of hours of hearings may be the same, the schedule is very much curtailed—so early morning starts, late evening finishes. In terms of work, there is nothing wrong with starting early in the morning or finishing late at night, but when you have these sorts of hearings back to back, one after the other, you have got fresh ministers coming in, you have got tired and at the end of the time exhausted committee members, it is not a reasonable match.

You also have a situation where hearings are occurring at hours that are not convenient to the media, and that again minimises the coverage, so we have far less coverage at PAEC now than we have had in the past. I know people will say, 'Who cares? It's another committee hearing'. But the reality is the PAEC process is intended to take the place of consideration of the committee of the whole, or consideration in detail, as we now call it. That is what PAEC is about. I know we do not do a lot of consideration in detail, but surely if there is one bill a year that you want to consider forensically and examine in detail, it is the appropriation bill. It is happening, but it is not happening to anywhere near the extent that it used to.

The second change that does concern me in terms of transparency or in terms of opportunity to examine these important documents is the fact that we are now conflating the debate—and I know that is not the technical term—we are now conflating the issues of the appropriation bill and the appropriation parliament bill. Frankly, I have a problem with that for two reasons. The first is we are now forced to consider the appropriation of the Parliament in the same breath as the executive. That is not appropriate. The second point is I doubt if I have heard anyone mention the Parliament in this whole debate. You do not need to be debating the appropriation parliament bill for weeks, but it deserves to be examined separately and it deserves to be considered separately. The practice now diminishes the role of the Parliament and effectively places it in this debate in a subsidiary position to the executive, and that, in my view, is not appropriate.

I think all members—it does not matter which party they belong to or to no party at all—need to be aware of the need to protect the position of the Parliament. And okay, if you are a member of the government, you do not need to go out and argue the case in public, but at least have a voice inside your own party and protect the position of the Parliament, because under the current arrangements it is being eroded. Democracy is multifaceted and the parliamentary process is an important part of it, but the reality is that unless we keep pressure on all facets of democracy—and the lesson of Saturday is our system is working, but we need to make sure we keep it working—unless we make sure we safeguard the democratic process, it is very easily diminished.

I want to give a recent example of how transparency can be diminished and democracy potentially threatened, and that is in the United States. A few days ago Jen Psaki, who was President Biden's first press secretary, doing the briefings, stood down after 16 months. During the course of those 16 months she had given 224 briefings. In contrast, the however many press secretaries Donald Trump had had

in total over four years given 205 briefings. So in 16 months Jen Psaki has given 224 briefings compared with 205 for the whole four years. That is about transparency and that is about access. Now, I know they have a different system to us, clearly, but my point is in the United States they have taken action to repair the damage to the democratic process that was done under Trump. I am not suggesting that what is happening here is anywhere near as dramatic, but the point is we need to be vigilant. We need to be on guard to protect the process.

You cannot have a discussion about a budget without talking about debt, without talking about deficits, because debt is an ever-present part of every public budget, and of course deficits are a part of some budgets. But this year, for the current financial year, the government forecast a deficit of \$11.6 billion. The deficit at the end of this financial year will be \$17.6 billion—just a lazy \$6 billion variance. Yet the Treasurer a few weeks ago stood up and said, ‘Oh, we’ll be back in surplus in four years. We’ll deliver a modest surplus in four years’. I think that has got a touch of the Wayne Swans about it, because it simply cannot be done. In saying that, I want to make my position on debt very, very clear. You need to borrow money to build infrastructure, but you do not need to borrow money to fund cost blowouts that should not occur. You need to borrow money to support a budget in an emergency, and the deficits that have been run over the last couple of years I have no problem with when the money has legitimately been used for the emergency. But in many cases it has not been, and I will come back to that as well. So I have no problem with the legitimate COVID expenditure and I have no problem with sensible infrastructure provision, but unfortunately that is not the total story in this budget.

Coming back to the comparison with 2007, in 2007, when I came into the Parliament, the budget surplus was \$324 million. We had net debt of \$3 billion. The budget deficit for 2022 is expected to be \$7.9 billion. Given the performance last year, who knows what it will actually be—who knows? Net debt will be almost \$119 billion, by the end of the forwards, \$168 billion—21 per cent of gross state product at the end of the next financial year and 26.5 per cent of gross state product at the end of the forwards. Now, to put that growth in perspective, the CPI in December 2006 was 86.7; it had risen to 124.2 at the end of March this year. That is a 43 per cent increase in the CPI over that period. The appropriation bill, when you look at the amounts to be issued from the Consolidated Fund, totals \$85.1 billion. The corresponding figure in 2006 was \$26.8 billion, in round terms. So in other words, in those 16 years notional spending has trebled.

Now, I know the CPI has gone up by, as I said, 43 per cent. The population has obviously grown significantly over that time as well. It has gone from 5.1 million to 6.6 million, but the government was spending back then \$5188 per capita. If you index that by the 43 per cent, that comes to \$7400 per capita in round terms. But the actual spend per capita in this budget is \$12 800, so over that 16 years real spending has grown by 73 per cent, and that is not sustainable. The government knows it is not sustainable. It cannot be sustainable. Okay, interest rates are at historic lows, and we can probably support the sort of debt that that generates as long as interest rates do not move. But we know they are going to, so I think there are some concerns there.

I want to delve a little further into the detail, and that is to briefly talk about the Treasurer’s advances. Page 15 of the appropriation bill provides a \$14 billion allocation as an advance to the Treasurer—\$14 billion—and actually it is down a little bit. Last budget it was \$16 billion. So what we are proposing in this budget is to allow the Treasurer basically to spend \$14 billion on whatever he deems necessary. We are handing over \$14 billion. Now, during an emergency that is a reasonable thing to do. It is not desirable, but it is a reasonable thing to do. But we are coming out of that emergency now, and that approach should not be business as usual. We should not be allowing that sort of funding to be allocated and then simply signed off by the Parliament in a couple of years time.

Again, I go back to the figures from when I first entered this place. The amount provided for the Treasurer’s advance in 2006 was \$482 million. In other words, the amount provided in this budget compared with 16 years ago is 29 times higher. As I said, yes, it is reported back; yes, it appears in the annual financial report; yes, we get to sign off on it two years down the track—but there is no oversight from Parliament. There is no veto. We only get to approve it when the money is spent. And just in

case there is a claim that it has all been spent on COVID, when you have a look at the figures in the budget papers nearly \$8 billion was spent by way of Treasurer's advance in 2020–21, which are the numbers that are reported, and \$3.4 billion of that was COVID but \$4.16 billion of that was not COVID, just simply extra spending not of an emergency nature.

Just very briefly in terms of the Mornington electorate, normally I stand up and say, 'We got nothing, so thanks for nothing'. In this case I am delighted to say, after a 10-year campaign, Mornington Special Developmental School was funded for a rebuild. It has been a 10-year campaign. It is going to be a great development for the kids at the school. It is going to be a great development for the teachers, who do a fantastic job. It is very, very welcome news. Unfortunately there is a long list of infrastructure works that have not been funded, but there is one funded, and for that I am very, very excited.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (18:34): Hello. I am going to bring the energy up a bit in this chamber and talk about what a great budget the Victorian budget is, because there is so much to celebrate in this budget. This is a great state budget for Ballarat, it is a great state budget for regional Victoria and it is a great state budget for all Victorians. I thank the Treasurer, his office and the Department of Treasury and Finance for putting a budget together that will make Ballarat an even better place to live, to study and to work—not forgetting a great place to raise a family and also to retire, Minister for Planning. That is possible. We can make Ballarat an even better place to live.

Across our state, our country and our world COVID-19 has put unprecedented pressure on health systems, including in my electorate of Wendouree. I want to commend and thank everyone at Grampians Health, particularly the Ballarat Base Hospital, our prevention and recovery care centre and our many public aged care facilities across Ballarat as well as our local GP clinics, Women's Health Grampians, Ballarat Community Health and our child and maternal health services. I am so proud that the Andrews Labor government is supporting the needs of regional patients in Wendouree, making sure everyone can get the health support they need close to home. The Andrews Labor government will always stand by our frontline healthcare workforce—our paramedics, our nurses—and this is the case again in the 2022–23 Victorian budget, with our \$12 billion investment in Victoria's health system and our pandemic repair plan.

I would like to thank our ambos for the work they do every day but particularly over the last two years during the COVID pandemic. Thank you to Danny Hill and the ambulance union for your leadership and advocacy. But it is not just words of thanks we offer to show our appreciation to our ambos; we are investing in our ambulance service, with another 90 paramedics being delivered in this budget. Significantly, this means we have added 790 extra paramedics to the workforce since we came to government.

This budget is delivering funding to train and hire up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses. This will ease the pressure on our COVID heroes and will support the delivery of quality care in Ballarat and across Victoria. I thank Lisa Fitzpatrick and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation members for their incredible resilience today and throughout the pandemic. The budget also provides for 1125 new registered undergraduate nursing positions and 75 new registered undergraduate students of midwifery roles over the next two years. I am also pleased that we are recruiting up to 2000 expat and international healthcare workers through a global workforce recruitment drive. This will reduce pressure on our healthcare workers, and I welcome that.

Right around the nation demand for emergency services is at an all-time high. Our 000 call takers and dispatchers are dealing with unprecedented call volumes. Unlike the opposition, I thank them for the work they do under the most challenging circumstances. To support these important frontline workers to speak to Victorians who need help faster, we are investing \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase 000 call taking and dispatch capacity for 000 services. When there is a problem it is our job to come up with a solution, not just to throw rocks.

This budget also has a very strong focus on regional health. I strongly believe that regional Victorians deserve the same level of care as do Melbourne patients. At the centre of our plan is \$300 million to upgrade regional hospitals and healthcare facilities in every corner of our state—the largest Regional Health Infrastructure Fund boost since it was created by the Andrews Labor government. We are also providing \$9 million to regional women's health services, including Women's Health Grampians, and a further \$11.5 million to deliver group parenting sessions to support families with children struggling with their mental health. I know how important this is going to be for the families who are struggling at the moment.

For the Ballarat Base Hospital our government has already announced \$541 million for a transformative redevelopment, and in this budget we are continuing to support Ballarat's hospital services. That is why we have announced new equipment in this budget, including a surgical robot and a replacement radiotherapy linear accelerator. This is great news for patients from across the Ballarat and Grampians regions. The investments in state-of-the-art surgical and cancer treatment equipment for the Ballarat Base Hospital will mean regional patients will save countless hours travelling to Melbourne for treatment. As a mother who has travelled to Melbourne in the past for appointments and treatment with a sick child, I know firsthand what a difference it will make for patients and their families to have the provisions of quality health care close to home.

Surgeons from across Ballarat have been calling for a surgical robot that will enable them to offer a robotics program performing many different types of complex surgical procedures. The console of a surgical robot provides the surgeon a high-definition magnified 3D view of the surgical site. I know if I am under the knife, I want them to have a good look and see what is going on. The benefit of robot-assisted surgery is that it is less invasive surgery, with fewer complications, quicker recovery and shorter hospital stays. Currently there are surgical robots across metropolitan hospitals, including the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and St Vincent's Private Hospital, as well as three surgical robots in Geelong, but this was a first for Ballarat, and I am so proud to have helped achieve this for my community.

I would like to single out colorectal surgeon and general surgeon Carolyn Vasey for her pivotal role in advocating for the surgical robot. She explained to me the benefits, not only to patients but to Ballarat's ability to attract surgeons into the future. The technology is mind-blowing, and it was incredible to have the opportunity to have a go on a surgical robot, fortunately without any patients in sight or anywhere nearby. Our \$6.5 million investment for robot-assisted surgery to be delivered at Ballarat Base Hospital will improve surgery outcomes and reduce recovery time for patients in Ballarat and across the region, a huge win for Wendouree.

I am also pleased that we are replacing our old radiotherapy equipment to deliver better cancer care for our local community at the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre, and I thank the Premier for coming to Ballarat the day after the budget to promote this announcement and meet the staff, not only at Grampians Health but also our very specialised staff at the BRICC, the Ballarat Regional Integrated Cancer Centre. He was so warmly welcomed.

I am pleased also that we are addressing the significant issues of mental health in Ballarat. Australia's first-ever royal commission into mental health told us that, when it comes to accessing mental health care, Victorians do not know where to turn or who to turn to, which is why having a nearby mental health service in your local community can make all the difference. That is why we are getting on with delivering mental health and alcohol and other drug hubs, including planning for a new one at the emergency department at Ballarat Base Hospital so that community members and their loved ones struggling with mental health can get the care they need in Ballarat.

We also know that far too often Victorians do not get the mental health support they need when they need it. That is why we are planning for an additional 33 acute mental health beds for the Ballarat Base Hospital. This means we will be doubling the number of acute mental health beds in Ballarat. For those who need the support, they will get it sooner and closer to home.

In the midst of unprecedented global events and the pervasive impact of social media, young Victorians have suffered a surge in new eating disorders and relapses, a statistic that is sadly replicated worldwide. This budget also provides support for regional Victorians with an eating disorder by developing and expanding high-quality and therapeutic bed-based services. The funding will support an expansion of the eating disorder enhanced integrated specialist model into four regional health services to support clinical mental health services to provide multidisciplinary support for the increased presentation of patients with eating disorders in regional Victoria, with services to be established at Grampians Health, Barwon Health, Bendigo Health and Latrobe Regional Hospital.

I would like to thank the families of the children with eating disorders who shared with me their lived experience. Minister Pulford and I met with some incredible dads, who passionately advocated for the provision of services to be available locally for adolescents with eating disorders. I would like to acknowledge Ballarat paediatrician Dr David Tickell for his insights and support for the enhanced integrated specialist model to treat eating disorders.

So much in this budget for Ballarat, but I will continue. I will plough on, because I have not even spoken about schools yet, and I am so proud that this budget continues to build on our record investment in the students and teachers at Mount Rowan Secondary College. I know you cannot get a first-rate education in a second-rate classroom. That is why we are building first-class facilities for Wendouree students. It was an absolute pleasure to visit Mount Rowan Secondary College with the Treasurer and share this wonderful news with the year 9 students, their teachers and the principal, Seona Murnane. The announcement will provide \$6.1 million to upgrade Mount Rowan Secondary College to build a new year 9 learning centre, because under an Andrews Labor government we are giving every child the opportunity to achieve their full potential. As a former teacher and a mum of school-age students, I know how important it is to invest in our kids' future, and this is what we are doing in schools across Ballarat.

Another significant announcement for Ballarat in this budget was the \$3.2 million safe spaces trial in western Victoria region. This investment will provide for a trial of community-led and evidence-based programs to provide care and respect to LGBTIQ+ individuals most in need as well as a trial of a place-based approach to building resilience amongst the LGBTIQ+ community and the provision of mental and social support. Ballarat is a kind and inclusive community, and this sends a clear message that equality is not negotiable in our city.

We also care about our animals and our pets in Ballarat. We know how important pets are to our health and wellbeing, and that is why this budget is providing \$11.5 million to build a new, purpose-built Ballarat Animal Shelter to improve the quality of life delivered to hundreds of strays as well as lost, abandoned or abused animals across the Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool, Golden Plains, Pyrenees, Ararat and Central Goldfields local governments. I thank the Minister for Agriculture for joining me and the member for Buninyong at the current Ballarat Animal Shelter in my electorate of Wendouree to share this announcement with my community. The current animal shelter, where we adopted our beloved Mr Licorice, is housed at a former abattoir, which is far from appropriate and was never fit for purpose. I am delighted that we are building the Ballarat Animal Shelter in Mitchell Park, which will be not only a vast improvement for animal care and protection but also a significant improvement for the very hardworking staff at the City of Ballarat's animal shelter. I thank them for the care they provide many vulnerable dogs, cats and other animals, day in, day out.

It was terrific to hear the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events talk about the Commonwealth Games—because they are coming to Victoria, and they are coming to Ballarat. This budget announces \$2.6 billion to bring the games to regional Victoria. These games will be unlike any before in the history of the Commonwealth Games as they will be held in regional centres, including my hometown, Ballarat; Bendigo; Geelong; and the Latrobe Valley. I cannot wait till Ballarat hosts the athletics, the cricket and the boxing. This is a huge opportunity for Ballarat to host the Commonwealth Games and welcome athletes and officials from across the world to our city, but we will also have the triple benefit of creating local jobs and legacy infrastructure and boosting our regional economy.

I only have a short time left, but I must talk about the duplication planning money, the \$6.6 million for Ballarat-Carngham Road from Dyson Drive to Wiltshire Lane in the west of my electorate. I am pleased that we are continuing to focus on roads and road safety, and this business case is going to do great things for road safety in our community. I have listened to community members and key stakeholders about the necessity for this upgrade, and I have worked hard to advocate for funding for this important business case for upgrading the road to accommodate growing traffic areas in Alfredton, Lucas and Winter Valley. Well done, Treasurer.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (18:49): Here we are talking about the latest budget to be handed down by this government, and it epitomises where this government is at, because this budget, within 24 hours, fell flat within the Victorian community. You know, this tired government—one that is not standing up for Victorians, one that is forgetting the needs of Victorians and is more focused on itself, more focused on saving the Premier and more focused on ensuring the Premier does not come clean on the issues that he is confronting. It does not focus on what Victorians are expecting. After six lockdowns, two years of lockdowns, the longest lockdowns of any location in the world, this budget fails to provide the support, the vision and the hope that Victorians were looking for.

You only need to look at the concerns around our health crisis. There are nearly 100 000 people waiting on hospital waiting lists. We have got ambulances ramped across the state at local, regional and rural hospitals. We have got Victorians unable to get through to 000. We have got Victorians waiting an extended time for an ambulance to arrive. And worse still, Victorians have, sadly, passed away due to that negligence. But this budget, despite the spin, actually cut the funding for health. When you look at last year's budget in comparison to this year's budget the figure is less.

A member interjected.

Mr WAKELING: Of course it is less, because instead of actually recognising that they are in a crisis and fixing the crisis, they have actually cut the funding. I mean, we have got Graham Ashton, who has done an investigation on behalf of the government. The government rolled out the report under the cover of a federal election, and it just points out how parlous our system is after eight years of this government. He has made a range of recommendations, including scrapping the board and changing the name. Well, I tell you what, we need a lot more than scrapping the board and changing the name. The system is in crisis. We expected this budget to fix it, and it clearly has not.

When we look at issues around secrecy, when we look at issues around ensuring there is transparency, we only need to look at the Premier, who is potentially under investigation in three separate matters before IBAC, but we would not know because it is done in secret.

Mr Wynne: What has this got to do with the budget?

Mr WAKELING: I will tell you why it is relevant to the budget: because the government has failed to fund those bodies that hold them to account. It was the previous Liberal-Nationals government that established the body. This government sought to gut the body, ensuring it starved it of funding.

Mr Wynne: That's just not true.

Mr WAKELING: Well, the minister at the table can argue whatever he likes. But do not take it from the opposition, take it from those who actually operate within that system. They themselves have cried out about the starving of funding, about how they are nobbled in the way in which they operate. It cuts to the heart of the way in which this government operates. It cuts to the heart of the way in which this Premier operates. He does not like scrutiny. He does not like transparency. He does not like fronting up to the Victorian people to confirm whether he is under investigation—not once, not twice but three times. Don't you think Victorians have a right to know whether the Premier of this state is actually under investigation? The Premier ducks and weaves at a time when the state is looking for

vision, looking for hope and looking for a budget that is going to take it out of the malaise that it is in. We have got a Premier who is more focused on saving his own bacon than saving our children.

When I talk about our children, one only needs to look at the impact of six lockdowns. In education and mental health our children have suffered significantly. As a parent I see it in my own children. I see it in the children within my community, and there are so many stories across this state. Children have suffered significantly, but of course this government failed to take up the proposal put forward by the opposition, by the Shadow Minister for Mental Health at the table, of immediately ensuring we could provide additional resources and mental health support for young people and for those within the community—psychologists who could provide immediate support to help those children, to help families that desperately need support. But again, the government failed to act.

This is a government that has been in power for eight years. Eight years they have had to ensure that the systems are in place, but of course we look at this government—\$119 billion in debt. We are going to head to \$170 billion, and we have got cost blowouts—tens of billions of dollars in cost blowouts on major projects. They could have delivered the additional infrastructure across the state that is desperately needed, but again, this government cannot manage money.

When I look at my own community, eight years I have been advocating to get a set of traffic lights built. I have raised it in this house on numerous occasions, and it was constantly rejected by the minister who has sat in the position of Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Well, at the eleventh hour, just before an election, they have finally relented and listened to our commitment. We called on the government to match our commitment to build a set of traffic lights, and they have done it in this year's budget. But it should not have taken eight years to do that. It is a set of traffic lights, for heaven's sake. That is where this government is at.

I called for funding for a new basketball court at Wantirna College and was very pleased to have the Leader of the Opposition join me to announce it. Well, three days later the Minister for Education toddled off to the school and matched our commitment—a great outcome for the school. But when you look at education across my community there are so many schools that have missed out. Mountain Gate Primary School want a portable—a portable!—because the government is about to take away their library. To date the Department of Education and Training is refusing it. Knox Gardens Primary School wanted a portable because they lost their library. The parents had to raise funds and buy their own portable. Parents had to buy a portable so the kids had a classroom so that they could have use of their library. That is where this government is at. That is the failure of this government.

This is a government that is focused on itself and that is focused on the Premier. The Premier comes into this place and he lectures and he hectors and he blames and he criticises, but what he does not do is stop and listen. He does not stop and reflect. He does not understand that Victorians are hurting, Victorians are wanting leadership, Victorians want a government that has their back, a government that is going to help industry, a government that is going to help families, a government that is going to help children, a government that is going to help seniors because they have struggled for two years. All the government can talk about is whether or not last week's election was a referendum on their performance. I mean, for heaven's sake. Premier, it is not about you. It is about the people.

Mr Wynne: Well, it sure as hell was a referendum on your federal colleagues.

Mr WAKELING: I will take up the interjection from the minister at the table because that is exactly the problem with this government. They think about everything else except what Victorians want, what they are expecting from their government. They want a government that will listen, a government that will help, a government that has their back. Again, we know from what we have seen in this budget, what we hear from the Premier, what we hear from his ministers and what we hear from the backbench that this is a government that is not listening, that has forgotten Victorians, that will not listen to Victorians. It is a government that is not prepared to actually sit back and say, 'We made mistakes under difficult circumstances. We've made mistakes, we've failed to put the resources in place over our eight

years of government and we're going to fix it'. The problem is they do not recognise they have made mistakes. Who at the end of the day is affected by that? The people. They are the ones that pay for this. They are the ones that are paying for the crisis in our health system. This government failed Victorians, and that is the problem that we have with this current government as seen through this budget.

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.

MONT ALBERT AND SURREY HILLS TRAIN STATIONS

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (19:00): (6376) My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek is for the minister to release the detailed plans of the planned Union railway station designs and meet with concerned local residents to discuss the impacts the proposed design will have. Following the 2018 election the Premier and the now member for Box Hill made the commitment that their government would, in removing the level crossings at Mont Albert and Surrey Hills, keep two railway stations at the existing sites. Since then Victorians have learned all too well what the Premier's word is worth: absolutely nothing.

In December 2020 the Premier, the member for Box Hill and the minister announced an unwelcome Christmas present to local residents: that there would be a new combined station, to be called Union station. This announcement apparently came as a result of supposed extensive engineering and technical investigations which I am sure will never see the light of day. Since then, despite the government's spin, the project has caused much concern for residents as the government have had next to no consultation with residents, resulting in legal action being brought against the government. Eighteen months later residents still have yet to have any access to detailed plans for the new station. It is still unknown as to the building's footprint, setbacks or even the building heights. What is known is that the station will be just 4.5 metres from people's homes. In addition 700 trees, some over 100 years old, are planned to be cut down, seeing local streets lose their green canopy.

The member for Box Hill has been asked to meet with residents, but he is nowhere to be seen. He is refusing to advocate for his constituents or even meet with them. Fortunately, though, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Liberal candidate for Box Hill, Nicole Werner, is prepared to step up, already showing residents that she will speak for them and support them. In the few short months since her preselection Box Hill residents can see that she will be a representative who is actually prepared to stand in their corner.

It is patently clear that the government is aware that this project does not quite stack up and will cause a multitude of problems, since local residents have already been offered to be relocated by the level crossing removal authority. This is another case of, 'Don't listen to what Labor says but look at what they do'. Now, the Office of the Victorian Government Architect have stated that they have serious concerns about the direction of the design of Union station, and the level crossing removal authority has warned the architect not to instigate any contact or respond to any queries from the general public about their concerns for the project. As an aside, I wonder if the architect's comments are what led to a significant cut to her office's funding in the recent budget.

This is a rushed project aimed at justifying another glossy press release, all the while ignoring the wishes of local communities who will be affected the most. Once again I acknowledge the work of Liberal candidate for Box Hill, Nicole Werner, who will step up for residents as the current member steps away from them. There is no doubt that Box Hill residents will be far better served by Ms Werner as their representative.

WEST GATE TUNNEL

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (19:03): (6377) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action I seek this week is that the minister update me on our government's progress in delivering the West Gate Tunnel Project. It is true this project has had its challenges, challenges that have caused my community a great deal of worry, but I am very pleased to be standing here this evening saying that we are getting on with delivering this project, and that is exactly what communities like mine in Melbourne's outer western suburbs need. We are talking about taking 20 minutes off our morning and afternoon commute times. We are talking about taking industrial trucks off the West Gate Bridge and making it easier for us westies to get home from work. It is so important to deliver this project for Melbourne's west to get us back up and moving around the city, and I know that my constituents would greatly appreciate an update from the minister on where we are at in delivering this vital piece of infrastructure.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE DUNKELD UNIT

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (19:04): (6378) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to immediately confirm an additional allocation of funding to finally make the new local headquarters for Dunkeld SES a reality. This is a project which has been going on for a very long period of time. In fact eight years ago they first announced that they would get an allocation of funding for the Dunkeld SES. There have been many, many challenges in trying to secure a site, which has now been acquired. It has now been agreed that a former police property will be made available to the new local headquarters for the SES. However, there have also been some changes over this duration of time, including changes to the SES design principles of what the minimum requirements are for their headquarters. This includes requiring a drive-through motor bay, and of course that will require an additional driveway. They are looking at a much higher cost now than what was initially allocated to them.

There is great concern within the Dunkeld SES. I recently met with them. I have known Greg Gardner for a very long time; he is the deputy controller at Dunkeld. One of their key concerns is they have got the land secured, they know they have got an allocation of funding, but because the design principles have changed so much they simply have not got enough money to make this a reality.

All the Dunkeld SES are looking for is a confirmation from the minister to say yes, she will make this a reality, finally, and we will finally have a local headquarters for the Dunkeld SES and support for the great work that those volunteers do not just in road rescues along the Glenelg Highway but also the fabulous work they do in the Grampians National Park, the rescues they perform through there and particularly in supporting the Grampians Peaks Trail and the increased tourism and walkers that we will see through that area. I do implore the minister: please commit this additional funding and provide our local volunteers with the support that they desperately need.

SKYE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (19:06): (6379) My adjournment matter is for the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to join me on a visit to Skye Primary School to meet with the wonderful students, teachers and support staff and to celebrate their brand new competition-grade gymnasium as well as the major refurbishment to their learning and administration areas. These significant upgrades are part of the Andrews Labor government's commitment to making Victoria the Education State, and these upgrades are making this great local school even better, providing students at Skye Primary with the very best facilities—facilities they can be proud of, and that is really important.

I well remember back in 2018 visiting Skye Primary with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. We met with some of the school leaders: Sarah Manshanden, Ari Sapolu, Harry Keher and Eloise Ryan. They had a presentation for us, setting out the case on why students at Skye Primary needed a competition-grade basketball stadium for basketball and netball, for sport, for school assemblies and for use by local community clubs. They were great advocates for their school and great

ambassadors for all of the Skye Primary students who would follow them in the years ahead, and their case was very, very compelling.

Fast-forward one year to 2019, and I was back at Skye Primary announcing to a very excited student assembly that \$7.8 million had been allocated in the state budget to upgrade their school. I will never ever forget those kids' cheers—cheers of utter joy and excitement, cheers that nearly lifted the roof off, cheers because their school was getting an upgrade. This made them feel pretty special, and special they are. I am so proud to be able to deliver this significant investment at Skye Primary, and I cannot wait to see this project done and to see the happiness and the pride this investment brings to the students and school community at Skye Primary. I look forward to the Premier visiting this fabulous local school and meeting the terrific students and hearing from them just how important this upgrade is to them. I also hope that Eloise, Harry, Sarah and Ari and many other students who made the case for this upgrade at Skye Primary are able to come back to see their legacy.

REGIONAL GAS PRICES

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (19:08): (6380) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is that she fix the clear inequity for regional energy users caused by the gas monopoly in western Victoria. The minister is looking curious, and so I will explain for the benefit of the house what this is. There is a gas pipe from Carisbrook to Horsham, and it only has one gas provider, which has the whole capacity on that pipe. What that means is that if you live west of Carisbrook, you cannot avail yourself of competition in the gas or electricity retail markets. While you can have a variety of electricity providers, you are not able to access any of those bundled deals with gas because there is only one gas provider. And even if you go to get a bundled gas deal with that gas provider, they say, 'No, no, you can't do that in western Victoria', because they know they have got no competition. I note the member for Lowan is also in the chamber. We have both raised this repeatedly with the minister for energy, and we have not had any satisfaction as to why those of us who live in western Victoria are not able to access lower, bundled energy packages. It is because this is a monopoly.

The minister has previously in correspondence to me blamed this on the privatisation by the Kennett government in the 1990s. However, I would just point out to the minister that what we are seeking are the very benefits of competition that every other Victorian is able to access. The fact is that this government has allowed a monopoly situation to continue in western Victoria, which means that western Victorian energy users pay much higher energy prices than those anywhere else. There has to be a fix for this. The minister has to stop hiding behind rhetoric that is really very tired or in some cases, when she is not talking about that, is incorrect. So we just need a fix, and that is what I am asking for today.

BOX HILL UNITED SOCCER CLUB

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (19:11): (6381) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting Box Hill United Soccer Club and their president George Petheriotis to inspect the new pavilion works that are going on and taking shape at their home ground at RHL Sparks Reserve in Box Hill. This is a fantastic new facility that will provide female-friendly facilities on the north side of Canterbury Road and at Sparks Reserve. At the moment there is a training ground only without any facilities, and as has been told to me by the club on many occasions, unfortunately it means that some of the players are forced to train and to use facilities that are bushes, not actually the facilities that are across the road in their main pavilion. Crossing Canterbury Road is not a journey for the faint hearted, particularly coming down the hill as you approach Middleborough Road, so putting the facility there is a fantastic venture. The government is putting in \$500 000 as part of the World Game Facilities Fund, a contribution in partnership with Whitehorse City Council, to develop this facility. It would be fantastic to have the minister down there to see progress on this important project, speak to the club and talk to them about their important needs going forward. I look forward to the minister's response.

LIFELINE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (19:12): (6382) My adjournment debate is directed to the Minister for Mental Health. The action I seek is for the minister and the state government to urgently provide funding to Lifeline to enable this incredible organisation to provide additional support to Victorians who are in crisis. I have previously written to the Treasurer and the Minister for Mental Health, some months ago, in the hope that the Victorian government would allocate \$5.5 million in the 2022–23 state budget to building capacity in Victoria so that Lifeline here in Victoria could contend with the ever-increasing number of calls it was fielding. Disappointingly this minuscule amount of requested funding in comparison to the totality of the overall state budget was not forthcoming. Due to COVID and other circumstances, calls to the 13 11 14 Lifeline number in Victoria have increased from an average 680 calls per day in 2019 to nearly 1000 calls per day in 2021.

One of the greatest problems is this: Lifeline provides a national service, yet Victorians are making thousands more calls for assistance than are being answered here in Victoria. For example, in 2020 Victorians called 13 11 14 some 304 427 times, yet only 164 796 of those same calls were answered here in Victoria. In November 2021 the McKell Institute Victoria released a report titled *Calling for Help: How Crisis Lines Support Victorians' Mental Health*. In part the report says that with almost a third of all calls to Lifeline coming from Victorians:

... there needs to be an ongoing effort to increase the capacity of Lifeline's services to meet the demand ...

Given this report, given the discrepancy in Victorians not answering calls made by Victorians and given the increased statistics relating to Victorians calling Lifeline's crisis number, it makes no sense that a minor amount of funding cannot be found to support such a critical service. Way back in September 2018 I raised in Parliament the issue of suicide prevention with the then Minister for Mental Health. In part the minister referenced the government setting a noble but challenging objective to halve the suicide rate by 2025 as part of a 10-year plan. The minister at the time stated how appalling it was that 646 Victorians lost their lives in 2014. But unfortunately the trend is not going down, with more than 700 deaths in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and a slight reduction, down to 683, in 2021. In regional Victoria the number of deaths rose from 217 in 2017 to 248 in 2021. One has to ask: what has happened to the 10-year plan to halve the suicide rate? Surely one thing we can do is ensure that crisis service providers like Lifeline are adequately supported and funded. I again call upon the government and the minister to provide urgent funding to build capacity and infrastructure for Lifeline in Victoria.

WESTERN PORT WOODLANDS

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (19:15): (6383) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with representatives of the Save Western Port Woodlands group. Most of us have driven down the Bass Highway past the Gurdies and the Grantville Nature Conservation Reserve without taking the time to stop, walk in and appreciate its uniqueness and, at its high points, the views over Western Port Bay. The Victorian National Parks Association's 2021 report, which has their site investigation area going from Grantville to Nyora through to Adams Creek, mentions many threatened species, including the southern brown bandicoot, the powerful owl, the lace monitor and the white-footed dunnart. Threatened fungi and threatened flora include the green-striped greenhood and the spurred helmet orchid.

Over the past year hundreds of people have discovered these beautiful and rare woodlands through walks led by passionate and knowledgeable locals. The group formed in 2020 and has over 300 members. An e-petition was presented to this Parliament calling for a moratorium on sand mining in fragile remnant forest, and I tabled their paper petition on 11 May with over 1000 signatures. Their campaign to protect and enhance this area is supported by community and environmental organisations, including the South Gippsland Conservation Society, the Phillip Island Conservation Society, the Bass Coast branch of the National Trust, the Victorian National Parks Association,

Environment Victoria and BirdLife Bass Coast. I look forward to the minister joining with me to meet representatives of the Save Western Port Woodlands Group.

YARRA VALLEY AND MURRINDINDI BUS ROUTES

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (19:17): (6384) My matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for the minister to abandon his plans to alter the bus routes in the Yarra Valley which extend into the Murrindindi shire. The proposed changes will see four routes become two and the routes changed. Essentially they are altering and cutting short routes 684, 685, 686 and 687. These changes are deeply unpopular in the communities they serve. Passengers like their bus travel. They appreciate the assistance of the bus drivers very much. They like the comfort and they like the safety.

Route 684 has 22 stops between Eildon and Southern Cross station, and it services many small communities like Narbethong, Marysville, Buxton, Taggerty, Acheron, Alexandra, Thornton and Eildon. It is now going to start and finish at Chirnside Park. That means it will not be stopping off at Eastland or, so importantly, the medical precinct in East Melbourne at St Vincent's Hospital before heading to Southern Cross station.

Now, there are elderly, those with a disability, those with mental health concerns and workers who catch this line for safety, practicality, familiarity, comfort and, as I have said, the assistance the drivers provide. Cancelling this direct service will severely impact these communities. Passengers in and around Healesville feel similarly. Route 687 from Healesville to Chum Creek will cease. Routes 686, Healesville to Badger Creek, and 685, Healesville to Lilydale, will be combined.

I have got some quotes from a couple of people who are very concerned about these:

I feel safe, I feel secure, it's less hazardous lugging cases onto the station, standing there in the cold not feeling all that safe. Then getting to the city on a train and then having to get on a tram to go to a specialist or doctor. It's all just a little bit too much to have to deal with.

Somebody else from further north:

Those of us who live in the regions are treated as unworthy of receiving the same level of services as those in Metropolitan Melbourne despite paying taxes and the same fares for service which ...

seem to be 'a government charter'.

Now, passengers have had no comfort in the words that they have received from government ministers, just saying that they are making the bus network better to meet the travel demands of the communities and that they are streamlining the network and expanding customer travel choices to improve productivity and patronage. The locals in my area certainly do not see it like that. They see that services that they have relied on very much and really enjoyed—and they are happy to travel on those coaches—are going to be taken from under them. I ask the minister to absolutely have a good look at this and not disenfranchise all of those bus passengers. Ditch the plans you have to abandon these routes.

GET ACTIVE KIDS VOUCHER PROGRAM

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (19:20): (6385) My adjournment is for the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the number of Get Active kids vouchers that have been redeemed by households in Nepean. The Get Active kids voucher program was recently extended, providing \$12.3 million towards the cost of young people playing sport. As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and return to doing the things we love, keeping our kids involved in community sports is so vital to their health and wellbeing. But obviously it is not always easy for parents to shell out to buy uniforms and equipment for their kids, and that is why this grant has been so important for families right across the southern peninsula. I have been fortunate to get to know so many clubs in my time in this role: Dromana Cricket Club, Rosebud Cricket Club, Rosebud Soccer Club, Main Ridge Cricket Club—the list goes on and on. I am meeting with Sorrento Cricket and Football Club next week.

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I note that this program has been a big help to families across my electorate of Nepean, and this government has time after time shown its commitment to community sports on the southern peninsula, such as through the latest round of the sporting club grants program, which saw several local clubs receive funding. My question to the minister is: how many families in Nepean have received Get Active vouchers, and how has this benefited southern peninsula families?

RESPONSES

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Planning to respond to members' adjournment matters.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (19:21): Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker, you are having a very big week.

A member interjected.

Mr WYNNE: No, she is going sensationally.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is the highlight of my week, Minister.

Mr WYNNE: And I assure you, Deputy Speaker, it is mutual.

All right. Here we go: the member for Warrandyte has raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, seeking a release of the plans for the Union station, which is a consolidation of two stations in the Box Hill area. I will make sure the minister is aware of that request.

The member for Tarneit also has raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, seeking an update on a really crucially important infrastructure project, the West Gate Tunnel. She knows very well the importance of this, not only to the western suburbs but indeed to the movement of traffic more generally in that region. I will certainly make sure that she gets an update from the minister.

The member for Lowan has raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services, advocating for extra funding for Dunkeld SES. Of course we love the SESs, which do such a marvellous job for our community.

Ms Kealy: Yes, Dunkeld is lovely.

Mr WYNNE: Dunkeld is a beautiful part of the world.

The member for Carrum has raised a matter for the Premier, seeking that the Premier attend with her Skye Primary School to celebrate the \$7.8 million upgrade program at the school. I simply say to the member for Carrum: have a look at my socials. The Premier came out to me—

A member interjected.

Mr WYNNE: I mean, seriously—

A member interjected.

Mr WYNNE: No, it was unbelievable. He came to a school in my area, in Richmond. I mean, fair dinkum, the kids just went crazy. It was just wonderful. Have a look—it is a beautiful thing on my socials. The kids were just magnificent—chanting and—

A member interjected.

Mr WYNNE: No, I should not do it here. I am sorry, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have got half an hour; you can speak on any topic.

Mr WYNNE: I can keep going, can I? No? I tell you: she gave me the snake eye in question time. Do not let her do it to you again. 'Shut up'—righto, I got it.

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The member for Ripon has raised a very interesting question, which I was completely unaware of, to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, seeking that the exclusive access to retail gas distribution in western Victoria be in effect decoupled and opened to a more competitive set of arrangements so that consumers can have the opportunity to choose from different providers. Again, I will make sure the minister is aware of that particular matter.

The member for Box Hill—

A member: He is here.

Mr WYNNE: Indeed—he raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport, seeking that the minister attend Box Hill United Soccer Club to inspect their new facilities, which sound absolutely fantastic, particular for women players there, which is a fantastic initiative as well.

The member for Morwell continues to raise important issues in relation to mental health, and I respect the stand that he has taken on these issues. He is seeking further funding for Lifeline, one of our critical service delivery organisations. The data that the member for Morwell has provided really speaks, I think, very eloquently to the question of the support that we have needed to provide to our community through the COVID lockdowns. I thank the member for his continuing advocacy in this area, and I will make sure the Minister for Mental Health is aware of your advocacy.

The member for Bass has raised a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change seeking that the minister meet with one of her environmental groups, the Save Western Port Woodlands group, to talk about some important challenges that she has within the electorate there. I will make sure the environment minister again is aware of that.

The member for Eildon has raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking that the minister recast some decisions in relation to bus route changes in her electorate—and I think I have got them all; the 684, 687, 686 and 685 are the four—and the potential impact that she says may affect her community in Eildon.

Finally, the member for Nepean has raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport seeking to get some data on the uptake of the Get Active kids voucher program, a wonderful program to get kids out and about now, and the crucial importance of physical and sporting activity for our young folk. I will make sure that the minister is aware that you are requesting that data.

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow, Deputy Speaker, at question time, where you have been doing such a splendid job.

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

House adjourned 7.27 pm.