

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2022**

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The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

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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
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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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
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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**Thursday, 26 May 2022**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms JM Edwards) took the chair at 9.32 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.

**NATIONAL SORRY DAY**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:33):** Today is National Sorry Day, a day to recognise the history and continued effect of the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their families, communities and culture. Today let us reflect on how we can all play a part in the ongoing process of healing.

**Business of the house**

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

**Notice given.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER (09:34):** General business notices of motion 7 to 14 and 33 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 petition presented to house by Clerk:**

**NEWPORT RAILWAY WORKSHOPS**

We the undersigned residents of Victoria, draw to the attention of the House that thousands of Victorians want to see the 130 year old Heritage listed Newport Railway Workshops used only for Rail Heritage purposes.

The petitioners therefore request the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

**That all the buildings, machinery and land listed on the Victorian Heritage Register H1000, be declared the NEWPORT RAIL HERITAGE PRECINCT and be used only for rail heritage purposes.**

**By Ms HORNE (Williamstown) (4225 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Documents**

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

*Victorian Government Response to the Review of the Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017*

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:35): I table, by leave, the government response to the review of the Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017.

**DOCUMENTS****Incorporated list as follows:**

**DOCUMENT TABLED UNDER AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT**—The Clerk tabled the following document under an Act of Parliament:

*Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*—Review under s 492B of the *Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017*.

**Business of the house****ADJOURNMENT**

**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) (09:35): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 7 June 2022.

**Motion agreed to.****Members statements****FEDERAL ELECTION**

**Mr PALLAS** (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (09:36): I am pleased to congratulate my local federal colleague Joanne Ryan for her re-election as the member for Lalor, and I look forward to working with Joanne and the newly elected Albanese Labor government for the benefit of my electorate of Werribee. We know that Labor has always been committed to the health and wellbeing of our communities. The Andrews government has demonstrated this over the past eight years with its significant investments in the health sector in Wyndham and right across Melbourne's west. The recent state budget provided \$109.6 million to upgrade the emergency department at the Werribee Mercy Hospital, and the Albanese Labor government has committed to delivering a Medicare urgent care clinic for Lalor and making Wyndham a priority area for local GP recruitment. Providing wider access to efficient and reliable health care will mean safer communities and healthier families in Werribee.

We now have a real opportunity for collaborative partnerships between the state and federal governments to deliver vital infrastructure committed by federal Labor to counter the growing mess, such as the Wyndham WestLink and Ison Road bridge in Werribee. The Andrews Labor government funded the early works and planning for the Ison Road bridge, and the Albanese government has now committed \$57 million towards its construction. WestLink will ease congestion in the town centre to allow for faster travel around Werribee. I have no doubt that the Werribee locals will see a real improvement in their everyday lives with their state and federal Labor governments strongly committed to them and their families.

**BENJY ORWIN**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (09:37): We all have local legends in our electorates, but I have got one that I really feel has done an amazing job. At the age of eight Benjy Orwin, who is in the gallery today, came home one day, freezing, and talked to his mum about people and what they do when they are struggling on the streets. He wanted to do something about it, and he set up his own charity called Socks 4 Support. Benjy is now 12, and four years later he has collected 30 000 socks to help people, whether it be all the way in South Africa, for England, for our youth hostels or for Ukraine, and even locally, whether it be after the floods in Dandenong. I know we worked with Givit to get some to flood-affected people in New South Wales. Benjy has been out and about collecting through all the schools in my electorate and others to help those in need. It is a fantastic story. It is a story that shows a young person can make a difference. I really want to give a big shout-out to Benjy and say to all members in this chamber: if you would like to donate some socks, preferably washed, certainly

new, please give them to us and we will ensure they go to a home in need. It is a great story that shows people can make a difference in these very difficult times. Thank you, Benjy, for all your great work.

### FEDERAL ELECTION

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (09:39): I rise firstly to congratulate Andrew Giles, the re-elected federal member for Scullin, who had a wonderful victory along with the federal Labor Party. I very much look forward to having a really great relationship with him as we work to deliver together for our local communities under a new federal Labor government together with the state Labor government.

### MILL PARK ELECTORATE SPORTING CLUBS

**Ms D'AMBROSIO**: I want to acknowledge a number of sporting clubs in my electorate of Mill Park and the players and volunteers who are the backbones of these community organisations. I recently had the pleasure of attending a game at Mill Park Basketball Stadium, where I watched the Mill Park Pacers take home the victory against the Bellarine Storm in the youth league men's division 2 in the Whittlesea City Basketball Association. The stadium recently underwent a major upgrade thanks to a \$1 million funding boost from our government through the community sports infrastructure stimulus program.

I also recently joined Bundoora United Football Club to mark the completion of their new competition-ready pitch at Hillsview reserve following a \$465 000 contribution from our government, and I was excited to toss the coin to start the women's game at the Uni Hill Eagles Football Club at Findon Reserve in Mill Park. This is a young club which, since having started in 2017, have now grown to have 180 kids in their youth teams as well as fielding senior women's and men's teams. I want to thank all of them for their fantastic volunteer effort to really grow community sports, and I want also give a shout-out to the \$200 Get Active kids voucher program—*(Time expired)*

### CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (09:40): I want to congratulate the Centre for Continuing Education, otherwise known as 'the Centre', in Wangaratta as they celebrate their 30th birthday. The centre has kickstarted so many careers over the 30 years and has reshaped so many lives along the way. Helpful staff and a great selection of courses give opportunities for people to study and adopt a new career. Happy birthday to the centre. Our community is far richer for the role that you have played and continue to play for the people of Wangaratta and surrounding towns.

### BOB ISKOV SCHOLARSHIP

**Mr McCURDY**: A big shout-out to the Wangaratta RSL, who are having a relaunch of the Bob Iskov Kokoda Scholarship. It seems light-years ago that we launched the program, which was pre COVID. Our community is back up and running again and in full swing now, and I urge everyone to come along and support this night. We have now raised enough money to send two year 11 students to trek Kokoda for the next four years. The personal development that these students will enjoy and the opportunities that will open up when they return will be life changing. Please support this at the Wangaratta RSL on Tuesday night, 31 May.

### LA FIERA ITALIAN FESTIVAL

**Mr McCURDY**: Congratulations to the Myrtleford La Fiera festival organisers. The festival was an outstanding success again. I attended on the Saturday, when the rain came thundering down, but that did not seem to deter anyone and a terrific time was had by all. Dancing and singing were the order of the day. I also attended the La Fiera young ambassadors function a few nights earlier, which is a brilliant personal development opportunity for the four young ambassadors. Myrtleford's future is in great hands with the calibre of those who step forward to promote the festival. I told them that our community are at their best when they all work together, and La Fiera was the perfect example of this.

**ROBERT KARKUT**

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:42): I rise to honour the life of Robert Karkut, who tragically passed away earlier this month. Rob made a significant contribution to the Flemington community as the founder of the Flemington Green Ninja Army. Rob organised volunteer ninja greening projects on the streets of Flemington, sharing his love and passion for the environment and local wildlife. He was committed to turning inner-suburban streets into habitat for birds and plants, making them a better place for humans to live too.

Rob's great talent was encouraging locals to participate in his ninja strikes—planting, collecting rubbish and making local streets more beautiful for all. I have fond memories of time spent with Rob and my wife and kids doing what we could to green up Flemington. Rob instilled a sense of community in his neighbourhood and lobbied both the Flemington Traders Association and the Moonee Valley City Council to join in. Traders and council supported his greening projects with food and drinks for his team of ninjas, protective clothing, hundreds of plants, mulch and a much-acclaimed green ninja suit that he wore to encourage local kids to join the ninja army.

Rob was known for his generosity of spirit and the gentle way he helped and supported his elderly neighbours. Friends and neighbours say that the street where he lived and the Flemington community will never be the same again, such was the love and respect for Robert Karkut. Rob's legacy will be informed by the many lovely plants, trees and streetscapes that grow and thrive because of his hard work and commitment. Rob is deeply missed by his parents, Annie and Frank, and his partner, Andrea. Vale, Robert Karkut, and thank you for the gift you gave of yourself to our community. We are richer for it.

**WEDDERBURN CHILD CARE**

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (09:44): Last week I announced that an elected Liberal and Nationals Guy government will deliver a new childcare centre for Wedderburn as part of the redevelopment of Wedderburn College. The 2022 budget included nearly \$12.9 million following calls from the school community and me for major works at Wedderburn College. An elected Liberal-Nationals government will ensure part of that budget allocation is used to create a much-wanted childcare centre co-located at Wedderburn College.

The community and I have campaigned for months for child care in Wedderburn. In February I presented a petition to Parliament with over 700 signatures calling for more childcare services for families in Loddon shire. The community has been crying out for more care options for children in Wedderburn, and the school redevelopment presents an important opportunity to deliver a new childcare centre, yet the Labor minister rejected the community's call for one. The Deputy Premier refused to consider child care for Wedderburn, despite his government delivering a similar centre in Charlton. A lack of appropriate child care has a detrimental impact on a community, forcing parents to choose between caring for their children and returning to the workforce. Communities like Wedderburn need a government that listens and delivers the services the community needs. Only a Liberal-Nationals Guy government will deliver a new Wedderburn childcare centre.

**MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:45): I rise to update the house on a recent event I attended in Brimbank with the Honourable Bill Shorten, member for Maribyrnong; my colleague in the other house Enver Erdogan; and fantastic councillors from the north-west, including Crs Ranka Rasic, Sarah Carter and Lambros Tapinos. I would also like to acknowledge the event organisers, in particular Praveen Kumar, Dr Naveed Mughal, Hassan Shah and Chaman Preet. It was a fantastic event where I had an opportunity to thank a whole range of organisations that were in attendance who undertook really amazing feats for their community in staying connected during COVID and in encouraging their communities to continue to get vaccinations and to operate in a safe manner

throughout COVID. In particular I would like to thank the Pakistani Welfare Association, the Nepalese Association of Victoria, AMAFHH, Sindhi Sangat Australia, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and MACE, which is the Multicultural Association of Community Empowerment. All of them and their work have been phenomenal, and it was a great opportunity to meet face to face and to celebrate on the night the fantastic community achievements of keeping people safe throughout the COVID period and for these communities to continue to thrive across our communities in the north-west.

### BRIGHTON ELECTORATE CRIME

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (09:47): Enough is enough. Not only do my community deserve to feel safe in their homes, they deserve to be safe in their homes. Brighton has been victim to repeated terrorising home invasions this year. Earlier this week a gang of seven invaded a home in Yuille Street, Brighton, and later in the night a home in Chelsea Street, Brighton. The gang was armed with kitchen and flick knives. In Yuille Street an 83-year-old home owner was forced to defend himself and chased the gang out of his house as they attempted to steal his car. The gang then targeted a home in Chelsea Street before the police were called by neighbours. The gang tried to flee the scene before crashing their getaway car into a tree. The vehicle the gang was driving was reported as stolen during a home invasion last week. My community has been repeatedly targeted by home-invading gangs. This year alone the Brighton community has been victim to similar crimes in Bay Street, Downes Avenue, Elwood Street, Martin Street and Sussex Street. All these terrifying crimes have occurred within one large block of Brighton. How many violent crimes have to occur in Brighton before Labor stops ignoring my community? Local residents across Brighton should not have to go to bed knowing that their surrounding streets have been victim to terrorising crimes over recent months. The state Labor government cannot keep ignoring my community. Enough is enough.

### FEDERAL ELECTION

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (09:48): I rise to congratulate my federal colleague locally, Kate Thwaites, the federal member for Jagajaga, for her strong endorsement at the election on the weekend, doubling her two-party-preferred margin with a 6.5 per cent swing. Her primary vote also increased, a great result, as the Liberal primary dropped some 10 per cent—a big improvement in the vote, with a 10 per cent swing in Heidelberg and a 7 per cent swing in East Ivanhoe. I just wanted to say to Alex and her campaign team congratulations on their hard work, their strong Labor values and the very strong endorsement from the community across the Ivanhoe electorate in Jagajaga. I am looking forward to working with new ministers to be sworn in in the next week: Linda Burney in family and social services, as we work through our child protection and family services work; Bill Shorten, who will become most likely the minister around the NDIS, to move away from the fear and loathing the disability community have had in their engagement with the NDIS and the previous government; and of course Clare O’Neil, in the work we have been able to do in the past in opposition when she was shadow minister for ageing and seniors. I want to also thank and congratulate Sam Rae, the new federal member for Hawke; the Honourable Richard Marles, the Deputy Prime Minister, for the work we have done together in his electorate of Corio for very many years; and my work colleague Libby Coker, who had again a very strong endorsement in Corangamite. I congratulate her—it was never in doubt.

### HOUSING SHORTAGE

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (09:49): I rise this morning to put very clearly on the record the huge housing accessibility and affordability crisis that is gripping not only my electorate of Polwarth but the state of Victoria as a whole. This government for eight years has overseen a situation where despite its huge, overblown investment in infrastructure and services around Melbourne—we have seen a huge \$24 billion waste and blowout cost to the Victorian taxpayers continue to grow—at the same time for the list of people waiting just to live in a home that is safe and affordable for them that has become less and less possible. In the electorate of Polwarth, where we have ample land and ample opportunity to provide homes for our residents, increasingly this is becoming less and less available.

For eight years now this government has turned a blind eye to the affordability issues along the Great Ocean Road and our coastal areas, where it is just no longer becoming possible for teachers, for policemen, for nursing staff and for people who work in our cafes and restaurants to actually be able to live in the communities where they are expected to work. This is a massive problem that, despite the government's rhetoric and its claims of big spending, sees the situation where people now are waiting 16½ months on the government waiting list just to get a home to live in. This is simply not good enough. There has been a doubling of the waiting time since this government has been in power. It needs to change, and a better, much more creative government is needed if we are going to recover and rebuild here in Victoria.

### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**Ms CRUGNALE** (Bass) (09:51): During National Volunteer Week last week we celebrated thousands of volunteers who put people—children, our elderly—and the environment at the heart of our community. From those at the barbecues and in op shops to first aiders at events and those teaching kids to drive and cooking meals for those in need, volunteers are everywhere. We recognise and appreciate your time, energy and care in making our community better, stronger and fairer.

### FEDERAL ELECTION

**Ms CRUGNALE:** The weekend ended with the election of a federal Labor government—and what a joyous relief. The healing journey begins, rightfully starting with the full recognition of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. To all our ALP branch members, supporters and friends whose unwavering dedication and unity in this campaign had no bounds, your support for our federal candidates, Jessica O'Donnell for Monash, Abi Kumar for La Trobe and Cassandra Fernando for Holt, has been energising and inspiring. You made phone calls, doorknocked, attended street stalls, markets and train stations, got up at ridiculous hours, stood for hours at pre-poll and handed out on election day with humour, civility and kindness. You never wavered from the conversations about child care, dignity for our elderly in aged care, an integrity commission, renewables, local manufacturing, skills and training, and our Labor legacies to strengthen Medicare and the NDIS and protect superannuation. You helped our community vote for change to bring out our best, work together, heal, embrace our differences and celebrate our diversity. We walk together now, all of us, arm in arm, side by side.

### MILDURA ELECTORATE

**Ms CUPPER** (Mildura) (09:53): Following two frustrating years of pandemic-related false starts, cancellations and tentative bookings, Team AC is finally back in action in outback Victoria, because lately we have been all over the place. A couple of weeks ago our team was treated to a full day of visits and activities in Nullawil, a little Mallee town which punches above its weight, especially when it comes to wheat production and football premierships. Thanks to the Nullawil Historical Society, we were provided a full guided tour of the Nullawil heritage museum, which has a rich local history. The sprawling site provides a home for historical treasures from across the Mallee, from schoolbooks to churches. We were so grateful for the local hospitality and especially the organising efforts of our own Nullawil girl, Sandy Pollington, who was also busy with preparations for the official opening of our Southern Mallee electorate hub in Birchip. Although the hub has been operating for a while, it was great fun to officially introduce the community to our new base, which has helped us to stay connected and accessible across the vast expanse of the Mildura electorate. The opening was well attended by locals from Birchip, Nullawil and Wycheproof, and it was a great excuse to spend some time and money in two of Birchip's premier nightspots, O'Donnell's wine bar and the Birchip pub.

It is a privilege to represent this part of the world. Mallee farming communities are made of tough stuff. They farmed the desert and turned it into a multibillion-dollar economic powerhouse. Thanks to ancestry.com, I can confirm that I am related to most of them.

**SEAFORD LIFE SAVING CLUB**

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) (09:54): Congratulations to Seaford Life Saving Club on their successful funding in this year's state budget. Following compelling advocacy by the club, Seaford Life Saving Club will receive funding to purchase all-abilities equipment like beach matting and beach wheelchairs to help more people get down to the beach and into the water. I commend Seaford Life Saving Club not only for the wonderful work they do as volunteers in helping to keep our communities safe but for their commitment to wanting to make our beautiful Seaford Beach accessible to even more people. Back in 2019 I met with the then junior coordinator for the Nippers program, Jackie Goudy, about getting kids as well as adults with additional needs on the beach and in the water with their friends. I commend Jackie and the Seaford Life Saving Club for taking such positive steps and generating change to make our community more inclusive, more welcoming and fairer and better for all of us. I wish to acknowledge club members Samantha Collins, Darren McLeod, Sheila Stones and Peter Stones, with whom the Treasurer and I recently met, for their ongoing commitment to making our beaches more accessible to even more people.

**FRANKSTON BMX CLUB**

**Ms KILKENNY**: Congratulations to Frankston BMX on their successful funding in this year's Victorian state budget. The funding will expand on important upgrades to the BMX track in Old Wells Road, Seaford. This fabulous local club led by president Peter Hart and a fabulous volunteer committee of Affy McGrath, Rohan Smith and Zoe Vrapcenjak is producing some of our nation's best young BMX riders, like young guns Juliana and Giovana; Billy, Archie and Toby McGrath; Noah Hart; and Cayden Neivandt. It was terrific to visit them at the club with the Treasurer to acknowledge their achievements and commitment to local sport in our community.

**HEALTH SYSTEM**

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) (09:56): This statement condemns the Andrews Labor government's appalling neglect of hospitals for residents in the south-east. Our health workers are under immense pressure in a system that is broken and under-resourced. I was shocked to hear the awful experience of patients in my electorate, like Adrian, whose stroke was not diagnosed for eight days. Adrian was rushed to the Monash Medical Centre by ambulance with a severe headache and vomiting on 2 May. Adrian also has prostate cancer. His wife pleaded repeatedly with hospital staff for an MRI. On 5 May the hospital diagnosed Adrian with a complex migraine. By Thursday, 6 May, having not had an MRI, he was discharged with no medication and no scheduled follow-ups. Adrian was still so ill by 10 May his GP saw him at home and immediately ordered an MRI. The MRI showed Adrian had had a stroke eight days earlier. But it gets worse. Adrian and his wife immediately returned to the Monash Medical Centre, where it took 5 hours to see a doctor. The doctor stated, 'We don't think he is a stroke victim', even though the MRI showed otherwise. Adrian was left in a chair for a further 7 hours. By the time a bed on a ward was available, more than 12 hours after he had arrived, he had been exposed to COVID and was isolated but discharged home with his family without a PCR test. Adrian's experience is not isolated.

**CAMBODIAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS**

**Mr TAK** (Clarinda) (09:57): I was delighted to host friends from APHEDA and the Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia here in Parliament this week. Asbestos has been completely banned in Australia since December 2003; however, 20 years later it is estimated asbestos-related disease still contributes to some 4000 deaths in Australia each year. Sixty-seven countries have banned asbestos, but in South-East Asia asbestos continues to be widely used in construction materials, such as roofs and wall sheeting. For workers and communities in these countries the fatal legacy of this toxic material will be felt for decades to come. Thank you to Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA Cambodian country manager Mr Veasna Noun; Mr Sok Kin, president of the Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia; and the Cambodian Ban Asbestos Network, who joined us to speak about the challenges to achieving a ban in Cambodia, the work that is being done and the role Australia is playing. Together with the federal member for Bruce, I was fortunate to meet

with some of the BWTUC members and delegates during a visit to Cambodia back in 2019 to hear about the campaign and challenges for freedom of association in Cambodia. I look forward to working together towards better outcomes for workers in Cambodia and Victoria.

### **BLACKBURN LAKE SANCTUARY**

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (09:58): I rise to speak on some of the many stand-out community members and groups that I have been working with in Ringwood. I recently visited Blackburn Lake for a working bee organised by the secretary of the Blackburn Lake Sanctuary advisory committee, Peter Dempsey. I thank Peter for his work in organising the important weekend duties, weeding out invasive plants and putting natives back in their place.

### **RINGWOOD CITY SOCCER CLUB**

**Mr FOWLES**: I was honoured to attend a fundraiser and charity match at Ringwood City Soccer Club, raising funds for the Wilhelmina fund. The club is committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for people from all backgrounds, so they established the Wilhelmina fund in 2019 to help players with financial difficulties by providing them with equipment and covering their registration fees. Dan does a great job down there.

### **MARLBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr FOWLES**: Marlborough Primary School in Heathmont had their annual colour fun run on 31 March. It was a great day. The sun came out for it, and everyone, kids, teachers, parents and guardians, had a wonderful time being sprayed with colour as they sprinted, skipped and jogged their way around the course. The school raised over \$6600 to brighten up the school's outdoor areas. This was thanks to a sterling effort from the whole MPS community, including the Baker family at Dos Amigos Catering, who were selling delicious food after the run and generously passed on their profits to the school.

### **HEATHMONT EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mr FOWLES**: I also had the great honour of attending the school leadership assembly at Heathmont East Primary School, HEPS, to present student leaders and junior school council members with their badges. Thank you to principal Anita Elliott and the whole school community for a wonderful morning and a fascinating tour of their facilities.

### **GLENROY PROJECTS**

**Ms BLANDTHORN** (Pascoe Vale) (10:00): I acknowledge that in Glenroy it is all happening. We have recently removed the dangerous and congested level crossing at Glenroy Road. This has caused motorists, pedestrians and the whole community great grief for many, many decades, and to see this crossing finally gone and to see the road finally open is just amazing. The new station is absolutely beautiful. I thank the LX team for all of their work in bringing this new station to reality. The community have just been so patient and so embracing of the outcomes of this project. The station will, for the first time in 100 years, connect the two sides of Glenroy.

And in Glenroy we are doing so much more than just removing this dangerous level crossing. I was pleased to be at the opening of the Glenroy Community Hub, where the state government contributed \$750 000 for a new library and \$1.6 million for a new children's centre, just the weekend before last. Of course we are rebuilding the Glenroy West Primary School, with \$18 million, and we are resurfacing the ovals at the Glenroy Central Primary School. In the recent state budget we committed \$1.88 million to the Glenroy Specialist School—simply an amazing and inspiring place to go and visit. And I particularly want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Glenroy secondary college, which we have upgraded. We are investing significantly in the programs and offerings of Glenroy College. I want to thank the Glenroy College community for the amazing work that they do in providing and offering an absolute first-class education to the families in Glenroy.



**NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Ms THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (10:02): We are truly living in the Education State, and my electorate of Northcote is at the very centre of it. Across our suburbs we have now secured over \$80 million for upgrades and improvements at every single local school—that is, new playgrounds, accessibility upgrades, shade sails, more classrooms, libraries, gyms, performing arts centres and specialist STEM facilities. This year through the state Labor budget we have been able to deliver even more. Westgarth Primary is getting an incredible \$12.9 million for new classrooms and a full-sized gymnasium. Thornbury Primary will have brand new bathrooms with a \$400 000 grant to make sure these young students have facilities that are clean, modern, safe and inclusive. Northcote High is adding to its exciting modernisation with an additional \$8.7 million to make its new STEM building absolutely state of the art, and Merri Creek Primary will have \$5.35 million to deliver stage 2 of their master plan, including a new study building and a fantastic rooftop learning space with city views.

These investments are not just about bricks and mortar; they are transformational. They say to every student in this state, ‘You are our future. Your dreams matter. We’re investing in you’. And it does not matter where you come from or what your background is or where you live: if you are a Victorian kid, you get a great education. That is what this government is about. That is how we deliver for families through real, tangible things that make a difference to people’s lives. I am so proud about what we have achieved for local schools in Northcote.

**BELLARINE ELECTORATE PROJECTS**

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (10:03): It has been a busy and exciting time in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale with a number of projects and funding announcements. I was pleased to join the Premier, mayor Ross Ebbels and Queenscliffe Historical Museum president Stephen Lee on a site visit of the newly completed Queenscliffe Hub. We invested \$4.2 million in the new hub, which will be home to the museum, the visitor information centre and the library and also provide a community activity space. Congratulations to all connected to the project, particularly the project control group and the steering group members. We are really looking forward to the opening day in the very near future.

Speaking of Queenscliff, I have also just this week been at Queenscliff Primary School, a great school of 158 kids, grown from six, providing a really first-class education to its students. I was very pleased to announce funding of just on \$500 000 to do some refurbishment, including staff and student toilets. I commend Richard Buckingham and the entire school community for their tireless work for the school. I was also pleased to be able to announce at the historic Point Lonsdale Lighthouse \$1 million of funding allocated for its ongoing upgrade. I thank all of the volunteers who have so passionately committed to the preservation of the lighthouse reserve, especially those serving on the project reference group. And only last week the I welcomed the Minister for Creative Industries to Queenscliff for the iconic Blues Train led by Hugo T Armstrong—\$40 000 to get that train back on track following COVID.

**PITSA BINNION AND MARILYN KOOLSTRA**

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) (10:05): I rise to pay tribute to two outstanding principals in the Bentleigh electorate who have recently announced their retirement at the end of the year—firstly, Pitsa Binnion of McKinnon Secondary College. Pitsa has been principal of McKinnon Secondary College for the last 15 years, and it is fair to say that McKinnon in that time has become unrecognisable. I have particularly valued working with Pitsa, and we have achieved quite a bit for that school together, including and most notably the addition of a second campus to McKinnon Secondary College, which opened this year.

I would also like to pay tribute to Marilyn Koolstra of Valkstone Primary School. Marilyn has been principal of Valkstone for more than 20 years, but her association with that school dates back to 1957, when the school opened and she was among the first students to start at Valkstone. Valkstone is no longer the small school that it was when Marilyn began as principal. It is a highly sought after school.

I think both Pitsa and Marilyn are to be commended for the commitment and the dedication that they have demonstrated to two outstanding local schools.

### Business of the house

### NOTICES OF MOTION

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (10:06): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with government business, notice of motion 1, today but asks that it remain on the notice paper.

### UPPER YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (10:06): I move:

That under section 46D(1)(c) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, amendment 122 to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* be approved.

I am delighted to make a contribution on this important amendment.

**A member:** And I will be delighted to hear it.

**Mr WYNNE:** Thank you very much to my opposition colleague. The Yarra Ranges Shire Council requested that I amend the regional strategy plan (RSP) to facilitate changes to the Yarra Ranges planning scheme to include more contemporary and effective planning provisions. Amendment of the regional strategy plan requires approval, obviously, by Parliament according to the Planning and Environment Act, part 3A. An update to the regional strategy is required to enable council to implement a major review of the Yarra Ranges planning scheme, and any amendment must be consistent with the regional strategy plan. Of course both went through a public exhibition process, an opportunity for these matters to be ventilated in a very robust and transparent way. Amendment 122, which updates the regional strategy plan, replaces outdated terminology and provisions. The Shire of Yarra Ranges is the only municipality which has a regional strategy plan to protect its unique character and townships. This is an administrative but necessary update so that the council's planning scheme review, which is amendment C148, can be implemented.

Moving now to amendment C148, C148 is a comprehensive planning scheme review. These are done, as I am sure members would be aware, every couple of years by councils to ensure their planning schemes are up to date and reflect their strategic direction. It also makes sure such things are aligned with current state policies in planning, so it is a very important thing for councils to continue to update their planning schemes. Amendment 122 proposes changes to clauses within three chapters of the RSP. These include removing the need for a permit for vegetation removal where it is not required by the planning scheme—for example, where vegetation has died or is unsafe. It will assist with safe and efficient vegetation removal after storms or fires and make sure it is consistent with existing planning overlays relating to vegetation.

It updates the activity centre hierarchy terminology so it is consistent with other planning schemes. They were previously called commercial centres; they are now called activity centres. This removes outdated terminology. It removes reference to 'intensive agricultural policy areas', where rural and green wedge zones can manage these through updated decision guidelines, and it removes 'major tourist facilities', which was too broad and confusing a term. It also updates references to restaurants so they can be located in conjunction with agriculture, natural systems, outdoor recreation facilities, rural industries or a winery rather than just tourism accommodation.

The exhibited version of amendment C122 included the removal of tenement provisions from the RSP, which restricts the number of houses that can be placed on land in one ownership. This change was not supported by the panel, and I accepted the panel's recommendation to retain the tenement provisions in the RSP. Council, I note, is supportive of this in total as it removes a lot of red tape and inconsistencies in the planning controls that apply in the Yarra Ranges. Amendment 122 does not

change any urban growth boundary or change subdivision provisions in the green wedge areas. The changes to the regional strategy plan under amendment 122 were of course publicly exhibited along with amendment C148.

Can I say in conclusion that the council, who have done some really excellent work in this space, can now get on with strategic planning work that helps them absolutely to protect the Yarra Valley and manage growth in appropriate locations. I commend this amendment to the house.

**Mr R SMITH** (Warrandyte) (10:12): Thank you, Minister. May I just start by expressing my appreciation to the minister and his office for putting the briefing together. It is my experience that the minister's staff and departmental staff have been unfailingly helpful and polite in their dealings with my office and me, so I thank him and by extension them for that.

I rise today to speak on the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* both in my capacity as the Shadow Minister for Planning but also as someone who has a particular interest in the area, having grown up on Mount Dandenong and gone to school at both Lilydale High and Lilydale Primary School. I know the area well, and I appreciate the work that Yarra Ranges council has done in making sure that they embrace the green wedge in particular. I want to talk a little bit about the green wedges. I want to talk a little bit about bushfire concerns in the area that may be affected by the amendments and also some of the heritage issues.

The green wedge, for those that do not know, was an idea first put forward by the Honourable Rupert Hamer, at the time Liberal Minister for Local Government and obviously a former Premier. But in his role as Minister for Local Government under the Bolte government he introduced these ideas as a way of making sure that there was a process to counter the urban sprawl, and he would later achieve that protection of those particular conservation areas through the introduction of planning overlays known as conservation areas. It has been heartening that successive governments have been true to the ideals put forward by the Liberal government in making sure that those areas have been always preserved.

We have an inference by our opponents at times that the Liberal Party does not care about the environment, and I am here to place on the record that that is absolute rubbish. The green wedge zones were born of liberal ideas, they have been maintained by liberal ideas, and the conservation plans which were made back in the 1970s for our future are something of which I am very proud. The green wedges are a Liberal legacy, and certainly in my time here I will do everything I can to protect the green wedges, whether it be in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, in my own patch in Warrandyte or indeed in other areas around the state, such as the Mornington Peninsula.

May I also just move on to issues around bushfire concerns. While section 70(2) speaks about the clearing of native vegetation, I think we need to be very cognisant while we are saving important vegetation—as a former environment minister I am very cognisant of the need to do that—of the need to preserve those ecological values. But I just want to make note of the fact that, following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the government of the day and indeed, I believe, successive governments believed that the primacy of life pretty well covers and is at the forefront of everything that we do when we look at bushfire protection. So when we are thinking about any restraints on native vegetation clearance, we have to make sure that people's homes and indeed people's lives are protected at the first instance. I just place on record that the primacy of life is something that should be at the forefront of our mind when we are looking at these sorts of issues.

Finally, just on heritage issues, I saw in the amendment we have some directions removed, one being to:

Ensure that buildings harmonise in character and appearance with adjacent buildings and with the character of the area.

And further that we:

Ensure retention and preservation of architecturally or historically significant buildings and features in each centre.

Those two provisions have been removed by this amendment, and I think that we have to make sure with those provisions being removed that we still maintain the character of the Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges, which have a particular character. As I said, I grew up in that area. I am very cognisant of the look, the feel and the ambience of the place, and despite those provisions being removed we still have to be very cognisant of maintaining the character of the area.

With those short words, I support the amendment being moved by the government but at the first instance by Yarra Ranges council. Tammi Rose has done excellent work as CEO of Yarra Ranges council. I am very supportive of what has been put forward but again just place on record those concerns about heritage issues and those concerns around native vegetation clearance, and of course, as I said, I remain, as always, very proud of the Liberal legacy of the green wedges.

**Ms VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (10:16): I also rise today in relation to this motion around the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* amendment, otherwise known as amendment 122. Amendment 122 to the regional strategy plan really is a critical step in paving the way for improved investment and community outcomes for my local community in the Yarra Ranges. As the Shadow Minister for Planning and Heritage has just pointed out, it continues to protect our green wedge areas, green wedges having been a forward-thinking environment policy brought to Victoria by a Liberal in the former Hamer ministry in a Liberal government. We will always proudly protect and seek to protect the green wedges here on this side of the house.

I am rising today because as the member for Evelyn—Evelyn is within the Yarra Ranges municipality—I thought it important today to put on record some remarks in relation to this amendment 122 and why it is important for our community. C122 ensures consistency between the planning scheme and the regional strategy plan and enables development in Yarra Ranges to more successfully deliver on the community's aspirations that were expressed through *Vision 2020*. It is worth noting, however, that it has been three years since this amendment was submitted to the Minister for Planning seeking endorsement. While it is really good that we are discussing it and debating it in Parliament today, it is worth noting that the delays have really blocked progress on other key planning improvements. It has been sitting on the Andrews Labor government's desk now for over three years, since 2019, and on behalf of my community—the residents, the businesses and the council—you do have to wonder what on earth the bureaucrats and the minister have been doing for all of that time, because it has caused delays in progress for my community. But that it is now before Parliament is a good thing. In particular the transformative C148 amendment will finally be able to proceed along with C186, and I encourage the Minister for Planning to expedite these as a matter of priority should amendment 122 be ratified. Indeed my community would be grateful to be advised by the minister and his office what the time frame is for C148 and C186 to be expedited.

After being in communication with the Yarra Ranges council in relation to C122, I understand that the community was thoroughly engaged on the proposed changes and that residents and organisations in the community provided input into the development of C148 before the council made this recommendation to the government back in 2019. Progressing C122 will achieve strong benefits for investment in our local community, for businesses and for the community, including: the rewriting of the municipal strategic statement that provides clearer strategic direction and decision-making guidance on a wide range of land use and development issues; the introduction of three new local planning policies for retail developments, environmentally sustainable development and dwellings in green wedge areas; the cleaning up and deletion of eight local planning policies, which will become redundant as a result of new policy guidelines contained within the revised municipal strategic statement and revised overlay schedules; a set of new significant landscape overlays that contain improved design guidelines for development in green wedge areas; a new environmental significance overlay that identifies and celebrates the important biodiversity habitats in the Yarra Ranges, particularly important for our local community, and provides targeted controls to protect these areas; cleaning up through the removal of redundant significant landscape overlay and environmental significance overlay schedules; a 5 per cent public open space contribution requirement through the schedule to clause 53.01 of all land inside the urban growth boundary—and I do note particularly that

this C122 amendment will not change the urban growth boundary, which is a really good thing; and further cleaning up through the removal of redundant requirements from the schedule to clause 51.03 of the planning scheme.

As I mentioned earlier and as has been mentioned I think by the minister and the shadow minister, a really important, significant reform back under a Liberal government, under former minister Hamer, was the green wedges. We, the Liberals and The Nationals, will always promote the green wedges. We will always seek to protect the green wedges and the beautiful natural environment and agricultural attributes of the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges area.

I also would like to put on record my thanks to the CEO of the Yarra Ranges council, Tammi Rose, and her team and also the mayor, Cr Jim Child, for their candid discussions about this and how the community was engaged on this process. As a local advocate and representative, as the member for Evelyn, which is contained within the Yarra Ranges municipality, and in support of the residents, the businesses and the council—because of course we know that this will contribute to the investment in our area and make things much clearer when it comes to planning matters in my area—I look forward to amendment 122 proceeding so that our community can move forward.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Bills**

#### **APPROPRIATION (2022–2023) BILL 2022**

#### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2022–2023) BILL 2022**

#### *Second reading*

#### **Debate resumed on motions of Mr PALLAS and Ms ALLAN:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) (10:23): I am pleased to be back speaking on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, because what this bill has done is fail to deliver for not only my community, residents across the City of Knox, but people across Melbourne, people across regional Victoria and people across rural Victoria. This is a government that after eight years has stopped listening to Victorians. This is a government that is more focused on its own political future. This is a government that is only worried about, unfortunately, one person, that being the Premier. So many people sitting on the back bench, probably on the middle bench and probably even on the front bench are ignored by the Premier. This is a person that is unfortunately more focused on his leadership, more focused on his personal aspirations, than focusing on the people who elected him to this place—that is, families, mums and dads and individuals across Victoria.

That is what is at the heart of the failure of this budget. This budget does not deliver for Victorians. This budget does not deliver for industry. This budget does not deliver for small businesses which are struggling after two years of lockdowns. This does not deliver for families who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures. This budget does not deliver for young people, who have struggled after two years of lockdown with their education, and it does not deliver for their mental health challenges as they grapple with the impact of lockdowns. Unfortunately this government has forgotten why they are here and what their purpose is, which is to stand up for all Victorians, to help all Victorians. We have seen that with the Premier of this state not acting as a leader but standing up in this place lecturing, hectoring and bullying. Victorians are not looking for that.

As we saw in the federal election, governments that are unpopular will be swept out of power. Governments that are unpopular get swept out of power, and I think there is a lesson in that for those opposite. What we saw the next day from the government was hubris, for heaven's sake—leaders in the government standing up with hubris about the federal election. Let me tell you, when people were walking to the ballot box on Saturday when I was speaking to Victorians, the feedback about the

current Andrews government was that it is not popular, not by any stretch. The government needs to heed the warnings. They need to look at the significant swings against this government, against the Labor Party in its own heartland. I mean, this is a government that is more interested in themselves. This is a Premier that is more interested in his own vanity. He is not interested in Victorians. He has stopped acting on behalf of Victorians. This is the failure of this budget. Victorians are looking for hope, they are looking for leadership, they are looking for guidance and they are looking for support. They are not getting that at the moment from this government. This side of the house has committed that we will stand up for Victorians. We will listen, we will engage, we will talk, we will support and we will offer hope. This budget failed to do that, and the next election will provide us with an opportunity to deliver that.

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) (10:28): We have the chance to turn adversity into opportunity. This government is delivering hope. The need is vital and urgent to deliver the vision, plan and constancy of purpose to overcome an insane period in history. Our focus is confronting the catastrophes of our times and creating future opportunities for every Victorian. Context is critical in understanding what we have overcome, where we are and where we are headed as a state. Catastrophic events converged in a new period of counterenlightenment when facts, instead of being stubborn and cherished, were declared alternate. Culture wars over global warming dismissed science as an inconvenient truth and coincided with the worst pandemic in more than a century, which triggered the worst global recession since the Great Depression.

The world still confronts the pandemic with potential new variants. War in Europe threatens a new recession. But thanks to one of humanity's cleverest creations, vaccines, a gift of science, our future now has greater possibilities. This budget necessarily puts patients first, with a \$12 billion investment in Victoria's health system. But I want to focus on how we build our competitive advantages and partnerships post pandemic to create opportunities for all and ensure that everyday people and their families benefit and can see where they fit in the big picture. This builds on the eight budgets of the Andrews government to redefine our future through the Big Build, the Big Housing Build, the Suburban Rail Loop and numerous other groundbreaking projects and programs. This is the big picture. This is the vision, the plan and the strategy you need to deliver hope—not just to talk about it, to actually deliver it. This has been the role that I have tried to play to drive the contest of ideas, and this has been my focus—to think big and to help define our future—because it is clear the world will not wait.

For nine years the federal coalition government refused to give Victorians our fair share. The post-pandemic proposal is to drive Victoria to become one of the smartest little countries in the world—and we can do this. We have got the best opportunity now with Labor in power nationally. This is critical for economic and cultural development. The bitter irony for the Sydney-centric coalition government is it lost government, all its seats overlooking the harbour city and its traditional heartland in Melbourne. Voters, businesses and world leaders have moved beyond the triumph of politics over rational decision-making and are demanding greater action against climate change. Technology-empowered leadership is critical to create competitive advantage. This is what we have done here.

When you look at becoming one of the smart little countries of the world, the Israeli ambassador was in the Parliament this week and I discussed this with him, because I looked at this and studied this notion in 2013, when we went to Israel and we went to the Technion and we went to the Weizmann Institute and we saw how Israel was able to translate its scientific breakthroughs and commercialise them. Well, the Victorian government has advanced dramatically with our key partners in doing that. The other country I was looking at was Ireland, and how it was able to help get so many of the big ICT companies to have their headquarters there. We had the President come out here, Michael D Higgins, with an investment and innovation tour that he led to Victoria. So that is another interesting proposition on how to achieve that. Then if you have a look at Singapore, which is economically regarded as a powerhouse, it roughly has the same population and GDP as Victoria, but we have actually more land and greater resources.

Labor in power nationally opens up enormous possibilities, and our new Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, took to the world stage at the Quad meeting alongside other leaders from the US, India and the host, Japan. Adding AUKUS provides major opportunities that we can attract for new industries and jobs. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research, I really want to emphasise that if you look globally the three leading cities are Boston, with Harvard and MIT; London, with the Imperial College and Oxbridge; and Melbourne, anchored with the elegant Parkville precinct around the University of Melbourne and the great southern hub, where we have Monash University, which has been doing an outstanding job with its breakthroughs, next door to CSIRO, connected by Innovation Walk. This is our future billion-dollar boulevard, and they are already delivering.

You see how the change of government so dramatically can change attitudes and recognition. You had Anthony Albanese with Joe Biden, and I emphasise again the opportunity we have through our Cancer Moonshot relationship that brought Joe Biden to Melbourne in 2016 for the opening of the billion-dollar jewel in our medical research crown, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. This is of huge significance to him—it is as personal as family; he lost his son Beau to brain cancer—and he has been committed to extending this. What he wants to do as President of the United States is take the value out of a defence agency that was able to come up with the internet and GPS and transfer that to a health dividend. This is how significant this is. He is looking at cancers, he is looking at Alzheimer's disease and he is looking at diabetes.

How we maximise our position in that relationship is vital for the leadership from Victoria. This has for a long time been driven by the Premier—against the arguments that have been put by the other side—the Treasurer and all the ministers who have been involved, and I have been happy and privileged to play some role in trying to push forward the ideas on how we do this. What the President is trying to do is adapt artificial intelligence and other technologies to supercharge breakthroughs predicted to outstrip half a century's advances in the next decade, so that is a wonderful quest and something that we can be a part of. This would target breakthroughs to prevent, detect and treat diseases. Australia is close to the top of the survival list for most cancers, so this is how we are valued.

The other key thing is to understand that big dreams demand big data being distilled into understanding, knowledge and then remedies. President Biden, when he came to Melbourne, praised the significance of the agreement between Victoria and the US to share patient histories, with full privacy protection, during his tour of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, noting, 'You are making cancer research a team sport'. That is the critical point of where we are. That is one of our greatest assets, our medical research being of international significance, and of course this was then built on so that Victoria won the national competition, fiercely contested, to manufacture mRNA vaccines, the next generation to provide the next breakthroughs. That is of great significance.

The other point I want to go to on creating opportunity is that the new Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Marles, is looking at how we address industries, and I want to say from Melbourne's north here is the wonderful opportunity now to have a partner. Let us not forget what happened. Under the coalition government the attitude was one of managed decline. That was Margaret Thatcher's approach to England's north, which led to social catastrophe, the burning of Liverpool. That is the way Melbourne's north was looked at. There were no seats to be won, so we were abandoned like an orphan. That is the truth of the matter. Let us not forget the 'lifters and leaners' budget and where that impacted most. These all have context and are of major significance, so I am going to invite the Deputy Prime Minister to come to Broadmeadows and see the plan that the Australian government is articulating. They want to try and coordinate the three tiers of government, and I have been able to do that as chair of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board, because you need to have a prototype and you need to have a proof of concept for business. So this delivers. We were able to attract a billion dollars in shovel-ready and pipeline projects to the derelict Ford site. That is emblematic, because that marked the demise of our once-proud automotive industry, the loss of manufacturing scale and the loss of the independent supply chains and national sovereignty that the Australian government craves and we have to have.

So what was the response? The Prime Minister then came to Broadmeadows, to CSL, where we are manufacturing more than 50 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, and there is another \$1.8 billion investment nearby with Seqirus, a CSL subsidiary, for vaccines against influenza. I would have thought this is great for diplomacy in the Pacific region. Why don't we help save lives through our vaccines? Very few countries make them. Here is a lucrative new export industry that we should use. Let us introduce vaccine diplomacy in that way and ramp it up, because saving lives is the best thing you can do for any community. I say that because there have been delegations from overseas whose members had tears in their eyes when they saw the value of our health system, the value of what we can do here and what it would mean to their people. So I think that is a wonderful proposition.

I do want to go to why it is important for business that we are talking to business and we are emphasising the opportunity, because I was at a function recently and a lot of people do not understand that the Breakthrough Victoria Fund will invest in innovation for impact. The fund is up to \$2 billion. This is a huge investment. It has a 10-year horizon. It is not what is going to happen on a short political run to the election deadline. It has got a 10-year-and-beyond horizon and it emphasises how Victoria is home to some of the best scientific, digital and knowledge institutes and businesses in the world, all sharing a mission to discover the next breakthrough. Whether it is the next generation for medical tech, designing sustainable food sources or uncovering new ways to take action on climate change, Victorian innovators are already developing the research, technology and ideas that will transform our lives. The investments and key innovations are in employment precincts. Significant opportunities from elsewhere in Victoria will also be considered, so obviously I am asking for Melbourne's north to be considered in this, with Broadmeadows as the hub but the key centres are Parkville, Arden-Macaulay, Fishermans Bend, Bundoora, Clayton and Waurn Ponds. These are key strategic investments over time. This is how you can build the opportunity, how you can create it and how you can then connect up. I made a point of talking to business leaders to say to them, 'This is here and now. This is it. See the opportunity and seize it'. And this is what I think we can do now with greater emphasis on climate change—take a look at the advantages that we have for that—and medical research. Take care of deindustrialisation—go back into the postcodes that were left disadvantaged and say, 'Here's how we reinvest'. Get the private sector on board. Coordinate three tiers of government, business and civil society. Here is how you can deliver the economic and social dividend.

So these are the strategies that have been laid out, as I say, over eight years. This is the vision, this is the plan. We have now the best opportunity, and this is the point that I am making to businesspeople: understand how much money is pumped into the system by the federal government and the Victorian government—but with Victoria really leading on this. The strategic investments are outstanding. The opportunities have never been better. You can talk down the state, or you can say, 'We want to lead. Here's the opportunity to do it, here's the strategy that's being put in place and here's the chance for Victoria to be one of the great, smart little countries in the world'. Let us aim high. That is how we got the Cancer Moonshot. That is how you build global learning villages. This is how we can do it, and here is the opportunity right here, right now.

**Ms STALEY (Ripon) (10:43):** I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the concurrent debate with the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. What we have here is a Labor budget, the outlook of which is built on a lie. Is there any Victorian outside the Labor caucus who actually believes that this government will deliver a surplus four years from now? I would put it to you that there is not. When we look at what they build that mirage of a surplus on, the fantasy becomes even more apparent, because they are planning to rip money out of the Transport Accident Commission—money that is meant for people who have been hurt in accidents and also for road safety programs. They are planning to rip \$3 billion out of the Transport Accident Commission to deliver their mirage of a surplus. We all know they are not getting there. We all know that Labor cannot manage money, and in fact that is what this budget is really about, because at every point we see that they are running big deficits that they then pad out with these fake ways of getting to a so-called surplus.



The debt is blowing out and is planned to be \$167.5 billion by 2025–26. When that debt gets there, if this government remains in power—and I am sure it will get there earlier than the 2025–26 year that they are estimating—Victoria’s debt will be the equivalent of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia combined. Our population is smaller than that of New South Wales, and it is certainly smaller than the combination of those three states. Yet this government seems to think it is a good idea to run a debt strategy that will see their debt equivalent to those three states combined. They cannot say that it is COVID. Those states went through COVID as well. And they certainly cannot say that they inherited it, because when they came to government in 2014 debt levels were around \$20 billion. So there is no excuse for why this government should be running debt of that level. It is simply that this government does not know how to manage money.

Of course when the Premier is asked about anything to do with money, anything to do with cost blowouts or anything to do with the reason that this budget is such a bad budget for Victoria, what he says is, ‘Oh, things cost what they cost’. Well, no Victorian thinks that. No Victorian looking at their own household budget goes, ‘Oh, things cost what they cost. We’ll have the kitchen renovation come in at three times the original estimate’. No. Victorians quite rightly, if that was put to them, would say either ‘We’re not going to have the kitchen renovation’ or ‘We’ll find somebody who can manage the project properly’. Whereas this government just throws its hands up and says, ‘Well, we can’t manage it. Things cost what they cost’, entirely without any managerial competence. And I particularly call out on this one the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, who has overseen cost blowouts in her portfolio alone of \$27 billion. We have every single one of her major projects—the West Gate Tunnel, the metro rail, the North East Link. I mean, the North East Link was promised for \$5 billion. In this budget it is saying around \$15.4 billion. It really does take a special sort of incompetence to blow out one single project that badly, yet that is where we are with this government.

I also want to make a comment about the government’s ridiculous—and ‘ridiculous’ is the only word you could use to describe it—establishment of what they call the Victorian Future Fund. We would remember that Peter Costello as Treasurer started the Future Fund, and he did so because at the time Australia had the great fortune to have a mining boom, and it also had the position where commonwealth public servants’ superannuation was not funded. It was funded each year from the budget. So the Treasurer, the then Liberal Treasurer, Peter Costello, wisely said, ‘We’re going to use part of the proceeds of Australia’s mining boom to fix once and for all the problem of having to fund public servants’ superannuation every year’, and that is what they did. That sovereign wealth fund, which is hundreds of billions of dollars, has achieved its purpose. It has done so and delivered something for Australia that is very worthwhile. Whereas this government is saying they are going to over time maybe put \$10 billion into a fund—for what purpose? They are running debt at \$170 billion nearly. Wouldn’t you just have less debt? We have got an increasing interest rate environment. Surely common sense would say in an increasing interest rate environment the number one priority is to reduce the level of your debt. But not this government. They are taking voodoo economics to a new level.

Despite having this huge amount of debt, it is not as if Victorians can think fondly that they are not being taxed to the eyeballs as well, because tax collections have increased by 80 per cent, from \$16.9 billion in 2013 to a forecast \$30.5 billion. Let us remember that in 2014 the Premier was asked a really direct question about tax. He was asked whether he could guarantee that there would be no tax increases, and he said, ‘I make a solemn promise that there will be no tax increases’. He has broken that promise 42 times.

**Mr Newbury:** He probably doesn’t recall saying it.

**Ms STALEY:** Yes, member for Brighton, that is probably right. If we asked him today, he would say ‘I don’t recall ever saying that’. It is a shame for him the video exists. Similarly, the Treasurer recently at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee was asked about the promise he made prior to the 2018 election not to increase taxes, and he tried to say that he had not said that. Yet again the evidence—the video evidence—shows that he had. What is it with these senior Labor figures—Premier, Treasurer—thinking that they can gaslight committees, gaslight Victorians and say that they

did not say something for which there is clear evidence they did. I remind the house of the Premier's response when asked about the 4000 ICU beds which are not delivered in this budget—they are not delivered anywhere. He tried to tell us that he had not made that promise. Well, of course he had stood up and committed to 4000 ICU beds, and then he did not deliver them.

And that brings me to something else that he has not delivered, something where the government is continuing to mislead Victorians. Government members are standing up one after another claiming that this budget increases health funding. I refer to budget paper 3, page 220—this is 'Service Delivery'—'Output summary by departmental objectives'. It is what has actually been spent in 2021–22 and then what is forecast for 2022–23. Page 220 is the health department. In 2021–22 the revised health budget was \$27.0559 billion. In 2022–23 the budget for the health department is \$25.0189 billion. It is a reduction. There is not \$12 billion additional going in there. It has gone down—in their own budget papers.

And when we look at the components of what has gone down, these are the things they are cutting: admitted services, non-admitted services, emergency services. We have an ambulance crisis and we have an elective surgery waitlist crisis, and yet this government is cutting admitted services, non-admitted services and emergency services. When you are in an emergency or you are going for elective surgery, this government is cutting the health budget. It is cutting drug treatment and rehab. It is cutting home and community care programs for younger people. And of particular interest to me as a country MP, it is cutting small rural services' acute health. These budget papers are cutting health in my community and across Victoria, and this government—member after member—is repeating an absolute lie that this budget includes \$12 billion more for health. It does not. The comparison between 2021–22 and 2022–23 is a cut in health.

I want to move to the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. The part of this that I want to discuss is the funding for the integrity agencies. In these bills they have schedules of how much is appropriated. No matter what the government says about what it is doing, the figures that it is actually giving in this bill say that for IBAC it has a 3 per cent increase, which works out at about a \$1.6 million increase. IBAC says it needs a multiple of that, and we, the Liberal-Nationals, have committed to delivering a \$10 million increase to IBAC.

Similarly, the Ombudsman has a very, very minor increase. We believe—and the Ombudsman believes, we are only acting on her request—that we need to add an additional \$2 million for the Ombudsman. Now, why would it be that this government is underfunding the integrity agencies in Victoria? Why would it be? Could it possibly be that IBAC is very busy, shall we say, with inquiries related to Labor MPs? Why would we not draw the conclusion that the reason the government is not funding the integrity agencies properly and is not funding the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission is that there are so many Labor MPs, including the Premier, being interviewed by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission?

IBAC has three inquiries before it at which we know Labor MPs have appeared, including the member for Cranbourne, who is in the chamber, and including the Premier at two of the three and possibly three of the three. I mean, this government is spending its time putting its members out to IBAC, and then they underfund IBAC. I do not think it takes Einstein to realise why that might be the case. We have got Operation Richmond, and that is Labor's dealings with the fire union. We have got Operation Sandon, which is the planning issue out in the south-east with John Woodman, and again we have got MPs being interviewed by Operation Sandon. Then we have Operation Watts. Operation Watts is entirely about corruption and branch stacking within the Labor Party. This is the one that has had the draft leaked from IBAC, and it says:

... Labor's "organisational and leadership culture" must undergo further change ...

Protection racket—(*Time expired*)

**Mr HAMER** (Box Hill) (10:58): It is terrific to rise today and make a contribution to the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. I would like to start my contribution by reflecting on the fantastic result on the weekend that brought in a federal Labor government. It is particularly important in the context of this state budget because the previous federal coalition government was very vitriolic in its treatment of Victoria, and it resulted in an underfunding of many state programs. I do hope that with the election of the Albanese Labor government we will see a change to this discourse. We can already see it, I think, in the infrastructure commitment that the new Prime Minister made in my own electorate a couple of weeks ago in relation to the Suburban Rail Loop.

Just in relation to the commonwealth funding, the federal budget that was released back in March revealed that Victoria's share of new infrastructure funding would be less than 6 per cent of new funding, despite having a quarter of the nation's population. In the \$7 billion regional development plan, Victoria was not even allocated a single dollar—not a dollar out of that regional development plan. Under the commonwealth government's GST carve-up, if the no-worse-off guarantee is not extended beyond 2027, Victoria will continue to lose out. So I do hope that the election of an Albanese Labor government will change the direction of the discussion between the state of Victoria and the federal government and we will see some greater cooperation and, as I said, less vitriol directed towards our great state.

I do want to look at the overall state budget, and I do pay tribute to the Treasurer for delivering a great Labor budget that is really reflective of the views of the Labor Party and particularly invests in what matters most to Victorians. This is no better exemplified than in the investment in our health sector. We all know what a challenging couple of years it has been with the pandemic and the absolutely enormous work that all of our healthcare workers have contributed over the last two years. They have worked tirelessly, whether they are in hospitals, whether they are ambulance workers or nurses in at-home care—all were put under enormous pressure. That is why the investment of \$12 billion through this budget in the healthcare system is just so important. It is investment that obviously is much needed. It will mean more call takers to the 000 hotline, 5000 more nurses, more paramedics and 1500 more mental health workers delivered under the pandemic repair plan.

The budget, through this health investment, will also be investing in additional surgical capacity. I know obviously the Eastern Health facility, Box Hill Hospital, in my own electorate has been under enormous pressure through the pandemic. I have had a number of discussions with them over the last two years about how they have had to deal with the influx of COVID patients in particular, how that has moved the dial on other patients, the impact that has had right throughout their facility and also the impact that the general health outcomes have had on their staff and being able to maintain their staffing levels. The investment to boost the state's surgical capacity to deliver 40 000 extra surgeries in the next 12 months and up to 240 000 surgeries each year by 2024 is certainly welcomed in my community and by all the health facilities across the state.

We are continuing to invest in mental health. The Box Hill Hospital particularly does have a very important mental health facility. Last year we invested in additional bed capacity within the mental health unit at Box Hill Hospital in particular, and this budget continues that investment in terms of increasing the number of mental health hospital beds, because we do know through the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System how important having those facilities and services available to sufferers of mental ill health is. This is an issue that was prevalent well before the pandemic, but there have obviously been further challenges that have been brought about by the pandemic. The delivery of additional mental health beds across the state is in line with the royal commission's recommendations and is again certainly very much welcomed in my community.

I also wanted to just touch a little bit on another key element of the budget, which is the cost-of-living power saving bonus. I think it is terrific that that is being offered across the board. We have all seen what has happened with power prices in recent months and general cost-of-living pressures and inflation. The bonus is not just for people who may be living in what are traditionally the less affluent

areas. There are a lot of people in my community who are pensioners or retirees. They might be asset rich; they might have a home that has quite a large value, but what they are able to spend in discretionary spending day to day is limited and yet that does not change what the bills are, in terms of what is coming in. That is going to make an enormous difference to a lot of people in my community, so I am really pleased that the program has been extended and broadened to help all Victorians through these times.

I do want to touch in particular on what the budget is doing locally, because there are some fantastic initiatives that were announced in this budget for the Box Hill electorate. They are not particularly large sums of money, but they are a very targeted investment that will really help the community, whether it is through education, whether it is in community sport or whether it is just access and getting around the electorate. I do want to highlight a few of them. The biggest investment locally in this year's budget was an \$8.8 million investment to upgrade Laburnum Primary School, a fantastic school in Blackburn. Its zone picks up a lot of the new housing—the new high-rise unit development—in Box Hill. It is a growing school. More than 700 students attend that primary school. I have been there many times since I first got elected, but when I have gone out there this year I have seen the demographic change that is occurring at Laburnum Primary. It is a real reflection of how our community is changing, even in the space of a few years. The upgrades that are going to be possible with this investment are going to be so critical to delivering the education facilities that the students in my electorate need.

That brings the total amount of investment in education infrastructure throughout the Box Hill electorate since I was elected in 2018 to more than \$40 million. I think that is just a wonderful indication and reflection of this Andrews government putting its money where its mouth is in terms of investing in quality education. We do have some of the best schools in the state in terms of their educational outcomes, but some of the infrastructure had been left behind, so bit by bit, school by school, we are working through all of the schools to try to get them the upgrades that they need. It was terrific to see that Laburnum will have an upgrade this year.

There was another school which received upgrading in this budget and that was the Aurora special developmental school in Blackburn South. This is a specialist school for deaf and deaf-blind children. It is an amazing, wonderful learning environment for the children. It specialises in the early learning and foundation years and really tries to transition the children so that they can integrate into the regular government sector or non-government sector, as the case may be. But it allows the students to integrate within the mainstream education system, which is absolutely fantastic and gives an opportunity for all of those students to excel.

In terms of some of the other fantastic local investments coming out of this year's budget, community sport is obviously really important in all of our communities. I know how much we missed it during COVID. There were a couple of fantastic announcements that we were able to make. One was \$400 000 to upgrade Hagenauer Reserve. Hagenauer Reserve is the home of the Box Hill Athletic Club, and it was rated by *Inside Athletics*, which is a magazine for those who enjoy athletics. They ran a poll, and they rated the Box Hill athletics track as the favourite track in Australia, beating out the track in South Melbourne and beating out all of the better-known what you might call 'nice' tracks around Australia. One of the reasons that they had been rating it as a favourite is that it is known as the home of the PBs. The orientation of the track does make it suitable for the running of PBs, particularly in middle distance running, and there have been some very fast 800-metre and 1500-metre times which were set there. But unfortunately the condition of the terraces and the lighting have not been up to scratch, and it is fantastic to say that the \$400 000 that has been acquitted in this budget will go to improving those conditions.

Another really important commitment for my local area is the investment in the Canterbury Sports Ground in Surrey Hills. And I must pay tribute to my good friend the member for Hawthorn. We have both been lobbying hard to get some additional funding for this. Boroondara council had acquitted some money in their previous budget, about \$2 million, to put some female-friendly facilities at this pavilion, but it did need more. The level of the pavilion was low compared to the ground, which

impacted visibility, but it also meant that whenever there was a local flash flooding event the pavilion would routinely get flooded. Indeed it got flooded in November and again in January this year. The additional funding will be able to resolve a lot of those issues, and we managed to get council to defer starting their construction work until we could get this funding through. So I do thank the council for that, and that will be a fantastic facility when it is done. Overall it is a terrific Labor budget, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (11:14): I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. This is an opportunity for me to speak to my community of Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton and on behalf of that community. Disappointingly the state budget papers did not commit a single new dollar to Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood or Hampton—not a single dollar, not one dollar. A budget should be about economic responsibility and a fair allocation of resources, a fair allocation of money. And yet my part of Victoria, part of Melbourne, did not receive one single dollar—not a single dollar.

In terms of the budget more generally, the budget figures show a \$7.9 billion deficit and an eye-watering \$167.5 billion state net debt figure by 2025–26. And why does that matter? Because the annual interest repayments on debt are growing from \$3.1 billion to \$6.4 billion in only four years. All of that money, all of that expense on interest, could be saved and spent on something else. Victorians will now carry twice the debt burden of those in New South Wales and will have a greater debt level than the combination of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. And in terms of tax, this budget includes a \$603 million land tax hit, up 14.2 per cent; \$1.5 billion in stamp duty on land transfers, up 22.6 per cent; \$1.1 billion in payroll tax, up 17 per cent; and, staggeringly, a \$27 billion infrastructure blowout.

Though I would like to be able to talk about any investment in my community, I cannot. What I can talk about is what the government could have invested in my community and did not. I will take the opportunity to talk about some of the school needs, some of the infrastructure needs, some of the health needs and some of the childcare needs. When you look at the budget overview and look to schools, it openly boasts about investing in Labor electorates and ignoring non-Labor electorates. The overview states that of the 13 new metro school constructions, 85 per cent are in Labor electorates, 82 per cent of the 22 school upgrades are in Labor electorates and 82 per cent of the metro special school upgrades are in Labor electorates. This type of pork-barrelling is not new. In the budget last year 85 per cent of the 35 metro school upgrades went to Labor electorates and 85 per cent of the 78 metro school upgrades announced in November 2020 went to Labor electorates. On five out of six occasions budget money went into Labor metro electorates. In my community over recent budgets Brighton Beach Primary School received zero dollars, Brighton Primary School received zero dollars, Brighton Secondary College received zero dollars, Elwood Primary School received zero dollars, Elwood College received zero dollars, Gardenvale Primary School received zero dollars and Hampton Primary received zero dollars, and yet the Minister for Education denies school fund bias—zero dollars into Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton schools.

When you look at a special school like Brighton Primary School, it is an incredible school, a school that has been in my community since 1875. It has 620 students, and it has developed a master plan to develop projected long-term enrolment growth and address issues with the facilities at the school. It is visionary. What most people do not know is that two-thirds of the school's students are in a dozen demountables that were installed in the 1970s. Two-thirds of our kids were put into those demountables 50 years ago, and nothing has changed. Another fact that most people are not aware of is that the school is home to 20 children with special hearing needs, and those demountables are next to the train line. So we have 20 students with special hearing needs who are in 50-year-old demountables next to a train line. If there was ever a greater need for investment in a school, I cannot imagine what it would be.

I move to Brighton Secondary College, a fantastic school established in 1955. It is home to 1200 students. It is a big, big school for my community—not just my community but also over the

road; a lot of students come from Benteigh. One of the issues in my area is that there is no modern performing arts space, so the college there has developed a plan for a 1400-seat tiered theatre with a stage, curtains, lighting, theatre-style acoustics, audiovisual facilities, music tutorial rooms, equipment and storage facilities to support it, accompanying infrastructure, a foyer area and kitchen facilities—a wonderful, wonderful facility not just for the children of my local area but also for community groups. There is not a dollar for Brighton Secondary College and their wonderful vision.

Hampton Primary School is the hub of Hampton, and it has been teaching children since 1913—another school in my community that is over 100 years old. No-one in the Hampton Primary School community or Hampton more generally can recall the government investing any money in the school, ever. The community of Hampton and the Hampton school cannot recall the government ever investing in that school. That is extraordinary. And it is not a small primary school. The school has developed a vision for a multipurpose netball facility that can serve as a sporting hub, a school meeting place and a community facility, because there is no place for the school to meet. It is a big school with no opportunity and no place for the school to meet.

How disappointing to hear Labor members laughing at the school needs of my community. How disappointing. If I then move to Elwood College, also a longstanding—

**Ms Green:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I take offence at what the member for Brighton just said. Labor members were not laughing. There was laughter from staff outside the chamber, so I would just like the member for Brighton not to falsely accuse us of laughing, because we were not.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny):** There is no point of order.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Of course not. Elwood College is an important school in my community, a 60-year-old college with 850 students and 50 international students. There is not a dollar for Elwood College either. That school has close to \$1 million worth of maintenance needs, including the gymnasium roof. The school are in a very difficult position because they have been fighting for their vision of a redevelopment of their gymnasium into what they call the Phoenix Theatre, a new theatre which would be utilised by both the school community and the local community. Elwood College is a hub for the local community. It has a wonderful performing arts tradition. They have got a facility in their current gymnasium and theatre that requires significant works, in fact urgent works. They have not received a single dollar, so they are in a very difficult position as to whether or not to try and invest in patchwork maintenance or hold out hope that one day the Labor government will remember that Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood and Hampton exist.

I move to a number of infrastructure projects in my community, especially pedestrian crossings. Members of this house may recall the government's refusal to invest in the Grenville Street crossing in Hampton over the Sandringham train line until an elderly local resident died at the crossing and the government was shamed into investing in the crossing upgrade. There were no safety facilities at the site—none—and one of our beloved local grandmothers passed away crossing that site. But there are a number of other similar sites. The Dendy Street crossing is a crossing utilised by two local primary schools, St Joan of Arc and Brighton Beach Primary School. One of the principals, St Joan of Arc principal Tony McMahon, has said publicly:

The fact that there hasn't been a terrible accident is purely through luck ...

There has been no investment in that crossing upgrade in an estimated 100 years, and the government has done work on that site. They know the safety issues of that site. It is known to the government, and yet we have not had a dollar invested in that site. At the Dendy Village pedestrian crossing at Dendy Village, council has actually installed the associated infrastructure at the site, and VicRoads support the installation. It is a bustling local shopping strip. Again there a local was killed, tragically, crossing at the village. The Parliamentary Budget Office has estimated a cost of \$900 000 to fix it—again, not a single dollar to that site.

The Glen Huntly Road crossing in Elwood is a crossing point for several schools and a childcare centre. Recent VicRoads data showed 17 incidents at that site; eight resulted in injury to locals—again a \$900 000 cost. At the last election, when this was an issue, Labor installed a sign down the road—not even at the site but down the road. VicRoads has confirmed there exists at that site demand for the crossing as a high priority—not a dollar, again. For an Esplanade crossing near Were Street, which is a crossing point for the community to Green Point, where there are numerous local events, there is not a dollar there either.

For health, there is not a dollar. Sandringham Hospital services 70 000 people in the local area—not a dollar for them. That is a much-needed facility, Sandringham Hospital, and the government has not put a dollar in there.

And finally, in terms of child care, despite the government announcing a \$47 million investment into Wyndham City Council for childcare infrastructure, the Port Phillip council is being forced to close three childcare centres, including Elwood Children's Centre, because the infrastructure at the sites is so out of date that they cannot afford to fix them and the government has not invested a single dollar there. 3200 local people in the community have signed a petition over that site.

There are so many things in terms of school infrastructure, health and child care that are needed in my community, and these state budget papers did not commit a single new dollar to Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood or Hampton.

**Mr TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (11:29): It is a great, great pleasure to rise in this place and talk on the budget, the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2022–2023) Bill 2022. This is the fourth of these bills that I am very proud to have spoken on as the state Labor member for Bayswater and, very proudly as well, my fourth budget. I want to just begin by thanking the Treasurer for all of his hard work. Of course it has been a very difficult period, these last two years. Being a Treasurer in any period of time in government, I have no doubt, is a very tricky job, and in fact over the many conversations I am just always blown away by the work, the care and the dedication that goes into each and every single budget. But of course not just the Treasurer but his staff, the departments and people right across government have prepared what is truly a great Labor budget in very difficult circumstances.

We have all spoken of it ad nauseam here, but it is important to acknowledge that in the context of this budget of course we are still dealing in, one could argue, a post-COVID world. We are still dealing with many impacts of COVID through unprecedented strain on our healthcare system and on the workforce, with all of the global pressures that we are facing. The Treasurer has delivered this budget, a truly Labor budget, which backs in our healthcare heroes, creates good, secure, well-paying jobs and continues to deliver the roads and public transport infrastructure that we need. We know many of these are overdue, and I am very proud that this government is delivering them, because the best time to start is today and now. This budget continues to back in the Big Build projects, all of those game-changing, generational Big Build projects that are being delivered in every single corner of this state, whether it is the north, east, south, west, the regions—right across this state. This budget delivers for them.

One of the centrepieces of this budget is, as we know, our pandemic repair plan, which I will go into in a bit more detail in a moment, but that is a cornerstone of this budget. It backs in our healthcare workers and helps to take some of that strain off our healthcare system by providing a \$12 billion boost to our healthcare system, and of course we know this budget will create meaningful jobs—the record amount of jobs we have created here. We know that we are well on our way to our jobs plan. From last year's budget, just off the top of my head, we promised to create 400 000 jobs, and we are well and truly on the way to doing that before the target of 2025.

We know this budget continues to build a world-class education system. We have the best education system here in the country and the best in the world, and that is indeed something that I am extremely proud of. Of course it would not be a Labor budget if it did not continue to deliver record investment,

making sure our kids, whether it is in three-year-old kinder, four-year-old kinder, primary, secondary or our TAFE institutions, get the very best start in life and get the skills they need for the jobs they want, right across the age spectrum, and helping families through some of the very difficult times they are facing as well—using our balance sheets power saving bonus to support them through some of the initiatives like three-year-old kinder and the.

So this budget really is a fantastic Labor budget, and as I touched on before, one of the important parts of this budget is our pandemic repair plan. We know our healthcare workers have moved mountains over the last two-and-a-bit years and have done incredible work, and they have turned up each and every single day in unprecedented circumstances. We know that the pandemic, this global pandemic, COVID, has placed unprecedented strain, and I want to place on record again my great gratitude, my thanks, not just to all of the amazing healthcare workers locally but right across this state. Having spoken to many of the healthcare workers in my community, having heard from them firsthand, I know they have just done incredible work, and this budget well and truly—absolutely, and so it should—backs them in. We know this is not just a trend that has started, it is a Labor government that always supports our healthcare workers, our hospitals and our healthcare system and always will.

Before my time in this place, when the first-term Andrews Labor government came to be in 2014, we put an end to the war with our paramedics. I remember being in the police force back then and talking to some of the paramedics, and I can tell you now—I will put it nicely—they were not impressed. I was there when the government changed and, I can tell you what, they were extremely happy with that result and the resulting investment that they were well and truly owed and deserved. We ended that war with paramedics, we properly funded our hospitals and our healthcare system and we made it, from one of the worst performing, into the best performing, and I am extremely proud of that. We did that not by fighting and arguing and going to war with nurses and paramedics and our healthcare system, we did that by working with them, alongside them, supporting them, investing in them, because they look after us when we need them most. That is exactly the kind of respect and investment that they need and deserve.

We know that our pandemic repair plan will mean more staff—7000 healthcare workers, with 5000 of those nurses. We will train them up, we will hire them, we will get it done and make sure that Victorians, no matter where they live, can get the best care they deserve. That includes right in the heart of my community at the Angliss Hospital—an amazing community hospital, with more on that in a tick—and making sure we are providing them first-class care.

It is not just about better hospitals. It is not just about better staff. We are investing a record amount into surgical capacity. We know that elective surgery certainly had a very difficult stretch during the pandemic as priorities shifted and changed, but we are now putting record funding in to catch up with a lot of that work, with an extra 40 000 elective surgeries over the next year boosting that elective surgery capacity to 125 per cent of prepandemic levels, which is unprecedented, needed and will make sure that we can catch up and get people the care that they need—in particular over the next year and into the future as well.

We are supporting our healthcare workers, as I touched on, with extra nurses and healthcare workers more broadly, but we will recruit 90 more paramedics with \$124 million. We will invest \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase 000 call taking and dispatch capacity for 000 services. Can I just again, in relation to our 000 and ESTA staff, place on record my great thanks. It is a very difficult job. I have been in that call-taking room myself in my former life, and the dispatch workers and the 000 call takers are amazing people. I remember some of the jobs that would come through in my time and even just being there—I mean, the pressure that is placed on them. It is amazing work they do—cool, calm and collected. This budget makes sure that we can respond to some of the strain placed on that system, respond to some of that work and continue to support them and make sure that Victorians get the care they deserve. That is critically important.



We know that this government is investing record amounts into our hospitals. In this budget alone there is \$2.9 billion in health infrastructure. And look, it is not my part of the world but this government is making unprecedented investment right across the state. I will get to my part of the world, but I know many members of this place have talked up the \$900 million for the new tertiary hospital in Melbourne's west. Melton hospital is a big topic of conversation. I know the member for Melton, who I am not sure is able to be here today. Is he?

**A member** interjected.

**Mr TAYLOR:** He is doing it a bit tough at the moment, but I know he is a very strong advocate for his community and he is absolutely up and about. That is an amazing investment. I know it will make a huge difference to his community out there from conversations with him. Of course there is the Barwon women's and children's hospital, and I have discussed the elective surgery capacity. It is all happening, particularly when it comes to health care.

We know mental health particularly again during COVID is something that has been very topical, and rightly so. It has certainly had an impact on people's lives, and well and truly before COVID we know that it was something that needed attention. That is why we brought in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and I was incredibly proud of not just this budget but last budget when we announced even greater funding than the Australian government's for the entirety of this country right here. In our budget there was \$3.8 billion last year to rebuild the mental health system from the ground up. It was a truly, truly proud moment not just for our side of politics but I think for everyone to really reset and to rebuild that health system. But to be fair it is only a Labor government that committed to that royal commission. It is only a Labor government that committed to all of the recommendations, and it is only a Labor government that committed to—

**A member** interjected.

**Mr TAYLOR:** It took you a while. It is only a Labor government that is funding each and every single one of them. We are not questioning the experts. We are not questioning the recommendations that came out. We are funding and acquitting each and every single one, and this budget continues to do that.

And of course we are creating jobs—good, secure jobs. As I said at the start of my contribution, we are creating record amounts of jobs. We know since we came to government in 2014 we have generated 560 000 new jobs alongside our community and alongside businesses, with more than 80 000 jobs in regional Victoria. Just on regional Victoria as well, we have record low unemployment levels there, and that is something to be incredibly proud of.

We have introduced Australia's first sick pay guarantee. That is an absolutely groundbreaking piece of work, and I have been out talking to hospo workers and talking to all the eligible industries who are able to take part in that scheme. That is going to change the game for them, because if you are sick, you should not miss out. Insecure work is something we need to address, and that is exactly what the sick pay guarantee is doing. So I am incredibly proud the budget does that.

Of course in the last few minutes I probably should get onto the electorate of Bayswater. It is a very great budget, a budget to be very proud of, but I tell you what: one of the proudest moments was out with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. We were out at Wantirna College, and we were announcing \$11.2 million. We were out there with Kevin Murphy and about 1500 kids and staff, and the roof nearly lifted off when we announced the funding. I am not even kidding; I was a little concerned—we almost had to get the engineers to come out and do a structural report at the end of it because the place was on fire. It was amazing. I along with the Deputy Premier and education minister announced that funding, which will deliver a state-of-the-art performing arts, sports and learning space, and the teachers are happy too because they are getting new admin facilities. It is only a Labor government that makes those types of investments, that backs in schools like Wantirna College, and it will make a huge difference there. The building that we will be absolutely rebuilding is a thing of

the past. It has probably gone past its use-by date now, and this is going to deliver the facilities that that school deserves to dream big and be whatever they want to be. I tell you: principal Kevin Murphy down there was bloody stoked. He was very excited, as was I.

Another great thing is that we are fully funding in this year's budget in black and white—thanks to the assistance of the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who is here—the McMahons Road intersection upgrade. This has been long talked about, and as I have said in this place it was always the promise that just kept on promising but never gave. Always a promise—others had opportunities when they were in government but did nothing, but it is this government that has delivered funding to upgrade the intersection of McMahons Road and Burwood Highway in Ferntree Gully. I tell you what, with over 600 signatures on my petition when I was out there talking to locals, this one was a massive issue, well and truly. I heard from the community, 'Jacko, get it done', loud and clear. That is exactly what this government will be doing. So I am very, very proud of that. That is going to help increase capacity, improve travel times and get locals home safer and sooner. Planning work has started and of course some of those more advanced planning works start later this year. It is a truly exciting project and one that is going to make our roads safer.

Every special school under this government since we came in has now been upgraded or will be upgraded. For Eastern Ranges School there is \$5.7 million. It is so exciting for that school and for the principal, Trevor Hodsdon, out there. It is a great school. Every child, regardless of ability, should get the exact same opportunities, and I am so proud that our government is backing in special schools and backing in Eastern Ranges School.

Of course we know the budget as well continues to deliver the North East Link, the state's biggest road project in history. It will cut travel times on the Eastern Freeway and get you across sooner. Work continues on that. We are removing more level crossings. We got rid of the two level crossings in Bayswater, at Scoresby Road and Mountain Highway, and rebuilt the Bayswater station.

This budget continues to deliver for Boronia. We are continuing to build a better Boronia, revitalising it and planning to build a better Boronia station. We have upgraded Heathmont station. We are upgrading roads right across Boronia. We continue to deliver upgrades for the Alchester Village roundabout, where we will be delivering lights and making that safer.

This budget delivers for the upgrades at Bayswater Secondary College. We are continuing to fund that. Whether it is the upgrades at Templeton Primary School, whether it is free TAFE, whether it is three-year-old kinder—the list goes on. I could be here all day, and I will tell you that another one that I got out and announced the other day was for Knox athletics—\$250 to back in athletics locally—with a *Chariots of Fire* video to make it all happen as well.

I love my community. I love delivering for them with this government, and they deserve every single cent of it. As long as I am here they will always have a strong supporter in me for my community of Bayswater, because they are legends and they deserve it all.

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (11:44): It is my honour to speak on the Appropriation (2020–2023) Bill 2022, and can I begin by acknowledging my transport portfolios of public transport and roads and road safety. I have just come from the launch of Victoria's new rolling stock strategy, and what I said upstairs was: how good is it to have Anthony Albanese, someone who is a former transport minister, in the Lodge? Equally you can think of the President of the United States as well, being Amtrak Joe. But in all fairness to those on the other side that are jeering a bit too early, I acknowledge Boris Johnson because Boris Johnson actually does have an interest in buses: he makes them, and he is on their forward plan. I do not expect a lot of research from that side of the chamber, so you probably did not know that. I will just give you that little tidbit. Go back and do your buses—just like the member for Yan Yean, who loves her buses too.

What is really important, though, is we have seen the Elizabeth line just get opened up in the United Kingdom—the fanfare, the 10 extra stations. Fast-forward to 2025 here in Victoria, when it will be a

Labor government that opens up the Metro Tunnel and all those new stations and the changes that it has made for this community. Think about where we would be now—it would probably be open—if those opposite had actually done something for that four-year public holiday that they had. It is why it is so important when you think about what we are doing in transport. It is actually very exciting to be thinking that we are actually now at that stage where we are switching on the Big Build. We are doing the infrastructure and then switching it on. I had the very great pleasure to be with the Premier and the Minister for Transport Infrastructure only last week underneath our great state with our construction workers that are doing the Metro Tunnel to announce all the jobs that will come with it. Whether it is the train drivers, whether it is the signalling or whether it is the customer service, it is such an exciting project that is happening literally underneath us.

I am very proud too because I get to see what this means for more services. You have got the transport infrastructure that then unlocks all those services. A classic example is the \$500 million Ballarat line, and you think about what that means for a regional town like Ballarat with the Commonwealth Games coming. Under our government we have delivered a train service every 20 minutes—something we never thought could be possible. But again, a Labor government makes the investment, gets on, builds things and then unlocks and squeezes the lemon to give all the Victorians the potential that they need. Also too you think about Bairnsdale. It is a Labor government building the Bairnsdale stabling yard on the Gippsland line. It will be an excellent project, because if those opposite did their homework they would know that that line is currently serviced by the classic fleet, but under our government we will be retiring that and allowing the replacement of that classic fleet with new VLocity trains, because that is what we do—we get on and we build things.

I talk about those opposite when they were last in government, and when we talk about rolling stock, to think that the ACT government led them on tram orders, when we are the biggest tram city in the world and have more trams and more kilometres than anywhere else, is just incredible. But that is what we faced when we came to office—literally the peaks and troughs—a rolling stock industry that was not working, that was not having the investment that was needed. Now when we talk about rolling stock, in addition to the jobs we talk about accessibility, and it was great to have the accessibility advocate upstairs with me, Tricia Malowney.

But also we talk about sustainability and transport's role in tackling transport emissions, whether it is zero-emission buses, whether it is making our tram fleet powered by the sun or switching our train fleet to also be powered by renewables. It is about, as the Premier often says, 'Built by Victorians, for Victorians'. When you look over the border and you see some of those issues that New South Wales are having, whether it is with their trains, trams or even their vessels, that is the price you pay when you outsource. Local procurement is something this government is very proud about doing. Getting to that 65 per cent in most cases is very, very difficult to achieve and to get to, but that is something we do. And we work very hard with our union partners, whether it is the AWU, the AMWU, the Transport Workers Union, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, all of our union partners—the Electrical Trades Union—that very much have a great role in the transport portfolio.

One passion I do have is buses, because I know, as I said yesterday, we are the first government since 2006 to actually bring in a bus plan to really unlock all of that potential, particularly coming out of COVID, when we know buses are the most resilient form of public transport because people are moving around locally, they are working locally and they are wanting to see their communities. The future of buses is very bright. We are very fortunate that we have buses literally being made in Dandenong at that great company Volgren, a coming together of Volvo and the Grenda family. One of the last times I was down at Volgren I actually saw the blue buses being made for New South Wales—literally buses being made in Victoria for New South Wales—because we have become the leader in the nation when it comes to rolling stock.

I am obviously very proud as someone who grew up with the steel wheels, not the train wheels but the steel wheels of the tram fleet, of the 59 out to Airport West that under our government we will be retiring a hundred high-floor trams and bringing in a hundred low-floor trams, with a great facility to

be built at Maidstone. I know that members all around the west, particularly the member for Footscray, are very passionate about the west because it has great linkages there. It has great linkages with Victoria University. The north-west is an area where we do have to bring in new trams, and these trams will be so good that they will be able to go anywhere on the network, with their regenerative braking and with their accessibility features. They are smaller in size. They are going to be a really fantastic modern fleet for our tram network. It was the Andrews government that placed the first tram order in decades, and it will stand the test of time.

Something we should be very proud of is that our forebears actually kept the tram network in Victoria. Most other jurisdictions around the world, with the advent of the vehicle, ripped up their tram networks. We have got the Commonwealth Games coming, and I am already buzzing with ideas about what that will mean for transport and accessibility. But one of the reasons we kept our tram network was the 1956 Olympics. It was very much seen back then, when the 1956 Olympics were being held in Melbourne, that trams and the tramcar could certainly help people get around. That is why, when you also envisage the \$4 billion regional rail link that we are doing with the commonwealth, the new rolling stock, the unlocking of the potential to our regions and what that will mean for the Commonwealth Games, with the transport investments we are making now and the dividends that will pay in 2026, it is a very, very exciting future.

I do want to touch just briefly, if I can, on the road safety portfolio. This is an area that has had bipartisan support for literally 50 years in this state, yet those opposite still do not have a shadow minister for road safety. Victoria is a world leader in seatbelts, Victoria is the world leader in mobile detection, alcohol interlocks and fatigue, and with the home base of the Monash University Accident Research Centre literally being here in Victoria I am very surprised that those opposite have still not filled that portfolio. We just last week met with families—Victorians, Australians—for National Road Safety Week. It was this Labor government that stood with the victims of road trauma, and we have got to be vigilant. We need to get to zero deaths. Every death on the roads is preventable. I will say this: with the new transport minister coming into Canberra in place of Barnaby Joyce, we will get somewhere on road safety at a commonwealth, state and local government level. All credit to Michael McCormack, because he actually had a strong interest in this and he was actually prepared to work with the states on road safety. He is a very nice man, but he was replaced by Barnaby Joyce, and I have got to say he did not have that same interest in road safety. He was not prepared to put what we wanted into road safety, whereas Michael McCormack was prepared. He was also prepared to put his money where his mouth was and really make sure that when we talk about roads, we talk about road safety equally. I do wish the National Party all the very best when they sort out their issues in the very near future.

I want to also say how proud I was of what this budget has delivered for the Niddrie community. I have always been a very proud lifelong local and have supported my local schools to make the Education State literally so, so relevant in the Niddrie community. We went from having literally no money going to the Niddrie estate to tens of millions of dollars going into our local schools. Whether it was Joan Kirner's old primary school, Aberfeldie Primary, whether it was Essendon Keilor College, whether it was Niddrie Primary, Avondale Primary or Kilmore Primary School, we have literally built the Education State in Niddrie. There could be no more important policy area than education, because our young kids are our future, and giving them every opportunity to equality and every opportunity to embed lifelong learning is so vitally important. Equally important is the rollout of three-year-old kinder. We know how important the first 1000 days are in a child's life. So I am very proud as the local member for Niddrie to say that the Education State matters in the Niddrie electorate. This budget, like every other budget we have delivered under the exceptional leadership of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, is another budget that supports Niddrie schools.

I must also highlight that I am very excited that I will be opening up the brand new Niddrie Autistic School. It is a wonderful project; it is a wonderful design right there on Garnet Street, Niddrie. A little bit of history of the Niddrie Autistic School: it was the Western Autistic School, and before that it was

Doutta Galla Primary. And who wants to have a guess what happened to Doutta Galla Primary during the Kennett years?

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr CARROLL:** Jeff Kennett sold the oval. It is hard to fathom. It is now the autistic school, and we have put investments into it. He sold the oval. So it is this little, little school—

**A member:** You weren't even old enough to vote then, member for Niddrie.

**Mr CARROLL:** I was old enough to vote then. Trust me, he was not getting my vote. I was in VCE. And then what we have been able to do to transform that is astronomical. This is the history we must always remind people out in the north-west about. If it was not selling off the school land, he wanted to put a toxic waste dump right in the heart of Niddrie at the old Valley Lake estate. The member for St Albans knows that very well. So that is what we are faced with, and this is what we will continue to do and continue to support.

I want to also say I welcome Gowanbrae into the Niddrie electorate. I am going to make a pledge here that I am going to ride my bike around the new parts of the Niddrie electorate. It is an idea. I look forward to riding my bike around Gowanbrae, and I look forward to riding my bike around Keilor and other parts. But what will also be good is I will have to take my dog to Gowanbrae, because we are giving a dog park to that wonderful suburb of Gowanbrae—\$250 000 was committed in the budget. So I am very excited about that too.

I want to also acknowledge the nearly half a million dollars in the budget for Rosehill Secondary. They are doing a fantastic job out there with their upgrades. I was there recently. It is like walking onto a scene of *MasterChef* when you see their home economics rooms. They are just literally first class.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the Airport West Tennis Club. It has been around for 50 years, and my dad actually did the wiring there. The wiring and the lights are beginning to fade and need an upgrade, but that is what this government will do—\$650 000 for the Airport West Tennis Club. We can get the bulldozers out now. We can literally give them the pavilion they deserve. Often tennis is one of those areas of sport in the local community that does not get the credit it deserves. The Airport West Tennis Club has been founded by women and supported by women. Ninety-nine per cent of the board and the life members are all women. It is a wonderful local club in the local community, and it means we are going to deliver a wonderful precinct there in Airport West, right next door to the footy club and the cricket club that I am the number one ticketholder of and played at many years ago.

In conclusion, can I congratulate the Victorian Treasurer on this budget. To think of the positivity that this budget delivers—to think of putting people front and centre, whether it is through health care, whether it is through transport, whether it is through education or whether it is through mental health, and then to think what we can achieve now with the Labor government in Canberra—is so very exciting for the future.

**Mr FREGON** (Mount Waverley) (11:59): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

**Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.**

## STATE TAXATION AND TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Mr PEARSON:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) (11:59): I rise to begin our contribution on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I would just like to thank the minister's office for their cooperation with this, for the Treasurer and me, and Emily Biggin from the State Revenue Office (SRO), Angus Mackellar from Department of Treasury and Finance and the minister's adviser, Henry Williams, who has been very forthcoming with information and responding to queries that we have had.

Victoria, as we know, is the highest taxed state in Australia, and we know that Labor love their taxes. They love them so much that in their time already they have introduced 41 new or increased taxes. We know that in 2014 the Premier, when he was given an opportunity to speak on TV, said that there would be no new taxes. What a falsehood, what an untruth, that has proved to be, when they have now gone on and popped in 41 new or increased taxes.

The opposition have a very different view on taxing to Labor. Labor tax at all costs and slug the taxpayer at every opportunity. Well, we know we need tax. We are about lower tax, reducing tax and relieving people of the burden of tax. But the way you do that when you are managing your economy is you need to look at innovative and creative ways to increase the revenues, whether that is through efficiencies of process, helping to establish and encourage new businesses or working with the private sector to make sure that they can thrive and that they can do their bit for the economy. They are a great source to generate revenue and growth for the state, and that is something we are very keen to promote and to work with. We do not want to penalise people for having a crack, for investing or even for becoming a self-funded retiree. They think they are doing the right thing, but they are constantly hit by the government, who taxes at every front.

As happens every six months or so, there is an omnibus tax bill before the Parliament, and this is what we have today. This tax bill makes a number of updates and, typically, has lots of administrative changes. Usually there are a couple of these a year. Typically the state taxation and treasury legislation bills have gremlins—they have gremlins where they are slugging people for different reasons. Now, forgive me for being a cynic. This one does not have the gremlins that they normally do, but we are in an election year. We are only a few months out from an election, so I think that the government has tried to ease up on the taxes, knowing that in the last two terms they have popped in 41 new or increased taxes.

There are even a couple of small benefits to consumers in this bill, and we are certainly not going to be opposing those in this place. The changes that will be brought about by this bill are quite diverse, and I will be talking about each of those in turn. Being the autumn budget, it has budget initiatives. There are two budget initiatives related to this bill. That is the exemption for motor vehicle taxis with disability access, and that is a revenue cost of about \$700 000 per year over the four years. And there is also another tax that is mentioned in the budget, not in this bill, and that is the increase in the casino pokies tax to align with pubs and clubs. That is going to be part of the government's ongoing response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, and that will be in a separate bill.

The bill before us amends the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987, the Duties Act 2000, the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, the Land Tax Act 2005, the Payroll Tax Act 2007, the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and the Windfall Gains Tax and State Taxation and Other Acts Further Amendment Act 2021. There are always consequential amendments to other acts when you have so many different areas being covered off. Interestingly, for a number of these acts the changes will come in at royal assent and others will come into operation on 1 July, which is the new financial year, and those are to the borrowing and investment powers, duties, Essential Services Commission and land tax acts. By and large, these are tax reductions that we have got here—not huge tax reductions,

only small ones. This is really in stark contrast to Labor's early years. In addition, we also have clean-ups that are cleaning up the problems that Labor has created with the introduction of new taxes.

First of all, I am going to the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act to deal with the amendments there. When you read the legislation and have a good look at it, it looks a lot more complicated than it actually is. In a nutshell, this amendment brings councils or the local government areas under the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act. They are not currently included. In addition, there are a number of administrative changes that are being made for simplicity. It is quicker, simpler and hopefully it should have less legal costs, because at the moment under this act there are a lot of one-off approvals, and being able to do those as a group should have those associated savings. If you are needing to seek legal advice and you only need to seek it once instead of five times, that will certainly be a saving.

Within this bill TCV, Treasury Corporation of Victoria, will be able to make a loan to councils under the government's local council borrowing program. That money will come from the Consolidated Fund along with any liability for TCV under this loan. Councils can borrow money at the moment from anywhere, and they do. We know that councils are not always flush with cash and there are times that they need to raise capital, get funding, to do particular infrastructure programs. We know with the rate caps, for some councils that has made it very difficult. What this is going to allow is councils to actually get the best available rates. Rather than go out into the commercial market they can get the cheaper rates of TCV.

The amendments will make it quicker and easier to amend the regulations should new entities be added. At the moment there are several methods where specific persons or entities are included, and they will be recorded and registered in the one place. This will make it certainly a lot easier administratively for TCV and the department when they are chasing up information, rather than having to work out in which place that might be, so this will in fact streamline that and make it simpler. The relevant government departments will notify Treasury as to what they would like prescribed in the regulations, and this will make them easier to amend.

There are a couple of risks here. With councils borrowing money—and they can borrow it on the open market or borrow it through the government now, through Treasury Corp—there is a risk that the government will lend money to councils who cannot afford it. If councils default or if they cannot pay it back in that particular time period, they will have to go, probably—and we will get this clarified in the upper house—into an arrangement where they change and refinance their borrowing terms. But you do not want councils, with this, being able to borrow more than they can actually pay back. At the moment, I believe, in the 2021–22 year, just shy of \$1 billion has been borrowed by councils, \$938.4 million, and this is not expected to change. We have asked about a breakdown by councils, but it is considered commercial in confidence, and that information is not published. As I said, we will be clarifying in the other place exactly what happens if a council defaults—will they be charged interest or is the taxpayer going to be picking up that tab?

But with regard to TCV—a lot of people will know that the Treasurer is responsible for the administration of the Treasury Corporation of Victoria Act 1992—it is subject to the general direction control and specific approvals, requests and determinations by the Treasurer. Each year TCV must pay from its surpluses a dividend to the consolidated fund. The dividend is such an amount that the Treasurer determines, and the chair of the board here would be speaking with the Treasurer, as the chair of the board reports directly to the Treasurer. If we have a look over the recent five-year period from 2015–16, on average these bills have crept up from around \$30 million to \$49 million–\$50 million, so we can see that there are significant dividends being paid to the government each year from TCV.

Now, when you compare budget paper 5 from last financial year and the one that has just been mentioned, you can see that last year over the forward estimates it was expected that in dividends there would be \$217 million paid to the government from Treasury Corporation of Victoria. And we can have a look now: that has been bumped up this year. They have revised that; they have revised it up by another \$26 million. And instead of the average being around \$50 million expected each year, it is

hovering between \$60 million and \$70 million. So you can see where the government is really strapped for cash, with its enormous overruns. I think we are up to \$27 billion of overruns since the member for Mulgrave has been Premier in this Labor government, so that is really quite extraordinary.

We have seen also in the financial statements that the TAC is being raided to the tune of \$3 billion, which is extraordinary, and that may in fact limit the good work that they can do. They provide money every year to the police to do a lot of road safety initiatives—drug testing, working with speed detection cameras and the like—and if such a large amount of money is being pulled from the TAC, being raided from the TAC, I think it really jeopardises those programs that they have. Equally it is not just the treasury corporation that is paying dividends. In fact now these are not even from TAC and the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority—they are not called dividends anymore; it is going into grant revenue under a tricky bit of accounting. But they are also pulling out \$100 million there, and this is an organisation that is barely solvent. If it were not for some tricky financial revaluation of assets, you would see that they are in negative equity; in fact you can see that quite clearly on their balance sheet.

Moving on to the next area that is being amended, it is the Duties Act 2000. Again, we pay duties. Current motor vehicle duties are paid when you apply to register or transfer the registration of a motor vehicle. There are some exemptions and some concessions. The amount that is expected in the budget is \$1.08 billion in the vehicle registration and transfer duty; that is up from \$0.98 billion last year. So we can just see all of these taxes creeping up, creeping up. As I said, with these duties, with the registration or transferring of registration of a motor vehicle, there are exemptions, and obviously to get an exemption you need to lodge an application and provide supporting documentation. This might be the death of an owner or a breakdown of a marriage or domestic relationship. Licensed motor car trader guys are exempt, as are primary production and firefighting, as you would expect. But more specifically related to this bill, we have the transport of disabled, handicapped, incapacitated or injured persons and/or wheelchairs; there is already an exemption for that, and this is when private motor vehicles have been modified or specifically converted to accommodate wheelchair access—they are eligible for an exemption. So this is extended now. The amendments here extend this to include an exemption from motor vehicle duty in relation to certain wheelchair-accessible motor vehicles that provide unbooked services in a commercial passenger vehicle. Now, unbooked services means if you are at a taxi rank or if you hail a cab in the street. Obviously you need to apply. This applies for vehicles registered on or after 1 July 2022 and ones that are less than two years old. This is intended to and should actually empower wheelchair users to access transport methods that work for them. So as I said, if that is hailing a taxi or picking up one at a taxi rank, it is easier for them to have ones with wheelchair accessibility because of that exemption that is being made here.

Moving on to the Essential Services Commission Act 2001, this bill is going to amend the ESC in relation to the enforcement fund and the operating fund. So we know that the Essential Services Commission has this enforcement fund which is to help fund litigation and other enforcement actions. Now, this here is to clarify funding arrangements under the enforcement fund. This is not terribly old, and it was established in response to the government's energy fairness plan and to help fund that litigation and other enforcement action that the commission undertakes, such as against energy retailers. I think at the back end of last year there was a bill here about ramping up the compliance and enforcement powers of the ESC, and I would have thought that this would have been picked up at that time. Whether this is an oversight, an omission or just sloppy work I am not 100 per cent sure.

But in reviewing the latest ESC annual report I did notice that penalty notices of more than \$2.5 million had been paid by four energy retailers, and these include notices for billing errors. We had external sales agents sign people up without their consent, and there was some discrimination against people with rooftop solar. There have been 240 energy industry penalty notices relating to alleged contraventions by energy retailers and a further 30 penalty notices in relation to solar discrimination. Apparently the legislation is not robust enough and has not had that required flexibility, and it will now cover enforcement action under the Victorian Renewable Energy Act 2006 and the Victorian



Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007. I would have thought, as I said, that this should have been picked up previously, but it has not been.

There are changes now to the Land Tax Act, Acting Speaker Dimopoulos, and I can see that you are intensely interested in this, given that your phone is occupying a large amount of your time in the chair there. We have had an enormous slug to taxpayers with land tax, and if we have a look in the budget, it is expected that there is going to be \$4.84 billion paid in land tax. That is up from the \$4.29 billion that was in last year's, and there have been some horrific examples of the government's grab for land tax. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of people who are self-funded retirees have investment properties, whether that be a shop or whether it be a residential dwelling. You pay land tax if you do have investment properties, residential rental properties or commercial properties. That is shops, offices, factories, holiday homes and vacant land. And there has been a bit of revaluation going on here. One of the tricky moves that the government pulled was to remove the power for local government to undertake land valuations and centralise this process so the valuer-general does this now every 12 months instead of two years.

I have got a couple of horrific examples. This one is from the Surf Coast shire. For 30 years, from 1983 to 2014, a couple had cattle graze on their property. For over 30 years they had grazed cattle on their property. What happened was that there was drought, there was less water and there was less feed available, and this couple were older and stopped running cattle. Then, a surprise to them, they received a land tax bill of \$868 162.50. That is getting up to \$1 million, backdated to 2015. We have got a small property that for 30 years had cattle grazing on it and the last six or so had not. That was rezoned, and they were hit with almost a million dollars in land tax. I find that absolutely extraordinary. Even when they were objecting to this, the State Revenue Office insisted that while this process was underway they must pay the bill or the SRO would include an 8 per cent per annum interest bill. That is extraordinary. These are self-funded retirees, and to be hit with something like that is just beyond belief.

I have had other examples. Somebody I know whose address was changed not by them—it was changed twice just because of the naming of the road—was hit with a land tax bill despite the fact that they only owned one property, their primary place of residence. We also heard in this place about a residential investment property in East St Kilda; Sam had the property's land tax increased by a couple of years worth in one year alone—\$4000 to \$6300; that is over a 50 per cent increase. So these mum-and-dad property owners who are the backbone of Victoria's rental market, whether that is housing or commercial, are being sluggish. It is not like these people are wealthy. And if you do your homework, you will find out that most people have one or two investment properties; they do not have 10 or 20. These are the mums and dads, the self-funded retirees. You would look at a number of people who did not buy shares but invested in property, and when they were older they were hoping to use that income to offset some of their pension or to add to some of their pension or to be entirely self-funded retirees. So when they start to get their bills pop up by 50 per cent, it is a real kick in the guts for those people who have really tried to do the right thing.

What we have had also is something that has been quite unfair here. And what the government does do here—and this is actually not too bad, because there is an ability to have a refund on land tax that is paid—is propose to replace the current refund model for recently constructed or renovated principal places of residence with an up-front exemption from land tax. So this includes a principal place of residence exemption where a person is absent from land because of construction or renovation of a residence. This exemption is available for a maximum of four years. This was a bit out of whack from other systems and processes in place. Currently you pay up-front, and when it is complete—the renovation or the construction, however long that might be—you have got to pay the land tax up-front. You have got your construction costs or your renovation costs—you have got all these costs up-front—and then you can claim a refund. So now this is being replaced, and we have a much fairer method where it happens up-front. In the exemptions from the land tax, there is also an exemption for land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling is being constructed. Currently SRSs,

the specialist residential services, have these exemptions, and what we are putting here is a two-year tax during construction. This is going to be pairing these together; it will be matched.

Moving on to payroll tax exemptions, there is an exemption here for employment agents. This is quite an interesting case, and it is based on the outcome of an interstate court case, one in Queensland. Victoria's system actually reflects the Queensland system quite closely, so Victoria is moving, gosh, even onto the front foot to have to do this. New South Wales are not in the same boat as us. So this confirms that an exemption applies to certain wages paid under an employment agency contract and other related arrangements where the agent on-hires their common-law employees to a client who is exempt from payroll tax—that might be a charity or a public hospital. The definition of a charity is a common-law definition which applies across a number of taxing acts, and this is also outlined on the website. There was a case in Queensland before the Queensland Court of Appeal, *Compass Group Education Hospitality Services Pty Ltd & Anor v. Commissioner of State Revenue* of 2021. So this will now align Victoria with that Queensland-New South Wales policy. What it means basically: if I run a hospital which is exempt from payroll tax but I need to rely on a bank of nurses from an agency, then I do not have to pay payroll tax. The agency who is providing me with that bank of nurses, who are coming to work for me, then does not have to pay payroll tax in that instance. I would expect from this that schools that also operate on a not-for-profit basis and which satisfy a lot of particular conditions would be under the same arrangement. The Governor in Council is enabled to prescribe by regulation specific circumstances and persons eligible for the exemption so it continues to operate as intended.

The Taxation Administration Act deals with a couple of areas, and it concerns deemed assessments of dutiable transfers processed using the online duty payment system. We know that we have all moved to the online payment system, the vast majority, and the matter of a payment being deemed was not so simple because at the point of validation it was not defined and there were several points where the commissioner could validate the information. Now it is taken to have been made and served if a person uses the online duty payment system, so that ascertains that an estimate provided also is not the actual assessment.

There is also a number of information-sharing disclosures relating to compliance here. It amends the act to allow the SRO to disclose tax-related info to the Australian Financial Security Authority and the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, and it is very clear about which agencies are authorised recipients of this relevant information. We know in times of investigations and law enforcement activities that this is important, and this includes commonwealth enforcement bodies as well. There is one area of concern here, and that is the lodgement of objections outside five years. The change that is being put forward here was suggested by the SRO or requested by the SRO commissioner wanting more finality in tax matters and in calculating final revenue. If an objection has not been lodged in five years, to date there was a discretion of the commissioner to accept that. And in very exceptional circumstances ex gratia relief was open to the minister—that is still open to the minister. Now, there may be very legitimate reasons why an objection has not been lodged in time. This is related to section 34, and we might be questioning this further in the other place. This is consistent on one hand with limitations in other areas—the retrospectivity of assessments, withdrawal of assessment, issuing reassessments—but there may be legitimate cases, complex wills or prolonged illness, where taxpayers may otherwise be able to convince the commissioner that they really do need to accept theirs late. In the last financial year only seven out-of-time objections were received. There were 13 in the year before, 11, 15. So there have not been an enormous number, but certainly there have been enough that you would wonder about this.

Finally, the windfall gains tax changes: well, this is fixing a stuff-up because the government absolutely went full at it to implement the windfall gains tax where property values were boosted via a rezoning. This was raised at the time: 'Where do the universities fit in here?'. The government in their wisdom had gone hell for leather to get this moving, and they had not thought it through. They had not thought this bit through, and they should have. When we asked the question 'What does it mean?', the Treasurer did not have any answers. The universities did not have any answers. So we now see that this has to be

fixed up. The windfall tax was really to try and hit developers and speculators, but actually we know that that is going back to the home buyer, because they are going to slug an extra \$20 000 on those bills—on the supply of land to new home owners.

What is being put forward here is an exemption from the windfall gains tax on lands that are owned by a university in certain circumstances. Now, there is a discrete exemption where it is satisfied that the revenue derived from the rezoned land will be spent in fulfilling a charitable purpose. For a university that may be a campus relocation or that could be for research or day-to-day running. Now, we had quite a bit of discussion in the bill briefing about this because universities may go into joint ventures with private operators. How does that work in those instances? This is one area that I was very pleased that the Treasurer's staff came back to us on to clarify a number of areas in this regard, because it is certainly not unfeasible that they could enter into joint ventures. But as long as the intent is that they are really fulfilling their core business, what they are known for, which could be research, it could be with a private provider or ongoing education—if it is linked, it can now be exempt.

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) (12:30): It is indeed a pleasure to rise to speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr STAIKOS:** Are you okay, Cindy? You do not look okay.

**Ms McLeish:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member on his feet is using unparliamentary language, referring to members in a way that they should not be spoken to. I would have thought he would know actually not to respond to interjections and to use the correct title.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Taylor):** What is your point of order?

**Ms McLeish:** I ask you to counsel him and bring him back to using proper language in this chamber.

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

**Mr STAIKOS:** Dear, oh dear, oh dear. Well, I would re-read the talking points, member for Eildon, because they have got this list of supposed new taxes and tax increases by this government. She said there are 41, the Leader of the Opposition says there are 42. The reality is it is a list that is just full of inaccuracies, and perhaps I will demonstrate that a little bit later in this contribution. This is a bill that continues this government's strong record of promoting a fair and balanced taxation system. It contains number 55, number 56 and number 57 in the long list of tax- and fee-relief measures delivered by this government—I will repeat: 57 measures of tax- and fee-relief delivered by this government. We are a fiscally responsible government, as this bill shows. We raise taxes from those most able to pay to fund the services and programs the community needs and to invest for the future while also reducing taxes and red tape wherever appropriate.

I am proud to say that as a government we have introduced many more initiatives cutting taxes or providing fee relief than we have introduced revenue-raising initiatives, including the exemptions provided for in this bill. The bill we are debating, for instance, exempts wheelchair-accessible commercial passenger vehicles that provide unbooked services from motor vehicle duty exemptions. This is to support more wheelchair-accessible taxis for Victorians. It also expands an existing land tax exemption for land under construction to include land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling is being constructed. Because this government is committed to delivering accessible transport services and accessible accommodation for Victorians, Labor ensures the tax system supports Victorians living with a disability. The bill exempts universities from the new windfall gains tax, where the revenue they derive from the rezoned land is used to further the university's charitable purposes, and I will return to this measure in a moment and perhaps refute a few of the points that the member for Eildon made in the final minutes of her speech. It ensures Crown Casino does not have an unfair advantage over club venues, which are often smaller not-for-profit, community-based venues, by equalising the tax rates applicable to poker machines and other electronic gaming

machines. This removes Crown's preferential tax treatment and forms part of the government's response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence's findings. The bill also makes a number of more technical amendments to ensure Victorian statute law keeps pace with case law, is administratively efficient and continues to work for all Victorians.

To the windfall gains tax, I am actually very, very proud of this measure, I have got to say. I was very much involved in the implementation of the windfall gains tax as the Treasurer's parliamentary secretary. It is based on the fact that rezoning decisions are decisions of government, and when local and state governments make a decision to rezone land, it is because there is a community need or benefit. Therefore it stands to reason that a portion of that windfall gain from that decision to rezone land is shared with the community. I think that that is a reasonable position for a government to take. The opposition is on the side of the property development industry. They pretend it is all because they are worried about first home buyers. In fact they are worried about their developer mates and use young first home buyers as cannon fodder. They did oppose the windfall gains tax, and I did hear the member for Eildon say that the measures in this bill around the windfall gains tax and the exemptions for universities amount to a stuff-up. Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong.

In fact I met with the university sector throughout the process. We always said to the university sector that we would come back after further consultation with them to address their concerns, and that is what we are doing. That is absolutely what we are doing with this bill. In this instance, we are providing an exemption that will require universities to satisfy the commissioner of state revenue of a link between the revenue arising from the rezoning, including sale, rental or licensing proceeds, and the university's charitable purposes. So a university cannot simply add the money to consolidated revenue for a use to be determined in the future, and it cannot put the money to a commercial purpose. There must be a direct link to charitable works for the community. This is entirely consistent with the aim of the windfall gains tax. It is to promote wider community benefits, in this case access to education, over purely private profits.

Land is one of the most important resources available to the community. Rezoning is a development control instrument we exercise on behalf of the community as a government, and this government believes land rezonings and developments should benefit the wider community, not a select wealthy few, whereas those on the other side of the house wanted to build a Gold Coast on the Yarra at Fishermans Bend to line the pockets of their developer mates.

The Liberals have found a way to keep themselves busy, as they fritter away their time on the opposition benches, by tallying up what they claim is a list of our new and increased taxes. But as is the Liberal way, they have inflated the list with double counting and outright errors and taxes they actually support. In a sign of desperation, they count the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax, which they not only voted for but supported vocally. In a further sign of desperation they include the mental health levy, which they supposedly now support—although that seems to change from day to day, so we do not always know where they stand on that. Their list counts taxes on foreign purchases of property six times. Not only is this double and triple counting but these are not even taxes on Victorians. This government will never apologise for putting Victorians first, and we will never apologise for ensuring foreign investors pay their fair share of tax to the Victorian community.

I have to say that the opposition act like they do not want any changes to taxation in this state. Do they support Crown Casino paying more tax? Do they support Crown Casino being on a level playing field when it comes to electronic gaming machine tax with RSLs and community clubs? Are they going to add this to this bizarre list? I mean, frankly when it comes to taxation and their arguments, they do not have a leg to stand on. As I said at the outset of this contribution, there are 57 changes to tax where we have either abolished or reduced taxes—57 tax reductions. That of course includes—

**Mr D O'Brien** interjected.

**Mr STAIKOS:** They like to claim they are the party of tax reduction and red tape. I am happy to say that these 57 tax reductions—and there are regional MPs currently in the chamber. Last July we cut the regional payroll tax rate to 1.2125 per cent, just one quarter of the metropolitan rate and the lowest in the nation, and currently the regional unemployment rate is 3.4 per cent, the lowest since records began. This is a fantastic bill, full of important measures that support Victorian families. I commend the bill to the house and I wish it a speedy passage.

**Mr D O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (12:39): It is nice to get up and speak a few facts, unlike the historical revisionism we have just heard from the member for Bentleigh. The member for Bentleigh seems to have missed the point that it was his Premier and his still Treasurer who promised in 2014 that they would not increase or introduce new taxes. Do not sit there and say that we should all agree that taxation should not change. This was your promise, your government's promise, that we would not increase, or introduce any new, taxes.

I would like to go back. I know my colleagues the member for Narre Warren North, the member for Pascoe Vale and the member for Mordialloc—I nearly said Sandringham, my apologies; they are brothers with their electorates next door—will be sick of me talking about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, but I do want to go back to that. On this promise we asked the Treasurer at PAEC about his promise not to introduce any new or increased taxes, and he said, 'I did not say that in 2014'. But in fact the record shows different, because on Channel 7 news just before the election we had a clip of the Treasurer saying, 'We will not introduce any new taxes or increase any taxes to pay for our election promises'. That was in 2014, and we all know and have all heard repeated the Premier's promise from the night before the election when he gave Peter Mitchell on Channel 7 news the exact same promise.

The member for Bentleigh needs to understand that our criticism is of the government's broken promise. There are 41 new or increased taxes. The rubbish he just went through a moment ago saying that we were double counting—when you increase a tax in 2019–20, in 2016–17 and in 2015–16, that is three increases, so that gets counted as an increase each time. He completely fails to understand that concept. Each of those adds to the tax burden on Victorians. The government stands condemned for breaking that promise. I am not going to stand here and say that tax will not change over time; of course it does. However, the Leader of the Opposition and the Shadow Treasurer have made that guarantee that we will not increase taxes if we are elected in November this year. I think it is in stark contrast, what the government has said and what the government has done.

This legislation is an election year piece of legislation. We have seen, as I have outlined, over the years, the government increase taxes just about every budget through its state taxation and treasury legislation bills. But 2022 is an election year, and obviously the government wants to make itself more attractive to the Victorian public, so predominantly there are minor changes at the edges and some changes to existing increased or introduced taxes, including the windfalls gains tax amendment. I just want to touch on that one briefly, because I note that of the 42 new or increased taxes about 21 of them are on property. I heard the member for Bentleigh say how proud he is of the windfall gains tax, and it is classic with those on that side of politics that they do not understand economics. If you tax something, you almost invariably increase the cost of it. That is what the GST did, and that is what the windfall gains tax will do. That is what the government's proposed 1.75 per cent levy on property developments would have done and will do. No doubt, if this government is re-elected, it will reintroduce that proposal to add to the cost of housing. At a time when housing availability and affordability are such significant issues in our community, it beggars belief that the government would introduce or increase 21 new or increased property taxes and then be surprised that housing affordability has become a problem. It is just astounding. The government needs to understand what actually happens when you add additional taxes, particularly to an existing fairly hot market. It is going to have that impact of sending prices high, making it more difficult for Victorian families to afford a home.

I want to just go to some of the data that is there in the taxation estimates in the state budget. I absolutely understand that taxation from a state perspective is a very difficult issue. We have a very difficult

problem in Australia where we have a vertical fiscal imbalance between the commonwealth and the states, where the states do the bulk of the service delivery but it is the commonwealth that has had the major revenue-raising capacity since the Second World War, when the commonwealth took on the main role of income tax collection. It does make it difficult for state governments to deliver what they need to do.

I will just make a couple of comments on the government's figures this year for some of the main state taxes that we have—largely payroll tax, land tax and land transfer duty, otherwise known as stamp duty. This year budget paper 5, page 18, shows that land transfer duty is expected to be \$8.2 billion. If you go back to the previous budget before the government came to power, land transfer duty was estimated at \$4.4 billion. That is an increase of 85 per cent in land transfer duty that the government has had over that time. Land tax this year is estimated at \$4.8 billion; in the budget before the government came to power it was \$1.9 billion—that is a 154 per cent increase in land tax in that time. Finally, payroll tax is \$6.8 billion. We heard the wonderful comments from the member for Bentleigh about how payroll tax is being reduced. Well, the quantum is still going up—\$6.8 billion versus \$5.1 billion in 2014–15, or a 32.7 per cent increase.

Now, of course all those taxes are going to go up if the economy is growing, particularly if the property market is growing, but it is just an interesting comparison of how much extra revenue the state has been able to reap under this government. You can look at it overall. Total taxation has gone up by \$12.4 billion—state taxation—since the government came to power, an increase of 68 per cent. And that is versus an increase in expenditure of 74 per cent. That has gone up from \$51.75 billion before the government came to office. This year the total expenditure from transactions was \$89.8 billion, so a 74 per cent increase. That is clearly why we have got a budget deficit, where there is a 74 per cent increase over the last eight years versus a 68 per cent increase in actual income—state taxation income, of course, I am talking about here.

This issue remains a significant problem. I note there has been some recent discussion about horizontal fiscal equalisation, particularly from the Premier of WA. We are on a unity ticket on that issue—that Victoria is not getting what it should—but I note that both the former federal Treasurer and the current federal Treasurer have no intention of changing that. I do not agree with the Western Australian Premier saying perhaps we should not have gone for the money on the Commonwealth Games, but I do agree that perhaps the Victorian government should look at managing its finances better. If we had not wasted \$28 billion on infrastructure cost blowouts, our budget situation and indeed our ability to fix the health system, to fix the 000 system and to fix the ambulance system would be a lot better off.

Just finally, we are not opposing this legislation. However, there are a couple of things that we are looking at—in particular clause 34, which relates to the discretion of the commissioner of state revenue putting effectively a time limit on whether or not he or she accepts an objection to a tax ruling made within five years. That is a little bit of a concern. We have sought some advice from the government as to the number of cases that might be involved or might be curtailed by the introduction of this five-year statute of limitations, if you would like to call it that, so we will consider that between now and the time that this legislation passes to the upper house. But we are not opposing this particular legislation. I note that this is an election year tax bill without any of the tax increases that we have seen but a reminder of the broken promise that the government made not to introduce or increase taxes in 2014, a promise that it has failed to meet, with 41 new or increased taxes since then.

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) (12:49): Thanks, Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute today to this debate on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. It was interesting to hear the member on his feet before me speak about revenue increasing since 2014. I actually take the state government revenue having increased as a sign of a strong economy, a growing economy, and that is a really good thing. When revenue increases, that means there is more money to spend on the things that are really important: the services, the infrastructure and the projects that every Victorian needs and every Victorian deserves. It is about improving the lives of every Victorian.

This bill does contain a number of proposed changes to Victoria's tax regime. The most significant probably before us are the changes to the land tax. There are also proposed amendments to the new windfall gains tax, stamp duty, payroll tax and some state taxation and administration rules. I will just go through these briefly. We have heard already from the lead speaker from the opposition and our speaker on this side about what these changes are. But in relation to the Land Tax Act 2005, amendments will be made to replace the current refund model for land tax where a person is absent because of the construction or renovation of a residence with an exemption. In essence this will introduce a new principal place of residence land tax exemption, which will give landowners an opportunity to apply for an up-front exemption from land tax while a residence is being constructed rather than having to apply for a refund.

The bill also amends the Land Tax Act to provide an exemption from land tax for land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling is being constructed. This is important too. These specialist disability accommodations are specially designed for people with sensory, intellectual, cognitive or physical impairments. And again, this change will extend the exemption to land in the construction phase of those dwellings.

Building on the taxation changes to support Victorians with a disability, this bill will also amend the Duties Act 2000 to provide an exemption from motor vehicle duty in relation to certain wheelchair-accessible motor vehicles. This will apply to new or near-new wheelchair-accessible vehicles that will be registered as a commercial passenger vehicle and meet the requirements of being unbooked, whether it is a taxi hail or a taxi rank. This is important. It builds on the exemption that currently applies for privately owned vehicles for either the disabled owner or the family member, and it is aimed directly at increasing the number of wheelchair-accessible taxis, which is a good thing. It provides greater autonomy to people who use wheelchairs—it enhances their independence—and we would obviously love to see these numbers grow to give further transport options to people who may use wheelchairs.

There are also some changes to the Payroll Tax Act 2007 in relation to certain wages paid under employment agency and other arrangements. These amendments now make it clear that where a service provider is a common-law employee of the agent and that person is on-hired to a client, the wages paid to the service provider will be exempt if the client is also exempt from payroll tax—that is, if the client is a charity or a public hospital.

There will also be some changes to the Windfall Gains Tax and State Taxation and Other Acts Further Amendment Act 2021. This is an act we brought in last year to deal with windfall gains, and the amendments here will provide an exemption from windfall gains tax for land that is owned by a university in certain circumstances. To be entitled to this exemption the land must be owned by a university, the university must be a charity and the commissioner must be satisfied that any revenue from the land will be used to further the university's charitable purposes. This will commence on 1 July 2023. On the windfall gains tax and why this is important, I think it is really crucial to really specify that the windfall gains tax is about equity, it is about fairness and it is about value. It is about the right thing to do, because we know that when governments make planning decisions to rezone land, property prices can increase really dramatically literally overnight, and it is therefore only right that significant value increases in that land are shared with Victorian communities and used to fund the services and the infrastructure that these communities need.

Just to head off any scare campaign by those opposite, it obviously does not apply to residential land, it does not apply to primary production land that contains a home and obviously we are not talking about charities or universities. But we are talking about land like Fishermans Bend. I have to say this is the kind of thing we never, ever want to see again—the kind of unscrupulous, immoral, crooked, value-adding frenzy that took place when the now Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, was Minister for Planning back in 2012. Overnight we saw the member for Bulleen rezone about 250 hectares of land, which is now known as Fishermans Bend, and it triggered an astronomical hike in land values. The windfall gains were massive. Landowners, property speculators—some connected

with the Liberal Party, we understand—gained from these land value increases, and there was no mechanism to capture those increases in land values to help pay for really vital infrastructure and services like schools, kindergartens and public transport. We really have to make sure that this kind of thing never, ever happens again, and the windfall tax is about this. It is about that distribution, it is about fairness and it is about equity.

Not unpredictably, we have heard the opposition get up today and talk about new taxes, whingeing about taxes, more taxes. A couple of fact checks: Victoria is not the highest taxing state in the nation. Second, these so-called new taxes, as the member for Bentleigh articulated, are things like the absentee landowner surcharge for foreign purchasers and the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax—again, taxes that those opposite supported at the time of their introduction—and they also include the mental health levy. They will not mention of course the 57 taxes and levies that the Andrews Labor government has already abolished. They will not mention the lowest payroll tax rates in Australia and the savings to Victorian businesses in payroll taxes last year alone amounting to \$1.7 billion. By focusing their debate so narrowly on this particular issue they are missing a really profound opportunity, and that is the importance of what we do on this side of the house, what the Andrews Labor government do—that is, we invest in Victorians. We invest in our people because it is the health and wellbeing of Victorians that determines Victoria's success. Investing in our people, in our services and in our infrastructure is a choice, and it is a choice we on this side of the house make. We choose to invest in our people.

We know what happens when those opposite are in power. They cut services. They cut funding. They choose to decimate TAFE. They choose to not build one new school. They choose to put a brake on infrastructure and development and projects. Under their watch we see living conditions go down, we see unemployment rise. They cut funding—and this is crucial, critical funding. It is not discretionary funding. It is not, like the member for Ripon said, renovating a kitchen. I remember those opposite, when they had their chance, cutting the education maintenance allowance. I just think, 'How mean can anyone get?'. The Andrews Labor government, we invest in our people. We are helping Victoria build back better than ever. This is about recovery from the pandemic. This bill is part of all of this agenda, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.**

**Business interrupted under standing 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 inform the house that I will answer questions today for health, ambulance services and equality; the Minister for Public Transport will answer for transport infrastructure and the Suburban Rail Loop; and the Minister for Regional Development will answer questions for Aboriginal affairs, women and prevention of family violence.

#### **Questions without notice and ministers statements**

#### **MEMBER CONDUCT**

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. How many times has the Premier been interviewed by the anti-corruption commission?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:02): I thank the member for Ripon for her question. And here was I thinking that there would be another case study that would not be handed over to get



fixed. Here was I thinking it might be a political question. Well, here we go. If the member for Ripon wants to know about any investigation being conducted by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission or any other integrity agency then she can direct those questions to that agency. The agency have been asked similar questions, and not even they will comment on or answer these questions, so why would I? How would it be appropriate for me to answer any questions about any matter that is ongoing? Fundamentally inappropriate—something I suspect that even the member for Ripon knows, but that does not suit the political stunts that we know her to be all about.

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (14:03): Given that the IBAC Commissioner, Robert Redlich, has stated that letters have been sent to several of those interviewed as part of Operation Richmond informing them that they are not bound by confidentiality obligations, has the Premier received this letter from IBAC?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:03): Again, I am not certain that the member for Ripon was listening to my answer to her substantive question. Let me make it very clear: if the member for Ripon wants to know whom IBAC has spoken to or whom IBAC has written to—and the same goes for all of our integrity agencies—then she should best direct those queries to that agency. This is not a new position, it is one I have held for a very long time. I do not comment on or cut across active matters. That is fundamentally inappropriate. That might be something that others are very keen to do. That is not the way that I operate, nor does any member of my government operate that way. If you want to know who they have been writing to, ask them.

**Ms Staley**: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, my question was about the fact that, on relevance, the Premier is required under sessional order—

**A member**: Which one?

**Ms Staley**: Under sessional order 11, to the genius who just wanted to know.

*Members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! Member for Ripon, what is your point of order?

**Ms Staley**: Answers to questions must be direct, factual and succinct. The Premier, I contend, is breaching that sessional order by not being factual. The commissioner from IBAC has said that he can answer that.

*Members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Order! The house will come to order, and I will remove members without warning. Has the Premier concluded his answer?

**Mr ANDREWS**: I have.

#### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: METRO TUNNEL

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:05): I am delighted to rise to update the house on the very significant progress that the government and all of its partners are making on the Metro Tunnel project. It will be even bigger when we get to the Suburban Rail Loop, but for the moment it is the biggest ever public transport project in our state's history. It is a transformational project. It is all about taking the busiest line out of the city loop. That frees up space for every other line, and it means that we have five new underground stations and a turn-up-and-go train system with no timetable required.

I remember, though: 'Oh, that'll never get built'. And you can turn your back now. They turned their back on passengers everywhere: 'That'll never get built'. Well, it is getting built all right. It is getting built, and it is so far ahead of schedule that we are having to recruit drivers for those trains—trains made in Melbourne by Melburnians—and signallers and all the other staff, some 300 staff, now in order to train them to be ready because it is running so far ahead of schedule. Forty-four weeks of training and 120 drivers we need, and we are getting on and recruiting those staff. There are 65 high-

capacity metro trains—again a great asset; bigger, much greater capacity—brand new rolling stock, new twin tunnels, five new underground stations and state-of-the-art features that we have never seen before, allowing our busiest train line to be much more efficient. You turn up and go, as I said—no timetable required. Every line and every Victorian benefits from this, because if you can take some of the congestion out of the current city loop, that means you can run more trains more often right across our network—not to mention removing level crossings means you can get on and run more trains more often as well. We are getting this done.

### HEALTH SYSTEM

**Mr GUY** (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:07): My question is to the Premier. Last week Zoran from St Albans experienced severe abdominal pain. He called Nurse-on-Call, who advised he seek immediate medical advice. Zoran saw his GP that day, who sent him immediately to the Sunshine Hospital. He waited 5 hours to be seen but concerningly had to give up seeking professional help as the staff were just too overworked; he could not be seen. Rather than return to the queues, he is now surviving on a large dose of daily painkillers. He has asked that his situation be raised in the Parliament for the government to hear. What does the Premier have to say to people like Zoran who just give up on being seen in a hospital because the government has failed to act to fix the crisis in our health system?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:08): I reject any assertion from the Leader of the Opposition that the government is not doing everything it can in partnership with our nurses, our ambulance paramedics, our doctors and our allied health professionals to deal with the unprecedented pressure that is on our system at the moment, made worse of course because we have got record demand—more and more patients who need care—at a time when we have thousands of staff unable to report for work because they themselves are sick.

In terms of the individual that the Leader of the Opposition references, if the Leader of the Opposition provides to my office or to the Minister for Health's office the details of that particular person, I will ensure that representatives of the health department and/or the health service in question, which I think would be Western Health given the reference to Sunshine Hospital, contact that person and work through all of the individual circumstances—every case is unique. If there are learnings, well, we would be grateful obviously to be able to understand that experience and work as hard as we can to improve the system in light of it. If there are other supports that we can provide to this individual, to his family and therefore to others who are in a similar circumstance, we would welcome the opportunity to do that.

I just have to make the point, though: I urge the Leader of the Opposition, please provide the details of this person. I have got—and I checked before we came to question time today—50 cases raised and less than 10 referred to my office or the health department or the Minister for Health's office. Lest any cynic draw a conclusion that the Leader of the Opposition raises these matters not so much for the patient but for the politics, please forward those details. I give Zoran and I give the Leader of the Opposition my commitment that we will follow up to learn the learnings, if they are there, and provide the support if that is needed.

On emergency departments before I finish, I might just make one further comment: I would reject any assertion from the Leader of the Opposition. Every staff member—nurse, allied health, administrative staff member—in every emergency department every hour of every day is there doing their very, very best. They are triaging each patient. They triage each patient as they present. The sickest are treated quickest, and as the Premier, as a parent, as a partner, you want the sickest patients treated quickest. If the Leader of the Opposition has a different model for how to deliver time-critical emergency care, then let us hear it. Dr Guy can tell us all about how we should reorganise things. Please pass on the details, and we will follow up for that patient.

**Mr GUY** (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): Emergency patients treated within clinically recommended times has fallen from 75 per cent in 2014 to 73 per cent in 2016, 71 per cent in 2018 down to 68 per cent in 2020 and this year will be under 66 per cent. Does the Premier accept

any responsibility for the suffering of people like Zoran, who are part of a growing number of Victorians who cannot get the health care they need at the time they seek it?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:12): Of course I accept full responsibility for every patient and for us doing everything we can across a big and dynamic health system to provide the very best care. I accept full responsibility for that—absolutely. There is pressure in the system, and that is undeniable. What is also in the system are thousands more nurses, hundreds—perhaps more—of extra paramedics and billions of dollars in additional resources. Imagine if we had not got on and repaired the damage left to us—imagine—by choice.

On a slightly different issue, the notion that these challenges are unique to Victoria, as the Leader of the Opposition would have us all believe—I was speaking with Premier Perrottet last night, and these challenges are not unique to Victoria, nor are they unique to Australia. Cutbacks will not fix this; only investment will fix this.

### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SCHOOLS FUNDING

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:13): I rise to update the house on the Andrews government's record investment in school infrastructure. This year's budget alone invests over \$1.8 billion in new or upgraded schools. This compares to a mere \$310 million average per budget under those opposite. Once again we have done more in one budget than those opposite could manage in four budgets. Since this Andrews government was elected we have invested more than \$12.8 billion over eight years, created 17 400 jobs and delivered more than 1850 school upgrades. This now includes a major upgrade at every single special school in Victoria—\$1.9 million for Bass Coast Specialist School, \$3.7 million for Officer Specialist School, \$6.8 million for Western Autistic School in Altona, amongst 36 projects. We are upgrading mainstream schools—\$12.9 million for Westgarth Primary School in Northcote; \$7.3 million for Yinnar Primary School in Morwell; \$12.8 million for Wedderburn College in Ripon, a great school; \$11.2 million for Wantirna College; and \$8.7 million for Laburnum Primary School. And all schools receiving upgrades will have architects appointed by August. Small but critical works as part of our minor capital works package are due for Viewbank College, Black Rock Primary, Guthridge Primary, plus a further \$247.3 million for essential maintenance. We inherited a school maintenance backlog from those opposite, which we have cleared. They scrapped the Victorian schools plan and replaced it with nothing, and they refused to build new schools in growing suburbs and regions. In contrast, we are continuing our unprecedented investment in school infrastructure. We are getting on with the job of getting students the facilities they deserve.

### POLICE RESOURCES

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) (14:15): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday the Police Association Victoria (TPA) confirmed that Victoria Police officers are now being forced to transport people to hospital because of the government's failure to fix the ambulance crisis, a move that is now removing police from important frontline duties. Does the Premier accept that his failure to fix this crisis is now spreading to a crisis that is impacting on other essential services like the police?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:15): No, I do not accept that conclusion because it is not based in fact. It is not based in fact.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, if you have a close look at what the TPA but also what police command has said—the chief commissioner today—if you look at the data, section 351 of the Mental Health Act 2014, those people who need, because they are a risk to themselves or others, to be transported, there has been no change in practice, no change in practice at all. The most recent data that I am briefed on comparing calendar year 2021 to 2020 for those sorts of transports, those types of mental health clients, there has been a 0.1 per cent increase in those numbers of incidents—0.1 of 1 per cent.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Oh, got no resources. If you want to talk about impinging on the performance of Victoria Police, how about cutting their budget? That will do wonders for crime. That will do wonders for safety. That will do wonders, won't it? This mob has never delivered a police officer that was not funded by a Labor government, that is the fact of it. If you talk to me about police numbers, I am happy to say to the member for Gembrook that I will refer you to the statements made by the TPA that make it very, very clear: 502 general duty officers, 50 PSOs, adding to the record recruitment that we have already delivered previously—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Oh, a third of what they were. Well, wouldn't you know about being a third of what people ask for? That sums you up, mate. You are about a third of what people ask for.

**Ms Staley:** On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Speaker has previously ruled frequently and has upheld previous rulings from the Chair that question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition and I ask you to stop the Premier from doing so.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

**Mr ANDREWS:** Under extreme provocation. I was accused of jumping on the hook over here. Seafood analogies have worked so well for you for so very long. Do you catch lobsters with hooks, Deputy Speaker? I am not sure.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Yes, baskets and brown paper bags. That is what you catch. Let us be very clear, I was asked about the police. I was asked about the police and a particular cohort of Victorians who need support. I have answered that part of the question, and I am asked about police. The budget provides further support for Victoria Police in record terms, welcomed and acknowledged as 'funding police properly'. That is what the TPA said. That is what the chief commissioner knows. What Victorians know is there will always be more to be done—always—and that is why we will, if given the great honour of delivering the budget next year, give a further boost to Victoria Police, because unlike some we do not cut Victoria Police budgets.

**Mr Richardson** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mordialloc can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

**Member for Mordialloc withdrew from chamber.**

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) (14:20): It appears that the Victorian police association do not have the same view as the Premier, when Wayne Gatt has stated, 'increasingly ... police are becoming the primary call to situations that otherwise wouldn't attract a police response' and that this can take hours and hours. How is Victoria Police being called as the sole respondents to medical events the right use of police resources?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:20): Similar matters were put to the chief commissioner today, and he has made it very clear that there has been no change to arrangements—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, the issue of being the sole dispatch is wrong—is simply wrong—and that is not me saying it, that is what the chief commissioner is making very, very clear. In any event—and I am not quite sure whether the opposition will flip-flop on recommendation 10 of the royal commission into mental health, they have flip-flopped on a few others—recommendation 10 calls for a health response, not a law and order response, and we are wasting no time in delivering that important reform. The police association and police command and Ambulance Victoria and every single police

officer and ambulance paramedic will be part of that. They already are part of that, and I thank them for their work in extraordinarily difficult times. That reform does take time. It also takes consistency, and that is exactly what we are delivering when it comes to mental health reform.

### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ECONOMY

**Mr PALLAS** (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:21): Since 2014 the Andrews Labor government's infrastructure pipeline has supported or will continue to support in excess of 190 000 jobs in this state. There are many Victorians who can take great pride in the fact that they are helping to build the future of this great state. That is a total of \$184 billion worth of new and existing projects underway, transforming our state and making sure that we improve the way that people move around the state and how Victorians get to access the services that they are entitled to in their local communities.

Take our rolling stock—not the way those opposite wanted to take it, to Asia. Take our rolling stock and build it right here in Victoria. We have invested nearly \$8 billion in over 300 new trains, trams and supporting infrastructure, supporting up to 10 000 local jobs right across the supply chain—trains built and maintained here in Victoria for Victorians.

With an unemployment rate 2.5 percentage points lower than in 2014 when we came to government, we are creating jobs in Victoria for Victorians. We have got on with the job of delivering the projects Victorians need despite a consistently raw deal from the commonwealth. Of course, the infrastructure funding from the Morrison government over five years was 20.4 per cent. Given that the state of Victoria is at least 26 per cent of the nation's population, we have been egregiously dealt with, and we are looking forward to working positively with a commonwealth government that shares our views and our values and our commitment to fairness, whether it is building the Suburban Rail Loop with at least \$2.2 billion worth of contribution or indeed an intermodal freight facility in our west.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) (14:24): My question is to the Minister for Housing. Minister, the issue of homelessness is a real issue for many individuals and families in the Latrobe Valley. Disadvantage, unemployment, the high cost of living, being squeezed out of the private rental market, a long waiting list for public and social housing and a lack of emergency and crisis accommodation are all contributing factors. Organisations such as Quantum and Community Housing Limited are doing the best they can for their clients. However, their resources are stretched.

The Housing Establishment Fund, HEF, is a vital support mechanism, but I understand that a single person or a couple without children are only able to stay in emergency motel accommodation for a maximum of two to three nights under current HEF arrangements. Given in many circumstances these persons have nowhere else to go, will the minister consider amending the HEF criteria to enable people to stay longer in this type of accommodation, as was the case during COVID?

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (14:25): I thank the member for Morwell for his interest in homelessness—and mental health as well, as he did last night in his contribution on the adjournment. Throughout the COVID crisis we have provided the most comprehensive response to homelessness of any jurisdiction in the country, and we are now getting attention from overseas, from the United Kingdom and Scotland, who are saying, 'What are you doing here? This is the most extraordinary intervention that anyone has ever heard of'. We increased our housing establishment funding to homelessness agencies quite rightly by over \$70 million to make sure that people who needed it could stay in the hotels to keep themselves safe from potential infection. Then we invested \$150 million in the From Homelessness to a Home program, which has seen 1700 households move into long-term supported housing. That is 2100 people who were sleeping rough or sleeping in insecure situations now in long-term secure housing. No other jurisdiction anywhere in this country has achieved that outcome. As well as that, we have got a \$66 million

package to help us move 250 families into long-term housing who are currently housed in hotels, and these are often families with a number of children.

In this budget I am delighted that again the Treasurer provided us with significant funding of \$75 million to continue to shift our homelessness response to ensure that we have a more tailored support and wraparound package. The key that we have learned through COVID is that not only do you provide people with safe, affordable and secure housing but you need to maintain them in their housing by ensuring that you have got supports to them. People do not choose to be homeless. This is not some sort of lifestyle choice. People are homeless for a whole range of reasons, whether it is drug and alcohol, mental health issues, family breakdown and the like. I am really proud of the response of our government, particularly to deal with some of the most vulnerable people in our community, and I welcome, as always, the support that the member has provided and his advocacy in relation to not only homelessness more generally but also mental health.

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) (14:27): Minister, in 2016 through the transitional support program 46.5 per cent of Quantum clients in my community were exiting the program to private rentals or public housing. In 2021 this had dropped to just 14 per cent, leaving so many people vulnerable and at risk of homelessness, and now there are many people and children just waiting to get on the TSP waiting list. Further, the HEF, which I mentioned earlier, has been important in supporting housing providers, agencies and their clients during some difficult times. Ideally even more HEF funding is required to deal with the current crisis, but can you at least confirm that this funding will not be reduced from 30 June 2022?

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (14:28): Thanks very much for the supplementary question. Can I indicate to the member that in the last financial year our government allocated \$12 million in specialist homelessness funding right in your area, and the funding included \$2 million for the private rental assistance program and over \$1.5 million in HEF funding. Of course above and beyond that is the Big Housing Build itself, the \$5.3 billion that we are building, with \$1.25 billion being built all over regional Victoria, which I know our colleagues over there are very, very happy with. We have now completed 28 properties in Latrobe, with a further 34 underway, for a total investment of \$29 million—a fantastic social outcome, great for jobs and of course the supply chain as well, with 200 jobs being created there. But in relation to HEF itself we will look at that again and we will see if we can do a bit better down in your part of the world. I thank you for the question and your long-term interest in homelessness.

#### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:29): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on the progress we are making to deliver Australia's first offshore wind energy projects. Victoria's offshore wind energy resource is second to none in this country—the best in Australia and one of the best in the world—which can deliver 13 000 megawatts of new build and more than 6000 ongoing jobs. We will build at least 2000 megawatts by 2032, with first power in 2028, 4000 megawatts by 2035 and 9000 megawatts by 2040. And it is not just about building more cheap renewable energy infrastructure for all Victorians to enjoy. We will be creating thousands of jobs across the state—skilled jobs, well-paid jobs, ongoing jobs that will be filled by our kids who are in school or training today and those transitioning from other jobs. They will also be part of the preparations, the pre-build if you like, which will be about the energy componentry, energy specialist services—all of those jobs that will be needed and available well before 2028.

We are not wasting a single minute in doing the work to make this a reality. We have invested more than \$40 million already in the three offshore projects. That will enable them to move to the next stage of their development. These three projects alone will deliver more than \$18 billion in new investment in our state. We will be talking with communities about our offshore wind development plan, which we will be releasing later this year. We want to make sure that Victorians understand, are a part of the

journey and enjoy the benefits as we go. There are significant benefits here. That is what happens when you show up to the Parliament and you actually vote for renewable energy targets legislation, rather than saying one thing on the radio but doing the exact opposite when you are in this place. This is massive energy infrastructure. It is all part of our ambitious plans for renewable energy transformation and the tens of thousands of jobs that come with it.

#### AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:32): My question is to the Premier. Ambulance Victoria—

*Members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr NEWBURY:** We are talking about people dying, Deputy Premier.

*Members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Deputy Premier, come to order.

**Mr NEWBURY:** Thank you. My question is to the Premier. Ambulance Victoria has confirmed that on average 35 taxis are sent out each day to Victorians who have called for an ambulance. How many of these cases of a taxi replacing an ambulance are doing so for an emergency call-out that would normally require an ambulance?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:32): I thank the member for Brighton for his question, and I am more than happy to refer his question to Ambulance Victoria for a detailed response. I was out at ESTA just last week with the Minister for Emergency Services. I was there for quite some time, and I was honoured to meet with ESTA call takers as well as dispatchers, as well as those who do not work for ESTA, they work for Victoria Police, for Fire Rescue Victoria and also for Ambulance Victoria—to meet with them and thank them for their work in extraordinarily high pressure, high demand, really challenging circumstances. I thanked them on behalf of all Victorians then, and I do so again now. They are all working very, very hard.

The member for Brighton may not be aware, but at Ambulance Victoria there are kind of two streams. There are code 0 and code 1—urgent, lights-and-sirens emergency response. There is then a secondary triage program called RefCom, and that is principally ambulance paramedics. So when someone has called for an ambulance but does not need a lights-and-sirens, time-critical response—they are not, for instance, having, say, a cardiac event or having a stroke or have not had trauma or are part of a road accident, so they do not need the lights-and-sirens response but they need a response nonetheless—they are sent to what is called RefCom, and there are tens of thousands of Victorians every year that are in longer consultations. It is not minutes; they may talk with a paramedic for a much longer period of time. Services are wrapped around those people to give them what they need, and that is almost always referral to a number of other different health providers. It is not uncommon for people to receive alternative advice to take alternative transport to a physio appointment, to a GP, to hospital, but not in time-critical, urgent circumstances.

I am not quite sure whether the member for Brighton knows so little about the system that he wants a situation where no matter what your clinical circumstances you get a lights-and-sirens ambulance. Like, nowhere in the world could have enough lights-and-sirens ambulances that everyone who makes a call gets a response as if they are having a heart attack even though they are not. These decisions, thankfully, are not made by the member for Brighton. They are made by experts—expert call takers as well as dispatchers. They are confirmed and validated by ambulance paramedics who are embedded in ESTA. They are run by experienced paramedics in that secondary triage RefCom system. And sometimes non-urgent, non-lights-and-sirens modes of transport are exactly what the person needs, as opposed to diverting an ambulance from a time-critical patient to send it to someone who is not time critical.

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:35): In the 2021 financial year taxis were sent out to replace an ambulance around 10 000 times. Yet in the first nine months of this year alone a taxi was sent out instead of an ambulance also around 10 000 times. Can the Premier explain why under his watch Victoria is on track for almost a 30 per cent increase in the use of taxis instead of ambulances?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:36): COVID, maybe? Do you think that might be it—a one-in-100-year event, maybe? Maybe that might be why we have got record demand. Let us be absolutely crystal clear. The member for Brighton, in a very expensive policy announcement, which he is wont to do—I am not sure whether he has checked with the shadow cabinet—wants no more cabs for people who need a cab, not an ambulance. So if you call—that is all you have to do—if you call 000, you get a lights-and-sirens ambulance under this one. This is what you get. So whether you need it—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, you had better get buying ambulances, mate, because you will need a few. Experts determine based on clinical need and years of experience what the appropriate response is. If it is the view of those opposite that every single person who calls 000 will get a lights-and-sirens ambulance within 15 minutes, well, that is a very different approach to the one you took when you were last in government.

#### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COMMONWEALTH GAMES

**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) (14:37): The 2026 Commonwealth Games will take the state of Victoria to the world—maybe not to Perth, but to India, Canada, the UK, Africa and the South Pacific. It is estimated that it will contribute more than \$3 billion to the Victorian economy and 7500 jobs in total, but it will also include significant investment in infrastructure in regional Victoria—housing, world-class facilities, four athletes villages—hosting up to 1750 competitors and officials in Ballarat, 1300 in Bendigo, almost 3000 in Geelong and almost 800 in Gippsland.

We are working really closely with LGAs on exact locations based on need and infrastructure, and those village developments will include spaces that can be converted into health support, education uses and commercial uses after 2026. But there will also be new and upgraded sporting infrastructure to make regional Victoria the ideal place, not just for communities but for events well into the future. Mars Stadium will have an additional capacity of 8500 seats. Latrobe city stadium will have grandstand, turf, lighting and player facility upgrades. A world-class swimming competition venue in the Barwon region and the finalisation of additional sports will mean even more sporting infrastructure in other parts of the state. The real beauty of that infrastructure is it is not just about the Commonwealth Games in 2026, it is about people in all of those regions—young and old, kids and adults, boys and girls—being able to enjoy that infrastructure for decades to come, assisting businesses to attract workers because there will be more housing and making sure those communities are healthier because there will be better sporting infrastructure for those communities to use for decades.

#### Constituency questions

#### CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:40): (6376) My question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. As I have mentioned on many occasions in this chamber, our area has one of the lowest amounts of green and open space in the state. Balaclava residents from the Port Phillip Emergency Climate Action Network and the St Kilda community gardens have been working with me on a project called the Green Line to access land alongside the Balaclava station, effectively creating a linear park. Can I ask for the minister to tell us what she has been doing to ensure the land, the unused land along VicTrack, is effectively going to be able to be utilised for this purpose and update us on a way forward for my residents to make this exciting project happen.



### BAYSWATER ELECTORATE

**Mr TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (14:41): (6377) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. My question to the minister is: when can my community expect works to begin on the fantastic new project at Wantirna College? This is a big one that means a lot to my community. I have been working on this for some time now. Indeed before I was a local MP, during my time as a local councillor, I was working even then with principal Kev Murphy on this project. It has been a long road with a lot of advocacy, but I was absolutely stoked to announce alongside the minister over \$11 million for a brand new state-of-the-art facility for this ripper local school very recently, and of course we know it is locked in the budget in black and white and fully funded by the Andrews Labor government. It will deliver a new state-of-the-art sport, food tech, learning and performing arts facility, which will include a double court, competition-grade gym and learning spaces as well as new outdoor facilities and more. I tell you what, the minister's announcement brought the house down at Wantirna College, and justifiably so. It will mean students at the college now and for generations to come will have the 21st-century learning facilities they deserve. We know only Labor backs in and delivers funding to our local schools to support the work of our educators, and I thank the minister and his team for their work.

### MURRAY PLAINS ELECTORATE

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) (14:42): (6378) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. I would like to thank the minister for his letter saying that Wendy Sims, a constituent of mine, would be offered a permission-to-teach grant so that she could return to teaching to help with the shortage of teachers at Lockington Consolidated School. Unfortunately the Victorian Institute of Teaching has now told Wendy that, despite what the minister said, she will not be able to return to teaching. I ask the minister what information he can provide as to how the Victorian Institute of Teaching can totally disregard and overrule his advice to Wendy.

### NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE

**Ms THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (14:42): (6379) My question is to the Minister for Women, and I ask: what does the 2022 state Labor budget deliver for the women of Northcote? Victoria is powering ahead with nation-leading reforms to improve gender equality and end gendered violence. From enshrining gender equality into law, putting in place gender responsive budgeting and funding three-year-old kinder, wage subsidies for sole parents, free TAFE, more homes and supporting women to enter the workforce, we are making the transformational change that women need and deserve. But there is still more to do. In Northcote there are still disparities that have long-term consequences for women's lifetime earnings, security, health and wellbeing. Locally I have been pushing for more investment in women's health, family services and perinatal care and working to increase opportunities for diverse women to step into leadership roles and gain economic security. The prosperity of our state depends on what we do to support, encourage, elevate and generate opportunities for women and girls, so I was thrilled to see over \$940 million invested as part of the state Labor budget.

### SOUTH-WEST COAST ELECTORATE

**Ms BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (14:43): (6380) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. Can the minister assure Brauer College and the wider athletic community in Warrnambool that funding will be provided for upgrades to Brauerander Park regional athletics complex? The multimillion-dollar athletics track directly north of the Brauer College main campus was extensively damaged by flooding in January 2021. Brauerander Park was built in 2007 and is home to the Warrnambool Little Athletics club, which has previously hosted regional championships at the complex. The complex is also widely used by Brauer College and the students from throughout Warrnambool and the surrounding districts for athletic carnivals. Funding has been sourced through insurance to repair and resurface the damaged track; however, \$800 000 is being sought from the Victorian government to install additional drainage. This will futureproof the track against another major flood event. I would urge the government to invest in this important project to ensure

Warrnambool schools and their students as well as other groups like Little Athletics again have a top-quality facility into the future.

### BURWOOD ELECTORATE

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (14:44): (6381) My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, what can the Ashwood School community expect following the exciting announcement of \$9.737 million to upgrade and modernise the school? It is a great honour to represent and work with the Ashwood School community as the member for Burwood. Ashwood School is a co-educational specialist school for primary and secondary-age students with mild intellectual disabilities. The school leadership team, principal Helen Hatherly and assistant principal Sue Boyd-Graham, and the entire school team work incredibly hard to provide a nurturing and encouraging learning environment for their students. This investment of \$9.7 million for upgrading and modernising Ashwood School will ensure that students in the inner east have access to a great education in a modern learning environment. I know that once these works have been delivered Helen at Ashwood School is really looking forward to being able to show prospective students and their families around the school with a great deal of pride, because as well as enhanced learning outcomes, new and modern school buildings will contribute to the great sense of camaraderie at that campus.

### PRAHRAN ELECTORATE

**Mr HIBBINS** (Pahran) (14:45): (6382) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: will the minister fix the pedestrian crossing on the intersection of Alma Road and Westbury Street in St Kilda East to ensure that it makes a sound and vibrates so people who are visually impaired can safely cross the road? I am advised that currently the crossing has no sound or vibrations despite this issue having been raised numerous times at various levels of government. The crossing itself is near a playground at Alma Park, a busy road, a local cafe and a kinder and is a recommended school crossing. This issue has been raised by local resident Jessie T, who has started a change.org petition which currently has over 300 signatures. I urge the state government to fix this crossing to ensure all people can safely cross the road.

### BASS ELECTORATE

**Ms CRUGNALE** (Bass) (14:46): (6383) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What is the latest update on the \$9.1 million south-eastern roads development package and how this translates to our Clyde-Five Ways Road corridor? This package we know will plan improvements to a number of key roads and intersections across the south-east, including the Berwick-Cranbourne Road between Cameron Street and Thompsons Road in Clyde North and Clyde-Five Ways Road between Pattersons Road and the South Gipps highway in Clyde. With more and more people calling this area home, we experience congested roads at peak, school and other times. Lanes go from two to one and back again, roundabouts are too small and crashes happen all too often. The network no longer caters for the increasing volume of traffic. Our recent \$15.4 million for the South Gippsland Highway–Clyde-Five Ways intersection upgrade was absolutely welcomed across the communities of Clyde, Devon Meadows and Cranbourne all the way to the Bass Coast. Thank you, Minister, for your support and understanding of our transport needs.

### POLWARTH ELECTORATE

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (14:47): (6384) My question is to the Minister for Employment in the other place, and my question quite simply is: Minister, when will all Victorians be allowed to get back to work? There is an underemployment labour crisis in rural and regional Victoria. The seat of Polwarth sees its major restaurants, many of its businesses and organisations right throughout the community unable to be staffed with the necessary labour force that they require. Communities have had individuals and families unable to work and earn a living now for two years. It is long enough, and we need to get back to normal. Victorians want to recover; they want to rebuild, and they cannot when they are not allowed to work.

Minister, quite simply you are allowing people to go to the football, you are allowing people to go to the pubs. People can go back to church. People are in supermarkets. They can go out for fast food. But we are not letting them get back to work. Victorians want to work. Victorians want to provide for their families. People want to provide for their futures, and this government continues to stop people getting back to work and contributing to our economy and our future.

#### YAN YEAN ELECTORATE

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) (14:48): (6385) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when is work due to begin on the brand new stadium to be based at Wallan Primary School? Sport, especially basketball, is going gangbusters in Wallan. The Minister for Community Sport and I are working closely with Mitchell shire to help meet demand for grounds, courts and change rooms. The state is also playing its part by including sport facilities for community use when it builds new schools like the Arrowsmith campus at Beveridge Primary School but also by building facilities at existing schools such as Wallan Secondary, where the Minister for Community Sport announced a new pavilion only last week and I was pleased to join her, but also at Wallan Primary. I know particularly the Wallan Panthers, the basketball association, are looking forward to having additional courts in Wallan, so I look forward to hearing the minister's answer.

#### Bills

#### STATE TAXATION AND TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

##### *Second reading*

##### **Debate resumed.**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (14:49): I rise to make a contribution on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I want to focus my contribution today on the concerns around Victoria being the highest taxing state in the nation. We need, particularly after what we have seen over the last couple of years of lockdowns and unfortunately being the longest locked-down state in the world, to do something to encourage investment and encourage people to set up shop here in Victoria. But instead, because of our taxation policies, where we used to have people come here, set up a business and grow a business, people are leaving and going to other places. Ultimately that does nothing in terms of creating jobs and opportunities going forward. So in looking at the taxation bill before us and in looking at some of the taxes that we have and the big taxes that this government relies on, unfortunately all we are doing is reducing those opportunities for more investment and more growth, and people are going elsewhere.

I want to draw attention to a few things. I am going to get to payroll tax, which is a real disincentive to actually employing people. I know for many businesses that I talk to it is just beyond belief the fact that we are providing a disincentive to encouraging more employment. Then I also want to talk about some of the property taxes. But before I do that, this government, when they came to power, preached very strongly from the rafters and when they were interviewed on TV—and we have said this on many occasions; I think it was on Channel 7 from memory—said, ‘There will be no new taxes under a government I lead’. That was the Premier's commitment. That is what the Premier said, and as soon as he got himself into power, the Andrews government and the Premier just went off on their merry way to create what are now 42 new taxes. It just keeps going. It is like somebody who is drunk on power; this government is drunk on tax. When you get used to something and you do not look at other creative ways of doing things, then you just do what you know, and unfortunately all that does is create no opportunity for investment and no future for our state and ultimately turns away the very people that we are trying to encourage to come here.

We look particularly at things like payroll tax. The government came into power, and since they have been in power we have seen payroll tax go up 32 per cent, up from \$5.1 billion to \$6.8 billion. Again, we do expect obviously things to rise more generally, but when you look at payroll tax, as I stated, it is a disincentive; it does nothing to encourage those people to actually employ more.

There are also the issues around property taxes. Many of these businesses pay property taxes, particularly land tax—and land tax for both commercial and residential. I know many people in my electorate of Caulfield who have a commercial property or a second property, which is effectively their retirement, that they have saved long and hard for. They are really struggling to meet the land tax bill that they get each year, and every time the land tax period comes along there is a long procession of people in my office. I can tell you that those people that are coming to my office are not wealthy people. They are people that are coming to my office with their tax bills. They have saved every dollar, they have gone without and when it comes to paying that tax bill they are making more sacrifices. Just at the time in their life when you would think they could actually enjoy their life, they are having to sacrifice a whole lot of basic things just to pay the land tax bill. So many residents have come to me and said that all they feel like they are doing is working for the government. We have seen land tax go up since this government has been in power from \$1.9 billion to \$4.8 billion—that is 154 per cent.

I want to make the point—and this is particularly during the COVID period and relates very much to this budget—that during the COVID period a lot of these businesses have been on properties for which land taxes have continued to increase, and many of the landlords, some of whom are self-funded retirees that are not wealthy, have not received a dollar when it comes to rent because they have had to defer rent during this period of time. We have been very much advocating for a deferral of rent in terms of the commercial tenancy relief scheme. That is important. That has been important because we know there have been a lot of small businesses that have not been able to pay rent, particularly during the lockdowns, because their businesses were closed. We knew that it was important for the government to come up with a scheme to ensure that those businesses did not go to the wall by having some relief for many of those small businesses in the form of a commercial tenancy relief scheme. So that was fine, and we actually called on the government to extend it.

I know there was some landlord tax relief for land tax, but it went nowhere near far enough. And the hurdles were so high for many of those landlords that rely on that effectively as their retirement plan. Again, I am not talking about a large corporate superannuation scheme, I am talking about a second property—pretty much their house and one other property—where they rely on that rent to effectively live. They have gone without for two years during COVID, and they have still had to pay the land tax bill. It is not like the government has given them a holiday on their land tax bill. That is where you get the pressures, and that is where I know there are so many people in my constituency of Caulfield that have found it really, really tough when it has come to actually making ends meet to pay that land tax bill. They have looked at deferrals, they have had arrangements with the land tax office, but can I say it has been really, really, really tough. I feel for them, and this government has done nothing over the period since it has been in government to provide any relief when it comes to land tax relief. And so I do say, when you combine that and payroll tax you have seen a real impost on people.

We have seen land transfer, or stamp duty, up from \$4.4 billion to \$8.2 billion, or 85 per cent. Again, property taxes really are big part of propping this government up. And we are now seeing a windfall gains tax, which this government is using to effectively tax people on property. Again, part of a windfall gains tax is it ideally should be taking a lot of land and encouraging that to provide housing stock into the market. We know that housing affordability is a huge issue, and we should be doing everything we possibly can to encourage more stock onto the market. You provide more housing stock—that is one way of lowering prices of housing. It is a basic supply and demand matter. This additional taxation on housing is certainly doing nothing to encourage more housing stock onto the market. When housing affordability is a real issue, particularly for many young Victorians—again, many young constituents in my electorate are seeking their first home—this is not the way forward in terms of being able to do that.

Can I say it has been a very, very tough period, as we know, over the last few years. Victoria has gone from top of the pops to the bottom of the heap when it comes to so many things, particularly when it comes to business confidence and investment. So many people have left the state and gone elsewhere. So many businesses are closed because of a government that lacks any forethought when it comes to

encouraging people. All this government wants to do is tax people. It is doing nothing in terms of investment and creating opportunity and hope in this state. And I do say it is an important thing. Cost of living is a huge issue. Jobs and businesses are huge issues. We are the party on this side of the house that backs small businesses and jobs. We believe in them. We believe in those people because at the end of the day they are mums and dads and families that have a go. They are mums and dads and families that put their lives on the line. They are the last ones that get paid—when their businesses do not make a dollar, certainly they are the ones that do not get paid—and they always put their staff and others above themselves. It is hard to run a small business at the best of times, let alone during a pandemic.

I respect that others have been through the same right across the world, but this state has had it tougher than anyone else—the longest lockdowns, the hardest lockdowns and the toughest laws that go with it. All of that has impacted small businesses, all of that has impacted Victorians and all of it has impacted investment in this state. More taxation is not going to help, and the tax increases that we are seeing before this budget will not help many of those Victorians either.

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (15:00): It is great to rise and speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and cover off some of the key points that are made in this bill. But let us cut to the chase. We have not heard one member of the opposition detail how they would take a different path or do anything differently under state taxation other than having a rant about taxes. Let us dig down deeper into what that means. That means that they would cut the revenue base to then cut services and cut deep into Victorians, because when they attack the revenue base of Victoria they are talking about taking revenue away from vital services, which we have seen. If you do not believe me, let us go back a decade. What happened this time 10 years ago? Right in the media at the time:

Hundreds of police, justice and health workers will be sacked with the Baillieu Government sneaking out details after public servants had gone home.

Hundreds of police, hundreds of job cuts in justice, hundreds in VicRoads, hundreds in human services—essential services in our state that were cut a decade ago as they cut the revenue base in our state. So when those opposite talk about taxation and lowering the revenue base, what is that actually code for? That is a deep cut to services that Victorians desperately rely on. It was only 10 years ago that the minister for TAFE at the time, Peter Hall, thought that it was better to resign. That is what he told TAFE leaders—it was better to resign than go and gut TAFE.

Victorians know that Labor governments invest in essential services, invest in education and invest in our health services, so it will be interesting whether any of those opposite in their descriptions of the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill will detail what they would do differently. What would they do differently? Because some of the revenue in taxes that they refer to they supported through this house of Parliament—they put their name to it in both houses. So when they say and list various taxation arrangements, put their name to it and then claim they are opposed to it, that is an extraordinary outcome.

Then there is the reference to the 2014 campaign, which is an extraordinary reference. We have had an election since then—one that was a substantial affirmation of the Andrews Labor government's delivery for all Victorians. It was a substantial result where we saw a substantial endorsement, a massive swing to our government during that time. It was raised at the Treasury hearing, and the member for Gippsland South as a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee colleague of mine raised this as well, referencing that 2014 campaign as if we want to go back in time to a better time where the Liberal-Nationals had 43 seats, when their primary was around 35, when teal was only a bad choice of colour. But now the changes in circumstances could not be any further from the truth. You see, they are not talking to Victorians, they are talking to fringe interest groups. This is where those opposite are still living in the past and hoping for a better yesterday while we are delivering for Victorians for tomorrow.

Some of these arrangements, some of these taxation measures, go to the heart of inclusive government practices and to supporting Victorians who need it most. I want to cover off on the motor vehicle duty

exemption for wheelchair-accessible commercial vehicles. This is something that was raised in questioning by a member for Eastern Metropolitan, Rod Barton, in the other place—Transport Matters Party—who obviously is very passionate about the taxi industry and the commercial vehicle industry. This is a question that was raised with the Treasurer, and this change is significant and important, because where we have a need for inclusive transport and supporting people with disabilities or additional needs, what we see is a clear gap in the market in supporting people. That is particularly around people that have a disability and need to get around to their appointments and to be supported in our community as well.

So a key measure in this bill is the introduction of that exemption for wheelchair-accessible commercial vehicles from motor vehicle duties. That is in line with the 2022–23 budget announcement that from 1 July an exemption from motor vehicle duties will apply to new or near-new wheelchair-accessible vehicles that will be registered as a commercial passenger vehicle and meet the relevant requirements to provide unbooked services. That is a really important measure, and I think that goes to some of our inclusive practices in this government of supporting people who need that additional support and are living with disabilities.

It also goes hand in glove with the land tax—the specialist disability accommodation dwellings under construction—amendments. In building on the taxation changes to support Victorians with a disability the bill also provides an exemption from land tax for land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling is being constructed. Obviously those supported accommodation places are so critical. We know that supported care, whether people have carers or are able to live on their own with support and care, is a really important area where we need more construction and more investment to support people with disabilities in our communities. This construction-phase exemption will be available for a maximum of a two-tax-year period and will operate retrospectively from the 2020 land tax year onwards. It is something I greatly support which will be greatly supported by our community as well.

There is also some of the rhetoric that was put forward by the member for Eildon in a bit of banter across the chamber with the member for Bentleigh about the windfall gains tax exemption for universities. I am glad the member for Bentleigh was able to once again correct the record. The member for Bentleigh has done a substantial amount of work engaging with the university sector. We listen to them, we engage with them and we invest in education and support them. While the former federal coalition government went running, slashed their budgets and took them absolutely to the brink, we support our university sector, we support indeed our TAFE sector and all those sectors that do such an important piece of work in our community. They went to the bone during the pandemic, and no-one was there to support them from the federal coalition government. No-one was there. These measures in the budget are an example of us consulting, engaging and working with our training sector and our university sector.

It is important to reflect on why the windfall gains tax was even in place. ‘Why was that?’, people might ask—those tuning in, the thousands tuning in online. They might ask, ‘Why did an arrangement like the windfall gains tax even need to happen?’. Well, I will tell you. It was the Fishermans Bend saga, the rezoning saga down the road where land was rezoned for Liberal mates and donor mates at a massive cost to the Victorian taxpayer—a massive cost. It meant we had to go back at a tenfold premium to buy school land and open space to support such a dynamic community that is coming online. You will never hear an apology from those opposite for the absolute travesty that was inflicted on that community—10 times the rezoned value. And when was it? Was it mid term? Was it maybe in 2012, 2013? No, it was right on the edge of the election, when they were sitting around the tables carving up the fundraising allocations. This was a rezone that was an absolute scandal, and it took the Victorian taxpayer tenfold the investment from that rezone—an absolute travesty. So this is why the windfall gains tax is in place, to make sure that we take the sugar off the table and ensure proceeds are returned to the community and we avoid situations like Fishermans Bend, which is the Leader of the Opposition’s legacy, then Minister

for Planning—a travesty. They never apologised, those opposite, never—not raised at all. They never clarified what on earth was going on down at Fishermans Bend—nothing at all.

**Ms Britnell** interjected.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I can see the member for South-West Coast might have a perspective for us. I mean, she was not on the scene at that time. Maybe the member for South-West Coast might apologise to Victorians on behalf of those opposite for that horrendous planning decision that cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars on each individual—land that we had to go and buy back to create schools, health services and childcare services.

Those opposite have got a few more speeches to go. They will do the waffle about, ‘Oh, it was 2014 that this happened’, despite the landslide victory in 2018. They have moved on. They are down to a few less seats than in 2014. I know they want to be the yesterday party. They have gone back to the future with the federal leader that they have put in over the course of this week nationally. But let us just get something straight: what will you cut? What will you change in the revenue base? Victoria has been the engine room—

**Mr Angus:** Stop the waste.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** The member for Forest Hill said, ‘Stop the waste’. There was no waste under those opposite because they did nothing. They did nothing, and they still cut services. They did not have an infrastructure project.

*Members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards):** I will ask people to stop interjecting.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** Remember what Minister Hall said? Minister Hall said, ‘I would rather resign than gut TAFE’. At least he had the integrity to stand up when there were cuts.

And let us just go back. A decade ago, on this day 10 years ago, hundreds of police were cut, hundreds of justice staff were cut, hundreds of health workers were cut and hundreds of public service staff, 3600, were cut. It is in their DNA. They do not do anything. They cut. They want a small government. They are not on the side of Victorians, they are on the side of their warped ideology. Tell us what you will cut and what you will leave Victorians behind with.

**Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (15:10):** What a rant that was from the member down there in Mordialloc, trying to rewrite a bit of history there. Anyway, I will not waste my contribution trying to rectify all that. But I am pleased to rise to make a contribution on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We can see under the purposes, clause 1, of the bill it amends seven bills, and I just want to touch on a couple of those today. In particular I want to start off by looking at the minister’s second-reading speech, in which he said the bill was:

... to increase the Government’s support for the provision of wheelchair accessible transport options and empower wheelchair users to access the transport method that best suits their circumstances.

I note that is a very noble objective, but it is a sad reality that I have been trying in this place to get the government to address some serious issues in relation to public transport in my patch out in the Forest Hill district in relation to wheelchair- and disabled-friendly public transport. The situation we have got specifically is the route 75 tram from the city to Vermont South. We have had all the great big so-called super-stops built along the route in various parts of the route, but all the trams that come on that route, every single one of them, has got a step in it. So it is a typical Labor project, really, that you build all the fancy new infrastructure you can cut the ribbon on and then you send a tram out there that cannot to this very day enable a disabled person, a person with a pram or a shopping trolley or someone in a wheelchair to access the tram.

**Mr Riordan:** The whole suburb.

**Mr ANGUS:** The whole length, from the city all the way out. There is a big gap there between the theory and the practice. That is what we are very used to in this place under this government, and that is why the minister's words ring so hollow in my view in relation to that particular claim that he made.

The other thing too that we are dealing with that is a live matter in our office at the moment is we had a call from a constituent who has had some dealings trying to get a wheelchair-accessible cab for his mother, whom he looks after. He rang 13CABS just recently and tried to order a wheelchair-accessible cab for his mother, who is confined to a wheelchair, and he was unable to do so. The system did not allow him to specify, so that was a huge problem for him, his mother and other family members. So that is a matter that I have written to the minister about, and I am trusting that the minister will respond to me and that that situation will be indeed rectified in the not-too-distant future, because obviously my constituent and his family are not the only ones affected by that particular situation. As I said, the fact that we have got those empty words, I would argue, at the start of the second-reading speech is a disappointment for certainly the residents out in the eastern suburbs and in the Forest Hill district.

I want to talk now about state taxes, because obviously it is a key area, and it is an area, like much of the whole Labor budget, we have seen grow extraordinarily over the last period of time the government has been in, the last eight years. I note back in 2015–16, Labor's first budget, they forecast total taxation revenue to be \$19 billion. In the current budget it is estimated to be \$30.5 billion, which is a 60.5 per cent increase, and then by the time we get to the 2025–26 budget, at the end of the forward estimates, it is estimated to be \$35 billion, a further 14.8 per cent increase over the next four years. So what we see over those 10 years is an incredible 84.2 per cent increase in taxes over those Labor years. That is something that all Victorians would be well aware of and all Victorians would be feeling in a whole range of ways, and I am going to go in and break them down a little bit more in just a moment.

But if we look at what has happened just up until the current budget, we can see that the average increase over those seven years was 8.64 per cent, and for the forward estimates the government's average that it has put in there is 3.7 per cent per annum. As I said the other day in my budget reply speech, I think it is quite fanciful to have an increase that is so small, given the unequivocal evidence that shows what has happened in reality under the Labor government. So for them to go from an 8.64 per cent per annum increase down to a 3.7 per cent per annum increase is quite delusional and will never happen.

If we look at some of the specific components of the taxation revenue—and they are referred to within the bill that we are looking at—we have got the motor vehicle taxes, registration fees and stamp duty. Again, if we go back to 2015–16, that was \$2.2 billion in Labor's first budget. In 2022–23 it is \$3.1 billion, so it has gone up by 40.9 per cent. And by the end of the estimates, 2025–26, it is up to \$3.5 billion, a further 12.9 per cent increase. So just in that section alone it is a 59.1 per cent increase in taxes over 10 years. We know there has certainly been increased traffic congestion and probably more vehicles around, but I do not think it has gone up to that extent. Again, for seven years they are averaging a 5.8 per cent increase per annum, and then in the out years they have got an average of 3.3 per cent per annum. I think the likelihood of that being reality is extremely low, and all Victorian motorists need to fasten their seatbelts, so to speak, for significant other increases in relation to motor vehicle taxes, registration fees and stamp duty. There are going to be a lot more black holes to be filled by this government.

If we look at taxes on employers' payroll and labour force, again in 2015–16 we can see the budget was \$5.4 billion. In 2022–23, the current year budget, it is \$7.6 billion—a 40.7 per cent increase over time, or 5.8 per cent per annum. In 2025–26 it goes up to \$9.2 billion, which is a 21.1 per cent increase over the next four years. That averages out at 5.3 per cent. But over the 10 years from 2015 to 2025 it is a 70.4 per cent increase in taxes over those 10 years under Labor. We have there a huge impost on business, and that is one of the things that hurts business so much: having to pay payroll tax and other taxes of a similar nature when that is such a disincentive. I know there have been some amendments to the rates and so on, but there is still a lot more work that can be done to encourage businesses—small, medium and large.



If we look at land transfer duty, we can see in 2015–16 the budget was \$5 billion. In 2022–23 it is \$8.2 billion, a 64 per cent increase. In 2025–26 it is estimated to be \$8.7 billion—just a modest 6.1 per cent increase—but over that whole time, for seven years, it has averaged a 9.1 per cent per annum increase. Now, we know that property values have certainly gone up during that time, but there has certainly been a fair bit of gouging because of the so-called bracket creep. There have not been any adjustments to speak of in relation to land transfer duty, and that has caught up with people very, very significantly. Over the next four years the average noted in the budget papers is only 1.5 per cent per annum. I find it quite extraordinary that the government can realistically think they will keep it down that low, because we know the government loves to tax land and property-related matters. The budget papers are there for all to read and see, and that is one of the key areas they source their revenue from. Just in this area alone we have got a 74 per cent increase in taxes over 10 years under Labor. It does not augur well for property owners.

I know, like me, Acting Speaker Richards, you have probably had many constituents—or maybe you have not. Maybe they do not want to come and see you, but they have certainly come and seen me in relation to their stamp duty problems and their land tax problems. Particularly some of the passive sorts of investors that perhaps might have had a property as their superannuation now—and particularly in the last two years, with some very difficult times for tenants—have perhaps had to have forgiveness on rent as landlords and other things. They might not have had the revenue source they had but they have still had the massive outgoings, particularly in relation to land tax, and that has really, really hurt the community. I have had so many people come and see me about that. Numbers of those investors, whether they be self-funded retirees with self-managed super funds or other sorts of vehicles like that, are in a situation where they are facing the issue that they have got an asset but their outgoings of cash flow do not keep up with that. So they are going to have to sell the asset, and that is going to be an issue for them—for their subsequent retirement and so on—as well as for the broader community.

Just in conclusion, we can see, I suppose, that the whole basis of this bill and of all Labor tax matters is that everything keeps going up. And the galling thing about it, as others have mentioned on this side, is that there has been such huge waste by this government—\$28 billion of blowouts on major projects. If that burden was not there, we could have lower taxes and charges and we could have less debt for all Victorians.

**Ms CRUGNALE** (Bass) (15:20): I rise to speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I am pleased that this bill builds on the Andrews Labor government's record of implementing a progressive taxation system. I wish to acknowledge a verifiable piece of information: that across our term of government we have cut or abolished taxes and fees 57 times.

A key measure in this bill is the introduction of an important exemption for wheelchair-accessible commercial vehicles from motor vehicle duty. An exemption from motor vehicle duty is in line with the 2022–23 budget announcement, and from July 2022 it will apply to new or near-new wheelchair-accessible vehicles registered as commercial passenger vehicles that meet the relevant requirements to provide unbooked services—for example, taxi rank and hail work. This measure will provide a \$2.7 million cut. Having wheelchair-accessible transport options that empower wheelchair users to access the transport method that best suits their needs and circumstances is a core value of the Labor government and is achieved through this measure. It is our hope that through measures like this this number will grow and give people with a disability more transport options, which translates to greater freedom of choice. This measure expands and complements the current suite of motor vehicle duty exemptions and concessions for the transport of people with a disability or injury and builds on the Andrews Labor government's body of work supporting Victorians with a disability.

Another key initiative in this bill is ensuring fairness across the gaming industry and that a casino the size of Crown does not have an unfair advantage over small gaming venues. To do this as part of the government's ongoing response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, we will also ensure Crown is paying its fair share with an electronic gaming machine measure that will generate up to \$30 million a year. This is something that we are working on. The first tranche of the

Labor government's response to the royal commission included the removal of arrangements with Crown introduced by the previous coalition government which prevented the state from changing regulations without having to pay compensation. It is a fair and reasonable change that will pave the way for fairer taxation arrangements due to legislation again passed by the previous coalition government on ideological grounds. Crown for too long has benefited from preferential tax treatment.

SDA—specialist disability accommodation—is a dwelling that has been specially designed to cater for the needs of people with sensory, intellectual, cognitive or physical impairment, and building on taxation changes to support Victorians with a disability, the bill also provides an exemption from land tax for land on which an SDA-enrolled dwelling is being constructed. This construction phase exemption will be available for a maximum of two tax years and will operate retrospectively from the 2020 land tax year onwards. This builds on the previous initiative on motor vehicle duty to ensure the tax system works in a way that supports Victorians living with a disability.

As announced as part of the 2021–22 budget, our government is introducing a windfall gains tax on rezoning decisions that create a land value uplift of more than \$100 000. The windfall tax has come under criticism from those in the other place and on the opposite side of this chamber, but this is an important integrity measure that takes sugar off the table and ensures proceeds are returned to the community and we avoid a situation like we saw at Fishermans Bend with the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Planning. The windfall gains tax, now to come into effect on 1 July 2023, will ensure that the community receives a fair share of the value generated from government rezoning decisions. Since its introduction the government, led by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer, has been consulting widely with industry ahead of its commencement. As part of this process the government has agreed to an up-front exemption from the windfall gains tax for land owned by an Australian university in certain circumstances, because Labor will always consider the impact on education institutions in decision-making.

On land tax this bill replaces the current refund model for a recently constructed or renovated principal place of residence with an up-front exemption from land tax, including a clawback mechanism if the exemptions requirements are not fully met. The new exemption does not require the land tax to be paid up-front and will reduce financial burden and red tape for landowners. It will also be consistent with the rest of the PPR exemption provisions, which provide an up-front exemption rather than a refund. The amendment will take effect from 1 July this year, and this means that if a construction or renovation of a principal place of residence is completed on or after 1 July, the landowner may apply for an up-front exemption for the 2023 tax year onwards.

The bill confirms that an exemption from payroll tax applies to certain wages paid under employment agency and other related arrangements. The amendment is intended to confirm the longstanding policy position in Victoria that an exemption from payroll tax is available for wages paid to service providers by an employment agent where the agent supplies their common-law employees to a client who is exempt from payroll tax, like charities and public hospitals. This initiative seeks to strengthen Victoria's existing law and brings it into line with New South Wales, where a similar exemption is provided for wages paid to service providers that are the common-law employees of the employment agent.

As an important note, the bill amends the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to permit the disclosure of protected information to certain specified commonwealth enforcement bodies and to enable further commonwealth enforcement bodies to be prescribed by regulation. These bodies include the Australian Financial Security Authority, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre and member bodies of the Phoenix Taskforce where the disclosure is in connection with their law enforcement or public revenue protection activity. This change also seeks to authorise the secondary disclosure of protected information with the consent of the person to whom the information relates. The amendment also authorises secondary disclosure to one new situation where the person to whom the information relates gives consent to a secondary disclosure by the recipient from a tax officer.

In closing, on the points those on the other side are making regarding raising taxes, I ask that they bring some provable facts to the table. The Andrews Labor government has cut or abolished taxes and fees 57 times since coming to government, and this includes increasing the payroll tax free threshold twice since coming to government so that fewer small to medium-sized businesses pay any payroll tax. This was a key part of the drivers of business support measures our government offered during the pandemic. And last July we cut the regional payroll tax to 1.2125 per cent, just one-quarter of the metropolitan rate and the lowest in the nation. Additionally, we supported businesses through the worst of the pandemic with payroll tax cuts that saved Victorian businesses around \$1.7 billion up to 2021–22 and about \$4 billion over the forward estimates.

It is interventions like this that have seen the regional unemployment rate fall to 3.2 per cent, the lowest in the nation and less than half of what it was when those opposite were voted out of office. Within their list of 42 alleged new or increased taxes, it is of concern that those opposite include the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax, which they not only voted for but supported vocally. They also include the mental health levy, which they now apparently support, but they are contrary on this so it is plausible this position will change as well. In closing, I am just going commend this bill to the house with a minute left.

**Ms BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (15:29): I rise to speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is a bill that does a number of things. The bill amends the Duties Act 2000 to give an exemption to accessible commercial passenger vehicles such as taxis from motor vehicle duty. I might discuss disability access a bit later. I will not focus on that, however.

The bill amends the Land Tax Act 2005 to replace the refund model for recently built or renovated principal places of residence with an exemption from land tax. It also exempts land on which specialist disability accommodation is being constructed from land tax. It amends the Payroll Tax Act 2007 to ensure certain wages paid under employment agency contracts are exempt. It is also a bill that amends the Windfall Gains Tax and State Taxation and Other Acts Further Amendment Act 2021—just last year—to allow land owned by a university in certain circumstances to be exempt from windfall gains tax. This may be a good initiative in some circumstances, but it certainly will not make a difference in my region, the electorate of South-West Coast. The windfall gains tax, if I can just take you back and remind people of what this is, will see the government take 50 per cent of the windfall after land is rezoned as residential and sold off. It is expected to make the government an annual income of \$40 million a year. The government says it is targeting greedy developers, but the tax will actually impact farmers who are now on the urban fringes of growth areas in South-West Coast in areas like Warrnambool, Portland, Port Fairy and Koroit. There is already a massive shortage of available land in South-West Coast, and this tax will only make things much worse. The people who are involved in real estate and understand the market tell me that you could not buy a block of land in Warrnambool or its surrounds for two to three years if you wanted to, so the shortage is extreme.

When the land is rezoned and sold and developed, the costs are going to be passed on, and this will actually drive up the price of land. This will turn people away from the market. We see that with developing properties there are about 21 taxes on a property, so when someone goes to build a house there are 21 taxes—and this is from a government that said there would be no new taxes. The Premier in 2014 said, ‘Under my watch there will be no new taxes’, but we hear not only of a windfall gains tax—it is only one of 42 taxes. I am sorry, it just makes no sense when you could not get a block of land for two to three years because there are just none available. When land is unavailable, why would you introduce a new tax which will disincentivise and raise the price? It is just nonsensical. We need to be fast-tracking land. We need to be reducing the red tape associated with the development of land.

We have a massive housing crisis. All this government is doing is making that worse. The Andrews Labor government clearly do not understand how markets work and the flow-on effect this tax will have. I will tell you now, there will be farmers, most of them, who will say, ‘I’m not selling’, and they will just sit on that land. Why would you sell your asset and lose half of it? You are better off sitting on it and waiting for this madness—

**Mr Pearson:** Do you understand how rezoning works?

**Ms BRITNELL:** Well, that is how the farmers—

**Mr Pearson:** Do you understand how rezoning works? If it is at \$100 an acre and it gets rezoned to \$1000, it just makes sense.

**Ms BRITNELL:** I think I am speaking. I am just making the point that I am the one who is actually speaking.

**Mr Pearson** interjected.

**Ms BRITNELL:** I am very confident that what I am saying is quite accurate, and the reality is generational farmers will not sell. They will be severely disadvantaged, and the land will not become available—

*Members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards):** Order! The Minister for Creative Industries! The member for Polwarth! I am having trouble hearing the member speak.

**Ms BRITNELL:** The government sees this as a river of gold that it is easily going to tap into, but it is not going to do anything except create more long-term problems around affordability. I have people coming into my office every day saying they cannot get a rental property and they cannot move to the area and take on jobs. Women who have left difficult family situations are sleeping in their cars. The social housing need is extreme. We have over 800 people waiting for a place on social housing lists. We cannot keep people in houses when we do not make land available so we cannot build more, we cannot then rent and we cannot then have people in social housing. It is the whole of the flow-on effect that is affected. We are in a desperate situation for more houses, and this is doing the exact opposite of what we need to do. I cannot stress more clearly that if you want to keep wasting money and keep taxing, you are not going to provide opportunity. You are going to make the cost of living greater.

This government has put 42 new taxes into the system since they made that promise to Victorians. The Premier, when he spoke to Victorians the night before the election in 2014, said, ‘I guarantee there will be no new taxes under my watch’. So it is really, really shameful that we stand here with a state taxation bill and we talk about a windfall tax that is going to get money from ‘greedy developers’. It is not greedy developers; it will be passed on through the chain, the people purchasing land will actually pay more and that will put the price of housing up. There is no other way of actually explaining that. When you have got a community in Warrnambool, Portland and Heywood desperate for houses and when you have got 1 per cent unemployment and people desperately looking for people to come into the region to fill jobs and you cannot house them, you need to do more to fast-track land. You do not tax land and make it more expensive. It makes it unavailable. It will not bring through more land to the market, and if I have not had that made clear to me by the community around me, who are trying to solve this problem, I do not know. They are certainly sharing it to me, so they must be telling the government this is madness as well.

I will go now back to the disability access part of this bill, which makes services more accessible. I will raise the point of the VLocity trains that are supposedly coming to Warrnambool. They will have disability access, but we have been waiting since the promised VLocity trains were—

**Mr Riordan:** 2017.

**Ms BRITNELL:** mentioned in 2017. That is right, member for Polwarth. In July 2017 the government announced that they would build these VLocity carriages for the Warrnambool line. Now in 2022 we finally see it allocated in the budget but with absolutely, again, no understanding and no time line of when this will finally be delivered. There is a government here that says it cares about the disabled community. Well, I will just tell you a story about a 21-year-old young man who went on the train; it did not have a disability access toilet, and his father had to pick him up and carry him through

three carriages so he could be placed on and use the toilet. How demeaning for a 21-year-old young gentleman to have to go through that. We are in 2022. To have a disability and be put through that shame is totally unacceptable, so it is time to deliver those VLocity trains—not in another five years, like we have been waiting five years now, but today. It is so disgraceful that you cannot access a disabled service to get to Melbourne for any appointment or any activity you want to do and you cannot even use the toilets in the train station in Warrnambool—the door opens the wrong way and traps you if you are in a wheelchair. So it is a disgrace that we are living in this day and age and we have got more taxes to deal with and no accessible services for people with a disability who deserve the right to respect and who want to get on with living and should be able to get on with living. This Labor government continually says it is assisting with that, and it is not delivering.

Again, I recommend quite strongly that this windfall tax be removed and we find ways to fast-track more land, cut the red tape and deliver more land for the community so we can house the community and solve some of the problems we have got. We have got desperate people wanting and needing housing so we can grow our regions and get on with a better Victoria when we recover and rebuild this state from the mess Labor have created.

**Mr HAMER** (Box Hill) (15:38): It is terrific for me to rise today and add my contribution to the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I do want to talk about the windfall gains tax in time, but I do want to start by just addressing some of the other elements of the bill. As has been mentioned, one of the acts that the bill seeks to amend is the Duties Act 2000 to provide an exemption from motor vehicle duty in relation to certain wheelchair-accessible motor vehicles that provide the unbooked commercial passenger vehicle services. That is an exemption that currently exists for privately owned vehicles which have been modified for use to transport either the owner or a family member with a disability but will now be extended to apply to a commercial passenger vehicle so we can support the provision of more unbooked taxis available for service and give those who use a wheelchair more transport options.

I know, as the member for Mordialloc said, it is an issue that Mr Barton of the other place has been pushing and will be an important reform for those who need it most and those in our community who rely on accessible transport. It will save eligible commercial passenger vehicle owners who provide unbooked services between \$2700 and \$4700 in motor vehicle duties, depending on whether concessions were to apply, and that is on the purchase of a \$90 000 wheelchair-accessible commercial passenger vehicle. There are only 975 wheelchair-accessible commercial vehicles registered with Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria, and Victorians who need a wheelchair take more than 1 million commercial passenger trips per year. So this measure will hopefully expand that number and enable more vehicles to provide that offering to those people living with a disability.

The bill also proposes a number of changes to the Land Tax Act 2005, including replacing the provision for a land tax refund for land where a person is absent because of the construction or renovation of a residence, and it provides an exemption from land tax for land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling provided by a provider is being constructed. SDA-enrolled dwellings have been eligible for land tax exemptions since the 2020 land tax year but only once construction was complete, and now this change will be expanded to include up to two years of construction and will apply retrospectively so anyone who paid land tax duty since 2020 may be entitled to a tax refund. Again, this is about changing the tax system to help Victorians with a disability and relieve the financial burden of land tax while the future disability accommodation is under construction, and it will bring the treatment applied to these dwellings in step with other specialist accommodation types, including supported residential services. In relation to the exemption for recently constructed or renovated principal places of residence, it replaces the current refund-based system so that rather than having to pay the tax and applying for a refund once owners have moved in, these changes will reduce red tape by applying an up-front exemption, as well as a clawback mechanism if the exemption requirements are not fully met.

I do want to talk a little bit about the windfall gains tax and particularly how it applies to my electorate of Box Hill. I know there were a couple of examples over the last five or six years where land was sold at an extraordinary premium. There was a car park which was sold for more than \$50 million—just a car park in Box Hill—and there was also an old haberdashery store, a single-level haberdashery store of 4000 square metres, which was sold at about the same time for about the same amount, about \$50 million. The windfall gains tax is precisely looking at that type of engagement. People, if they were lucky enough to own a property in Box Hill for many, many years—10 years, 50 years, however long it might have been—and due to changes in the planning in Box Hill over years that value has gone up, are obviously going to get some increase in value and sometimes a massive increase in value. But with that value also comes a responsibility to be able to provide the community facilities that are going to come with the development that proceeds on those sites. All of those sites are now earmarked for very large developments, only a portion of which is collected through an open-space development levy which applies at the end of process on the development side.

Allowing a mechanism to capture some of that value is of critical importance to being able to put that back particularly into the local area, where so much growth is occurring. We have seen what happened when this did not occur, particularly in Fishermans Bend, where the land was all sold off and then the government, at significant cost, had to go back and repurchase land that had been already rezoned as a residential zone to allow for community facilities to be built and allow for education facilities to be built. This argument has been very well prosecuted previously. It was supported at the time, obviously, by the government and me, and I continue to support it today.

In relation to the changes that this bill does propose in relation to the windfall gains tax, I guess the challenge with the windfall gains tax is that some beneficiaries from the property price rise, the property price uplift, would not necessarily be private developers or private institutions. The amendment reflects the government's agreement that Australian-owned universities that profit from rezoning decisions can apply for an up-front exemption from the windfall gains tax on land that they own as long as they can satisfy the commissioner of the State Revenue Office that the revenue generated from any rezoned land would be used for the university's charitable purposes, such as reinvesting profits into education offerings. This is an important exemption and allowance. Particularly I think of some of the land around Deakin University, which is very close to the seat of Box Hill, and I know there have been some discussions with the university about other parcels of land in and around that vicinity. They do need to keep growing. I remember, having gone to school next door, when there were really just one or two campuses on that site. It has really grown enormously, and having that, I guess, flexibility within the taxation system will certainly be of benefit.

Just finally, the bill also provides some clarity for certain wages paid under employment agency or other similar arrangements and confirms that an exemption from payroll tax applies. Where an agency supplies workers to a client who is exempt from payroll tax, the payroll tax exemption is available for any wages paid to that employee. I strongly commend the bill to the house.

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (15:48): I rise today to contribute to the debate on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Listening to the contributions from the government on this bill, it will come as no surprise to the people of Polwarth that this government fundamentally misunderstands its responsibility as a prudent, sensible, forward-thinking government. Contributions today have talked about the fact that government is good because it continues to increase taxes, it does not cut services and it provides for Victorians. What they leave out of that narrative of course is value for money in the way it spends the taxes that it collects. This government has seen more than a doubling of its tax take from Victorians through a couple of key tax measures that it has—payroll tax and land tax and other duties. In recent times, despite its promises back in 2014 that it would not increase taxes, it has in fact increased 42 taxes here in Victoria, and one of the most egregious ones of course is the windfall gains tax, which is again mentioned in this legislation that we are debating today.

Now, the government is making much of the fact that it is making things a little bit easier for universities—those institutions that are long-suffering and underfunded, those institutions that have

no money—but they are not thinking about hardworking Victorian families, particularly those in regional Victoria. The windfall gains tax is going to be one of the single biggest obstructions to getting affordable and accessible housing in regional Victoria. Unlike this government, I understand that most of the land in rural and regional Victoria is controlled not by big wealthy developers, not by big corporations, not by big government, but by small landowners, by people who have often scrimped and saved and have small parcels of land around the fringes of our towns. They will now not be in a position to do the subdivision that they want to do to provide the land that community needs. In fact in my home town of Colac I know there are many, many families, small groups and small landowners who are being stifled by the uncertainty that this tax has inflicted upon them and the community. This government fundamentally misunderstands that home availability, accessibility and affordability come from supply. Increase supply and you put downward pressure on prices and costs and you make things more available to the community. With the windfall gains tax amendment in this piece of legislation before the Parliament they are thinking about the universities. They are giving them a bit of a free kick, but they are making mums and dads at home pay the cost for the incompetence that is now rife in the Treasury here in Victoria.

This windfall gains tax has been sold by the government as the government's fair share from a big gain to be put back into the community. If only that was true. In my own community and across the district of Polwarth and throughout regional Victoria millions of dollars will be collected and transferred from rural and regional Victoria to the big smoke, to Melbourne. And why? Because this government has fundamentally lost control of its budget. It has fundamentally lost control of its big projects in Melbourne. We are hearing it regularly. We thought it was going to be about \$24 billion worth of overspend and out-of-control projects in Melbourne, but it is actually going to be \$28 billion. And in a government in a time when its revenues have more than doubled it has not just doubled its debt, it has not quadrupled its debt, it has increased its debt exponentially with no end in sight. Victorians are expected to pay the price for that. They are going to pay with less available land, less accessible land and most importantly less affordable land.

It is not only those wanting to get into the housing market that will pay through the taxation incompetence of this government but the older self-funded retirees—those that have scrimped and saved to have a small nest egg, a small commercial property or a couple of tenancies where they are providing a small but modest income for themselves over time. They are being taxed out of their retirement. They are being taxed out of their own self-reliance and the provision that they have made for superannuation, to the point where there are now commercial properties in high streets around rural and regional Victoria, around the state, where the tax bill is almost more than what they can collect in rent. That is simply unfair, and that is an impost that this government wilfully inflicts on people who have worked hard all their life, who have made provision for their future, who have paid their fair share of tax.

This government regularly talks about a fair share. Well, it is about time people who have contributed throughout their lives, who have made provision for themselves into their retirement, get their fair share, because at the moment this government is absolutely without question taking way more than its fair share. And it is taking its fair share and it is having to use it to cover up for the waste and mismanagement and the ballooning of projects right across Melbourne. This government has unleashed an absolutely irresponsible raft of projects without the proper control and prudence that Victorians absolutely expect it to have.

There is also the fact that payroll tax is another huge dampener. This government has not implemented the reforms it needs to in payroll tax. There has been some tinkering around the edges for some regional businesses, and while that has been very welcome in rural and regional Victoria, the fact is the thresholds are way too low. At \$700 000 a modest business on a payroll of around \$1 million in Melbourne will be forking out the best part of another full wage in tax, and that tax is a tax on business. It is a tax on employing people. It is a tax on making Victorian businesses more efficient. What that payroll tax does is it incentivises businesses to leave the state or, even worse, leave the country, and we

have heard lots about businesses that have call centres and other services now conducted overseas. That is how they get around it. It is a disincentive to employing and growing the workforce here in Victoria.

This State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill sadly makes no reference to something the resources industry has been talking to this government for a long time about, and that is reform for the gold tax. The gold tax is yet another hit on the industry. It is a short-term vision, this tax, because what it does is it hits an industry that needs and relies on research and investment. It does not incentivise anybody or any company, any resource company, to put the investment into developing further gold resources. We know Victoria is rich with gold. We only have to look around this magnificent chamber to realise the wealth that our state has benefited from. But this government is using its taxation measures, its lust for more cash, because they have lost control of the budget. They are doing whatever they can to put their big, long, sticky fingers into every possible pie of cash that they can find in the state of Victoria, with no vision on what their responsibilities are as a prudent government. They are not coming back to the people of Victoria and saying, 'Oh, guess what, people of Victoria? We're actually undertaking a project, and not only are we going to deliver it on time'—which is a basic courtesy of government—'but we're actually going to deliver it on budget. And if we say it's going to cost \$1 billion, it's going to cost \$1 billion'. But not these guys. They are actually shameless. They are perfectly happy to stand here in this magnificent chamber and admit to the fact that they are not only \$1 billion over or \$2 billion over or \$3 billion; they are happy to stand up there with a straight face and admit to projects blowing out by \$10 billion. And they do not think twice about it because of those big, sticky Treasury fingers that they are happy to put into the pockets of hardworking retirees and of people seeking to find affordable land for their first home. They are happy to continue to tax businesses and payrolls.

So this State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill is just a confirmation that this government has not got its priorities right. It does not prioritise prudence over waste. It does not prioritise fair taxation over putting heavy taxation burdens on certain people. This government has not been responsible. Its spending continues to be out of control.

**Ms CONNOLLY** (Tarnet) (15:59): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. It is a greater pleasure to follow the member for Polwarth in his contribution. I am smiling over here because I am someone who lives in one of the largest growth corridors in this country and we most certainly benefit from major infrastructure projects that are being paid for through contributions to tax—absolutely reformative projects. I say that and I am pointing to the 11 new schools that we will have built, if re-elected, come—

**Mr Riordan** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards)**: Order! Member for Polwarth!

**Ms CONNOLLY**: I am sorry, member for Polwarth, you have had your time. We have spent it on schools, hospitals, \$1.8 billion on roads. And, yes, we are going to spend it on the West Gate Tunnel, which is costing more than initially we thought, but we know in the western suburbs we need this tunnel more than any other projects probably in the history of families moving out west. The West Gate Tunnel will absolutely be one of the biggest reformative projects that this government could have and will have delivered for families in Melbourne's western suburbs.

When I reflect on the debate that has gone on in this chamber this afternoon—I have listened very carefully to those opposite—it can sometimes be a little bit tough. Listening to the member for Polwarth there at the end, I almost thought he was going to stand up and say he stands for a fairer, more equitable Victoria. And then I realised what side of the chamber, member for Polwarth, you stand on, and that most certainly could not be true, whether you are talking about tax or any other project that is delivered in this state. I have listened to those opposite go on and on about our government and accuse us of raising taxes, and sometimes I feel like we have got a little bit of an old-fashioned tune happening here and maybe a little jingle that they want to get up and sing. You know,



the one we have just heard recently that did not have any sort of effect in the community—the ‘There’s a hole in your budget’ type jingle. I imagine that they would sell the point that they are trying to make much more effectively if that jingle was not so annoying and emphatically rejected right across Victoria and indeed Australia.

The reality is of course that our government has not raised taxes 42 times, as those opposite continue to assert. In fact we have cut or abolished taxes and fees 57 times since coming to government in 2014—57 times. Now, those opposite might be surprised to know that our government on this side of the house, the Andrews Labor government, has a very strong record of cutting taxes and making things easier for Victorians, because on this side of the house we are all about a fairer and more equitable Victoria for all Victorians. We have raised the tax-free threshold for payroll tax twice, making things easier for small and medium businesses in Victoria to get by.

I was sitting in my office just a while ago listening to the member for Caulfield make his contribution, and I absolutely reject the notion that the Liberal Party and the National Party here in this state stand for and stand by Victorian small businesses. We saw that at no greater time than during the last two years and the global pandemic. This government and this side of the house stood by small businesses in a way that we have probably never seen before in this state. The amount of money that was injected to small businesses, to mums and dads and to those families right across Victoria in their time of need, in their darkest hour, was extraordinary. Whether that was through constant grants and funding that were put into their bank accounts or whether it was through mentoring and mental health programs, whatever they needed, we were there to help them get by.

But what made me angriest when listening to the member for Caulfield make his contribution about small business and how we have somehow not stood by them and ruined them—you know, the member for Caulfield talks about the longest lockdowns in the world here in Victoria—is that he fails to recognise that the lockdown last year was caused because the Prime Minister, his mate in Canberra, failed to follow the advice and order enough vaccines before COVID really hit this country. We should have been vaccinated. Victorians and Australians should have been vaccinated before we ended up in that last lockdown, and that is what made me angriest.

Of all the lockdowns, we should not have been in that situation, because the Prime Minister failed Australia and failed Victorians. They failed small businesses. Small businesses were hurt because of the time that it took for us to deliver the vaccine rollout. And when the vaccines arrived the Prime Minister, the Liberal Party and the coalition government could not even get the messaging right. An education awareness campaign—again we had to step in and do their job for them. The best thing that the Liberal and National Party here on that side of the house could have and should have done, which the member for Caulfield should reflect on, is that they should have picked up the phone and spoken to their mates in Canberra, begging them to get those vaccines into the arms of Victorians so we could open back up and small businesses could get back on their feet. I bet not one of them made one of those phone calls.

Now, I want to talk about regional payroll tax. We have cut the regional payroll tax to just a quarter of the metropolitan rate. That means regional businesses have been able to thrive, giving us the lowest unemployment rate in this country at less than half of what it was when this government came to office. That is not even mentioning the tax relief that businesses received during the pandemic, and as I said before, that was extraordinary. Huge amounts of money went into helping businesses during the pandemic.

I want to look at some of these tax increases that the opposition keep talking about. Might they include the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax which, let us remember, they voted for and emphatically were in support of? Might they include the mental health levy to support rebuilding our mental health system? Well, you will forgive me for not knowing or not being able to recall whether or not they actually supported that one. I think I saw absentee landowner surcharges for foreign purchasers listed six times in their list—a seventh of these new or increased taxes. And let me remind

those opposite that tax on foreign purchasers is not making life tougher for ordinary Victorians. Rather, this tax makes it easier for Victorians to buy a home in an increasingly difficult market so that first home buyers or local property investors, if you are worried about them, are not being outbid by foreign developers. So for the life of me I cannot wrap my head around this dodgy list that the opposition have cooked up and continue to cook up about taxes.

I think the federal election has now shown us how Victorians reacted to their rhetoric on tax. That ‘There’s a hole in your budget, dear Labor; more taxes are coming’ I remember hearing them singing on the news—well, I hate to break it to those opposite, but after Saturday night, ‘There’s a hole in your party, dear Liberals, and more and more and more losses will be coming at you. I think we will see how this rhetoric does play out and what matters to Victorians in November, because ordinary Victorians are not listening to this kind of nonsense that is constantly put before the house by those opposite.

But I want to draw back, in the 90 seconds that I have, to make a contribution to this bill, because there are actually some hidden gems in here. So for all this talk about tax increases, if we have a look at what is in the bill, there is actually an exemption for wheelchair-accessible commercial vehicles from paying motor vehicle duty. Now, the Andrews Labor government believes in creating a fairer, more equitable Victoria, and that is for everyone. If you are in a wheelchair, if you have special needs, if you have a disability, we have introduced significant legislative reform to help improve the quality of life for you. This tax will do the same thing. We are talking about having a new wheelchair-accessible vehicle tax exemption, and we know that for Victorians in wheelchairs it is really difficult to find public transport to take them from here to there. There is a struggle to find taxis and Ubers that can accommodate their wheelchairs, and hopefully through this change in this bill this tax will help improve things for people in wheelchairs looking to catch taxis and Ubers and private modes of transport to get them to where they need to go.

This is a great bill. It is going to help improve things for people, whether we are talking about people in wheelchairs being able to access better transport or measures and things like that. This is another great bill that we are introducing to the house to make Victoria fair and equitable.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Crugnale):** The member for Rowswell—no, the member for Sandringham.

**Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:09):** Call me what you like, Acting Speaker. I am here and on my feet and ready to take down the government with this contribution on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. It is all right; we all make mistakes, and I am about to admit a biggie. I did make a mistake in this chamber historically. I once during the course of a government business program debate said that the government’s only economic plan for Victoria was to tax and spend, tax and spend, tax and spend, trying to echo the sentiment of Mr Squiggle, a childhood character of mine. But I was wrong. I am happy to admit that I was wrong. It has become clearer to me since I made that contribution in this place some time ago that the government’s only economic plan is really to tax and waste, tax and waste, tax and waste. You need to measure that with the following: Victoria at the moment is carrying the largest debt of all states and territories. Victoria’s debt is heading to a combined total of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania’s. There has been a whopping \$24 billion—\$24 billion, with a ‘b’—that has been blown out in government projects. That amount of money could have paid for some 1600 new schools or, at a time when we are experiencing a health and hospital crisis in this state, 120 000 new ambulances, fully fitted out, on the road, there to help our fellow Victorians at a time when they need it most. The situation in Victoria’s economy is nothing to gloat about; it is particularly shameful.

My interest in matters of taxation goes way back to my first speech in this place. From a philosophical perspective I do not like tax. This side of the house does not like tax. When we say there will be no new taxes, we mean there will be no new taxes, unlike the Premier in that famous interview with Channel 7 on—

**Mr Battin:** With Peter Mitchell.

**Mr ROWSWELL:** Yes, with Peter Mitchell on Seven News—thank you, member for Gembrook—on the eve of the 2014 election. When we say there will be no new taxes, we absolutely mean there will be no new taxes. In December 2018, when I made my first contribution in this place, I said:

Let me be clear: payroll tax is a tax on employment. It is a bad tax that prevents enterprising individuals from expanding their business horizons. It is a barrier to more people being employed. It should always be the aspiration of the Liberal Party, in opposition or government, for the payroll tax in this state to be zero. When Robert Menzies founded the Liberal Party he did so in the belief that our party would be the party of enterprise and of the individual. There is no greater barrier to employment and the dignity of work than the burden of taxes and over-regulation.

That final sentence especially—‘There is no greater barrier to employment and the dignity of work than the burden of taxes and over-regulation’—is truer now than it has ever been before. We look back to the last two years: a one-in-100-year event, as we are continually reminded of, and yes, there have been significant health implications. But equally there have been significant economic implications as well, and the solution in these times is not to simply tax more and spend more, tax more and waste more; the solution is to remove the tax burden so enterprising individuals can create jobs. The phrase ‘the dignity of work’ is not some sort of esoteric thing that is far removed from the realities of our daily lives. The dignity of work means that people do not just have a job but have an opportunity to feel worth, to feel dignity, to provide for themselves, to provide for their families, to pay their school fees, to pay their mortgages, to save up and to take their families on a holiday. Very often in this place we talk about numbers as if they are far removed from reality, not recognising the impact that those opportunities actually have on the lives of people. I think it is important for us to be reminded of that.

Victorians hoping for a bit of hip pocket relief in the Victorian budget this year are sadly disappointed, and they will be hit with billions of dollars of increased taxation, including an increased \$603 million in land tax, up 14.2 per cent; \$1.5 billion in stamp duty on land transfers, up 22.6 per cent; and \$1.1 billion in payroll tax—that dreaded payroll tax—up 17 per cent just in the coming year.

I would like to spend the final time that I have articulating for those who may be interested just some of the new and increased taxes and charges introduced by the Andrews Labor government since November 2014: a new stamp duty on property transfers between spouses; an increased stamp duty on new cars; a new stamp duty on off-the-plan purchases; a new so-called vacant home tax; a widening of vacant residential land tax to uninhabitable properties; retrospective increases in insurance duty for overseas-based insurers; a new annual property valuation to increase land tax; a cladding rectification tax; an environment litigation levy; an increase to the luxury car tax; increased land tax for homes with contiguous blocks on a separate title; an increased fire services property levy not only in 2015–16 but in 2019–20; a new point-of-consumption gambling tax; a tripling of brown coal royalties; gold mining royalties; a new tax on Uber and taxi fares; a new corporate restructure duty; increased foreign stamp duty not only in 2019–20 but in 2016–17 and 2015–16; an increased absentee landowner surcharge for foreign property; an increased absentee owner surcharge for foreign property in 2019–20, 2016–17 and 2015–16; a new city access tax for the West Gate Tunnel; a new on-dock rail charge on imported shipping containers; an increase to the municipal and industrial landfill levy, the bin tax; a road occupation charge on construction companies; a numberplate tax; an electric vehicle tax—I am just two-thirds of the way through; a new affordable housing tax; a windfall gains tax on rezoned land; number 32, an increased land tax on taxable landholdings above \$1.8 million; increased stamp duty on property transactions; an expanded point-of-consumption tax on gambling to keno; a 10 per cent increase to Victorian government penalty units; an expanded land tax on gender-exclusive clubs; a mental health payroll tax surcharge; an increased wagering and betting tax; an increased fire services property levy in 2021–22; a 50 per cent increase to Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages fees; a new family homes tax; and number 42, a proposed levy on employers to fund five days of sick leave for casual employees, initially a government-funded trial but which no doubt will be followed up with a new tax after that two-year trial has concluded.

I conclude where I began: the government's economic plan is quite clearly tax and spend, tax and waste. That is not good for Victorians at this time in our history. That is not good at a time when our community and our economy need optimism and hope, need certainty for the future and need government to frankly get out of the way so private enterprise can get about doing what it does best, and that is creating opportunities for Victorians, giving people a go and giving people an opportunity to work so they can provide for themselves and provide for their families. It is fundamentally who we are as Liberals, and Labor should get out of the way.

**Mr KENNEDY** (Hawthorn) (16:19): I am delighted to be following the member for Sandringham in these matters. It gives me pleasure to speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We all know about the Andrews Labor government's record on the implementation of a progressive taxation system, but I would like to reiterate the fact that across our term in government we have cut or abolished taxes and fees 57 times. Who is counting? I think both sides are doing a bit of counting, and that is my contribution to the count. The member for Sandringham indicated that he did not like taxes, especially payroll taxes, and then he went ahead and named all the taxes that are here in this state of Victoria. He then offered that notion of tax as waste, with an emphasis on the tax and no elucidation on the waste.

When I came into this place, once I worked out what the hell I was doing here I had to think about what would be the mantra for me, and the answer was to look for a Victoria that is fair, productive and compassionate. I keep repeating that, and I quite understand that there is no good wanting something compassionate if there is no productivity to support that compassion, and the same with fairness. But I do have a problem with some of the rhetoric, if you like, that one hears from the other side here and then federally about tax. The late Prime Minister was fond of saying—and I have repeated it actually, so I am as bad as him—and kept saying 'It's your money, it's your money, it's your money' and variations on that theme like 'It's your money. It's your money. It's your money'. That to me was problematic because at no time was there any attempt to say 'Well, with these taxes we will be producing these goods'. Instead of that we salve our conscience by saying 'All you'll be producing is waste, and therefore, because you're producing waste, taxes are wrong'. It is a fairly vacuous argument in my opinion. One really has to say that taxation is there and, while no-one would say they highly embrace taxation, we have to recognise that there is a common good being served in taxation. I would simply repeat that in responding to the member for Sandringham and his dislike of taxes.

Let us talk about the Andrews tax cuts. We have increased the payroll tax free threshold twice since coming into government. Maybe I need to repeat that: we have increased the payroll tax free threshold twice since coming into government. Now fewer small to medium-sized businesses pay any payroll tax at all. Last July we cut the regional payroll tax to 1.2125 per cent, just a quarter of the metropolitan rate and the lowest in Australia. After all, it is because of measures like this that we have seen regional unemployment fall to 3.2 per cent, the lowest in the nation. Even in the pandemic our payroll tax cuts saved Victorian businesses \$1.7 billion up to 2021–22 and will save them around \$4 billion over the forward estimates. These are more than just bland statistics; they are the results of an approach that has balanced the needs of business, individuals and our government to create Australia's best economy.

Now let us turn to the farcical coalition list of 42 new or increased taxes. This appears to have captured their imagination, and they have gone on with monotonous regularity almost to the point of actually believing it. It is genuinely beyond me how the opposition can count the point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax, which they both voted for and supported vocally, on this list. They have also chucked in the mental health levy, which they have finally decided to support after wavering for yonks. How desperate can the opposition get? I understand being scared after the weekend's results, but this is patently absurd. How about the absentee landowner surcharge for foreign purchasers being on the list six times? I did not think it was such a controversial idea that we should work to improve housing supply. For those opposite: it is a fact that taxes on foreign purchasers are not taxes on Victorians. I know by now that we are used to these bad faith arguments from the opposition, but it is clear to all of us that the Andrews government has been a fierce advocate for all Victorians and all Victorian businesses.

What about the increased tax on electronic gaming machines? Now, this is an interesting one. One of the key changes within this bill is that from 2023 Crown's electronic gaming machines will be subject to the same tax rates as those operated by not-for-profit community-based venues like RSLs—fancy that. I would like to take a moment to speak about the harm of these gaming machines. In 2019 Victorians lost \$2.7 billion on these machines. They lost \$460 million in Crown Casino on the pokies alone. I am sure we are familiar with the scourge of pokies in this state. The addiction and ultimate consequences that these machines can visit upon their victims is a modern tragedy, and now the first group of changes in our response to the royal commission includes the coalition-introduced laws that prevented the state from changing regulations in respect to Crown without having to pay compensation. This is a change that makes our tax system fairer. Crown does not deserve preferential tax treatment.

Indeed I am going to read to you a selection of Ray Finkelstein's words used to describe Crown Melbourne, which formed a headline in the *Age*: 'Disgraceful, illegal, dishonest, unethical, exploitative, alarming'—otherwise everything is okay. These are not words used to describe an organisation that deserves preferential tax treatment, and indeed I am thrilled that this government has boosted funding to the new regulator, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. Crown may have kept its licence, but it is vital that it comes under intense regulatory scrutiny and that the ramifications are felt not just at Crown but across the entire gambling industry. I am sure we have all seen recently that they already commenced disciplinary proceedings against Crown Melbourne. It is not just one regulator taking issue with Crown, though, as a statement of claim was lodged by the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre for contraventions of anti-money-laundering and counterterrorism financing laws. The case for this change is clear, and I am glad that oversight of Crown is not a lottery anymore.

The windfall gains tax is another one that it just surprises me people are shedding—well, probably crocodile—tears over. As we are aware, the 2021–22 budget saw that the government introduced the windfall gains tax on rezoning decisions that create an increase in land value of more than \$100 000. This will allow the community to receive their fair share of the value from the government rezoning decisions. It will allow us to avoid a Fishermans Bend situation, as we all know how the Leader of the Opposition rezoned this area, granting a huge profit to a litany of Liberal cronies. It is no surprise that the remnants of our Victorian Liberals' federal counterparts have been opposed to a federal independent commission against corruption with their state branch up to this kind of mischief.

As part of our consultation with stakeholders during the process of developing this measure, we as a government agreed to an up-front exemption on land by an Australian university in certain circumstances. To apply, the university must satisfy the commissioner of state revenue that any revenue derived from the rezoned land will be used for the charitable purposes of the university. I am glad that this state government backs universities, and I am excited to have a federal government that appreciates these institutions as well. Whilst many elements of this bill may appear to be incremental, together they combine to significantly improve our taxation system.

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) (16:29): Unlike the pearl clutchers just around this side of the house a little bit further from me, who have been expressing their shock and awe over the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—the quite reasonable taxation measures that have been introduced within this year's state budget—I welcome these changes, and I simply do not see why you could not welcome measures like, in particular, the motor vehicle duty exemption for wheelchair-accessible commercial passenger vehicles providing unbooked services.

I have spoken a number of times in this place about loving the High Country and wanting it to be accessible for everyone, and I am looking forward to the opening of the ski season in a couple of weeks time and reconnecting with Disabled Wintersport Australia, of which I am a member. After two long years of not being able to volunteer I am really looking forward to volunteering and helping participants with a disability achieve their goals in the High Country. Whether they have a mobility disability, are vision impaired, have Down syndrome or are on the spectrum, Disabled Wintersport

takes all comers, but a lot of the focus is mostly on those with mobility issues. We have seen a number of those people go on and represent Australia in the Paralympics, but it takes a lot. I have seen in my volunteer work particularly with people with disability the courage and bravery of those with a mobility disability, and for them to come to the High Country or participate in any sport is much harder. It is also harder to participate in work, so this is a fantastic budget measure.

In the budget what is changing—if this bill passes this house and the house next door—is that from 1 July 2022 an exemption from motor vehicle duty will apply to new or near-new wheelchair-accessible vehicles that will be registered as commercial passenger vehicles and meet the relevant requirements to provide unbooked services—that is, taxi rank and hail work. If the vehicle is not new—that is, it has been registered before in Victoria or another jurisdiction—the exemption will only apply if it has been less than two years since the vehicle was first registered. We want the safest and best vehicles on the road carrying around people with disability. Currently an exemption from the motor vehicle duty is available for a privately owned motor vehicle that has been or will be specially converted to provide wheelchair access to the owner or a family member, and a commercial passenger vehicle converted for wheelchair access may also qualify for an existing \$24 000 reduction in the dutiable value of the vehicle if the vehicle is new—that is, previously unregistered.

The amendment expands and complements the current suite of motor vehicle duty exemptions and concessions for the transport of people with a disability, handicap or other injury by providing a new full exemption for a vehicle that is converted for wheelchair access to be used to provide unbooked commercial passenger vehicle services and such services as are currently provided by the traditional taxi industry. Accordingly, this measure is directed at supporting more wheelchair-accessible taxis. I think that particularly at a time when we have a massive skill shortage in Australia—there are many jobs in Australia and Victoria that are being unfilled—and I know that when I have travelled in Europe it is really much more common to see people with disability in the workplace, it needs to be more common in Australia and in Victoria. Australia has the lowest rate of employment of people with disability in the OECD, and it is measures like this that can turn that around. We want people with disability to be able to get to work, whether it is driving themselves or whether it is getting on an accessible bus or in an accessible taxi.

So I am just not from the school that the minute you say the word ‘tax’, that tax is bad. Exemptions from tax are good, like this one, but our taxes actually fund the services that our community needs. I note that the opposition are apparently a late convert to the mental health levy, but I simply am not very trusting of them when they say things like that, given how long they have been opposed to it.

Other measures in this State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill include replacing the current refund model for recently constructed or renovated principal places of residence with an up-front exemption from land tax, including the clawback mechanism; expanding the exemption for land under construction to include land on which a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling is being constructed—yet another measure where we are seeing how we assist people with disability to live and work in our community; confirming that an exemption applies to wages paid by employment agents who on-hire their common law employees to clients that are exempt from payroll tax; clarifying the point in time at which a deemed assessment, for land transfer duty purposes, is taken to have been made and served where the dutiable transaction is processed using the online payment system; and confirming that an estimate of duty is not an assessment of tax.

The bill makes further amendments to permit the disclosure of protected information to specified commonwealth enforcement bodies and enable further commonwealth enforcement bodies to be prescribed by regulation. The bill proposes to remove the prohibition on secondary disclosures of protected information where the person to whom the information relates consents to the initial disclosure. It places a maximum five-year time limit on the discretion to permit late lodgement of an out-of-time objection and provides an exemption from the windfall gains tax for rezoned land owned by a university in certain circumstances. The bill also amends the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987 to provide financial accommodation with an associated statutory guarantee to local councils

under that act and replace the mechanisms that specify all the persons and bodies to which certain powers apply under the act with a power for such bodies to be prescribed in regulations. And it amends the Essential Services Commission Act 2001 to clarify funding arrangements.

In relation to the Borrowing and Investment Powers Act, something that I know you, Acting Speaker Crugnale, given that we both represent the Shire of Nillumbik, understand is that they have a very small rate base, a small population and a large geographic area to deliver services to and to provide infrastructure to. Councils having the ability to borrow and to be supported by state government and get their interest rate at the same rate as state government is able to borrow at just means that things can be brought forward and can be built for the benefit of the community, so I am glad that we are doing further work in that.

Some of the things I mentioned earlier relate to connections with the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre, and so it is very important that we are able to ensure that we are working with AUSTRAC to make sure that duties are properly paid but also that we are able to follow where they are going—follow the money, essentially. There is a large suite of changes that are proposed in this amendment bill. I thank the Treasurer and the Assistant Treasurer for their work on this and the public servants who drafted it, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms SULEYMAN** (St Albans) (16:39): I rise today to also speak on the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As many speakers have said today, this is a significant bill for our community and of course our state. Since the Andrews Labor government came in we have cut or abolished taxes some 57 times, and during the pandemic alone we were able to support Victorians, in particular small businesses, by saving \$1.7 billion from payroll tax cuts alone. Just during COVID alone in the City of Brimbank small businesses received financial supports of close to \$292 million from our government. This was extremely critical for most businesses in my electorate so they could continue during these challenging periods to remain open in some way but, most importantly, stay afloat during, as I said, these challenging last two years.

Today I am here to discuss some of the new tax incentives that will bring strong benefits not only to my electorate but also to the Victorian community. This includes motor vehicle duty. It is important that Victorians have access to safe and suitable transport, and our government is seeking to make sure that wheelchair users have access to commercial passenger vehicles without having to book ahead, which at times can create stress and anxiety. This is why an exemption for motor vehicle duty will be introduced for new commercial passenger vehicles, such as taxis, if they meet the requirements for wheelchair accessibility. I know in my electorate this will be an important piece of change. It will also apply to vehicles which are unbooked services, meaning that Victorians can hail them from the side of the road, where it is convenient, or request a ride at a taxi rank. The owner of the vehicle will save thousands in the cost of duty by making sure that their car or vehicle is suitable for everyone to travel in.

This is really important for residents and those community members who have some form of disability and need wheelchair accessibility to be able to travel from A to B. This way there will be more suitable vehicles on roads, which will help, as I said, not only those with disability but family members as well. Of course accessibility is absolutely critical in our community. We want to make sure that every barrier when it comes to transport is removed and people are not limited in their options to travel across their communities.

Just recently I had the pleasure of again visiting the Brimbank Bicycle Education Centre and being able to witness firsthand their disability riding program. I was joined by the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and we were able to see firsthand the great work that the Brimbank Bicycle Education Centre and their volunteers are doing with their local disability agencies to enrich the lives of and provide positive experiences for those who have a disability, whether they are mid aged or whether they are young children. It was great to see some of their programs making sure that Victorians have access to the best opportunities regardless of their ability. The Andrews Labor government is

committed to supporting, as we know, all Victorians, including those with a disability, and this scheme will make a real difference in the lives of so many.

Another part of this amendment is the land tax exemption for specialist disability accommodation. Again, this is another incentive being brought in to support Victorians with a disability—the exemption from land tax. We know the cost of land tax can be pretty high and for some not affordable. Land that has a specialist disability accommodation enrolled dwelling built on it means that the dwelling is in a building that has been specifically designed to support people with sensory, intellectual and physical impairments. That particular building that has that specialised accommodation will be exempt, and also on top of that the exemption will be retrospective, meaning that anyone who paid land tax on eligible properties within the last two years will be able to claim a refund. As I said, we are extremely proud, and this is part of our foundation of supporting Victorians with a disability or people with health conditions. It is just absolutely important that we have the right support programs and the incentives that place Victorians with adequate support. I think that is important, having that adequate support.

Another part of this package will include tax on gaming machines in casinos. For the many years it has been in Melbourne Crown Casino has had a tax advantage over small gaming venues in relation to how much they pay on their electronic gaming machines due to previous decisions by previous governments. We know that gaming machines are big business and bring huge amounts of revenue to Crown and also to smaller venues across the state. Many of these machines are located across Victoria, and of course Brimbank has high losses when it comes to gaming machines. It is clearly appropriate for our government to change the rules to make sure that Crown will pay its fair share when it comes to revenue made from electronic machines. These rules should be applied to all gaming operators equally, and I think that is a fair outcome. This legislation will mean that Crown will need to pay the same amount of tax as every other organisation in relation to gaming machines in Victoria. This will be partly about making it fair and in line with other gaming operators and the revenue that is paid back to the state. Importantly this simple change will generate up to \$30 million per year, and those are significant funds that can be invested back into communities to benefit all Victorians. This is important. Not only will it make it on par with all other gaming operators, but it will also generate that income back to the state.

Of course these reforms are all part of a package and about investing in Victoria, making it fairer, making it equal and building on the state's future, whether that is ensuring Crown Casino pays its fair share, supporting people with a disability, boosting incentives on tertiary education or our government backing the Victorian economy so that we can continue to be the powerhouse of the nation and invest in a fairer and more just state for all Victorians.

We have just seen the in last two years a very challenging period, and I must commend the Treasurer for his steady leadership of our economy and for leading us through a global pandemic. There have been global ramifications that have affected everybody, including Victoria, but we have been able, despite the challenges and despite the negativity, to continue. You know, as I said in my earlier introduction, just in Brimbank alone we have been supporting businesses with over \$200 million in financial support for local businesses during the last two years. We continue to be the government that is steady and continue to be the government that is responsible economically. We are investing back into the community and making those important reforms where they are needed. I thank the Treasurer for this bill.

**Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (16:49):** Those of us of a certain age will recall with some fondness the show the *Muppets*, and it is great to be joined by Waldorf and Statler this evening as I bring the week home with this State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.

**A member** interjected.



**Mr FOWLES:** Well, who is going to be Gonzo, mate? Come on. I am absolutely delighted to be seeing out the week with the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Can I begin by thanking the Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Creative Industries, the member for Essendon, for his work and the work of his team in bringing this bill into the chamber. It is a bill that deals with some big things and it is a bill that deals with some very, very small things, but one of the more substantial things is the important work this bill does in relation to the provision of wheelchair-accessible transport. I notice that the Minister for Public Transport is at the table, and he knows, and those in my community know—even in the case of my staff, we know—that wheelchair accessibility is a critical enabler of those who have the misfortune of being in a wheelchair being able to access employment, access health services, access education and training, so much of it. Whilst there are many more options than there have been in the past, there is always more to do in relation to wheelchair accessibility.

The amendments made in this bill remove one of the cost burdens on those commercial passenger vehicle services that are able to provide unbooked services, the lay term for which is taxis. We are not talking about booked services like DiDi, Uber, the rideshares—those services. It is those services that can be found at a taxi rank or simply hailed on the street. Those services will benefit from an exemption from motor vehicle duty. An exemption is currently available for those private motor vehicles that will be specially converted to provide wheelchair access, and there is already a \$24 000 reduction in the dutiable value of a vehicle where it is used commercially. But what this does is it gets rid of that threshold, simplifies it and just says simply that there is no duty payable. It is not about the dutiable value. There is simply no duty at all. That is a \$2.7 million commitment over the forward estimates period. That is not a vast amount of money in the context of government expenditure, but it makes it really clear to those commercial passenger vehicle providers who are contemplating providing a wheelchair service that they will not be paying stamp duty on the vehicle they use to provide that service. It is an additional incentive, an important incentive to ensure that we continue to have the provision of those services, because it does not matter how good the bus network is, it does not matter how good the tram network is, it does not matter how many flat-floor superstops or whatever we have in place, there will always be a need for specific point-to-point transport for wheelchair-based people. There is no doubt that you are always going to need to have some add-on service because in many cases there are going to be significant limitations on getting, for example, from a regional railway station to home. There is always going to be a need for this sort of commercial passenger vehicle service, and I think this is a very, very good measure to improve the availability of those services by decreasing the tax burden on the provision of them.

There are some land tax amendments in this bill, and they go particularly to the land tax and the stamp duty in relation to land tax when a construction or renovation is happening—a new build on a site. Under the current model it is given back by way of refund at the end of the process. That obviously is a significant cash flow imposition on the taxpayer. We are proposing to make it an exemption that is then available up-front, so the cash never has to be paid and then refunded. Obviously that is administratively simpler, but it is also intrinsically fairer and I think that is a very good reform. In fact it brings us almost identically in line with the way in which that exemption is structured in New South Wales. Of course, there is always the temptation for cynical purveyors of our trade to criticise a policy in the hands of one party and then praise the same policy in the hands of another, but New South Wales got it right. We are happy to be following their model, and we will not seek to take the opportunistic path that others might in seeking to simply criticise a policy based upon the proponents of it rather than the merits of it.

I have 4 minutes left, and I will exhaust my time in order that the whip does not have to wax too lyrical in the 30 seconds he has available to him to close out the week. There is a nigh on overwhelming temptation to sit down, I have got to say, and make him johnny-on-the-spot, but his capacity for retribution is far more significant than mine, and I dare not poke the beast.

**A member:** The bear.

**Mr FOWLES:** Thank you. This bill also introduces an exemption from land tax on specialist disability accommodation. Now, we hear the acronym SDA, and that causes the hackles of some people in our movement to get up, but in fact SDA in this context is specialist disability accommodation, and specialist disability accommodation is entirely worthy of an exemption from land tax. A discrete exemption, a small exemption, has been available since the 2020 land tax year for land that is occupied or available for occupation, but it was not extended to land that was in that construction phase. So what we are doing now is making sure that land in that construction phase, land that is in the process of becoming specialist disability accommodation, is in fact exempted from land tax. That is an entirely sensible measure—a measure that will continue to encourage supply of this very, very important category of accommodation into the market.

There are some further amendments that might be best described as administrative in nature. The Taxation Administration Act 1997 is a ripping read I am told, and I am sure that we could delve right into the detail there, but these amendments are largely administrative in nature. They are not particularly controversial. Perhaps evidence of that is that the opposition is not opposing this bill—evidence of that is in their stance on it.

So there is the windfall gains tax amendment, and the windfall gains tax, as you know, was introduced about this time last year I think. It is a very, very sensible revenue measure, because it ensures that the value uplift that comes from the stroke of the ministerial pen or the stroke of the mayor's pen—that is, the financial uplift that is delivered solely by government action, not just by the passage of time—is shared with the public. That is a very, very sound principle. It is a principle that makes certain that where those landowners have benefited from government action—in many cases government action that they have neither instigated nor sought—they share the revenue and share that uplift or part of that uplift back with the state government.

That windfall gains tax does not kick in until 1 July next year, and it is only for land that increases in value by at least \$100 000. There are plenty of exemptions, like residential land up to 2 hectares, which is 5 acres in the old money, and there are of course some important carve-outs here for things like charities and universities.

So all in all it is a balanced bill, it is sensible bill, it is a bill that supports the very important revenue measures that the state has. We will do our level best to see it carried through this place and the next.

**Mr CHEESEMAM** (South Barwon) (16:59): It is with some pleasure that I make a very, very short contribution on this bill. I think it is fair to say that the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 ought really be read in conjunction with the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022, because of course the tax bill very much goes to the revenue measures that need to underpin the arrangements as spelt out very clearly indeed by the budget. And I must say we need to read both of those bills in the extraordinary circumstances that our government has faced.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The bill will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

**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.

**Motions agreed to.****Read second time.***Third reading***Motions agreed to.****Read third time.**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The bills will now be sent to the Legislative Council and their agreement requested.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.****Adjournment**

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**GAS SUBSTITUTION ROAD MAP**

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (17:01): (6386) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is that she urgently releases the gas substitution road map, which was due late last year and then was meant to be released a few weeks ago. The reason that I have requested this adjournment tonight is that today I received an email from a long-term private regional manufacturer in Stawell, who said to me that their gas supplier for the last two years has been Weston Energy, which was suspended from retailing gas on Tuesday, 24 May 2022. They had been recently, over the last six months, paying an average gas price of around \$12 per gigajoule. Today they received a proposal from AGL, who are listed as the retailer of last resort, with a quoted default rate of \$42.50 per gigajoule. As the business owner has said to me, this is a business-threatening and completely unsustainable increase.

When I spoke with a number of industry participants over the day, what became clear is that Weston Energy has been forced into a position of exiting the gas market because their investors have pulled the pin on their financing, and the reason that their financing has been removed is that there has been no certainty in the Victorian gas market. They specifically mentioned the gas substitution road map and the fact that it had not been released. So we are sitting here with a situation where the state government's policy road map and the lack of its release has led to—I believe—many hundreds of companies being affected by this, but in this particular case I am talking about one in my electorate that is facing a gas price of \$42.50 per gigajoule. It will send them broke. The government needs to act urgently. This has only recently happened—on 24 May, and it is only 26 May today, so it has only just been suspended. The government really needs to take urgent action here. That is why I have stood up on the adjournment today, and I thank my good friend and colleague the member for Gembrook for giving up his adjournment so that I could make this adjournment tonight.

**STRATHAIRD RESERVE**

**Mr MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (17:04): (6387) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Community Sport and concerns the upgrade of facilities at Strathaird Reserve as announced in the state budget. The action I seek is that the minister provide further

information on how this investment will benefit constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South. It really is terrific to see that \$1.5 million has been allocated towards the upgrade of the facilities at Strathaird Reserve. I have for some time now been meeting with the representatives of Narre South Cricket Club, who have had ideas about an upgrade, and I thank them for their advocacy and for their patience as well. I am so pleased that the Andrews Labor government can now make this budget commitment. And it is not only the cricket club—it is Narre South football-netball and junior football clubs, who all use Strathaird Reserve and are all vital parts of our local community, as they provide an opportunity for many to enjoy and play their favourite sports. Sport brings people of all ages together, and this is enhancing social connection and improving physical health and mental wellbeing too. Sport is back, and back in big numbers, now in Narre, as many people are returning to their clubs. But now clubs need the facilities they deserve, especially in catering for the booming interest in women's sport. Modernising the club's facilities should lead to greater participation, diversity and access, and this is a great thing for grassroots sport in my community. I would appreciate any further information that the minister could provide on the upgrade of facilities at Strathaird Reserve and how this will benefit my electorate. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

### HOMELESSNESS

**Ms VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (17:06): (6388) The matter I raise is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is to receive a briefing about housing affordability and accessibility in the Yarra Ranges and what measures are being undertaken to tackle the housing crisis, the massive public housing waiting list and the homelessness crisis under the Andrews Labor government. Sadly, around 120 000 Victorians are on the public housing waiting list, including many in my local community in the Yarra Ranges. That is the worst social housing waiting list of any state in Australia and a shocking legacy of this Andrews Labor government. By the government's own estimates, Victorians will be waiting nearly 17 months for housing, a waiting time that has more than doubled since 2014, since the election of the Andrews Labor government. Vulnerable Victorians need access to housing now. Too many of these Victorians are women and children in my community, with a troubling spike in women over the age of 55 becoming homeless and needing housing support.

Also, there are people that need affordable and accessible housing to take up job opportunities in the Yarra Ranges for jobs in tourism, hospitality, farming and fruit picking, as examples. Andrews's Labor loves the glossy headline—a big build for social housing—but this is really just a big catch-up over a drawn-out 10 years and after many years of underinvestment and mismanagement. What compounds this problem is that despite a widespread understanding that the cost of construction, building and materials is increasing by more than 30 per cent, there has been no increase in funding by the government to credibly achieve this program.

Furthermore, the state budget revealed a savage cut by \$43 million annually for homelessness programs, leaving nearly 1500 of the most vulnerable Victorians out in the cold at the worst possible time. The Council to Homeless Persons chief executive, Jenny Smith, said:

... it's unfathomable really that this Victorian government ... has failed to continue the funding ...

The Victorian Public Tenants Association CEO, Katelyn Butterss, called it a 'cruel trick', saying:

With the cost of living only increasing, vulnerable Victorians who need support to remain in or access a safe, affordable home need more support—not less ...

And that:

Waiting list times are blowing out, yet this Budget fails to deliver the housing that would allow Victorians to access the safety, security, and dignity of a place to call home more quickly.

At this point I would like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to and thank the people and groups in my community who do tremendous work supporting those that need access to housing and those who are experiencing homelessness, including Neal Taylor and Deborah Clancy and volunteers at Holy Fools, Jenny Willetts and volunteers at Stable One winter shelter, Kate Coleman and volunteers at

Yarra Ranges Housing Action Group, and Heidi Tucker and team at Anchor. People need support for a variety of reasons—fleeing family violence, due to lockdowns or to afford housing to take up a job—and they need support.

### UPFIELD BIKE PATH

**Ms BLANDTHORN** (Pascoe Vale) (17:09): (6389) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that the minister joins me; the candidate for Broadmeadows, Kathleen Matthews-Ward; and the candidate for Pascoe Vale, Anthony Cianflone, to visit the upgrades that are both happening and planned for the Upfield bike path, and in particular, notwithstanding the improvements that have been made along the bike path which extends from Princes Park right up to Box Forest Road, the extension from Box Forest Road to the Western Ring Road. This is an important part of the Upfield bike path, and we have promised to extend the section of the bike path along here and include important safety measures, such as lighting and other things within that.

I would really like it if the minister could come with me and the two candidates to inspect those parts of the project which have already been rolled out but most importantly the part of the project which is still very much eagerly awaited by our community. The shared path that goes from Princes Park to the Western Ring Road, once completed, will be an important part of our local community infrastructure and in particular our transport infrastructure, which encourages safe biking and pedestrian use that gets our local community from where they are in the north all the way into town. I would very much appreciate the minister's attendance.

### COVID-19 VACCINATION

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) (17:10): (6390) I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for the minister to remove the vaccination mandates that apply to prison visitors. I raise this matter as I was contacted recently by a local resident who I subsequently spoke with at length last Tuesday. This constituent informed me that they were married with children and that their spouse was currently in prison. My constituent and their children had been visiting their spouse regularly since their spouse had been imprisoned. These visits were stopped during the numerous lockdowns experienced by all Victorians over the last two years. Visits recommenced in February 2021, with no vaccination requirements but with other restrictions. They had again been regularly undertaken by my constituent and their children until they were stopped again in May 2021.

Visits have recommenced; however, the government has now introduced the requirement that all prison visitors must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19. My constituent and their children are for personal reasons unvaccinated. Consequently, they and their infant children are prohibited from visiting their spouse, who I note was forced to be vaccinated against their wishes whilst in prison. The last visit my constituent had with their spouse was in May 2021. Thus, one year later my constituent is now forbidden to visit their spouse or take their infant children to see their imprisoned parent. As would be expected, this exclusion is having a very significant detrimental impact on my constituent and their young children.

Until the most recent minor easing of the vaccine mandate requirements I was regularly contacted by countless other Victorians who were unable to participate in society, such as young parents who were unable to take their children to the local library or swimming pool. Thankfully the recent easing of vaccination requirements in some areas has been of partial assistance, but it will not assist this constituent in their particular circumstance. I note that my constituent would willingly undertake a PCR test or a rapid antigen test prior to attending a prison visit for themselves and their children.

Given the very high vaccination levels in Victoria, together with the fact that it is now well documented that the vaccination clearly does not prevent people getting or transmitting COVID-19, surely it is time for the government to remove the prison visitor vaccination mandate. Minister, the vaccine mandate for prison visitors needs to be removed to enable unvaccinated loved ones and friends of Victorian

prisoners to visit them once again for the benefit of both the visitor and the prisoner and ultimately the Victorian community.

### GARDINERS CREEK (KOOYONGKOOT) MASTER PLAN

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (17:13): (6391) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Water, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Gardiners Creek in my electorate of Burwood to gain a full appreciation of the local interest in the recent investment in a master plan for this important waterway. First, I wish to make a note on the name that I intend to use throughout my contribution this evening. The original name for Gardiners Creek was KooyongKoot, which comes from the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri-balluk group. It translates to ‘haunt of the waterfowl’, which has a certain poetic character to it. I support usage of the name KooyongKoot for the waterway rather than Gardiners Creek, so I will be referring to it by this name.

KooyongKoot is over 30 kilometres in length. It rises in Blackburn, where small creeks and gullies converge around Blackburn Lake. It then flows through Box Hill South, Burwood and Ashwood. Near its junction with Scotchmans Creek in Malvern East at the Malvern Valley Golf Course, it turns north-west and flows through Ashburton, then Glen Iris, Malvern and Kooyong, before flowing into the Yarra River in Hawthorn. The creek spans five separate LGAs—Stonnington, Whitehorse, Boroondara, Monash and Glen Eira—and as many state electorates, most of them Labor. And for every government body that has an interest in the waterway you will find three more community organisations who have an even greater interest in this important environmental and cultural asset. There were at last count 17 friends groups and other organisations associated with the creek. The groups have formed an alliance to work for the betterment of the KooyongKoot, and through their work together the KooyongKoot Alliance has developed as a strong independent voice for the waterway.

Since being elected in 2018 I have had many conversations with constituents and stakeholders about KooyongKoot. As a result I have also had many conversations with caucus colleagues, including the Minister for Water, about the need for a coordinated plan for this waterway—as, I should also note, have my parliamentary colleagues who proudly represent the electorates that KooyongKoot passes through. I was ecstatic on budget day to contact the KooyongKoot Alliance with the announcement that the 2022–23 budget is delivering \$250 000 to support the KooyongKoot master plan development in partnership with the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung traditional owners.

We need new approaches to managing and protecting our iconic rivers and creeks. Earlier this year the minister launched the *Yarra Strategic Plan*, which builds on the Victorian government’s landmark Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Act 2017. And last year the Andrews government launched the *Waterways of the West Action Plan*, a plan to protect the iconic rivers and creeks in Melbourne’s western suburbs, with traditional owners’ voices at the centre of decision-making. The work in KooyongKoot builds upon this legacy of protecting and improving Melbourne’s waterways, and I look forward to the minister’s response.

### HAZELWOOD MINE REHABILITATION

**Dr READ** (Brunswick) (17:16): (6392) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that the scope of the environment effects statement (EES) for the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine will include consideration of the rehabilitation of the other mines currently operating in the Latrobe Valley and the environmental needs for water.

There are currently three extremely large open-cut coalmines in the area, Hazelwood, Yallourn and Loy Yang. The impact of these giant mine pits is so significant that they have altered the geology of the area. These mines are unstable and need to be constantly managed to stop the walls collapsing. Once these mines stop operating they need to be rehabilitated, and operators say that some level of water is going to be required in the pits to stop major mine wall collapse. However, there are some really important questions to do with the rehabilitation of the mines and the water use that remain

unanswered: where will the 638 billion litres required to fill Hazelwood come from, and how much will the mine owners pay for it?

Water is already scarce in the area. The Latrobe River system and the downstream Gippsland Lakes are already suffering from overextraction of water for mining and agriculture and from the continuing long-term decline in rainfall in Victoria. So it is vital that the EES for Hazelwood, the first of the mines being rehabilitated, looks at the full picture. Engie, Hazelwood's multinational owner, probably wants to fill the pit with fresh water and walk away. This is the easiest and cheapest option for them. But this would take an untenable amount of water out of the surrounding rivers, and the evaporation lost from this giant artificial lake would be huge. We simply do not have that much water available. This approach would also set an expectation for the other mines, and we certainly do not have enough water to fill all three. That is why the EES must consider all the options—for example, alternative landforms or having the mining companies purchase manufactured water.

Of course the planning for mine closure and rehabilitation should have been done decades ago. It also should have been done in the last few years as part of the recent *Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy*. But it was not done at either of these times, and now things have got to the pointy to end with this Hazelwood EES about to start. The government cannot put this off any longer, so I look forward to the scope of Hazelwood's EES including the consideration of Gippsland's environmental water needs and what is to happen to the other two mines.

#### BENTLEIGH ELECTORATE

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) (17:18): (6393) My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek from the minister is that he visit the wonderful Bentleigh electorate, because I have a lot to show him concerning his portfolio.

Firstly, this government has fully funded the signalisation of two major intersections in the electorate. One is Centre Road and Bignell Road in East Bentleigh and the other is Jasper Road and Brewer Road in Bentleigh, and we are about to release the designs of those intersections for community consultation. In the recent budget there was also planning funding for a new signalised pedestrian crossing at East Boundary Road near Clarence Street, which is something that families at Bentleigh Secondary College have been asking for for some time, as well as planning funding for signalisation of the Mackie Road and North Road intersection, which is also something the community has been lobbying for.

In addition to that, in the public transport space there is a new passenger information display which is about to be installed at Patterson station, and there is going to be an accessibility upgrade designed at Moorabbin station. That is particularly important because over a number of years I have heard from many locals as to the need for better access to Moorabbin station for vulnerable people, for people with disabilities and for people who are older. The ramps at Moorabbin station are too steep, and they are certainly not compliant with today's disability standards. So I am really pleased that in the budget, as part of a broader package to make public transport more accessible, we are going to make Moorabbin station more accessible. There is so much for the minister to see in the Bentleigh electorate, and I invite him to join me soon so that we can discuss these fantastic projects further.

#### NORTHEAST HEALTH WANGARATTA

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (17:20): (6394) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Health, and the action that I seek is an independent investigation into the treatment of Mr James Newton by Northeast Health Wangaratta and the Victorian ambulance services.

Early last week Mr Newton was at Northeast Health Wangaratta but was required to go home to have an assessment done so they could check the viability and the possibility of him being able to go home permanently in the future. Whilst that assessment was being conducted, Mr Newton, who is 86, slipped off the chair that he was sitting on and fell onto the bathroom floor of his home. Mr Newton waited

3½ hours for an ambulance, and then they were finally told that the ambulance would not be coming for him because the ambulance service was overloaded and not coping. When family members could get Mr Newton back to Northeast Health, he was left on a temporary bed in the surgical unit because there were no beds available. Mr Newton remained on this trolley for four days, being moved from one room to another because there were no beds available. Northeast Health then moved him to a nursing home which was in quarantine for COVID-19. Mr Newton was told by the nursing home that he should not have been sent there until the COVID outbreak was under control.

This is by no means a criticism of the fantastic efforts by Northeast Health, its staff and the nurses and the work that they do. They are doing an amazing job under difficult circumstances. However, I believe Mr Newton needs some answers as to why this occurred to him, and the community deserve answers on whether this health crisis is over or if it is continuing. Shedding further light on Mr Newton's treatment may help others to make life-saving decisions for their own families in future situations.

### LOCAL SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) (17:22): (6395) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is for her to make public the successful recipients in the Ripon electorate for the latest round of the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria, I get to meet the most amazing sporting club participants and leaders. In recent weeks I visited amazing communities in Ararat, Clunes, Creswick, Dunolly, Maryborough, Stawell, Port Fairy, Mildura, Rupanyup, St Arnaud, Carisbrook and more. Since the Andrews Labor government came to office, we have invested more than \$1.2 billion into community sport for facilities in every corner of the state. One of these projects currently underway is the \$2 million-plus stage 2 development upgrade of the Carisbrook Recreation Reserve facility.

I really enjoyed the recent visit that Labor's candidate Martha Haylett and I had to the ground and the welcome we received there. It is home to the Redbacks, who have a phenomenal number of women and girls in particular playing football. I felt very much at home, because I am the patron of the Redbacks in the Northern Football Netball League. They are Panton Hill, but red and black are my favourite colours. The clubs throughout the Ripon electorate and the municipalities there have had a very high success rate in projects going forward through our sport and recreation programs, and that is because of the quality of the work and the projects that they put forward and also the work that they do collaboratively with the clubs. There are phenomenal, very good leaders in those clubs. I met with them recently at the football in Ararat, where they were playing Dimboola, and I was able to see firsthand particularly how important football and netball are of a Saturday—I know that you know that, Deputy Speaker—especially in regional leagues, where you see the whole town. It was Ararat versus Dimboola, and they were relocating to Ararat, contributing to that economy and having a family weekend away but also just participating in some great sport.

I think that the clubs and the municipalities that have worked so hard on their applications would love to see those applications get a public announcement so that they can take the next step of working collaboratively to deliver those projects.

### RESPONSES

**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) (17:25): The member for Ripon had a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change regarding the release of the gas substitution road map. The member for Narre Warren South had a matter for the Minister for Community Sport regarding the upgrade of Strathaird Reserve. The member for Evelyn had a matter for the Minister for Housing regarding a briefing on housing affordability in the Yarra Ranges. The member for Pascoe Vale had a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding a visit to the Upfield bike path. The member for Forest Hill wants the Minister for Health to allow unvaccinated people to visit prisons—surprise, surprise. The member for



## ADJOURNMENT

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Burwood wants the Minister for Water to visit Gardiners Creek. The member for Brunswick has a request for the Minister for Planning to look at the scope of the environment effects statement regarding the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine. The member for Bentleigh would like the Minister for Public Transport to visit the Bentleigh electorate to look at transport projects. The member for Ovens Valley would like the Minister for Health to conduct an investigation into certain matters regarding Mr James Newton. The member for Yan Yean would like more information regarding local sporting infrastructure fund grants particularly in the electorate of Ripon. I will pass all of those requests on to the relevant ministers.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 5.27 pm until Tuesday, 7 June.**