

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION**

**THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2022**

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The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

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Minister for Planning .....	The Hon. EA Blandthorn MP
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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
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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	Richardson, 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
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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	Koroit	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**

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

### **Standing Orders Committee**

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

## Joint committees

### **Dispute Resolution Committee**

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

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

### **Electoral Matters Committee**

*Assembly:* Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowswell.

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

### **House Committee**

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

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

### **Integrity and Oversight Committee**

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

*Council:* Mr Grimley.

### **Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee**

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

*Council:* Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

### **Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**

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

*Council:* Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

### **Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee**

*Assembly:* Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

*Council:* Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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**Thursday, 9 June 2022**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.32 am and read the prayer.**

**Announcements**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

**The SPEAKER (09:32):** 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.

**Documents**

**DOCUMENTS**

**Incorporated list as follows:**

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

Auditor-General—Annual Plan 2022–23

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994*—Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 39.

**Business of the house**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (09:34):** I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 21 June 2022.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Members statements**

**GREENBROOK COMMUNITY HOUSE**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (09:34):** I rise to acknowledge the volunteers and staff at the Greenbrook Community House in my electorate of Mill Park and the role that they play in empowering and supporting the local community. The Greenbrook Community House is an inclusive and accessible space for people of all abilities and over the years has always been a welcoming environment for locals. I recently had the opportunity to visit Greenbrook to participate in their annual celebration event and hand out appreciation certificates to some of the amazing volunteers, who work tirelessly to better the lives of people of all abilities. The performance of the Bust a Move all-abilities dance group during this celebration was pure joy and filled everyone's hearts. Thank you, Emily Woodward. You are such an inspiring young woman and a wonderful dance teacher.

From all-abilities music and dance workshops to art fiestas, community gardening and composting, the Greenbrook Community House is supporting local families and provides numerous opportunities for people to come together to socialise, to learn and develop their skills and to work collaboratively for everyone's benefit. Their motto is 'Better together', and they live by this. Thank you to Rachel Cooper, Greenbrook Community House coordinator; Jackie Turner, City of Whittlesea community development officer; and all of the volunteers for creating such a great 'better together' space at the Greenbrook Community House. The support that they provide to the local community is invaluable and is a much, much appreciated part of our local community.

### SWAN HILL JUNE RACING CARNIVAL

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) (09:35): This weekend is the Swan Hill racing carnival—three days of great racing in Swan Hill, starting tomorrow and continuing Saturday and Sunday. Having had two carnivals that were impacted by COVID, it is going to be great to welcome back crowds to racing in Swan Hill. The Shadow Minister for Racing on this side of politics is very, very committed to the racing industry, and I look forward to getting some winning tips from the Shadow Minister for Racing so I can back a winner, particularly when I go along on Sunday to the cup race there. It is a very important meeting of the racing industry right across Victoria but particularly on the social calendar for Swan Hill. All the motels are booked out. All the restaurants are booked out. Everyone is really looking forward to a great weekend of racing up there this weekend.

### MURRAY PLAINS ELECTORATE ROADS

**Mr WALSH:** The other issue I want to raise is the issue of country roads. My electorate has road after road after road with 80-k and 60-k speed limits on them because the government will not fix those roads. Every time I put up a social media post people come back with, ‘Well, that’s bad, but what about this one?’, and there are roads and there are roads. You can particularly look at the Prairie–Rochester Road, an A-double road that has narrow bitumen, the sides are breaking away and there are big potholes in it. If we going to have designated truck routes, let us make sure there is the money to fix those roads.

### SURFSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (09:37): I recently had the pleasure of visiting Surfside Primary School in Ocean Grove to open the school’s newly refurbished classrooms and sensory garden. Surfside is a great school that I have had the pleasure of working with over many years. The refurbishment saw a complete upgrade to 10 classrooms, which have been designed to make classes more interactive through collaborative learning. Importantly the school’s library was also upgraded as part of the works. The new outdoor sensory garden looked great and will make the play area far more inclusive for all. I thank the school for the warm welcome it provided me, and I must say I thoroughly enjoyed the comprehensive tour I was given by student leaders Lexi Clay and James Carty, both obviously very proud of their school. I congratulate the school community on their commitment to the future of Surfside, led by principal Peter Walsh, teachers, staff and school council president Eloise Cann.

### OCEAN GROVE NATURE RESERVE

**Ms NEVILLE:** Also in mid-May I was pleased to visit the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve to mark the commencement of important upgrade works. Through the distinctive area landscape funding of \$245 000 the works will include a new all-abilities drop-off parking and picnic area, a new connection path to existing tracks and upgraded information signage. Consultation, planning and now works have been the result of collaboration between Parks Victoria, traditional owners and Friends of the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, including Peter Sullivan, Beth Ross, Barbara Spiller and Lel Shipley. The reserve is much loved by Ocean Grove locals, and with the ongoing commitment from the state government and the ‘friends of’ group, the area will be protected and enjoyed for many years to come.

### SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

**Ms VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (09:38): Today marks the one-year anniversary of the 9 June 2021 storms that ravaged communities right across the Yarra Ranges—floods in Yering, Yarra Glen and Coldstream and cyclone-like winds ripping 100-metre trees clear out of the ground across roads and properties in communities including Mooroolbark, Lilydale, Silvan, Mount Evelyn and Montrose, right up to Kalorama, Olinda and Mount Dandenong. The homes of around 80 families were utterly devastated that night. Tens of thousands of residents were cut off from power and water for weeks. I take the opportunity to again thank the tremendous efforts of all emergency services who responded, including volunteers at the Lilydale SES, the Emerald SES, the Kalorama CFA and many other local

CFA brigades, and the Yarra Ranges police. Thank you to all members of the community who helped in whatever way—offered shelter, helped with the community foodbank, donated food or blankets or offered a hug as residents came to terms with the devastation. And thanks to Yarra Ranges council for continuing the recovery.

Twelve months after the disaster our communities continue to grapple with the long-lasting impacts. You only need to drive around the area to see the damage and the troubling levels of fallen trees and debris around the Silvan Reservoir, and we are still waiting for adequate disaster-relief funding to be released by the Andrews Labor government. However, we have listened to SES volunteers. We have announced that we will build a new SES unit up in the Olinda-Monbulk area. Only a Guy Liberal government will get it done, and I commend Gareth Ward, the Liberal candidate in Monbulk, for getting this done.

### MEN'S SHEDS

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (09:40): I have had the opportunity to visit many of our fantastic men's sheds across the state as we open, until 30 June, our new grants round of up to a million dollars, with grants of up to \$80 000 for men's sheds. I encourage them, across the state, to make an application, and I encourage colleagues in this place to get them to apply so that we can provide further support to the amazing work that men's sheds do. We had the men's shed association in here just this week on Tuesday, convened by the member for Thomastown and our friends of men's sheds group, and a lot of MPs attended that. I am really pleased that we were able to catch up with the men's shed association. I did also want to say, though, that while I have often been asked myself, I can help by staying out of the way when it comes to being anywhere near sheds or handyman sorts of work.

I was really pleased to have both the member for Brunswick and the member for Burwood on hand when we honoured our men's shedders. One took a bit of a tumble and was not very well, but the doctor was in the house, the member for Brunswick, and I appreciate his very useful assistance—and also the member for Burwood. That particular individual, I can report, is well. We got him home—we gave him a lift actually; he happened to be a constituent. But I just wanted to thank colleagues in this place for stepping up and providing great support on the night. It was really important. Again, I think it just goes to making sure that men's sheds not only provide great support and camaraderie but are good for your health, and I really commend the program to all members.

### BAYSPEAK

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (09:42): Bayspeak is a public speaking competition for secondary school students in Bayside organised by bayside Rotary clubs and Toastmasters. Congratulations to the 13 schools and over 50 students who took part. The 16 junior and senior category student finalists delivered a range of thought-provoking speeches last night. A special thankyou goes to Brighton Rotarian Arthur Hubbard for his work on the competition.

### TEAM SPORT INITIATIVE

**Mr NEWBURY**: Up to 500 at-risk young people between 12 and 24 will be helped by getting them into team sport. The Rotary Club of Brighton and Team Sports 4 All have been successful in a joint federal government grant of \$350 000, which has allowed the organisations to set up a Teams and Connection through Youth Community Sport—TACTYCS—program. Thank you to Brighton Rotarian, Jo Kwok, for her leadership with this work.

### MENTAL HEALTH

**Mr NEWBURY**: Thorne Harbour Health's new report, *The Cost of Adverse Mental Health Outcomes in the LGBTIQ+ Victorian Adult Population*, estimates that poor mental health in the rainbow community, who represent up to 10 per cent of Victoria's population, costs \$3 billion. It also

estimates the rate of lifetime mental illness at 73 per cent compared with 46 per cent more broadly. The findings will help us understand the real impacts better.

### **FIRBANK GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

**Mr NEWBURY:** Firbank Grammar School has unveiled its new, inspiring, world-class \$5.5 million arts precinct. The precinct has been designed with specialist spaces for all forms of creativity and will promote women's participation in art. My warmest congratulations to principal Jenny Williams, the school board and the entire school community on this project. Our region is fortunate to welcome this new creative space.

### **SYDENHAM ELECTORATE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Sydenham—Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support) (09:43): I rise to update the house on some amazing infrastructure investment projects underway in the electorate of Sydenham. I know these projects will help locals spend less time on the roads and more time with those that they love. That is why I am proud to see our recent investment of \$50 million towards updating the Calder Freeway put to good use by the Department of Transport using parts of the funds to undertake a corridor study which will aim to identify and prioritise future investments along this important stretch of road. This study will be completed by the end of the year, bringing us one step closer to a safer and less congested Calder Freeway.

This brings me to another exciting project that is underway in the Sydenham district, and that is the removal of the dangerous level crossing at Calder Park Drive, the second level crossing in my electorate to go and the sixth on the Sunbury line under this state government. In the recent state budget we unveiled our plan to invest \$14.9 million to deliver a safer Melton Highway, with the duplication of the road between Crown Drive and The Regency intersection. This project will reduce delays in travel time and improve safety for both pedestrians and cyclists. I am really pleased to see the preliminary works occur on our \$16 million project to remove the Sunshine Avenue–Melton Highway roundabout. We know these projects are needed to accommodate the growth and address road safety in our area.

### **POLWARTH ELECTORATE BUS SERVICES**

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) (09:45): I wish to bring to the house's attention the marvellous work of Juliet Beatty from Deans Marsh. Juliet has worked with the Lorne, Deans Marsh and Colac communities to present a petition this week to the Parliament, requesting that the Legislative Assembly extend the bus service that operates between Colac, Birregurra, Deans Marsh and Lorne to a daily service. Juliet has been campaigning for this service for a long time. It is a service that currently operates over the summer months and is of huge benefit to local businesses, to the elderly and to the young people who want to go between Lorne and Colac for obvious reasons: health care, education and employment. It is not only Juliet who is very passionate about the bus service but also a great list of others who have sent and provided letters of support. That includes the Deans Marsh Community Cottage, the Lorne Business & Tourism Association, youth workers, the Lorne P–12 school, local real estate agents and the Committee for Lorne. These groups and that community are most keen that the Minister for Public Transport receives this petition and is able to look very favourably upon increasing a year-round service to Lorne. With a housing affordability crisis along the coast, it is urgent that we help local businesses and communities stay better connected and take full advantage of what opportunities are in the region.

### **PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARDS**

**Mr CARROLL** (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:46): On Monday, 23 May, I had the honour of attending at the Aberfeldie Community Bowls Club the Keilor East Rotary Pride of Workmanship awards, which are given in recognition of exemplary service in all fields of work in our local community. My sincere congratulations go to the awardees

and to the nominators, vocational director Bob McMartin, social director Ginny Billson and president Yvonne Osborn for organising such a wonderful, memorable event. Can I also put on the record my appreciation to Jessica Romeo from Destination Graze for the delicious food.

Pride of Workmanship is not a competition, and there are no winners. It is recognition of individual achievement and dedication to one's local community. I want to put on record and into *Hansard* my great and sincere congratulations to the people that were chosen for their vocation: Connie Micallef at Holloway Hostel; Dino Sapuppo, the pharmacist at the Keilor Village Pharmacy; Ana Maria Sedano, a cleaner at Melbourne Showgrounds, who has done outstanding work during the COVID pandemic; Michael Juzefowicz, a landscaper at Wood-Land Landscapes; Timothy Wood, a landscaper at Wood-Land Landscapes as well; and Angela Buckley at Hotchkin Hughes accountancy. My sincere congratulations to the awardees for their pride in their work and to the Rotary Club of Keilor East for their outstanding work over the past few years, in particular for the 25 years they have been running the Rotary Club of Keilor East Pride of Workmanship Awards. I am very pleased that—apart from COVID—since I was elected I have been able to attend each one of these award ceremonies in great recognition of community spirit.

### SOUTH-WEST COAST ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) (09:48): Mikayla is a 21-year-old who has battled rheumatoid arthritis for most of her life. She lives at Coorimungle, about an hour from Warrnambool. Recently Mikayla suffered an acute flare-up of the condition, which attacked her stomach. It was pain like she had never experienced before and, given her high pain threshold, she knew she needed professional medical help. Mikayla rang for an ambulance. It was 6.30 pm and she was told no ambulances were available. Her partner, who had never seen Mikayla experience a flare-up of this kind, was extremely distressed himself and was forced to drive her to Warrnambool hospital.

After arriving at the hospital's emergency department Mikayla was told she would be facing a 6-hour wait before she could be attended to. She described the scenes in the emergency department as heartbreaking. In her words, there were people waiting outside while others were in the waiting room, some of them in tears and in pain, waiting to be seen—people of all ages, including the elderly. Mikayla said she felt sorry for the overwhelmed staff at the hospital, who were amazing. In no way does she blame them for the long wait. The emergency department was just so overwhelmed. As Mikayla said, she is not one to flippantly call for an ambulance. She has lived with pain most of her life, but when a situation arose where she needed immediate medical help with an ambulance, she was unable to get one. Mikayla wanted her story told because, like so many others, it shows just how swamped our healthcare system is. We have never seen a crisis like this before, and it is one the government must fix immediately.

### HAMPTON PARK SECONDARY COLLEGE

**Mr MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (09:49): It was only some six weeks ago that I was at Hampton Park Secondary College to help open their \$2.62 million stage 1 works, but last week I found myself back there again. This time it was with the Premier to officially open their Doctors in Secondary Schools clinic as well as to inspect their stage 2 works. It was a pleasure to have the Premier visit my electorate of Narre Warren South to touch base with this terrific local school that has had such an impact on the Hampton Park area. The principal, Wayne Haworth, and the student services leader, Debbie Edwards, are really to be commended. They have worked so hard to, firstly, establish this clinic and, secondly, put on a really terrific event at really short notice.

The ceremony involved students, teachers, staff, departmental representatives and community and service professionals. Doctors in Secondary Schools funds general practitioners to attend up to 100 Victorian government secondary schools up to one day a week. Hampton Park Secondary College will receive funding to enable their staff to support program coordination and training, while students do not incur any out-of-pocket expenses for their consultations with the GP.

The Premier also inspected the school's \$3.9 million stage 2 works, which will deliver a new, world-class science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics and fabrication facility. It is all happening in Hampton Park, and my thanks go to the Premier for supporting our community and to the principal, staff and students of Hampton Park Secondary College.

### COVID-19 VACCINATION

**Mr TILLEY** (Benambra) (09:51): At what point will this Labor government remove the COVID-19 mandates that prevent people from working and in doing so ease critical staff shortages across a range of industries? We need people back at work, not on welfare. Let us be brutally honest now: the big stick that this Labor government used to get people vaccinated is now broken. Victorians voluntarily got to 95 per cent vaccinated with two doses; now with three doses we have stalled at a small 67 per cent. Personally, I am triple vaccinated, but many others increasingly are vaccine hesitant. No amount of vaccine seems capable of stopping you from being infected or passing COVID-19 to someone else. For some the vaccine saves lives, but for others the current strain is a head cold and seven days iso, which is about four days too much. As businesses reduce hours, health services struggle with staff shortages and casual relief teachers are almost non-existent, we still treat this highly skilled albeit unvaccinated labour force as taboo. I nearly choked when I read the government's claim the vaccinated economy was dead because you did not have to sign in to a cafe anymore. The reality is it is still very much alive. We need a road map that returns the unvaccinated to work, and in the most vulnerable settings the plan should be about finding meaningful tasks that ease the burden on these services.

### GAP ROAD, SUNBURY, LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

**Mr J BULL** (Sunbury) (09:52): Last week on a cold winter night at about 11.00 pm I was delighted to help the fantastic team from Rail Projects Victoria lift off the boom gates at the Gap Road level crossing in my electorate. These gates have divided our town and divided our community for decades, and it is only an Andrews Labor government that has been able to get on and remove these boom gates. It was a terrific evening. Construction is now progressing full steam ahead, reducing congestion and improving safety. Only an Andrews Labor government gets on and gets it done.

### MELBOURNE AIRPORT SOLAR FARM

**Mr J BULL**: I was also delighted to welcome the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to my electorate and to the Melbourne Airport solar farm last week for a wonderful visit looking at cleaner, greener energy—over 12 megawatts of power from that facility. It is a terrific investment, and we want to continue to make sure that we are investing in renewable technologies for cleaner and greener energy.

### YOUNG CARERS FESTIVAL

**Mr J BULL**: Also last Friday night I had the opportunity to attend the Young Carers Festival of 2022, which was an excellent celebration and a recognition of the incredible work that our young carers do each and every day right across the state. The festival provided an opportunity for young carers to share their talents. As Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers I am immensely proud of the extraordinary work our young carers do and thank them for all of the work that they do in the community. I want to congratulate Little Dreamers, Merri Health and Carers Victoria for putting on such a special event, and I say congratulations for all of the work that they do.

### IAN EWART OAM

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) (09:54): Today I rise to pay tribute to former Callignee CFA captain Ian Ewart OAM. Ian was the Callignee captain from 2004 to 2022 and in charge of the brigade during some of the most challenging and devastating periods, inclusive of the 2009 Black Saturday fires that impacted Ian's beloved Callignee community and surrounding districts. Tragically, precious lives were lost, as were homes, assets, pets and wildlife. Despite these traumatic times Ian's leadership was simply inspiring. Ian is enormously respected by the CFA family and our community—and rightly so,

given Ian's service contribution and dedication to others. To Ian's wife, Sylvia, we also say thank you for what you do for our community and for your support of Ian.

#### **GEOFF DYKE**

**Mr NORTHE:** I also wish to pay tribute to Geoff Dyke, who passed away recently. Geoff was the Victorian branch secretary of the CFMEU mining and energy division and a highly respected union official who was extraordinarily passionate about the energy industry and his members. There have been enormous changes in the energy industry within the Latrobe Valley over previous decades, including privatisation, mine fires and the closure of Hazelwood, to name a few. I know Geoff was a great visionary and confidant to many people during these challenges. Just recently Geoff proposed that coal-fired power stations in Victoria's Latrobe Valley should be replaced with small modular nuclear reactors. Our community passes on its collective condolences to his beloved wife, Claire, children Zara, Millie and Blaeden and grandchildren Kaiden and Huxley.

#### **RINGWOOD ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (09:55):** Over the last four years our government has doubled the amount of infrastructure funding going into local schools in the district of Ringwood. This is real money. These are real outcomes. It is what strong local advocacy gets for a community. Every single public high school in the district of Ringwood is receiving a multimillion-dollar upgrade right now. This is fantastic. This is what Labor stands for. We know that every dollar invested in our local schools is a dollar well spent. The investment return for the wider community is exponential. As Nelson Mandela once said:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

This government believes that. We will continue to push forward so that students get the very best facilities, the facilities that they deserve. It is also not lost on me that, like many workforces, our teachers have done it tough over the last few years and have been stretched thinly. I thank them for their enduring commitment to our community and to our students. This is about acting; this is about getting things done, and the Andrews Labor government is getting things done for our community in the east and for students right across the district of Ringwood.

#### **QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE**

**Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (09:56):** I rise this morning to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her platinum jubilee. Her Majesty's life has been one of extraordinary service, leadership and example. She has been a constant in the world for the last 70 years and a wonderful leader of the commonwealth and indeed the entire world. It was a real pleasure to attend the choral Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral to mark Her Majesty's platinum jubilee earlier in the year. On behalf of the residents of the Forest Hill district I put on record the thanks and appreciation of the residents to Her Majesty and wish her ongoing success and good health.

#### **NUNAWADING SWIMMING CLUB**

**Mr ANGUS:** It was a pleasure to attend the Nunawading Swimming Club Championships 2022 at Aqualink Nunawading last Saturday. It was great to be back together in person once again and terrific to see the wonderful competition in the pool. My congratulations and thanks to all the volunteers and staff in organising this event as well as the many other activities of the club, ably led by club president James Boyd and club captains Jack and Tayah. I was honoured to be able to present in person various club awards relating to the previous two club presentation nights. Well done to all recipients.

#### **WHITEHORSE CHURCHES CARE**

**Mr ANGUS:** I recently visited the new community space coordinated by Whitehorse Churches Care located at Forest Hill Chase. It is a wonderful collaboration between the Chase, local churches and the local community and provides a space for people to drop in to connect with others. It also

houses the important community support register, which is run in partnership with Whitehorse police, where volunteers ring vulnerable members of the community to check on their welfare. Congratulations to Whitehorse Churches Care.

#### DR MOSES 'MOSS' CASS

**Ms HALL** (Footscray) (09:58): When I was a young person interested in progressive politics my father used to tell me about the brilliance of Dr Moses Cass. Moss Cass was a heart surgeon. He ran the trade union clinic in Footscray, providing free health care to the working people of my community, and that legacy lives on in Cohealth. He was the member for Maribyrnong from 1969 to 1983, and he was Australia's first Minister for Environment and Conservation, and conserve he did. His story is one of never wasting an opportunity to effect change. He was a man of great integrity. His election slogan of 1969 was, 'I don't mind who you vote for as long as you think about it'. He won. In his inaugural speech he put the case for the legalisation of abortion. He was an advocate for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. He was an opponent of uranium mining. His work laid the foundations for a universal public health system, and he saved the Great Barrier Reef from oil drilling. His legislative reforms paved the way to protecting the Franklin River from damming. As Minister for the Media he championed a diverse media that included the creation of 13 community radio licences and support for Double J and of course SBS. For Moss Cass having power was only of use if you did something bold with it. He was a visionary, a great reformer in the history of great Labor reformers. On Monday a state memorial service was held in his memory. I attended with the Minister for Public Transport and the Assistant Treasurer. These words were on the back of his booklet:

We have not inherited this earth from our parents to do with it what we will.

Vale, Moss Cass.

#### NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

**Ms THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (10:00): Well, it has finally happened, something my community have been anticipating for years: the boom gates at Bell Street are gone, along with three more at Cramer Street, Murray Road and Oakover Road. These noisy, dangerous, congested level crossings are gone for good. That is 82 000 vehicles each day plus pedestrians and cyclists who no longer have to contend with one of Melbourne's busiest roads. Communities are now flying high, enjoying the view from our new rail bridge as train services have returned on a single line while the rest of the rail is built. This is an incredible achievement and an exciting time for Preston. I feel it every time I speak to locals, every time we see another pylon go up, with every panel added to our new stations.

And we are making sure we deliver even more for locals, with new open space that will have everything from playgrounds to barbecues to a yarnning circle to an amphitheatre. It is going to be stunning. Of course this is just one of 85 level crossings we will kick to the curb by 2025, and Bell Street means we are now at 64. We are in the midst of a transport transformation. The Metro Tunnel is powering ahead to take pressure off the city loop. One hundred new Victorian-made trams will roll out across our city soon. We have upgrades in the works for Thornbury and Merri stations. The North East Link will reduce congestion on our local roads. The Suburban Rail Loop will create new connections to jobs and unis. There is too much to talk about, but we are well and truly rolling into the future of transport. Northcote has many level crossings along the Hurstbridge and Mernda lines too—*(Time expired)*

#### TREATY ADVANCEMENT

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (10:01): This week the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 was introduced into Parliament. With this bill we take another step on our historic journey towards treaty and to realising genuine self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians. The Andrews government first committed to advancing treaty with Victoria's First Peoples in 2016. This commitment was then formalised in law with the passage of the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018, the first treaty legislation in Australia's history. In 2019 the First



Peoples' Assembly of Victoria was elected, the first democratically elected representative body for traditional owners and Aboriginal Victorians in the state's history. Now this week we have introduced legislation that will support the establishment and ongoing operation of the Treaty Authority. As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who I note is in the chamber, said in her second-reading speech on the bill, treaty is a shared opportunity to create a better and fairer Victoria. Every Victorian has a part to play in reconciliation, and I share that sentiment wholeheartedly.

### MULLUM MULLUM INDIGENOUS GATHERING PLACE

**Mr FOWLES:** I recently visited Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place in Ringwood East to meet CEO Elke Smirl, chair Karen Milward and their team and congratulate them on securing the purchase of their premises. Established in 2005, Mullum Mullum provides a culturally safe and inclusive space for Aboriginal Victorians in Melbourne's east. In 2019 this government gave Mullum Mullum funding to explore their options for their organisation's premises. They decided to purchase the existing premises and refit it, and we have made that possible with \$4.4 million for that process.

### POLENTA DAY

**Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:03):** After a two-year hiatus polenta day returned with gusto, and what a magnificent celebration. The festa began in Wonthaggi over 35 years ago with the coming together of families who had migrated from San Donato, a village in the Veneto region. 'We don't want to lose our traditions that go back generations—roasting chestnuts and cooking for the entire community', said Frank. Over 200 paesani, amici, parenti e famiglie reunited at the table, and we were joined by sunshine, culture, song, good health and joy—an extraordinary effort by the committees and members of Wonthaggi Italian club, i Sandonesi and Melbourne's Veneto Club, joining together again to set up, prepare, cook, stir, roast, serve and keep us in tune. A special thankyou also to Frank and Marisa Cengia, Sergio Povoletto, Aida Studham, Elio Piasente and Danny Luna, Friends of the State Coal Mine and Parks Victoria for the use of the grounds and facilities.

Polenta was cooked in large cauldrons, stirred by many, with chestnuts roasting around the corner. There was a sharing showcase of homemade wine, liqueurs of great strength, olives, crostoli and more. Speeches were made and people acknowledged. They included Ugo Andrighetto, who turned 90 on 21 May. He came to Australia in 1951, worked in the mines and is our much-loved local treasure. As we had a celebratory moment together, he told me his birthday present was a Labor federal government. I agree. *(Time expired)*

### Business of the house

### NOTICES OF MOTION

**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) (10:04):** I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with government business, notice of motion 1, and I ask that it remain on the notice paper. I move:

That the consideration of government business, notice of motion 2, be postponed until later this day.

**Motion agreed to.**

### STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

**Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong—Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (10:05):** I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the following arrangements to apply on Wednesday 22 June 2022:

- (1) At the break of business immediately after statements on parliamentary committee reports, the Chair will direct the Clerk to ring the bells for one minute to call members to the Chamber;

- (2) Once the bells have finished ringing, the Chair will invite Bangerang and Wiradjuri Elder, Geraldine Atkinson, elected Co-Chair of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and Nira illim bulluk man of the Taungurung Nation, Marcus Stewart, elected Co-Chair of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to attend on the floor of the House;
- (3) The visitors may carry into the House possum skin cloaks, wooden message sticks, wooden digging sticks, and other objects or artefacts approved by the Speaker;
- (4) The Chair will invite Co-Chair Atkinson and Co-Chair Stewart to address the House in English and Aboriginal languages to explain what the treaty process means to them, their families and Victorian Aboriginal communities and how it may support reconciliation to benefit all Victorians;
- (5) During the addresses, one of the visitors will read out the names of members of the First Peoples' Assembly—
  - (a) the names of the members of the First Peoples' Assembly must be provided to the Speaker at least one day in advance;
  - (b) after their name is read out, each member of the First Peoples' Assembly may attend on the floor of the House entering via the door closest to the bar of the House, walking directly through the Chamber and exiting via the door behind the Chair;
  - (c) members of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria may carry with them possum skin cloaks, wooden message sticks, and wooden digging sticks, and other objects or artefacts approved by the Speaker, and they may clap their objects or artefacts as they walk through the Chamber;
- (6) At the conclusion of the addresses, the visitors will leave the floor of the House; and
- (7) The House will immediately proceed with Government Business.

The Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 is the result of work alongside Victoria's Aboriginal community through the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria—a significant body of work, I should add, with a lot of effort and time and passion poured into it. The bill will allow the Treaty Authority to be established as a truly independent umpire to oversee negotiations between the government and Aboriginal Victorians. The 31 members of the First Peoples' Assembly, covering every corner of Victoria, have contributed to the development of the Treaty Authority model and through that of this bill. This is self-determination in action, and it is something that we should all be extraordinarily proud of in this place. It represents a genuine partnership between the state and Victorian First Peoples.

Given this partnership, I feel it is appropriate that the elected co-chairs of the assembly, Bangerang and Wiradjuri elder Geraldine Atkinson and Nira illim bulluk man of the Taungurung nation Marcus Stewart, be invited into the chamber at the commencement of the second-reading debate. I know we typically reserve only the most special of occasions for ceremonial practices like these, but this is absolutely worthy of that distinction, and I thank members in this place for their cooperation. The co-chairs will be invited to make a short address in English and Aboriginal language to explain what the treaty process means to them as well as their families and the Victorian Aboriginal communities more broadly and how it may support reconciliation to benefit all Victorians long into the future. The co-chairs will also read the names of the members of the assembly and invite them to walk through the chamber. This really is an opportunity for Aboriginal people to have a true voice in this place that has been denied them for hundreds of years, but I think it is also a way of demonstrating the partnership that has been poured into this model and of course this piece of legislation as well.

There is precedence for this motion. In 2018 the former treaty advancement commissioner, Jill Gallagher AO, and the chair of the treaty working group, Mick Harding, were invited by this chamber to address the house ahead of debate on the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018, a moment that will remain memorable for many of us in this place, and I think it was an important step forward. I want to in advance thank members for their consideration and hopefully cooperation on this motion, which I genuinely believe should be a source of pride for all in the chamber. This is a truly significant piece of legislation. It represents self-determination in action, as the First Peoples' Assembly itself has said; it represents government doing things differently, which

is ultimately what the treaty process will require of us; and it is a historic step forward to resetting the relationship between the state and Victoria's First Nations people.

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) (10:08): I rise to support the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs' motion to have the co-chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria attend the chamber and all the other 29 members of the First Peoples' Assembly come through the chamber. If my memory serves me correctly, I think the Liberal Party actually had Wayne Phillips as the first man of Indigenous descent as a member of Parliament in here 20-something years ago, so it is not without precedent that we have had representation from the Indigenous community in this chamber in the past.

I share the comments from the minister about the aspirations of our Indigenous community here in Victoria, and particularly about actually delivering on the ground for local communities. We do not want to see a disconnect between the bureaucrats in Melbourne in this process and our local communities, and good outcomes for our local communities. On this side of the chamber, and I would suggest on the other side of the chamber, we want to make sure that this process not only delivers on the aspirations of our Indigenous communities but actually makes a meaningful contribution to the Closing the Gap indicators—to think that we still have our Indigenous community over-represented in the justice system, they are disadvantaged in our education system and they do not attain the same rates as the rest of the community here in Victoria. Particularly I know as a local member the issue of Indigenous housing is a critical issue we regularly deal with in my office, particularly for young mums with children who are victims of domestic violence, who are really struggling to get housing when they leave an abusive relationship. So we want to make sure as we work through this treaty process that it actually really delivers for those people on the ground in our communities. Quite a few of the members on this side, the regional members on this side, have large Indigenous populations in their communities and are very focused on making sure the things I am talking about can happen.

While I have got the opportunity to speak, we have a real situation in the community of Koondrook, where faceless bureaucrats in Melbourne are taking the local elders' names in vain, saying that they are actually opposing the building of a new kindergarten on a site there. The local elders are absolutely supportive of the community and that new kindergarten, but again we have this disconnect between people in Melbourne, who want to effectively play Indigenous politics to the disadvantage of the Indigenous community, and the elders in that community, who say, 'We are part of this community. We want to work with our community to achieve these outcomes for the whole community, because we've all grown up together'. But there are people who are using a wedge in that community, and I am sure there would be other examples if other members had the opportunity to speak where it is actually not working on the ground for people.

We are very focused on making sure that as we work through the treaty process, as we work through the truth telling, it delivers for the Indigenous community in the communities where they have grown up and they live and interact, play sport and do all the things they do in those communities. It has to deliver at the ground level for our Indigenous community. We look forward to welcoming Marcus Stewart, Aunty Geraldine and the other members of the First Peoples' Assembly onto the floor here in a couple of weeks time.

**Motion agreed to.**

### **Bills**

## **CASINO AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022**

### *Second reading*

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Ms RYAN** (Euroa) (10:12): I welcome the opportunity today to rise to speak on the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. From the outset let me make it clear that the opposition will

not be opposing this legislation. I think it is an incremental step forward in an effort to ensure integrity at Crown Casino and with the casino operator. But I do not think that we should pretend that this bill is before the Parliament because of the government; rather, I would argue that it is here in spite of it.

I have said before and I will say again that the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, which precipitated the arrival of this bill, was a royal commission that the Premier never wanted to have. This is a government which at a broad level faces very deep questions about its integrity on many fronts, and this is but one of those areas where there are serious questions about the government's interaction with the regulator, the regulator's interaction with the casino operator and the government's interaction with the casino operator itself. The Premier, as we know, is before two, possibly three, IBAC investigations, and we have seen that the government has nobbled the powers and the funding of integrity bodies like IBAC and the Ombudsman. And we have seen in recent days that the Labor chair of the IBAC committee has even attempted to shut down public viewing of hearings with the IBAC Commissioner for fear that it would reflect poorly on the Premier. We have seen of course the red shirts affair, which was described by the Ombudsman as an 'artifice'. So I think on many fronts the government faces very deep questions on these issues, and when it came to investigating years of allegations of illegal behaviour at Crown and investigating concerns about how the casino operator was managing that precinct, the Premier just resisted, resisted and resisted those calls and proved himself to be very reluctant to have any kind of examination of those issues. It did not come from our side of the chamber; it came from the three former gaming ministers, who told *Four Corners* that they believed the Premier was too close to Crown.

So we arrive here today discussing this bill after in fact it was the opposition who proposed a select committee in the upper house—in the other place—where we sought to examine not just Crown but also the regulator and the government's interactions with Crown. It was on the eve of a vote in the upper house on those terms of reference to establish that select committee that the Premier finally agreed to call a royal commission into Crown, but as we know, the royal commission was given very narrow terms of reference, and it was pointed solely to look at the casino operator, not in fact to examine any of those issues with the regulator or indeed with the government. I have always been of the view, as I think many people who have observed this process closely have been, that that was done very deliberately by the government to direct the spotlight away from the government's interactions with the regulator and with Crown and to put it firmly back to the casino operator itself.

So as a result of that process we had the royal commission, which delivered 33 recommendations. I do make the point that there are a number of those recommendations which still have not been delivered upon by the government. They include a number of recommendations to crack down on money laundering and the structure of the casino operator and also recommendations about the responsible service of gambling. So they do go to very serious matters that went to the heart of the royal commission. I want to point to one. For example, the royal commission recommended that a direction be given to Crown that on or by 30 June this year it must keep and maintain a single account, as approved by the regulator, at an authorised deposit-taking institution in the state for use for all banking transactions by patrons. The deadline for that, as I said, is now less than a month away, but we still have no visibility on whether in fact that has occurred and whether the government has given those instructions to Crown.

The commission also recommended a direction be given to Crown pursuant to section 23(1) of the Casino Control Act 1991 requiring it to retain all security and surveillance CCTV footage for a period of 12 months. Again there is nothing to inform the Parliament as to whether that has actually occurred, and that recommendation is particularly relevant to the heart of this bill and some of the changes that this bill makes to the functions of inspectors. So I would hope that perhaps as government members seek to address this bill they may look to informing the Parliament as to whether those directions have now indeed been given to Crown.

One of the primary purposes of this bill is to separate the functions of liquor and gaming between two separate regulators. Clause 22 amends the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 to establish a new liquor

regulator, the Victorian Liquor Commission. Clauses 11 to 16, 37 to 43 and 45 to 62 amend the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 to reflect the separation between gambling and liquor regulation. The risk I see with the establishment of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission is that it risks being little more than a name change and a shuffling of the deck chairs within the regulator. I think whilst we are dealing with enabling legislation here to establish those changes, the devil really is going to be in the implementation and the structure of the new commission. Some stakeholders have actually already raised concerns with me that nothing has changed within the regulator after the royal commission's findings. I understand that there has been an exodus of experienced staff from the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) in recent times, the CEO being but one. I understand that a number of redundancy packages were in fact offered and the most experienced inspector now employed at the regulator has only 18 months experience. So that raises some very real red flags about the ability of the regulator to do its job, and I think serious questions need to be answered by the government as to why there has been such a massive turnover of frontline staff within the regulator. In fact this is some recent feedback that I have received from people who understand the sector well. This is a direct quote: 'Inspectors have told me that casino and gaming are on the backburner. They also said that the numbers just do not stack up on gaming and on the casino side. They are saying they only have 12 inspectors to cover gaming throughout the entire state and 14 to cover the casino. There are not enough people on the ground'.

We know that last year the government asked Ian Freckelton QC to review the VCGLR, particularly after a number of gaming inspectors spoke out on *Four Corners* and raised their concerns about the fact that behaviour they witnessed on the floor of Crown was not investigated by the regulator and that they felt that their concerns about loansharking, money laundering and illegal drug dealing were repeatedly ignored. The Freckelton inquiry was told during its interviews with staff members at the VCGLR that at the time of the establishment of the regulator in 2012 there were approximately 95 operational inspectors who were conducting gambling and liquor auditing, and that included the casino. This has reduced to a total of between approximately 20 and 30 inspectors, with just eight inspectors assigned to the casino.

They were the findings of Ian Freckelton, who was appointed by the government to review the VCGLR. We also know that at the time of the Auditor-General's report in 2017 there were about 40 operational inspectors at the VCGLR. So what we have seen is a huge cut in inspector numbers by Labor, and the legislation before us does nothing to change that. I think it is very curious when you think that most areas of the public sector—and the Premier's department, Department of Premier and Cabinet, is certainly one—have expanded to a great size, but then you have got a regulator that is fulfilling very important obligations to ensure the integrity of gaming in this state that has found that its frontline roles have been drastically cut back. I do think that that is something that the government needs to examine closely.

Catherine Myers, who was the former CEO of the VCGLR until she stepped down last year—departed late last year—told Mr Freckelton that one of the limitations that she faced as the CEO was the budget reductions that were imposed on the VCGLR, which meant that operationally it was difficult to run rosters 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and absorb the cuts while also meeting the targets set by the government. I find it extraordinary that in light of her concerns about the operational budget of the VCGLR and her inability to actually fulfil the obligation of properly regulating the casino with the budget she was given Labor would then further slash the budget of the regulator in this year's budget.

Page 316 of budget paper 3 shows that the output funding for liquor and gaming will reduce in this coming year from \$86.1 million to \$76.1 million—a cut of more than \$10 million. You really have to ask how the regulator is actually going to achieve material change on the ground, on the floor of the casino, if the government is in fact stripping resources away from the regulator and reducing inspector numbers further when you have got the most senior levels of that organisation already saying, 'We're at bare bones and we're struggling to do this job', and when you have got someone like Ian Freckelton telling us that inspector numbers have been drastically reduced whilst the Andrews government has

been in power. It is hard to arrive at any conclusion other than that splitting the commission is little more than a PR exercise for the government when they are actively cutting the organisation's budget. There is clearly no intention to actually increase those inspector numbers on the ground. I think if anyone is interested in the government's response to that, they may like to go back and read the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee transcript of the minister where she struggled to explain why indeed the government is cutting funding for the portfolio.

This bill delivers on two of the 33 recommendations that the royal commission made. The first relates to the functions of inspectors, and that goes to recommendation 17 of the royal commission. The commissioner recommended that inspectors be given the functions to ascertain whether money laundering or loansharking is taking place or whether illicit drugs are being sold, and he recommended that they be given the ability to make an exclusion order, where appropriate, to withdraw a person's licence to remain on the casino premises and also any other functions that might be prescribed by regulation. I think why Commissioner Finkelstein made these recommendations is important. The royal commission actually concluded that staff at Crown do not or historically have not taken sufficient action to deter or to prevent illegal conduct, even when it is happening in plain sight.

Victoria Police used to maintain a 24/7 presence at the casino through a dedicated unit called the casino crime unit. That unit was actually disbanded when the current Premier was the gaming minister back in 2006. That unit was responsible for the collection of intelligence, for investigating suspected international cheats and for investigating money laundering, counterfeiting and other suspicious activity, and it provided a primary response to the day-to-day criminal conduct that occurred within the casino complex. By disbanding this unit you could argue that the government effectively allowed Crown to regulate itself, and it was certainly a big step to a greater self-regulation model if you like. But it is because this unit no longer exists that the royal commission recommended additional powers for inspectors. During the course of the royal commission a police officer who was based with the organised crime intelligence unit actually gave evidence about money laundering that has been occurring in recent times at Crown. The officer stated that:

- 'there [was] money laundering at the casino on a daily basis'

He said:

- '[outside] junket programs ... we observed a lot of lower level money laundering or suspected money laundering'
- 'individuals had a certain amount of cash with them ... [for example] in plastic bags ... going to the casino'

He said—I should say he or she; we do not know the gender of this particular officer:

- a particular type of container in which the cash was placed was 'a very big indicator [of money laundering] for us'
- 'there is a high probability [that certain people carrying money into the casino] are just money runners ... working for a money laundering syndicate'.

So the effect of the changes we have before us now is to put far greater responsibility and far greater obligations on the inspectors who are employed by the regulator.

We supported the royal commission's recommendations, but again the sticking point will be in how these changes are implemented. I think it is all well and good to expand the remit of inspectors, but that really does need to be accompanied by appropriate training. I think, given the current state of flux in the regulator, the staff turnover that I mentioned and Labor's cuts to inspector numbers, it is very difficult to see how just expanding the functions of inspectors is going to solve the bigger issue. At the end of the day I think it is important that inspectors can use these powers, but there have to actually be enough of them on the gaming floor in the first place to be able to observe that behaviour.

I want to go back a little bit in time. In 1982 the Victorian government appointed a former federal court judge, Xavier Connor QC, to inquire into and recommend whether casinos should be established

in Victoria—it was when the debate first started to occur in Victoria. Xavier Connor ultimately recommended against the establishment of casinos in Victoria, but he said that, were they to be legalised, they would need to be very highly regulated and there would need to be a very high level of regulatory control. Now, while everyone remembers the footage of Jeff Kennett as he opened Crown Casino, it was in fact Joan Kirner during her time as Premier who legalised both casinos and electronic gaming machines.

**Mr D O'Brien** interjected.

**Ms RYAN:** But I do digress, member for Gippsland South. Connor recommended that the government appoint inspectors, so that was the first time that that recommendation had been made. He did not believe that a casino should be legalised in Victoria, but he said, ‘If you do do it, you need to appoint inspectors and they need to have investigative, surveillance and auditing skills’—a team of inspectors with those qualities that have very high integrity and skill.

When the Melbourne casino was actually opened, when Jeff Kennett was Premier, the Victoria Police crime unit that I referred to earlier was also established in addition to the work of those inspectors. So you had a dual track, if you like—you had permanent police presence via a permanent unit stationed at Crown, which was doing a lot of the intelligence work and a lot of the work to stamp out crime at the casino, and then you also had this team of skilled inspectors. That police presence, that permanent police presence as a dedicated casino unit, is no longer there, but effectively what the legislation before us now does is expand the role of those inspectors. I would certainly argue that in recent years the job of an inspector has not become less complex, and I would make the observation that it is a very big ask to require an inspector to take on the functions that are prescribed in the legislation that is before the house as well as to maintain those skills that Xavier Connor pointed to in 1983 when he first recommended the establishment of those inspectors. It is a very big and a very broad job with exceptional challenges. So I draw back to the fact that if now the most experienced inspector in the regulator has just 18 months experience, that is a great concern and it raises a real red flag for me about how the government is actually going to ensure integrity on the gaming floor at Crown.

A further recommendation that this bill seeks to implement is recommendation 18 from the royal commission, which calls for changes to the powers of inspectors. The commissioner recommended that inspectors have free and unfettered access to all parts of the casino, to all surveillance equipment used by the casino operator and to all the books and records of the casino, and he further recommended that interference with inspectors’ performance of their functions becomes a strict liability offence, which this bill delivers on, which carries a significant penalty; I believe it is 120 penalty units that the bill imposes. I think these changes are certainly important, particularly in light of those concerns raised by inspectors within the *Four Corners* report, but more important is a willingness to actually use those powers when they are required. Again I draw back to that *Four Corners* report, where one inspector said that Crown tended to believe that they should have control and virtually had a self-regulatory model and they would have been quite happy to see the gaming inspectors out of there. Another inspector, Barry McGann, who actually worked at the VCGLR until 2008, said:

In regards to auditing and Crown giving us the information, they’re definitely—they’re feeding us the information they want us to see.

Yet another, Danny Lakasas, who worked at the regulator until last year, pointed out that the inspectors already have coercive powers under existing legislation where they can interview people, they can demand CCTV footage, demand the production of documents or seize footage. But the concerns of those inspectors related not so much to the powers that were at their disposal but rather the willingness of the regulator to actually act upon them and investigate those concerns.

Clause 9 of this bill inserts new section 108 into the Casino Control Act 1991 to give inspectors greater access to the casino, including its security equipment, books and records. But I do note that in seeking to implement this recommendation the government is actually requiring inspectors to give notice in writing in order to allow the inspector to access and operate the security and surveillance facilities for

the casino and to access, inspect or take copies of or extracts from books or records of the casino operator. Some of the former inspectors that I have spoken to have raised concerns about this requirement. In their view it has been a particular problem in the past because it gives the casino time to hide and manipulate what is provided to inspectors—remember that these are highly experienced inspectors who have many, many years on the floor at Crown—and in their view an inspector must be able to walk in and request the information on the spot so there is no opportunity for the casino to destroy, manipulate or change information. They say that they used to be able to walk into Crown's surveillance department and do that; they would be provided with the footage immediately. It was more, in their observation, where things changed within the regulator that Crown became more bolshie and started pushing back on those requests. So their view is not so much that there are gaps in the existing legislation but rather that there needs to be a willingness within the regulator to exert the power that it has.

With that said, I would challenge the government to explain why they are putting limitations on the level of access for inspectors and why they are putting that requirement into legislation that they do in fact need to first notify Crown in writing of any request for books or documents or CCTV footage. I also would really like the government to explain why they have taken that decision given it was not a recommendation from the royal commission but rather the royal commission made a recommendation, as I noted earlier, that Crown should be directed under existing powers within the Casino Control Act to retain a copy of all security footage for a minimum of 12 months.

In conclusion, I guess I want to finish with the observation that I made earlier that the sticking point and the success of these changes is ultimately going to be in how they are implemented. The Parliament can grant some additional powers to inspectors and we can split the regulator into gaming and liquor, but ultimately it is going to come down to how the government chooses to resource the regulator. As I pointed out, I have grave concerns that that is going in the opposite direction—that in fact the regulator is having its budget cut even further and that that is likely to result in further reductions to inspector numbers when already we have evidence before us from both the former CEO of the regulator and also from Ian Freckelton to suggest that inspector numbers have been drastically wound back in recent years.

Again, that gutting of the regulator really does lead Victorians to ask why. Why was the Premier so incredibly reluctant to call any serious investigation into Crown? Why has this government cut the regulator back so that there are some shifts that have gone unfilled at the casino? Why are they even this year—after all of the concerns that have been raised about Crown, after all the findings that have come to light through both the New South Wales Bergin inquiry and Ray Finkelstein's royal commission here in Victoria—now further reducing the budget of the regulator by another \$10 million? Those things all remain very significant questions that the government has to answer. I think it would not be a stretch for Victorians to actually ask what is going to change here because it is one thing to give these powers, but more important than that, we need to ensure that the regulator is properly resourced to do its job.

**Mr TAK** (Clarinda) (10:38): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, another important bill that will continue to deliver the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence and strengthen regulatory oversight of our gambling environment through the full establishment of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC). Over the past 18 months we have seen this government's commitment to responsible gambling and regulation of the industry. We have seen this commitment through the announcement and delivery of the royal commission as well as the procurement of an independent policy review of casino regulations in August 2021, which led to the establishment of the new dedicated casino and gambling regulator, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission.

I also had the privilege of contributing to the debate on the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, which came into operation on 1 January 2022 and commenced the transition



to the VGCCC whilst also implementing the first tranche of recommendations from the royal commission. The VGCCC will strengthen oversight of the casino and improve harm minimisation, and this is particularly relevant to my community in Clarinda, where gambling and gambling-related harm is a serious issue and is challenging for many.

It is too often those that can least afford it that suffer from gambling, and that is true in the City of Greater Dandenong. Greater Dandenong is one of four local government areas that make up the Clarinda electorate, and according to the census data, it is second in Victoria for socio-economic disadvantage. Despite this, over \$350 000 was spent at the casino per day throughout 2020–21 and over \$72 million for the year, which is the third-highest expenditure in Victoria. This is a cruel reality—that those that can least afford it are the most vulnerable.

I know from my time as a councillor at the City of Greater Dandenong that gambling causes a great deal of harm to the health and wellbeing of many of my constituents through financial stress, relationship breakdown, family violence and mental illness, and that also comes with gambling addiction. I know that this is particularly so in many of our multicultural and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, so it is important that we continue to remind ourselves of this harm and we continue to work together to address and mitigate this harm wherever we can.

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation does some amazing work in partnership with communities across Victoria to inform people about the risk of gambling and to provide support to those who need it most, including those affected by someone else's gambling. The foundation has funded a number of councils, including the City of Greater Dandenong, to implement the Libraries After Dark program. The program is focused on reaching at-risk communities and those most vulnerable to social isolation, things also known to be risk factors for gambling harm. Springvale and Dandenong libraries are avid participants in this project, delivering workshops, film screenings, games nights and more, so you can just pop in for a free cuppa or a snack and make some new friends there. It is a wonderful program, mostly on Thursday evenings, and sessions this week are fully booked. Springvale Library will host sessions on electrical wire jewellery with Vivian Qiu, and their session is every Thursday. For everyone feeling isolated I recommend, suggest, urge and encourage them to get involved.

There is also a foundation prevention partnerships program which funds the Reducing Gambling-related Harm in CALD Communities project. This project aims to design and implement a community-led prevention strategy with culturally and linguistically diverse communities and associations to reduce the level of gambling-related harm in the City of Greater Dandenong—a very important initiative. The foundation prevention partnership program is funding the Engaging Cambodian Buddhist Temples in Gambling Prevention Partnerships project. The aim of this project is to build the capacity of Cambodian community leaders, including monks, in Melbourne's south-east to raise awareness of gambling harm within the Cambodian community and to engage community members with the issue, which we know sometimes is taboo and something that is not spoken about. I know that the project has delivered some really important services and outcomes for the Cambodian community, and I would like to say thank you to Mora Gibbings, welfare coordinator at the Cambodian Association of Victoria, who manages that project. She is a strong advocate for her community and has done an enormous amount of work to address gambling-related harm and family violence in our community.

Returning to the substance of the bill, the bill makes amendments to four acts. The first of those is the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011, also known as the VGCCC act. The relevant amendment will facilitate the full establishment of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission in legislation—namely, the amendment will establish the organisational structure and governance of the new VGCCC and provide for the commissioner to have particular skills and experience, such as regulatory experience and financial qualifications; introduce a new objective which reflects the VGCCC's role in gambling and harm minimisation; clarify the VGCCC's functions, including informing the public about gambling policy and undertaking activities to minimise gambling harm; provide the minister with the power to issue written directions to the

VGCCC relating to its objectives and functions; and, most importantly, ensure that decisions are made at the appropriate level by making certain functions non-delegable.

These are more important changes that will strengthen oversight of the casino and improve harm minimisation. There are also other amendments to the Casino Control Act 1991, the CCA, which will introduce a new mandatory reporting function so that inspectors must report to the VGCCC any observations of money laundering, loan sharks or the sale of illicit drugs; give casino inspectors greater access to surveillance equipment, books, records and other documentation; allow the VGCCC to accept a written undertaking where there is a breach or a potential breach of the CCA or the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 or in relation to any further matter where the VGCCC has a power or function; and enable the VGCCC to take disciplinary action against the casino operator following a single breach of the operator's responsible gambling code of conduct. These are all important changes.

Finally, there are changes to the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 which will establish a new Victorian Liquor Commission under the LCRA within the Department of Justice and Community Safety. And lastly, there are provisions for relevant savings and transitional provisions to implement the establishment of the new regulations. These are comprehensive and important changes that will continue to implement the recommendations of the royal commission, strengthen oversight and improve harm minimisation. These are important changes for my community, and I know that my community would support this. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) (10:47): I rise to make a contribution on the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I want to begin by noting the comprehensive review and assessment that the Shadow Minister for Gaming and Liquor Regulation, the member for Euroa, provided to the house not so long ago. This could be a good news story, but sadly we have had so many issues with the casino that the government has been forced to bring in a number of bills to address some of the issues, and I will certainly be going through some of those issues.

We know the casino is part of the heart of the Crown complex, and that complex at Southbank is an enormous gathering place for many people, with the restaurants and with the fun and activities that they have in and around the casino. So it is not just the gaming machines and tables that draw people there; the entire entertainment complex is very important to Melbourne. It is very important to tourism in Melbourne. I note that prior to COVID it had some 19 million visits per annum. Many of those people are locals in Melbourne, Victoria. People will come from interstate, and they will stay at a number of the hotels that are there. Certainly we know that they come internationally, and here is where some of the problems begin with some of the practices that have been going on there.

I have been lucky enough on a couple of occasions to have had a behind-the-scenes tour of the complex, and there are a number of exceptionally impressive elements of how it runs. Their training program, the training that they provide for people that are working on tables, for security and for people working in a number of the areas, restaurants and catering—I understand that within the industry it provides some of the best 5-star training that young chefs or people who are going to be working in the hospitality sector can get. I think it is in recognition of the important role that the casino, and the complex, plays in Melbourne's economy and certainly the tourism sector that it has continued to survive rather than have its licence pulled from it.

Running a casino cannot be easy. It is a lot more than fun and games, and it has a lot of complexities about it, because when we are starting to look at things like money laundering and problem gambling, it is how you get on top of those things. When I visited, I saw some of the work that they were doing with problem gambling, but clearly that has been far from adequate, and a lot more work needs to be done in this area. I think that the government have really dropped the ball on this for quite some time.

The purpose of the bill that we have before us is to amend the Casino Control Act 1991, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011, so there are quite a number of acts that are tied up in this. We know

that the bill also makes further arrangements for the regulator, the VGCCC—as we said, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission—and it implements the government’s decision to separate gambling and liquor regulation and to establish the new regulator for liquor, and that is something that has been there in the past. This will be creating the Victorian Liquor Commission, the VLC. The amendments of this bill will transfer all aspects of liquor regulation, which is currently undertaken by the VGCCC, to the new liquor commission.

I want to talk about the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. Actually, no, I will go back a step. I want to start with the casino. It was established at the World Trade Centre in 1994 and at Southbank in 1997. We know prior to that that it was the Kirner government that legalised casinos and electronic gaming machines. So we have had for quite a considerable period, in a different way, gambling in Victoria, which has been known around the world. When you look at what has been going on around the world and the challenges that they have faced, it was something that we very much needed to be in control of. What happened was we had the Bergin report in New South Wales. The Bergin inquiry found that Crown facilitated millions of dollars to be laundered through a bank account of a subsidiary and Crown Melbourne allowed operators with links to organised crime to arrange for junket players to gamble at the casino. These were very, very serious allegations, and it has been very disappointing that the government really did not want to do much here and were actually dragged kicking and screaming to the royal commission.

Ray Finkelstein AO, QC, the commissioner, handed down his final report on 15 October last year, and he made 33 recommendations. As I said earlier, he stopped short of cancelling Crown’s licence because it would have caused such harm to Victoria’s economy and so many associated third parties. The government has given in-principle support to the remaining 24 recommendations after the first tranche of the legislation, which went through last year. I want to quote from the royal commission:

Within a very short time, the Commission discovered that for many years Crown Melbourne had engaged in conduct that is, in a word, disgraceful. This is a convenient shorthand for describing conduct that was variously illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative.

That is pretty damaging. Another quote:

Crown Melbourne had for years held itself out as having a world’s best approach to problem gambling. Nothing can be further from the truth. The Commission heard many distressing stories from people whose lives were ruined by gambling but whose situation might have been improved if casino staff had carried out their obligations under Crown Melbourne’s Gambling Code.

In January this year the Labor government walked away from its promise to implement all of the recommendations, and as I said, they had avoided a royal commission at every opportunity. It only went through when the upper house proposed forming a committee to inquire into Crown’s regulator and the government’s interactions with Crown.

In 2016—these are some of the findings; things that are really quite damaging—when Crown had 19 employees arrested in China for promoting gambling illegally, 16 of them were imprisoned and they did nothing to protect their staff. In 2017 the Auditor-General found that money laundering by high rollers at Crown was not being properly scrutinised by the regulator. In 2019 Fairfax and *60 Minutes* ran an exposé on the casino, in which they alleged Crown was working with junket operators backed by organised crime. We only have to look at today’s newspapers, this week’s newspapers, to see continued concerns about overseas interests in money laundering operations and illicit drugs. We know that these problems are difficult; they are complex. It needs to be tackled properly. On Crown’s underpayment of casino tax, more than \$61.5 million in back taxes has been repaid. We found also, as I said, that the Bergin inquiry made comments. So Crown was fined \$80 million for the illegal practice of accepting Chinese bank cards to fund gambling, disguising the transactions as hotel expenses. These are very damaging.

Of course we have to have a look at the staff and the board there and their responsibilities. I acknowledge absolutely that running a casino, being on the board of a casino, is complex, and so the

skill of the board members absolutely needs to be first class. They need to know and understand all the risks. They need to be aware of those risks, what is happening under their noses, and how to mitigate and deal with them.

With the legislation, it is great to have some legislation, but it is the implementation that is going to be where the real runs are made. If it is not implemented well, then there are real problems, because this legislation provides additional functions and powers for the regulator. Certainly we know that the budget has been cut—that was evidenced at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and through the budget papers themselves. If that means that there are less inspectors on the ground, well, some of these issues may actually grow rather than being tackled and knocked off.

We see now that the interim chair, Jane Halton, is the only board member to remain at the company. Xavier Walsh, the CEO, stepped down from his role last year, and they have had to have a new CEO. With this come enormous golden handshakes. The *Australian Financial Review* on 21 October outlined the extent of the millions and millions of dollars being paid in termination benefits. It is really quite staggering how many millions—tens of millions of dollars have had to be paid.

Whilst the opposition is not opposing this legislation, we do implore the government to make sure that it takes its role and the role of the regulator seriously so that we can avoid damaging the reputation of what could be a good organisation for Victoria and for gambling at the casino in this state.

**Ms WARD** (Eltham) (10:57): I also rise in support of this legislation, and I am glad to see it. Like probably a number of people in this place, I am not much of a gambler. I could not tell you the last time I was at Crown Casino. I could not tell you the last time I used a poker machine. It is not something that I consider to be that much of an enjoyable activity. I can see, though, how other people would. I can see the fun, the adrenaline, you never know, that luck of the draw. I guess we all experience that during cup week or the racing carnival season, where there is so much excitement that comes with it—what is going to happen? What is going to be the outcome? Can I make a little pot of gold out of my gamble? It is because it can escalate, it is because of that adrenaline rush, it is because of that psychological excitement that can come with gambling that we do need to have government intervention. We do need to have a number of mechanisms that actually help manage gambling in our community. This is one piece of legislation that this government has put forward to address the challenges that we have seen emerging or that we have uncovered with gambling in this state.

For a lot of us our experience of a casino is often on TV or it is in a movie. It often looks pretty glamorous. It is pretty cool; there are lots of people wearing pretty cool clothes. Often they are just trying to rip off the casino. We do not actually get to see a lot of the sadness and a lot of the trauma that can come with gambling problems. We do not get to see the families at home struggling to pay bills. We do not get to see the distress of being at a check-out and not being able to pay because your partner has sucked up all of the money from your account through an addiction to gambling—whether it be horses, whether it be pokies, whether it be a card table.

We as a government have got a responsibility to help manage this, so we established the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. We know that the casino operator has to be held to account, and these are exactly the powers that the VGCCC will have. We want to minimise gambling-related harm, and we want that to be at the very core of the VGCCC. A number of speakers have spoken about the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, and I imagine a number of speakers after me will continue to do so. In response to the royal commission we are now going to, with this bill, give new powers to casino inspectors and expand their role to include reporting certain activities that they see happening within the Melbourne casino. We know that over the last few years a lot of activities have been happening in the Melbourne casino which are not right and which need to be stopped. We know that they should not be happening. I thank the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation for the work that she and her team have done on this legislation.

And I thank her for the support that she has given to my petition to reduce gambling ads on TV. I have spoken in this place before about this petition, and now the federal election is over I can assure the gambling industry that I will continue to go in hard with my petition. I imagine I am not the Lone Ranger in this place who is sick to death of the saturation of gambling ads on TV. I am sick to death of the saturation of gambling ads in my Twitter feed whenever there is a football game on, and I am sick about the amount of children who think that gambling is normalised behaviour through these ads that we see on TV, that we have got kids who understand what betting odds look like and that we have got kids who think it is normal to bet on who will kick the first goal, how many goals will be kicked, who will be reported, who will go off and who will make the team, not just the final score at the end of the game. This is terrible behaviour for our kids to be subjected to, and they are subjected to it because of the saturation of ads that we have on our TVs that happen at all hours of the day.

The previous federal government had a responsibility. They were going to, under Malcolm Turnbull, come in and reduce the amount of gambling ads that we had on TV; before 8.30 at night they were not going to be on TV. This did not happen. They absolutely fell over, the federal coalition, when it came to controlling and monitoring gambling ads on TV, and I hope very much that the new Albanese government will step in and start to do something about it which will pick up this important work that the Liberals squibbed on—and they absolutely squibbed on it.

I thank the minister for supporting me in my petition and in helping to get it out there and for listening to me and understanding the concerns that I have got. It is astonishing but it is not surprising in my community how many people are signing this petition but also how many people have expressed and shared with me their frustration at how many gambling ads are on TV. I suspect that my contribution today will result in another member of the gambling industry emailing me and inviting me to meet with them to learn about all the great things that they are doing in the industry and the help that they are giving. One of the helps you can give is reducing your ads so you are not creating the harm in the first place. Do not email me and say that you want to catch up with me and talk through all the great work you are doing if you are not actually going to reduce the gambling ads that you are putting out there, if you are not going to minimise harm by ensuring that kids understand what gambling looks like—and the kids actually want to participate; the kids want to grab an app. And when you are creating gambling ads where you have got a bunch of blokes walking into a pub and they are all on their phones betting—that is their social interaction—that is not healthy behaviour. Why are you as an industry supporting that? Why are you as an industry promoting that? Just stop it. Cut it out.

**Mr McGuire** interjected.

**Ms WARD:** I know it is about money, member for Broadmeadows—it is absolutely about that. Where is the social responsibility here, though? Where is the investment in community? Absolutely, the gambling industry can give money to sporting clubs and the rest of it. But you are doing that because we make you do it. You do not do it out of the goodness of your heart. There needs to be a social contract here where there is some responsibility taken for the gambling ads that we are being subjected to and who they are being targeted at. They are absolutely being targeted at kids and they are absolutely being targeted at teenagers, just as they are being targeted at adults, and that is shameful behaviour. It is exactly the same as the tobacco industry. The tobacco industry worked very hard to get kids in at a young age, to hide the harm but to get kids in.

**Mr McGuire** interjected.

**Ms WARD:** Absolutely, member for Broadmeadows, get them hooked so that all throughout their lives they are participating in gambling. They need to cut it out—they absolutely need to cut it out. It is ridiculous. It is on every sports show you watch, and I have said this before in this place. I love watching *The Front Bar*. It is a great show. It is terrific, it is fun, it is funny. There is great analysis of football, and it is enjoyable to watch. All throughout it are bloody gambling ads. It is relentless. And then you have got ‘Mick’s multi’ halfway through. There is normalisation of football commentators around gambling and around gambling odds. So it is not just that you can put the TV on mute during

the ad breaks to try and block out the ads, you have got commentators talking about it throughout the game. It is relentless.

We are embarking on an economic journey that we know is going to be painful. We know the cost of living is going up, we know that energy prices are going up, we know that grocery prices are going up and we know petrol prices are going up. People are doing it hard, and the last thing they need is the gambling industry selling them false hope and sucking up money that they cannot afford to spend. As I have said before: just cut it out. Give people some space. How much money does the gambling industry actually have to raise? How much revenue? How much profit do they need to make? Just slow down. Make your profit, make your money. There do not have to be record profits every year from the misery of other people. Your profits come from people losing money. And why would you continue to hammer people to try and suck money away from them?

I am not saying that there should never be gambling ads on TV. What I am saying is: reduce it. Make sure that your ads are not on of an evening when kids are watching games, when kids are watching sport. Put them on later at night. Have some social conscience about this, and stop trying to suck money out of people who can ill afford it. We are entering a period when we need corporations to show an absolute social conscience, and the gambling industry has to be a part of that.

**Mr ROWSWELL** (Sandringham) (11:07): I rise ahead of my colleague the member for Caulfield, who is at the table for the next 55 minutes and I am sure will make a mighty contribution to the debate on this bill within the next—

**Mr Fowles**: Mighty? Don't stuff it up.

**Mr ROWSWELL**: Yes, member for Burwood, an absolutely mighty contribution—I expect nothing less from my good friend and colleague the member for Caulfield, and within the next 55 minutes I am sure he will do such.

I rise to address the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and in doing so acknowledge the great work in this policy space of my colleague the member for Euroa, who very capably led this debate on behalf of the Liberal and National coalition just moments ago. I am a little concerned with what I have heard from the government members' contributions during the course of this debate so far. The first comment made by the member for Euroa in making her substantive and substantial contribution to this debate, which spanned 30-odd minutes, was to indicate that the coalition would not be opposing this bill. We are not here for war, we are here to simply put our case on this bill. But I am concerned that the members of the government have almost—well, not almost, they have—given the impression that there are significant issues in the gambling and liquor regulation space. My concern with that is that for the majority of the last two decades it has been Labor that have been entrusted by the Victorian people to govern this state. If there are as significant issues within this space as have been indicated by members of the government during the course of this debate, why haven't they spent the majority of the last two decades trying to fix those issues, trying to establish or propose further reforms in this space? I suspect the reality is that there are not that many issues in this space. If the bottom line from some members of the government is that this area of policy in the liquor and the gambling space is just so harmful for people, well, why not be frank and say, 'Let's ban it'? I mean, if it is really that much of an issue, why not go to that extreme? That is the impression that you would get from hearing some members of the government during the course of this debate.

My experience in this space is probably pretty similar to many people's experience in this space. I am a 36-year-old bloke, I like catching up with others, I like going to the pub and I like having a punt—not too much and not to excess. And I must say that my interactions in this space at a personal level have been entirely appropriate and certainly not to excess, and that has been the experience of those who I call friends as well. It is also clear to me in my interactions with some people who operate in this space, professional people who operate in this space, that they are not inclined to wait for the government—no matter what the colour of the government is—to set new regulations in this space, to

set new laws in this space. They are fully aware; they are fully apprised of their social obligation. They are in fact proposing and working through things that make gambling to excess less harmful without the need for government regulation, without the need for government interference.

There are legitimate businesses within this state who are going about giving options to those people who engage in this space, giving those people options to curtail behaviour, to put checks on themselves and to encourage self-responsibility—because my very strong view is that that is what we should be encouraging people to do. We should not be coming to this place to create new laws to curtail behaviour necessarily; we should be encouraging people to do the right thing by them and to educate them about that beforehand—and frankly, the liquor and gambling industry are not waiting for governments to stipulate what those areas might be.

It is also important during the course of this debate to recognise the contribution that clubs and pubs right around this state make, and that is not just through the employment of Victorians. I think of the Australian Hotels Association, for example, which employs more than 50 000 Victorians. As I have said in this place before, it is not just a job. A job is an opportunity to be self-sufficient, to be self-reliant, to provide for yourself, to provide for your family, to pay your power bills, to pay your mortgage, to send your kids to school, to treat yourself and to save for a family holiday, and it is so much more than that. In the case of the Australian Hotels Association, where they have got about 50 000 employees connected to their associated pubs and clubs, they give that opportunity to some 50 000 Victorians.

I can think of pubs and clubs around this state who recognise their social contract with their local community and give back to their community, who give back to their local sporting clubs, who dip into their own pockets and who do not rely upon government funding, whether it be local government funding or state government funding, to pay for club jumpers or new training equipment or whatever it might be for particular sporting clubs—no, no, no. Those local sporting clubs, those local community organisations, know that their local pubs and clubs have their back. They can go to them and they can ask them to contribute to their local sporting organisation in that way, and they do. And that is a wonderful thing. That is what our community should be about—that local ecosystem that supports each other. This is a social contract that I am referring to.

This bill makes arrangements for the gambling and casino regulator, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, and implements the government's decisions to separate gambling and liquor regulation by establishing a new regulator for liquor, the Victorian Liquor Commission, otherwise referred to as the VLC. The amendments in this bill will transfer all aspects of liquor regulation, which is currently undertaken by the VGCCC, to the new VLC. On face value it would appear that there is a bit of a shuffling of the deckchairs here. I am not aware that there are substantive changes to the way that liquor is regulated in this state as part of this change. Yes, there is a new body, but broadly speaking, at a principles level, will there be substantive changes to the way that liquor is regulated in this state? I am not aware that that is part of the government's plan here. I understand that this is in response to a recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, which was held very recently.

In closing, I just want to conclude where I began. It does concern me that the government contributors to this debate have sought to draw out many, many issues that they perceive with the gambling and the liquor industries here in Victoria. These industries are legal industries. They employ people, they recognise their social contract and they give back to our community in substantial ways. That also deserves recognition, and I am happy to pay tribute to those industries for the work they do in that regard. It must also be noted that the same government members who have cast those wideranging and broad aspersions upon this legal industry are the same government members and members of a government that rely heavily upon the taxation income that those industries deliver to the state government, which then enables them to make broader contributions to our state in any number of areas. I think in discussing these matters a broader, more level-headed context is certainly required.

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (11:17): The member for Sandringham in his contribution today has leapt to the defence of the gambling industry in a way that I think is somewhat disingenuous, because he has sought to draw out this perception that, one, the government is wholly and solely reliant on gambling income and therefore we are all in some kind of conflict of interest in relation to the regulation of that industry, but also that when we seek to highlight problems that the gambling industry has caused, either in our respective communities or elsewhere, we have omnipotent power to do something about that and any inaction is therefore solely at our feet. Of course many, many gambling entities in Australia are registered in different states. Many of them transmit their advertising via the airwaves that are regulated by the federal government. Many of them are offshore. There is a whole range of activities that do not necessarily fall within the jurisdictional purview of the Victorian Parliament, so it is not actually that easy always for us to act on a particular problem.

I recall that the member for Mount Waverley recently raised the issue of the purchase of credits within a particular children's console game played on either an Xbox or a Nintendo Switch or whatever—for the benefit of the minister at the table, the Minister for Planning, it is sort of like a Commodore 64 but a bit faster—and that there is the ability to have gambling-like behaviour made available to children in that environment. There was not a strict jurisdictional head for Victoria to necessarily step in and regulate that conduct, but there is always the need for us as parliamentarians, as community representatives, to be live to what is happening in our communities and make sure we are bringing those issues forward. There is no doubt there has been an unbelievable proliferation of gambling advertising in recent years as smartphone-based and smart device-based gambling apps have made the accessibility of gambling so much easier. Once upon a time you had to go down to the TAB to get a bet on the races. Now you can do that sitting in this room. I am sure people have.

It is absolutely imperative that we continue to understand that technological change will drive change to the way that gambling is delivered to Victorians, and it may well be delivered by entities that are not Victorian or are not even Australian. They will be delivered by methods that have not been contemplated by regulators. It is, I think, disingenuous to try and suggest that all problem gambling sits at the feet of this government. We know that gambling can be problematic for some. I absolutely honour and respect the hard work done by many people in many of these businesses in a fair and legitimate way, but we just need to be live to the fact that there are not necessarily cure-alls or panaceas for some of the problems that are out there.

The Crown Casino frankly was a very good example of that, because there you had a complex that had at its heart a casino, yes, but a whole range of other activities, a whole range of other businesses and hundreds and hundreds—in fact thousands, nearly tens of thousands—of workers employed in non-gambling activity. Even just the hotel and functions business alone—a very, very large business—has no direct connection to the gambling business other than tangentially. Heaps of members of my union, the United Workers Union, and other unions and lots of workers are potentially going to be very, very badly affected—having come out of the pandemic, mind you—if a blunt instrument is applied to Crown Casino. There is no doubt that Crown Casino fell well short of its obligations and even further short of the expectations. Crown Resorts as the single biggest gambling operator in Australia in this market have an absolute obligation to be the best operator. They are the best resourced. They are the best placed to be delivering gambling services in the safest and most socially responsible way. They fell miles and miles and miles short of that goal; there is no doubt about that.

We want Crown to be a model citizen, and part of the behaviour change that is going through that organisation at the moment is being driven by the things we have set up, including the special manager. Part of it will be driven by public pressure, part of it will be driven by the regulatory changes contained in this bill and part of it, hopefully, will be delivered by a better quality of leadership than they have had historically. Plenty of people, including former Liberal ministers, have taken the golden parachute out of the joint, having run it into the ground. I can only hope that with better governance, with a better selection of directors and with a more ethical approach to their activities we will see better behaviour from Crown Casino, and this bill forms part of the picture, part of the response from the Victorian



government to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence to make sure that that in fact happens. My preliminary remarks, as they often do, have taken me all the way through to the 6-minute mark, so I will whizz along from here.

The approach to these reforms recognises that there is that separate role of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission at the casino, and the role of the VGCCC is around casino activities and gambling activities. We need to accept and respect that there are other agencies that have a role at Crown, including, for example, Victoria Police. It is not the role of the VGCCC to be monitoring, for example, the sale of drugs at Crown Casino. They will report it if they see it, but it is not their key role to be down there engaged in that activity, and VicPol, frankly, are far better resourced and set up to be responding to individual instances of illegal conduct like that. The role of the VGCCC is about ensuring that the right controls are in place at the casino to limit the opportunities for some of the behaviours that we have seen come to light, including money laundering, which is obviously hugely concerning—money laundering that has been perhaps aided and abetted but most certainly ignored by parts of the Chinese government. It is important that we recognise that that regulatory role and that relatively narrowcast scope is adequately resourced—it will be, and it is—but that the depth of the powers that the VGCCC have are appropriate and are fit for purpose. That is why I am pleased that there are a number of changes being brought through in this bill that will improve the powers of the regulator.

One of those, and it is an important one, is actually enshrining into law that the VGCCC has as part of its core business minimising gambling-related harm. It is sort of extraordinary that that was not in there at the outset, but it is entirely appropriate for a dedicated gambling regulator that that sit at the absolute heart of their role. We do want to minimise gambling-related harm. There is a role for gambling, there is a place for gambling. I occasionally gamble. I do not have any issue with it. These are legal businesses conducting legal activity, but we have got to ensure that the harm minimisation arrangements are felt right through the organisation and that they are not seen as some sort of attack or some sort of greenwashing exercise done at the end.

One of the other reforms is to expand the education function of the regulator to making sure that people understand what their role is as well as delivering those harm minimisation activities. An additional reform is making sure that inspectors are given further and better access to the casino, including unfettered access to all security and surveillance equipment as well as books and records, irrespective of their location. It is absolutely the case that there has been unethical and illegal behaviour. The sanctions for those have been very, very significant. Crown's shareholders—I am not one—have had a wild ride over the course of this journey because of the financial implications of the mistakes that they have made, and that is entirely appropriate; this is a mess of their own making. But it is really important that the regulator has the ability to cut past any unethical or illegal activity and access the material they need to be able to substantiate regulatory responses. And those responses include things like written undertakings. This bill allows the regulator to accept a written undertaking, and in addition to that, if the casino then breaches that undertaking, the regulator can actually seek court enforcement of it so that if they were then to further breach the undertaking they would be held in contempt, the consequences of which are very, very significant indeed.

I think we have seen we are in an era where there has been some normalisation of sports betting and odds betting and that kids have an awareness of this that they did not. That is a function of the advertising environment, and I support the work of the member for Eltham in trying to make sure that we do apply a lens to some of those trends that we are seeing in society more broadly. I thank the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation for bringing this bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) (11:27): I am pleased to have the opportunity to join this debate on the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Of course, as page 1 tells us, we are amending the Casino Control Act 1991, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011. I should also, before I go on, declare an interest as a director of the Victorian Responsible Gambling

Foundation, appointed by the Parliament. But I did want to make the point, in terms of a disclaimer at least, that my comments today do not in any way reflect necessarily the views of the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. They are entirely my own comments.

**Mr Wynne:** You're not conflicted, though.

**Mr MORRIS:** I agree. The minister says I am not conflicted. I am not conflicted, but I think it is important to make the declaration just to put those comments in context. I do welcome the reforms proposed, and you have only got to go back to the comments of the casino royal commissioner, where he said in his opening remarks:

Within a very short time, the Commission discovered that for many years Crown Melbourne had engaged in conduct that is, in a word, disgraceful. This is a convenient shorthand for describing conduct that was variously illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative.

He went on to talk about the regulator being bullied and how the manner in which Crown responded to various investigations was behaviour that was not expected of a regulated entity, including providing false and misleading information, delaying the investigation and so on. He also went on to talk about the impact on vulnerable people who have a gambling problem and made the point quite rightly that the cost to the community of problem gambling is enormous. And it is not just the person with the problem that suffers of course, it is those around them and those beyond them.

There is also then some commentary around the unsuitability or otherwise of Crown to hold a licence. The point is that this was a complete failure in terms of the regulator—a complete and absolute failure. I know the member for Euroa talked about the resourcing of the regulator, and I think that that is a significant part of the issue. But the regulation failed.

While I do welcome the reforms that are proposed here, as I said, hopefully this is not an exercise of rearranging the deckchairs, because this new commission has to be properly resourced. The regulation of liquor and of gambling has been an ongoing problem for decades, but when you come to the second-reading speech, the bulk of the speech is about, effectively, the casino, whereas when you look at the bill, the bulk of the bill is in fact about regulating liquor—perhaps rewriting, not reinventing the legislation around the administration of the liquor system but simply remaking that legislation with a different agency overseeing it. So I am not convinced that we have got this right. I am not convinced that we have got the administration or regulation of liquor right, and I am not convinced that we have got the regulation of gambling right. When you look at the participation rate, it is critical that we do get that right because at least 70 per cent of Victorians, or 69 per cent of Victorians, engage in one gambling activity each year. Forty-four per cent engage in TattsLotto and 37 per cent in buying raffle tickets and things, but playing pokies or electronic gaming machines (EGMs), 14.1 per cent, and in the casino, 6.1 per cent. Those are significant numbers of Victorians, and it is important that we get it right.

As others have commented, I am certainly not a wowser. Yes, I do gamble. Mostly it is TattsLotto, but if I go to the races, I will put 10 bucks on a horse. That is about the extent of it; frankly it does not excite me in the slightest. But I know for others it can be very addictive. But the reality is that prohibition does not work. People choose to gamble. They should be able to choose to gamble, and I certainly do not have a problem with that. But I also recognise that these are very big businesses. Quite rightly, in the time that we have had the casino operating and in the run-up to its opening, we have had a focus on organised crime, and that is entirely reasonable, particularly given the huge amounts of cash that wash through the system. But I think we also need to have a focus on the impact on consumers, because it is frankly not acceptable to have an industry of this nature that is not heavily regulated and that is not effectively regulated, because when you think about it, a licence to have electronic gaming machines is effectively a licence to make money. It is a lucrative licence. I know some have found it difficult to make a dollar, but the overwhelming majority do very well. Similarly, with a casino, it is lucrative, but it is also a monopoly, so it has got to be heavily regulated and it has got to be effectively regulated.

I also think there is an argument to be had around how the proceeds of the activities from this industry are utilised. Frankly, if the outcomes from what is potentially a harmful activity are simply to generate

profits for the providers, to generate significant revenue streams for the state, to generate jobs, either directly or indirectly—and all of those are good things—if those are the only outcomes, that is simply not good enough, because as I mentioned, I think the community has the right to participate but it has the right to participate on a level playing field.

This is a potentially harmful activity, so you have got to have support mechanisms in place to allow the activity to take place but to recognise that there are potentially harmful outcomes. You need the regulation. You need to provide the support. We have an activity called ‘driving on the road’. We have the regulation: you cannot drive wherever you like, you have got to drive on the left-hand side. If the worst outcome happens and you have a collision, you have support services there—you have ambulances to come and get people who are injured, you have tow trucks to come and take away the cars. You have all those things, and then you have the ongoing support—and all of those things just happen as a matter of course. But we do not necessarily see that in terms of this industry.

To give you an example, if you look at the total media spend of the casino—the EGM providers, the operators, the various other opportunities for wagering and betting, the total money spent in those areas—and then compare it with the money spent for problem gambling service providers, for public education programs and for the impact of gambling, there just is no comparison. It is not a level playing field. It is way lopsided. If you think about how effective—going back to the road analogy—the TAC program has been, there has been a lot of money spent, but it has been an excellent investment. Together with effective regulation and tools like speed cameras, as a society we have driven down the road toll, even as the number of cars on the road has been expanding significantly. I think we really do need a similar campaign in terms of the gambling industry, but we need a well-resourced campaign. I am quite certain that the resources that are available at the moment—and maybe more resources will be available as a result of this bill going through—need to be boosted significantly.

I just want to conclude by referring very quickly to the impact of the pandemic. Life shifted online for many people throughout the pandemic, and life gambling-wise shifted online for many people as well. That is an epidemic we still have to come. Again, we need much better support for those services.

**Ms HALL** (Footscray) (11:37): I am pleased to rise to make a contribution in support of this bill and make sure that the Victorian government keeps upholding the highest possible standard of gambling regulation. I would like to make a couple of comments, I suppose, on contributions from a number of people in this place. Firstly, the member for Clarinda made a really thoughtful contribution with respect to gambling harm in his community. That is something I would also like to reflect on, because in my electorate of Footscray in Melbourne’s inner west we have long dealt with a disproportionate amount of gambling-related harm, in the City of Maribyrnong and in the City of Brimbank.

In preparing for this contribution I looked at some old research—it is from 2014, but it is the most recent I could find from the City of Maribyrnong—where they talked about the gambling losses in different parts of my community. The part of my community that I wanted to speak about today is Braybrook. Braybrook is a part of Melbourne’s inner west that has historically experienced high levels of disadvantage. There is a very large amount of public housing in Braybrook. Braybrook is a place that has a number of places with electronic gaming machines, and the damage they do in my community is far reaching and has a number of flow-on effects. I read some research from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, where a local resident spoke about the impact it has on Vietnamese women in my community. A number of those women find themselves in situations where if their partner or family member is addicted to gambling, it forces them into situations of homelessness, family violence or even begging. It has terrible impacts. In Braybrook the pokies losses in 2014–15—and at that time Braybrook was the fourth-most disadvantaged suburb in Victoria—were \$15 million, from a number of hotels with machines.

One of the things I often reflect on when I am driving through Footscray is the fact that one of our main gaming venues is opposite a primary school. It is called The Palms. It is directly opposite Footscray North Primary School. It never fails to disappoint me, and I wonder what impact that has

had on the community. That is the same street that my grandparents lived on, and I know that when my grandfather died it became a place that my grandmother, because I think often she was lonely, would go to—down to The Palms. I wonder how much social disconnection and disadvantage and lack of social inclusion leads to those impacts—leads to people going to places where they spend money that perhaps they do not have because they are lonely. Of course the levels of addiction in Melbourne's western suburbs are something that I have always been concerned about.

The member for Eltham spoke really powerfully about the impact of gambling advertising, so Sportsbet or the different betting agencies. I was thinking about that. Just recently the Western Region Football League—in my community and in yours, Acting Speaker Connolly—held a round called Love the Game, Not the Odds, and the reason they did that is that the impact of gambling advertising on young men in particular has just gone into every element of their lives. We know that 18- to 24-year-old men account for a third of all the sports betting. That is shocking, and it is because they have grown up in a culture where they are so used to seeing gambling ads. I remember going to the football recently and listening to a conversation of some young men sitting next to me, and all they were talking about was the odds. When I say they were young, they might have been between 10 and 15 years old. I think that is a pretty sad state of affairs, where gambling advertising in this country has affected our culture so much that our local footy clubs are organising rounds of football to encourage kids to focus on the game and not on the odds. I thought the member for Eltham's contribution was really powerful and also her reflection that there were parallels between the tobacco industry and the gambling industry. But I was really pleased to hear about her petition, and I might do something similar in my community of Footscray. The Western Bulldogs locally have been out of gaming since 2019, and that is something I am really proud of. They had a venue in the heart of Footscray which had been a source of a lot of problems, and I was very pleased to see the Western Bulldogs, with their commitment to our local community, get rid of their gaming machines. So there have been positive steps but there is so much more that can be done, particularly within those communities I was speaking about, and Braybrook is one that comes to mind.

This bill amends three key pieces of legislation—with my preamble, as with the member for Burwood, I have got 2½ minutes to go—the Casino Control Act 1991, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011. By amending these acts the Victorian government will be able to provide stronger, more focused oversight of Victoria's casino licence operator and gambling sector and liquor regulation. Liquor and gaming regulation will be separated, establishing a new regulator that will operate with the support of the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

I just want to also respond to some of the comments from members of the opposition. The recent budget included a huge commitment to boost gambling regulation—\$55.6 million, which includes funding for the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. This also includes funding for the office of the special manager overseeing every single aspect of Crown's operations with extraordinary powers. We are also ensuring that the regulator has the resources it needs to do its job now and into the future.

We want Crown Casino to be a model citizen, and this reform, this work, lays the foundations to make sure that it is properly regulated. The bill fully establishes the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, which will be able to provide a dedicated focus on monitoring gambling and the casino. It will be able to take disciplinary action against the casino following even a single breach of the responsible gambling code of conduct, and it will be able to require and accept an enforceable undertaking from the casino operator. Casino inspectors will be given greater access to surveillance equipment, books, records and documents, with casino employees required to assist inspectors to access surveillance equipment. This is a really important step. All of us were appalled at what we saw happening at Crown Casino. There is a lot of work we have to do in this country to tackle the impact of gambling-related harm. A lot of that comes from the gambling companies themselves. I wish this bill a speedy passage.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) (11:48): There is an old saying: where there are two flies crawling up a wall they will soon attract onlookers betting on which fly will reach the top first. Betting is certainly something that has been part of the fabric of our culture and our community, and we see it right throughout our community in so many different ways. I want to particularly pay tribute to a number of members in the chamber because it is not so much about the passion or the interest in what betting attracts, but it is how far that betting goes and what that does in terms of when it starts to impinge on not just somebody's values but more importantly their welfare and day-to-day life. That is really the crux of a lot of things where regulation and education become just so important.

We are seeing betting evolve from the traditional casinos, horseracing and the TAB, as the Minister for Planning says, at the table, to cards, footy, sports—we see it in just about everything now. There is gaming and arcade games. Even when I was involved in an organisation called Try Youth and Community Services we used to have these things called lucky envelopes, which would be sold at pubs. You would put in a dollar or two and get the lucky envelope and hopefully get a prize. There were also things like bingo centres, and again that was something that Try Youth did. As a service that helped vulnerable kids it used to do these things that provided, in many ways, entertainment—particularly bingo—for a lot of lonely people. A lot of people would turn up each week, meet people and try their luck. So all that is the fabric of our community, and I do not think for one minute we should be trying to shut down any of that kind of stuff. The idea of people having a go and potentially trying their luck I think is wonderful.

But I do have concerns when things are not done right and appropriately, and we have seen that particularly with the way Crown Casino have conducted themselves. We have seen that in terms of the lack of regulation and the issues with the regulator. As much as we can sing *Kumbaya* in this chamber, the issues with Crown Casino happened under the government's watch and under the regulator with their lack of being able to apply proper regulation in managing the casino, which allowed corruption, which allowed money laundering and which allowed the likes of organised crime, drugs and a whole range of things to enter into a world which nobody wants to see here in this state. We have to do everything we possibly can to stamp that stuff out because that then bleeds into our communities and into the fabric of our great society—and many people have made contributions already in this chamber about that.

When we saw under the Bergin report the issues that were happening in our casinos and the very issues that were happening at Crown, the government's response—certainly to say it in the most polite way possible—was lacklustre. It could have been a lot quicker in stamping on this. We should have got onto it a lot quicker. We have now got these recommendations from the commission which we support; there are some 33 recommendations from the royal commission which we support. There are 22 outstanding recommendations that are yet to be legislated, and the bill seeks to address particularly recommendations 17 and 18, which are the powers of the inspectors. This stuff is really important because it separates off the regulator when it comes to liquor regulation and that for gambling. And then the regulators and the inspectors are able to go in, and their function is to ascertain whether money laundering or loansharking is taking place or whether illicit drugs are being sold, to make an exclusion order where appropriate, to withdraw a person's licence and to ensure that things are functioning appropriately.

When the New South Wales Bergin inquiry was put together, it found that Crown Melbourne facilitated millions of dollars to be laundered through the bank account of its subsidiary, and Crown allowed operators with links to organised crime to arrange for junket players to gamble at the casino. We saw the imagery on the likes of *60 Minutes* and the *Age*, which did some really good reporting of what was going on—and as I say, no-one wants to see that. It is not a fair, level playing field. It is not an appropriate playing field, and it is not something that anyone would be supporting. And in fact we need to do everything possible to stamp that out, hold people to account that have done the wrong thing and ensure that these businesses operate appropriately.

The member for Sandringham made some good points about many businesses very much wanting to do the appropriate and the right thing and the importance of doing that in terms of protecting their reputation. I will not talk about the specifics of the betting operator that I was talking with a few weeks back, but I was sitting next to somebody whose job is all around the integrity of gambling. What she does is she goes through all of the betting lists, and when somebody makes a bet that is out of the ordinary—so somebody puts \$10 000 on a horse—she will then go and have a look at that, investigate that. And if it seems that that person has put on that money which is well and truly above their means and it puts them in a very difficult situation in which financially it will cause problems for their family, they will actually refund the bet. Even though it is lost, they will pay that debt back. I did not realise that that kind of thing would even happen. She was telling me that just for their own sake, for their own business, for their own reputation they cannot afford for that kind of stuff to happen. When people make a legitimate bet where they can—obviously there is a limit to this, and there is counselling and there are other things that you need to do to ensure you are educating those people—it is one thing, when someone bets when they have got the money to do it, but when somebody is literally betting their house and putting their family and everything on the line, the consequences of that are huge, so to be able to have that kind of integrity element really does comfort me.

I am not saying that we should have everything self-regulated, but there is an element of that that I think we should absolutely take into account—that many businesses do do that, because at the end of the day if they do not have integrity in their business, they end up going broke anyway. We see that in farming, we see that in fishing and we see that in a lot of businesses—that you have to look at investing for future generations, particularly if that is something that you are relying on getting your income from. I was one of the inaugural representatives on the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation that was put together under the member for Malvern when he was the minister. That was a fantastic initiative, and I know that has continued. It did have a bit of a rocky road in this current term of government. I understand that it is now back on track, so to speak. And it did take a long while for reappointments of people from here—I think it was six months to get the member for Mornington from our side appointed onto that board. I am glad that he was appointed to that board because I think it is a very, very important board. A big part of what the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation does is educate people and provide awareness, and we absolutely do need to do that.

I come from a betting family. My uncle made a small fortune out of a big fortune from gambling. A lot of the money that he made was gambled away. Thankfully he did not have kids and he did not have family, so the only person he was really hurting was himself. But I know that on many occasions my father had to help him and bail him out in very, very difficult sets of circumstances. It is traumatic when somebody is a problem gambler, and we do need to do whatever we can to help problem gamblers. That is one of the reasons that prompted me to get involved in the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. I love to have an occasional bet—a very occasional bet. Even my children, now at the ages of 18 and 21, love following basketball and everything and will have a dollar or \$2 on something, but they are educated to understand what is a bit of fun and what is something that becomes a problem. I think that is what we need to do in our community—educate people to understand the consequences. In the end we cannot control people to the nth degree. We have got to give people the opportunity to make their own decisions—informed decisions—and ultimately to be informed that there are consequences when you make the wrong ones.

**Mr MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (11:58): I too rise to make a contribution to the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I do so after my colleagues have made some very strong contributions as well. The bill is the next stage of this Labor government's overhaul of gambling regulation, and that follows the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. At the end of last year the government established the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) as a standalone gambling regulator to focus on holding the industry to the highest standards that it possibly can. The minister at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing just a few weeks ago, in my view, did not struggle and in fact was very strong in detailing the \$55.6 million that is in the 2022–23 budget and how these moneys will be used to respond to the recommendations that

the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence has given and to enhance and improve gambling and liquor regulation.

The bill will finalise the governance and structure of the VGCCC and respond to further recommendations of the royal commission, with enhanced powers and functions including giving casino inspectors greater access to surveillance equipment and casino records and requiring casino employees to assist inspectors to access and operate surveillance equipment to monitor all activity on the gaming floor. This bill will also protect Victorians from gambling-related harm by embedding this as part of the VGCCC's core functions, mandating that this shapes every decision that it makes.

When it comes to gambling-related harm, I would like to at this point acknowledge the Alliance for Gambling Reform. The alliance do incredible work. They are an organisation that is supported by some 60 different organisations throughout the country with the sole purpose of tackling the inequality and hardship that gambling causes. They work very hard to prevent and minimise harm from gambling, and their aim as well is to remove the shame that surrounds gambling addiction and to make people aware that it is actually a public health issue and that as such it should be treated that way. They are trying to achieve the legislative changes needed to protect our most vulnerable communities, and all strength to their arm, because they really do fantastic work in the community and are very powerful advocates in this space.

In terms of the response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, the commission handed down its final report in October last year, and the government has responded pretty quickly in that the commission's nine priority recommendations were implemented through the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021, which we passed in December last year. This has now set up the necessary framework to start holding Crown to account, including establishing the role of the special manager.

The legislation also dismantled the deal that was put in place by the previous Liberal government which meant that Crown would be entitled to compensation for any changes that were made to the rules governing its operation. If you think about that, it is absolutely extraordinary that any changes to a public corporation's means to operate could not be made unless there was compensation that was paid to that entity. I guess when you also think of that casino and the then chair and the then board and the party that they had served previously in Parliament, or the party that they were large donors to, maybe the deal that was put in place was not so surprising. Actually in this chamber today we have had members who have stated how hard it would have been to provide requisite board oversight in a casino, which is just absolutely extraordinary. Suffice to say that the royal commission was highly critical of that deal, a deal which only served to shield Crown from accountability, and abolishing it has paved the way for this government's reform program to restore integrity to Victoria's casino. It also increased the maximum penalty Crown could face from \$1 million to \$100 million, above and beyond what the royal commission recommended, and empowered the regulator to act directly on the royal commission's findings.

In terms of the VGCCC, the former regulator, the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, was established by the previous Liberal government, and its merged model of gaming and liquor regulation was not fit for purpose, so we are completely overhauling how we regulate gambling in this state with a dedicated new regulator, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. It will have oversight of all gambling and gaming activities within the state, from pokies through to the casino, with its core business also focused on protecting Victorians from gambling-related harm. It is that particular piece which I will move to now, because when it comes to harm minimisation this government is doing more to tackle problem gambling and the harm it creates than any other government has done before it.

The bill itself will enshrine harm minimisation as a guiding principle of how we regulate gambling and how we protect Victorians from associated harms by embedding this as a key objective. The VGCCC currently does not have legislated objectives which guide how it regulates gambling, but the

bill will insert new objectives into the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission Act 2011 to legally oblige the regulator to have regard to minimising gambling harm. Specifically it will make minimising gambling-related harm part of the VGCCC's core business by requiring the commission to consider this in each and every decision it makes. It will also expand the regulator's education function to include educating the public and delivering activities which minimise gambling harm.

These reforms build on a very strong record of this government of tackling gambling-related harm, including increasing funding to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to \$153 million over four years, the largest commitment to address problem gambling in Australia's history. Labor also introduced Your Play, the nation's first statewide precommitment scheme, and tightened restrictions on how much and where gamblers can access money in venues. I am very proud of these key reforms in terms of harm minimisation. It was in my inaugural speech in fact that I spoke to the intolerable harm that gambling is doing in our communities, from a perspective of being in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, because I could see that that harm is especially inflicted upon those who have insecurity in their work, with their cost of living and with their health as well. And let us face it, those three areas are all Labor issues, and it is only this Labor government that can be trusted to ensure that we have the most comprehensive harm minimisation measures while working with the responsible venues and the people that they employ.

In conclusion, this government is getting on with the job and ensuring our regulatory framework upholds high standards in Victoria's casino and gambling industries, and it will provide the focused new regulator with enhanced powers to hold the casino to account and a dedicated focus on protecting all Victorians from gambling-related harm. It is a good bill, and I commend it to the house.

**Mr KENNEDY** (Hawthorn) (12:08): I rise to make a contribution on the important Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This bill is the latest iteration in the Andrews Labor government's efforts to overhaul gambling regulation in this state, following the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. We have heard a number of speakers today on this, and I would just like to, in a way, echo the member for Eltham and others in terms of outlining what is needed beyond regulation. I think that the media has a lot to answer for. I am still obsessed by those ridiculous ads where everything that you can think of in life is summed up in having a good gamble and then at the end of the advertisement it says, 'Gamble responsibly'. Now, that is just absolute nonsense. It is very subtly put together, and then at the very end that sort of fervorino, in a word, 'Oh, well, gamble responsibly'. So I would like to encourage the likes of *Gruen* on the ABC and others to take on gambling advertising and show it up for what it is, which is an absolute disgrace in a civilised community like ours.

What I am going to do today is talk about how we are fixing the mess the last Liberal government left us, a focus on harm minimisation—the Andrews government has a longstanding focus on harm minimisation—the new penalties and the new inspector powers, time permitting. Before we discuss the necessary changes this act will realise, we have to reflect on how the gambling regulatory protections had sunk to such a nadir that they required a royal commission. In the final report of the royal commission the activities of Crown were described as 'disgraceful', 'illegal', 'dishonest', 'unethical' and 'exploitative'. It does not get much worse, I guess. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame. Changes they made under the previous Liberal government weakened the incentives for operators like Crown to act in the community's best interests and weakened regulations and regulators. The previous Liberal government effectively established arrangements that made Crown untouchable. This meant that Crown would be entitled to compensation for any changes to the rules governing its operation. How convenient. The royal commission was highly critical of this deal, which only served to shield Crown from responsibility. The reforms in this bill will abolish these arrangements and pave the way for our reform program to restore integrity to Victoria's casino. The previous Liberal government also changed arrangements so that the regulator had to assume regulatory responsibility for both gambling and liquor functions and duties. This clearly failed and overburdened the regulator. The bill will fix this error by separating the regulatory responsibilities of these two



activities once again. This will allow the new Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to focus solely on gambling activities.

I do not like to be playing political games, but it is important to set that context there. I notice that the member for Euroa is here today and was on about the Premier being too close to Crown. I think they are the sorts of harmful distractions that can get in the way of doing something really worthwhile here, and that is why we have to focus on the past, focus on the history of the Liberal government and learn from the past. The focus on harm minimisation then is important. I believe it is important to note that one of the most fundamental differences in this government's approach, and indeed what will be enacted through this bill, is the need for gambling regulation to be focused on harm minimisation.

As referenced earlier, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, the VGCCC for short, will be established in this legislation. This revamped watchdog with new fangs will have its legislative functions and objectives amended to ensure greater clarity in its role. These changes will mean there is a clear focus to minimise harm from gambling and enhance the regulator's ability to regulate gambling providers. This is crucial. We saw the final report of the royal commission describe Crown's approach to dealing with vulnerable people who have a gambling problem as the most damning discovery during their investigation. Problem gambling not only inflicts suffering on gamblers but also often affects their family, friends and other institutions. The VGCCC act will therefore have a particular focus on harm minimisation. It will also expand the regulator's existing education function to include public education about its regulatory practices and requirements as well as delivering activities which minimise gambling harm. With harm minimisation as a core principle at the heart of the new VGCCC, this bill ensures that the regulator will always be guided by the responsibility to protect Victorians from gambling-related harm.

The Andrews government has a longstanding focus on harm minimisation. It is doing more to tackle problem gambling and the harm it creates than any government has before, and this bill is testament to that. These reforms build on our strong record of tackling gambling-related harm, including increasing funding to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to \$153 million over four years, the largest commitment to address problem gambling in Australian history. It is always tempting in this place, I have noticed, to pick out something and say, 'Oh, yes, but they've reduced the number of inspectors'. We have got to really stop that game and we have got to actually focus on: what are the duties; what is the total organisation; what are the powers? That is the sort of stuff that is important rather than just picking a few numbers out and so on. That is in my humble opinion anyway.

Let us go to the new penalties. In the findings of the royal commission the penalties that could be imposed on a misbehaving gambling provider were clearly shown to be insufficient. This is why we as a government have lifted the maximum penalty Crown could face from \$1 million to \$100 million. This goes above and beyond what the royal commission recommended and has already empowered the regulator to act directly on the royal commission's findings. Led by the inaugural chair and CEO, Fran Thorn and Annette Kimmitt, the VGCCC has wasted no time holding Crown to account. Since commencing on 1 January 2022 it has already taken disciplinary action against Crown, imposing an \$80 million fine for the China UnionPay process uncovered by the royal commission. This is one of the largest fines imposed on a casino anywhere in the world. This fine was welcomed by the chief advocate of the Alliance for Gambling Reform, Reverend Tim Costello. He said:

Finally we have a watchdog with some teeth, the stronger legislative powers given to the VGCCC should be applauded. This fine is a vindication of strengthening its powers ...

It means Victorians can at last receive some protection from the Crown-enabling organised crime activities that the casino has been shown to undertake with near impunity for years.

The state capture of the regulator over many years has meant Crown has effectively done what it likes with only the prospect of a pitiful \$1m fine as punishment.

In addition to the fine the VGCCC has conducted a thorough investigation of unpaid casino tax and recovered \$61 million from Crown, responding directly to findings of the royal commission.

The bill will enhance inspectors' powers with increased access to surveillance equipment, books, records, documents and so on at the casino, something they were shamefully denied by Crown. That is the important thing rather than numbers of inspectors, with all due respect. The royal commission identified consistent failures on the part of the casino operator to use its surveillance equipment to detect money laundering and other crime. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms EDWARDS** (Bendigo West) (12:18): I am pleased to make a contribution to the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I thank the member for Hawthorn for his very considered contribution and his highlighting of the harm minimisation that is so necessary when it comes to gambling. As many members of course would be aware, I have been a member of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF) for a number of years, and that is our sole purpose—our sole purpose is to minimise harm from gambling. I also noted that the member for Hawthorn mentioned the advertising that many of us have to endure when we watch sport in particular on our television screens. The reality is that it is a requirement for the gambling industry now to have that wording on the bottom of the screen, 'Gamble responsibly'. We are in a position where gambling exists, and it is probably not going to go away ever, but it is about making sure that those who do gamble do so responsibly and have supports such as the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and of course the new authority that this bill establishes to make sure that harm from gambling is absolutely minimised.

I just want to refer, if I could, to the member for Euroa's contribution earlier this morning. I noticed that the member for Euroa never once mentioned in her contribution gambling harm or the important measures that this legislation brings to harm minimisation from gambling. It is one thing to take the high moral ground when it comes to Crown Casino and legislation that is before the Parliament today and has been in the past and will be again in the future, but the reality is that taking the high moral ground is not actually a solution to implementing all of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence.

It is very well known in this house—other members have referred to it—and I think there is a general consensus that gambling is indeed a public health issue and that preventing gambling-related harms does require a very broad response. The fact is that we have limited data at the moment and limited evidence really on gambling-related harms, especially when we compare it to our knowledge around other public health threats, but it is starting to change, and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation is very active in this space. Classifying gambling as an addictive behaviour and increasing recognition of harms are increasing fields of research, particularly in that public health sphere.

All of us know or have known someone who has been affected by gambling and the harms that come with it, but there is quite a diverse range of risks from gambling. That extends from housing and homelessness to domestic violence, debt, family breakdown, depression and of course ultimately in some circumstances, tragically, suicide. Certainly, as has been mentioned by others as well, there are certain groups that are more vulnerable to harmful gambling, particularly men and young people, certain ethnic minority groups, homeless people and people with mental health and substance misuse issues. But what is less evident is the impact beyond the individual gambler, and I think the communities across Victoria are becoming more aware of gambling harm in their own communities. I certainly know there are a number of organisations in Bendigo, such as the Bendigo Community Health Service, that are working progressively towards supporting particularly multicultural groups in understanding the harm that comes with gambling.

As I have mentioned in this house many, many times when I have spoken on these bills, gambling among young people, particularly young men, is a growing concern. We know that the risk-taking behaviours that we see, particularly in teenagers and particularly in young men in their 20s, can lead to problem gambling and the harm that comes with that. It is a unique public health issue in this space because the rapidly changing impact of technology on behaviour is impacting on these young people and it is blurring the lines between what we know is established gambling—I am talking about pokies and Crown, for example—and online gambling, which is a growing concern.

The newly established authority that this bill refers to, the Victorian Gambling and Casino control Commission (VGCCC), has as its focus—for the first time, I think, that any established authority has—a dedication to harm minimisation. That is a central tenet of this legislation. Yes, we have established this new authority, and yes, we have separated it out from the liquor commission, but the central premise of this legislation is that this new regulator will have a harm minimisation function, and that will inform every single part of its approach to regulating Crown Casino. I think that is a really important part of this legislation.

The design of the VGCCC is being informed by best practice regulatory arrangements from around the world. It will have a dedicated focus on holding the casino operator to account, particularly because it will have specialised staff and dedicated commissioners. The legislation that we passed in 2021 set the basis for further legislation, and this means that the VGCCC already has increased powers to hold Crown to account, including a duty for casino operators and their associates to comply with the VGCCC in a frank manner and do everything necessary to ensure the casino operations are conducted with integrity. And for the first time ever the VGCCC will also be able to accept enforceable undertakings to ensure that their decisions are implemented, and an additional mechanism is provided to ensure compliance. These are really important measures because it means Crown Casino will be held to account at every step of the way. The legislation also includes provisions which require the casino operator to notify the VGCCC of significant breaches of its regulatory obligations to the state as soon as practical. Casino operators providing false or misleading information to the VGCCC now have to face a penalty.

Of course legislation responding to the remaining royal commission recommendations is currently being prepared by the Victorian government for introduction later this year, and I think that is an important point, because I note that some contributors from the other side have referred to the fact that this is piecemeal and that it is not actually going anywhere. But it is incremental reform, and it takes time to prepare legislation about Crown Casino and that makes sure that the royal commission recommendations are implemented, and if that means taking our time to get it right, then that is exactly what we will do. It was this government that actually established the royal commission into Crown, and I think that it is probably only a Labor government that will get on and implement its recommendations. We did commit to implementing all of the recommendations, and I am pretty sure that is exactly what we will do. As I said, further legislation will be introduced later this year.

I am really pleased that those opposite are not opposing—as opposed to supporting—this legislation before the house today, but I do ask maybe if they could just think along the lines of actually having some bipartisan support, particularly in relation to gambling harm, not politicising institutions that have been established, like the VRGF, like the VGCCC, to ensure that the public of Victoria and the people of Victoria who are potentially at risk of gambling harm have the most protection possible. That is so important, because that is why we are here today—to make sure that everyone in Victoria can be reassured that the government is supporting them. Yes, gambling exists, but we want to make sure that anyone who gambles does so in a responsible manner and does not suffer from the risks that go with excessive gambling and the harm—the dreadful, dreadful harm—that can come from a gambling addiction. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) (12:28): It is great to be in the house speaking on such an important bill and following my good friend who spoke very profoundly then. Thank you for such a well-rounded speech on that bill. I welcome bills like this that come through the house. It is again another proud day of bringing through progressive legislation that is well thought out. As the member for Bendigo West said, it does take time to do these kinds of things, and I will talk about that in a minute. But the most important part of this bill, I think, is the harm reduction.

Anyone in the house can pull me up, but I am yet to meet the man or woman that says they bought their house by going to the pokies and playing the one-armed bandits. I am yet to meet people that have successfully gambled to make a living. I must admit, I do not come from a gambling family, but on the flipside of what I have just said, I see a lot of gambling harm, especially in my community, and

I see the investment from the government, from unions and from community groups to treat that harm. And that is not just harm to individuals who cannot control their gambling or have gambling addictions. It is the harm to their families; it is the harm that is caused to their relatives when they have not got a roof over their head and cannot make repayments and things like that. So anything that is brought to this house that can reinforce minimisation of harm due to gambling is something that is welcome for me especially.

I think my community would wholeheartedly support this bill. It has been a fairly well-publicised story, the revival of the Frankston Dolphins. As a club one large issue that the Frankston Dolphins had, and one of the reasons they went under and their VFL licence was taken from them, was the fact that they made some bad decisions around licensing pokies in their bar. It did not go well for them. It is just another story where I am yet to meet somebody who can proudly say, 'I won on the pokies. I won big time, long term'. These are machines that are programmed to make money and take that off people. As I have said, anything that can reinforce that harm minimisation is terribly important. So we have got the story of the Frankston Dolphins.

Recently I flew to New South Wales and visited a place called Foundation House—a model we want to actually have here in Victoria, run by unions for workers' residential addiction rehabilitation—and met some people who have dealt with gambling addiction or were undergoing treatment for it. I must say that was an eye-opener. Again, anything at all that can go through this house that recognises the legal ability for people to gamble and do what they want—they are free to do that—but minimises harm, whether it be through education or regulation, is very, very important to my community, because my community is one that has been affected by gambling addiction. As far as those harm minimisation reforms go, I think we are doing more than ever before to tackle problem gambling and the harm it creates—probably more than any other government in history, I would say.

In saying that, gambling has evolved. The member for Caulfield and several members on this side have spoken about how it used to be the dishlickers and the horses, but seriously—I know there are some people that will yell out—now you can basically gamble on anything, and it is freely available. I do not know, the member for Euroa could be on her phone now losing money on *Angry Birds* or something like that.

**Ms Ryan:** No, I'm not a gamer.

**Mr EDBROOKE:** There are games that children—

**Ms Ryan** interjected.

**Mr EDBROOKE:** I know the member for Mount Waverley has talked before in this house about the blurred line between adults gambling and children using apps in which they have to pay for tokens—that in essence is a form of gambling and is introducing children to it. We have got gambling televised on mobile devices. We have still got the TABs. But it is everywhere, and the advertising is everywhere. Because of that increase, because of that change and evolution in the market, I think it is very wise for the government to take on every single recommendation out of the inquiry and ensure that we act on them too.

The bill actually enshrines harm minimisation as a guiding principle of how we regulate gambling as well. That is to protect Victorians from the harms that I have been talking about, and that is a key objective of this bill. We want to lessen the chance of the grandmother going through the grandchild's savings jar for a couple of cents so she can have a win. We want to make sure that people are secure and are not gambling away their house, and this helps do that. The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission does not currently have legislated objectives on how it regulates gambling. This bill will put in place that guiding principle of harm minimisation by inserting new objectives into the act to legally oblige the regulator to have regard to minimising gambling harm as well, which is so important. Specifically it makes minimising gambling-related harm part of the core business by requiring the commissioner to consider this in each and every decision they make. There will be people

in this house today that say that is common sense and who cannot believe that that was not done before, but I think it is a great step in the right direction. It will change a lot of decisions that the commissioner makes if they make those decisions with the dialogue and with the optic of how this affects gambling addiction and how this harms or does not harm someone.

Importantly, this bill also expands and regulates the education function to include educating the public and delivering activities which minimise gambling harm as well. These need to be a lot more than just a tiny sub line on an advert—‘Drink responsibly’, ‘Gamble responsibly’ or whatever. These are actually going to be education campaigns. I hope—and we will be following this up—that as part of these campaigns we are focusing them on youth and that they do not speak at the youth but actually take the market that they see and make sure that they are aware of the dangers of this as well.

We introduced YourPlay, the nation’s first statewide precommitment scheme, and that tightened restrictions on the amount of money you can access in venues. You see that across the board in pubs and whatnot. I do not think there is anyone that is going to complain about that—even gamblers. It is a good stop and check, it is a good reset and it is working. These reforms certainly build on the very strong record that this government has of tackling that addiction-related harm, especially with gambling, and I note that we have increased the funding to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation by \$153 million over four years, which is the largest commitment to addressing problem gambling in Australian history.

Again, it is bills like this, it is bills like what we were speaking on yesterday in regard to the Nazi swastika legislation, that make me very proud to be a member of a government that will act on issues, not just stand there, be silent and let these things pass us by. We are not afraid to get up, to have our say, to be challenged by the community, to make decisions that are for the good of the community and to make sure that everyone is consulted. I know people were widely consulted on this bill. I know that that happened, obviously, through the inquiry into Crown. But from my perspective, as I have said repeatedly, anything that can stop people on that roundabout, where we have to spend money as a government to clean up the mess created by gambling, is a good thing. If we can start at the source and deal with the actual issue, it is great, so we do not have to deal with it down the other end.

I still, as I have said, do not know anyone who would be against this bill. As you said in your speech, Deputy Speaker, it would be lovely to see some bipartisan support instead of not opposing—they are two different things. I think most people on the other side of the house would support this, but it would be nice to see someone stand up and say they actually support this legislation and tell us about some clauses, how it affects the community, why they support this and why they would like to see this enacted and passed. With that, I will give some time for some other speakers to get up on this very important bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms NEVILLE** (Bellarine—Minister for Water, Minister for Police) (12:38): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.**

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

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

*Council’s agreement*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** (12:38): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the State Taxation and Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 without amendment.

## Motions

## BUDGET PAPERS 2022–23

**Mr WYNNE** (Richmond—Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing) (12:38): I move:

That this house takes note of the 2022–23 budget papers.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to provide a contribution this afternoon to what is by any measure a splendid budget—the 2022–23 budget—because it has an extraordinarily strong focus on our healthcare system. As we continue to live through this pandemic, our budget rightly focuses on prioritising and supporting our healthcare workers, who by any measure have done and continue to do a magnificent job.

**Mr Edbrooke:** Heroes.

**Mr WYNNE:** Heroes, as my colleague the member for Frankston says. They are heroes—no question about that—and we call out all of our healthcare staff, whether they are our ambulance paramedics, our doctors, our nurses or our allied health colleagues. It has been and continues to be an extraordinary effort in the most extreme of circumstances, but we come into this Parliament at question time and people seek to not necessarily, in my view, have a bipartisan view about this.

We are in a very unique situation here where we as a community have gone through the most significant health challenge that has ever been faced not only by us here in Victoria or Australia but in the world more generally, with COVID in its various mutations and manifestations. The work that our healthcare staff have undertaken has been herculean—it is the only way that one could describe it—and we remain deeply grateful to every single one of them. I am delighted of course to see today that the Premier yet again has reached out with the wonderful announcement of a retention package for healthcare staff of \$3000, which by any measure is an appropriate acknowledgement of their efforts going forward. In that respect we absolutely commend those frontline health service workers.

The budget of course addresses a pandemic repair plan for more staff, as I indicated, and better hospitals and indeed continues our first-class healthcare system. It is creating decent jobs, secure jobs, because every Victorian deserves the dignity of the right to work. It is building a world-class education system and ensuring our kids have the foundations for a good life.

On indulgence, Deputy Speaker, as you know, I am very much attuned to social media—very much so. I simply invite anybody who perhaps follows my Twitter account—

**Ms Ryan:** Do you follow it?

**Mr WYNNE:** Too right I do, and I post on it too. Do not worry about that. Do not distract me. The visit of the Premier to one of my primary schools in Richmond only a few weeks ago, the reception that he received there—fair dinkum, it was like he was a rock star—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr WYNNE:** No, I did all right. Do not worry about that. He was an absolute rock star. It goes to the question of what this government has done in education. People actually get this. There is not one school—

**A member:** Record funding.

**Mr WYNNE:** Record funding, as my colleague indicates. There is not one school in my electorate that has not received substantial funds—right through the electorate—because this government understands the crucial importance of investing in education.

**Mr J Bull** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE:** The Education State, absolutely. Of course the marvellous announcement that every one of our special schools will be either rebuilt or upgraded speaks to the heart of this government—what this government is actually about. I am just so thrilled as I am coming to the end of my public life here to reflect back on just what an extraordinary job this government has done in education itself. As I indicate, it is the absolute foundation of opportunity for our community. I really must call out the Minister for Education, who by any measure will be seen in this term of government, and I hope the next as well, as a stellar person committed to—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr WYNNE:** I have got everything. Do not worry about that, mate. If it is coming and going, I have got it. Do not worry.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The minister to continue without interjections.

**Mr WYNNE:** Deputy Speaker, this is outrageous. I am under duress here. This is very, very high pressure for me.

**Mr J Bull:** The minister did a great job.

**Mr WYNNE:** The minister—yes indeed—who has done an absolutely splendid job.

I want to talk a little bit about an area that I have remained deeply committed to for all of my working life, and that is the provision of public and social housing. This \$5.3 billion build, as I have talked about here in the Parliament before, is the biggest commitment ever undertaken by any jurisdiction—federal or state government. Nobody has committed so much funding to the provision of public, social and affordable housing. I am immensely proud of our government for this achievement. As we know, 25 per cent of that is being invested in regional Victoria, right across the state. And what does this mean? It means we are spreading the opportunity right across the state. It is a fantastic social outcome, clearly, in terms of the provision of housing and incredibly important in terms of jobs on site but also for the supply chain as well, so it is win-win-win all the way through. It is just, I think, a wonderful, wonderful investment by our government.

Can I also say that the work that we have done in the area of rough sleeping—and I say this with a little bit of humility—actually leads the country, and in fact leads the world, in terms of the intervention that we have made with rough sleepers. Through the COVID virus we took more than 2000 people off the streets of Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat—everywhere. We took people off the streets, and we put them into hotels. Why did we do that? For the obvious reason that we knew that if you were rough sleeping you were in an incredibly vulnerable situation, with the potential to contract the COVID virus. The motivation that the government had to do this has been quite profound in terms of providing a safe environment for people who do not choose to be homeless as some lifestyle choice. They find themselves homeless because of family breakdown, drug and alcohol issues and mental health issues. I was just so thrilled that we made this intervention and made it with a really clear focus. The focus was to get people into a more secure environment than, obviously, being on the streets but also to seek to stabilise them and then move them on to secure housing.

We will have housed in the order of 1800 households, which amounts to about 2100 people, who actually to date have been rehoused into long-term secure housing. We have got at least another 200 families, possibly a few more, that continue to be in hotels, and we are committed to moving them into longer term housing as well. But the key to this, as you know very well, Deputy Speaker, is not just about providing a house, it is about providing the supports to both stabilise people in their new housing environment and to ensure that they have got the pathways to a better life than what they have now. So it is about housing itself, but it is also about the wraparound services to support them going forward. That is why I was so pleased to announce a further \$23 million, which was allocated to continue our head leasing program, because many people at the moment have gone out of the hotels into head-leased properties and will move into long-term housing as part of the Big Housing Build.

That extra year that we are providing in terms of head leasing itself but also the support services, with the \$23 million, I know has been very welcomed by the homeless support agencies more generally.

To reflect back on this budget, as I say, we are likely to build over the four years somewhere in the order of 15 000 to 15 500 properties. It is a massive investment by this government by any measure. It will be a legacy of this term of government and one that I know we do have a very unique opportunity to in fact work with our federal colleagues on now. Frankly we could find no interest or commitment from the previous federal government to the provision of social and affordable housing. They did a little bit on homelessness, and that is okay, but it is about ultimately a supply-side response—but a supply-side response, particularly when you are talking about vulnerable people and homeless people, that has got the supports in there as well, because we know, absolutely we know, that if you do not provide those supports, many homeless people of course end up churning back through the system again because they are not being properly supported. They end up back in our emergency wards in the hospitals, they end up in our mental health facilities again, and at an enormous cost to the community of having people in these environments when in fact the alternative intervention that we are making stabilises them and ensures that they are not continuing to cycle back through the public hospital system or indeed, in some contexts, into the criminal justice system, where the cost to the community is absolutely enormous. A relatively modest intervention at the front end—get someone a property to live in, put the supports around them—we know that that model actually works.

What has been really interesting is that we are getting incredible interest in our intervention from overseas. I mentioned to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that people in Scotland in the UK are approaching us saying, ‘Tell us a bit more. What’s this model all about? This is something quite unique’. Certainly I had a visit from the new Western Australian Minister for Housing, who came over to look at some of the work that we are doing here, and he could not believe what we have actually achieved here in terms of our intervention in terms of homelessness and the Big Housing Build and also the partnerships that we are establishing with the philanthropic sector and with local governments. The City of Melbourne—we have got marvellous partnerships there and with a number of other councils as well. The \$5.3 billion that we have in the budget gets stretched when you have a partnership where your partner comes along and says, ‘Well, actually, we’re prepared to put in land’, which of course completely changes the equation and gives you an opportunity to get a much better outcome for the dollars invested. I am delighted to make this brief contribution today. This is a wonderful budget, and I commend it.

**Mr M O’BRIEN** (Malvern) (12:53): While I am always pleased to have the opportunity to rise in this house to speak on matters of importance to the people of Victoria and particularly the people of my electorate of Malvern, I have to say that in taking note of the budget papers for the forthcoming financial year they have been a disappointment. I know that in opposition you never tend to get the same level of attention or care or investment as you might do for your community when you are in government. I have been in government, I understand how the system works. But I do not think I have ever seen a budget in my 15 years in this place that has had nothing specifically for the people of my electorate. My people work hard, my community pay their taxes. My community are entitled to a fair share of government investment, but they do not get that in these budget papers. The people of Malvern are being asked to pay more, get less and go slower. That is all they have been told to do by this government.

This government boasts about the level crossings it is removing across Melbourne. Well, I have got three level crossings in my electorate. I did have five. One was removed in a budget funded by the former Liberal government in which I was proud to be Treasurer—Burke Road. It was done well with the rail going under the road, which the community is delighted by. This government removed the level crossing at the entrance to the Monash Freeway on Toorak Road. Sky rail—not as good but, look, credit where it is due. Removing a level crossing is better than not removing a level crossing, so credit where it is due for that. But I have got three more level crossings in my electorate that have not been touched by this government. There is an organisation called the Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model, and they list the level crossings across Melbourne in relation to how dangerous



they are and in relation to how disruptive they are. Despite the fact that the level crossings at High Street, Glen Iris, Tooronga Road, Malvern, and Glenferrie Road, Kooyong, are all ranked very high on the list, they have been ignored and neglected by this government in favour of ones in Labor seats. When the Minister for Transport Infrastructure gets up and says, 'We're about removing deadly and dangerous level crossings', why doesn't the minister actually focus on the most deadly and the most dangerous level crossings? Why is this government more interested in playing politics about where it chooses to remove level crossings instead of relying on the science and relying on the assessments that have been done, which say that these three level crossings are highly dangerous? Tragically we know they are deadly as well. The fact that this government has got no plans to do anything for those three level crossings frankly is appalling.

High Street, Glen Iris, and Tooronga Road, Malvern, clearly need work. What I found interesting is that Glenferrie Road, Kooyong, was actually the subject of funding by the former federal government. At the federal election before last, in 2019, the federal coalition government promised to provide the funding to remove the level crossing at Glenferrie Road, Kooyong. What has the state Labor government done subsequent to that? Apparently nothing. Even though we had a federal government willing to pay the money to remove a deadly, dangerous and disruptive level crossing, this state Labor government has gone on what looks to be a deliberate go-slow. I do not know whether the government just did not want to give the federal government any credit for funding the removal of the level crossing or the government just felt, 'Well, it's not in our patch. We don't care'. But to have a federal government saying, 'We've got money on the table to remove a level crossing', and then just not taking any action on it is appalling. My constituents, who are held up every morning getting to school and getting to work and every evening getting home from school and getting home from work and all the hours in between, will not be thanking this government for a deliberate go-slow when it comes to removing level crossings.

I have also got, tragically, a deadly intersection on Dandenong Road where it meets Darling Road in East Malvern and also at Koormang Road in Carnegie. I say deadly because we lost at least two pedestrians last year. I have written to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I have raised this matter in Parliament on many occasions. To his credit the minister for roads has written to me saying, 'Yes, we acknowledge this is a problem', and he said in one of his letters, 'We have funding, and we will take action'. My questions therefore are: what is the funding, what is the action and when are we going to see something? Following the last fatality at this intersection, the government put up an electronic sign warning drivers to be careful. Well, that is not going to fix the problem, and now that sign has been removed so there is nothing there—no additional safety measures whatsoever, not even an electronic sign to warn people about what we know is a deadly intersection. This government cannot afford to keep delaying these matters. The minister has written to me. He said, 'The money's there. We will take action'. Well, my community wants to know, Minister: how much money, what action and when? Because we do not want to see another life lost.

I have got five government schools in my electorate, and my own kids went to one of them. They are great schools, but they deserve investment too. I go through the budget papers with a fine-tooth comb. I go to the capital budget paper, I look at the back and I look for all the suburbs in my electorate. I look with hope every year to see Armadale or Malvern or Malvern East mentioned. Disappointment once again: not a single dollar for upgrades for any of my state public schools.

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

**Business interrupted under standing orders.**

**Members****MINISTER FOR PORTS AND FREIGHT***Absence*

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:01): I inform the house that the Minister for Public Transport will answer questions for the portfolios of consumer affairs, gaming and liquor regulation; ports and freight; and fishing and boating today.

**Questions without notice and ministers statements****HEALTH SYSTEM**

**Ms VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (14:01): My question is to the Premier. On 6 April 2022 I asked the Minister for Health in this chamber about my constituent Stephanie, who at that stage had been waiting eight months for surgery to repair her facial disfigurement as a consequence of removing cancer from her tongue. I subsequently wrote to the minister on 20 April providing Stephanie's full name, address, the hospital she attended and a detailed explanation about the pain and health issues she was suffering as a consequence of waiting for surgery. I confirm that neither I nor Stephanie have received any response or contact from the health minister or anyone in the government or Department of Health about her painful situation. Stephanie has now been waiting 10 months for surgery and is unable to eat properly or leave home. Will the Premier now admit that the government not only has a health crisis but no longer cares about even responding to the Victorians it is failing?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:02): I thank the member for Evelyn for her question, and I acknowledge the circumstances of her constituent were raised with the Minister for Health. My advice is that it is not accurate to say that the patient in question has not been contacted. My advice is that the department has contacted the patient and discussed these matters with the patient, so to suggest otherwise is inaccurate.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr ANDREWS:** No, no—the department has spoken with the patient in question. That is the advice I have.

**Ms Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask that the Premier actually table that advice because my constituent has confirmed no response and has heard nothing.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order.

**Mr ANDREWS:** I will simply add that whether it be Stephanie, this particular patient whose circumstances have been raised—and obviously no-one wants to see anybody having to wait longer than is absolutely necessary for their surgery—this pandemic has seen a number of surgeries cancelled and a number of patients impacted by that. That is why in the budget just a little while ago, a budget that some misrepresent, if they even acknowledge it—a bit like the pandemic, they will not even acknowledge that the pandemic is real—we provided a \$1.5 billion boost to elective surgery, not just a blitz, not a blitz, not some once-only thing where we do a bit more for a short period of time, but a comprehensive plan developed in consultation and partnership with our clinical leads, with people who do this work and care for these patients right across our state, to grow the total capacity to 240 000 procedures a year, each and every year. It not only includes COVID catch-up, it also includes growing the capacity of the system in an enduring way. That is really important. That is what our health professionals have told us they need and want. That is what is best for patients, and we are pushing on. Despite the political games of others, we are pushing on to get this job done. I am very proud that our whole team are doing the best they can and working as hard as they can in very challenging circumstances to do more surgery faster.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn members again. If they shout across the chamber during question time, they will be removed without further warning.

**Ms Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on the Premier misleading the Parliament because my constituent has confirmed they have not received anything. But I would also, on a further point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! On the first point of order, there is no point of order. That is not the form to raise that matter. The second point of order is?

**Ms Vallence:** On relevance, the Premier is straying from the very narrow question about responding to my constituent, who has suffered severe jaw disfigurement for over 10 months with no certainty of surgery. I would ask that you bring the Premier back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question cited a specific example and then asked at the end a very broad question about a health crisis and responding to Victorians. The Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked.

**Mr ANDREWS:** As I was saying, the patient that the member referred to has been contacted. That is the advice I have been given. Secondly, the question related to the health system, and I am obliged therefore to point out the massive investment that this government has made and continues to make. It is not about the politics; it is about the patients. That is what drives us. That is what drives every nurse, every ambo, every doctor, every member of the team—a team that is disparaged daily by some and supported every day by this government.

**Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:07):** Stephanie, my constituent, is not a liar. When the government asks for full details of the case, gets them, then ignores the information—

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Evelyn has the call.

**Ms VALLENCE:** Stephanie, my constituent, is not a liar. When the government asks for full details, gets them, then ignores the information provided, like in the case of Stephanie, what should Victorians do next to get the attention and care that they need at the time they need it?

**Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:07):** The member for Evelyn ought to check with her constituent. The advice—

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, just then? I do not think she did it just then. The only person calling into question the accuracy and truthfulness of this patient is the member for Evelyn. I am not making that accusation at all, nor would I. The advice I have is that this particular patient has been contacted, and to suggest otherwise is not accurate. That is not the advice I have. I am grateful to the member for Evelyn for providing details. If only the Leader of the Opposition did the same, then we would be able to follow up each and every case that he has raised. But, you see, it might well be that they have been raised for political gain rather than to get those patients treatment. That is all we want to do: get them the care they need.

**Ms Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance: as I asked, I would just like to find out on what date my constituent was actually responded to by anyone in this government.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on both sides of the house will come to order. The Premier is being relevant to the question that has been asked. The Premier has concluded his answer.

**MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTHCARE WORKERS**

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:09): I am delighted to be able to report to the house that this morning I and the member for Melton, in his capacity as a parliamentary secretary—the outstanding parliamentary secretary that he is—were able to join with the leadership of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) down at their office to make a very significant announcement: a \$3000 payment paid in two \$1500 components, one in the middle of August and one at the end of September. This is about retention and also thanking staff for the amazing work that they have done. It is about encouraging people to maybe do an extra shift and indeed maybe to get some people who are qualified and have been out of the system for a period of time to come back and work in the system. It has been warmly welcomed by all of those health unions. It has been warmly welcomed, I think, by staff, who see this as a positive acknowledgement of their contribution and also fair recognition of the enormous pressure and unprecedented circumstances that they are dealing with each and every day.

I thank every member of that team—and that is the key point. We had the secretary of the nurses union today not just talking about nurses but also talking about the fact that—cleaners, ward clerks, the whole team—health is delivered by teams of people, and each and every one of them in our hospitals will be eligible for these payments, or a pro rata element of these payments, depending on whether they are part-time or full-time. I want to thank all of those unions who have worked so closely with us—the AMA, the ANMF, the ambulance union and many others—to develop this package. It is about saying thank you, but more than that, it is about retaining staff, it is about getting through winter and it is about properly valuing and honouring the contribution that our health professionals make every hour of every day in every shift right across the system. It sits in stark contrast to those who criticise endlessly and are in fact bagging our staff.

**HEALTH SYSTEM**

**Mr GUY** (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:11): My question is to the Premier. David Anderson from Delahey is a war veteran. He suffers from a debilitating hip condition that should have been operated on three years ago. Since then he has suffered multiple delays, reappointments and cancellations, and he himself has written to the CEO of Western Health seeking help. The matter has been raised by the opposition in the Parliament five times as well as by letter with full details provided to the health minister. What more information do the Premier and his government require to fix the case of war veteran David Anderson so he can finally get the surgery he needs and deserves?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:11): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I am not briefed on that particular matter, but I am more than happy to make the inquiries—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, if those opposite require me to concede that I do not have in front of me a detailed account of every single patient across—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, you raised it with the Minister for Health. I am not the Minister for Health; I am in fact the Premier. The Minister for Health is not here this week. Again, if only all the details had been provided on all the case studies, then we would be able to respond to all of them.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, of the 50 cases that have been raised, there are around 10 where the Leader of the Opposition actually provided details sufficient to make contact with them.

**Mr Guy:** On a point of order, Speaker, with respect, on relevance, I asked a question specifically about David Anderson. I asked the Premier: what more specific information does the Premier or the government require for Mr Anderson to get the surgery he needs?

**Mr Cheeseman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for South Barwon can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question as it was structured.

**Mr ANDREWS:** I will make inquiries as to the particular patient. I do not have a briefing in front of me on that particular patient right now. The Leader of the Opposition is unsatisfied with that. Well, I do not have that information, but I will get it for him and for the constituent, the patient, that he raises this issue on behalf of. These matters were raised with the Minister for Health. I am confident that if the Minister for Health were here, if he were not away sick, then he perhaps would be able to provide a more detailed answer than I can. But I will get it. I will get the answer. And the key point here is that we want Mr Anderson to get his surgery as fast as possible. The second point is: if only all the details were provided for all the cases that have been raised—

**Mr Pearson:** Rather than 20 per cent of the time.

**Mr ANDREWS:** Rather than about 20 per cent of the cases that have been raised. I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition: if it is good enough to raise these case studies for a political point, it is good enough to give us the details so we can get these patients the care that they need.

**Mr GUY** (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:14): On a supplementary, Mr Anderson is on the hidden waiting list. He has not even been given an appointment to see a surgeon so he can be added to the elective surgery waiting list of 90 000 Victorians. How many other Victorians like Mr Anderson suffer in silence and pain because they cannot even get an appointment to get on the waiting list to have some hope they will get the surgery that they need and that they deserve?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:14): As I said, I am more than happy to make inquiries in relation to the constituent, the patient, that the Leader of the Opposition refers to. That is the first point. He did talk about elective surgery, outpatient appointments and transparency, and I cannot and I will not allow the leader of an outfit that published barely any data at all when they were in government—

**Mr R Smith** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Warrandyte can leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour.

**Member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.**

**Mr ANDREWS:** They cut and closed and reduced the amount of outpatient activity and access to outpatient services across their miserable time in government. I will not be lectured to by the likes of those opposite when it comes to these matters.

**Ms Staley:** On a point of order, Speaker, you have previously ruled that question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition and also that people should use proper titles. In both those cases the Premier has not upheld those standards that you set, and given that he is the leader, he should know that he should be leading on standards as well.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order, but I ask members to cease interjecting across the table and drawing the Premier on some other matters that are not relevant to the question that has been asked.

**Mr ANDREWS:** For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, who seems unaware of or unprepared to acknowledge it, there is a \$1.5 billion boost to elective surgery. That includes access. It includes growing capacity, more surgery faster, dealing with the cancellations that this pandemic has caused. He ought to acknowledge we have had a global pandemic—

**Mr Guy:** On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I do not know if it has not been recognised by the Premier, I asked for a figure. The supplementary was: how many other Victorians are waiting on the list to get onto the elective surgery waiting list? The Premier has not addressed that in any of the time he has given the supplementary answer. I did not ask about government policy or any other matter. I asked for a figure as to how many other Victorians there were.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I understand the question that was asked. It referenced waiting lists, and the Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked.

**Mr ANDREWS:** And I have concluded my answer.

### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: ENERGY POLICY

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:17): I am absolutely delighted to update the house on the progress of our power saving bonus and how we are helping Victorian families—indeed every single Victorian household—to ease their cost-of-living pressures. Last month, people will know, we announced that from 1 July every Victorian household will be able to apply for a \$250 power saving bonus simply by going to the trusted Victorian government Victorian Energy Compare website. And how have Victorians responded to this announcement? How have they indeed. I am very pleased to report that we have had already 140 000 Victorian households register their interest to apply on this website, which demonstrates how popular and how important our announcement is and how well targeted and well received it absolutely is. This is in addition to the 480 000 families who received our first power saving bonus of \$50 under the first phase and the nearly 400 000 Victorian families who have received a payment under the current phase of the program—those on concessions, targeting those people to get their power saving bonus. Those who have not applied for it yet can get on right now, get \$250 and then come back from 1 July and get another \$250 straight in their pockets.

Of course we do not stop there when it comes to supporting Victorian families. It adds to the biggest support package of any state government, frankly, when it comes to people's energy prices. We have introduced the Victorian default offer and a fair market price, increased penalties for dodgy retailers that were allowed to run rampant by those people opposite and provided the most generous energy utilities concessions for pensioners—17.5 per cent for gas and electricity. And it does not stop there. The Solar Homes program, the utility relief grants—certainly Victorians are getting the best possible care from this government.

### HEALTH SYSTEM

**Ms VALLENCE** (Evelyn) (14:19): My question is for the Premier. Deborah from Lilydale has been waiting for a hysterectomy since April 2021. Her operation in July 2021 was cancelled. Over the 13 months that Deborah has been waiting for this vital surgery she has had to attend the Angliss Hospital on 30 occasions for severe bleeding. On one occasion Deborah passed out in an ambulance. When she arrived at emergency there were no beds available, and she was forced to remain in the waiting room on towels for 7 hours. Deborah works in the homelessness and youth sector but is unable to work because of the unexpected and severe bleeding she continuously suffers. Given Deborah has waited 13 months, is personally writing to the Premier or having her matter raised here in Parliament the only way for Deborah to get the vital surgery that she needs?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:20): I thank the member for her question, and the answer to her question is no, not at all. If we only provided surgery to those that those opposite provided us details on, then we would not be doing very much surgery at all, would we?

**Mr Guy** interjected.

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, for about 20 per cent of the cases you have raised, you have provided to us to get care for those patients. That is on the Leader of the Opposition; that is not on us. That is on the Leader of the Opposition—give us the details, and we will follow it up.

**Ms Vallence:** On a point of order, Speaker, on 100 per cent of the cases that I have raised the Premier has received the information, so he should please stop misleading the house.

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on my right! The member for Evelyn is not raising a point of order.

**Mr ANDREWS:** They are the facts: of 50-odd cases raised, for around 10 we have had details. On the specific case that the member for Evelyn raises, I have answered the question about what is required for that individual to get her care. It is not about writing letters to me, it is about budgets approved by this Parliament, put forward by this government, which will see this constituent and others get the care they need. That is the second point I will make. Thirdly—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Well, there is lots of noise. You know, they never said much when they cut the budget. They cannot even provide the details of the people they are pretending to champion. Provide the details for all of them, and we will follow all of them up—all of them. If you are about the patient, then do that—be about the patient rather than the politics. But something we found out this week is it is all about the politics and not about the patients.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** On the specific individual—we cannot get a word in. On the specific individual raised, let me—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Gippsland South can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Member for Gippsland South withdrew from chamber.**

**Mr ANDREWS:** On the issue and the specific case that is raised by the honourable member, let me firstly say I am more than happy to follow up and provide any further information, to double-check that all relevant support is being provided for this particular constituent. But if there is anything we can do to get her care and support and treatment faster than would otherwise be the case, we are more than happy to do that. While I am on my feet and speaking specifically about this person, can I also thank her for her service. As the member indicates, she is Deborah—

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS:** Really, the best you can do is play those sorts of games? While others are playing games, let me thank her for her service and her work in the homelessness and youth sector. Let me assure Deborah that the government is providing adequate funding to health services to catch up on surgeries that have been delayed unavoidably by this pandemic and that if her surname—beyond Deborah, her first name—is provided to me, then I will make sure that Angliss Hospital and Eastern Health are doing everything they can to support her in her clinical journey, that she is appropriately classified and that she is getting everything she needs as fast as we can possibly provide it to her.

**Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:23):** Tens of thousands of Victorians like Deborah are being forced to wait lengthy times for critical, life-changing surgery. Given the elective surgery waiting list gets longer every quarter, how can any Victorian have any confidence that the Premier will fix this crisis for people like Deborah?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:24): The answer to the question, as my colleagues point out, is that we do not cut health funding. We do not have a secret plan exposed—it was not secret for long—to dismantle nurse-to-patient ratios. We do not close hospitals. We do not sit by and cheer on our mates in Canberra as they cut health funding. We also do not say ‘Let it rip, let everyone get COVID. Who cares about protecting our health system?’. If you think there are challenges now, just imagine if (a) we had not pretty well repaired the damage done by the government we took over from or (b) we listened to these public health geniuses.

**Ms Staley**: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to it. I did not raise a relevance point, I raised that he was debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

**Mr ANDREWS**: On the point of order, Speaker, the question asked me: how could the community have confidence? I am detailing why the community can have confidence absolutely, and if those opposite, who I have not really referred to, identify with all the things I am listing, then that says a fair bit about them and their record in government.

**The SPEAKER**: Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

**Mr ANDREWS**: We will not be cutting health budgets, we will not be closing hospitals and we will not be privatising hospitals either, just quietly. In fact the Frankston Private Hospital is essentially becoming a public hospital under these arrangements. If the member is upset with the answer—you wrote the question. In short, we will not be doing what you got up to when you were in office.

#### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (14:26): I rise to update the house about how the Andrews government is implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System. Earlier this week I met Brad and Melissa, two Victorians who have one thing in common: bipolar disorder. Melissa, a peer worker at the mental health hub run by Star Health at the Victorian Pride Centre, visited the boarding house where Brad was living. He was reluctant to get the support that he needed, but having someone with lived experience of mental illness made all the difference. Today Brad is living in private rental accommodation, he has got psychiatric care, he has been connected to dental health services and he has even stopped smoking.

Over 30 pop-up mental health hubs connect Victorians to wraparound services they need to improve their mental health and get their lives back on track. Since we launched these hubs seven months ago they have cared for more than 1600 people. Such is the success and impact of these pop-ups, we will continue them for a further 12 months while we roll out permanent mental health locals, a key recommendation of the royal commission. We have made progress on 90 per cent of the royal commission’s recommendations, including funding, because on this side of the house we have always known that the recommendations of the royal commission are not an à la carte menu, because there can be no reform without funding—no hubs, no locals, no mental health nurses, no psychiatrists. But not everyone in the community agrees. There are those who for two years opposed sustainably funding mental health services and, when asked just last month about removing legislation to fund mental health services, said, ‘If we can, we will’—a \$3.7 billion, cold-blooded cut from the Leader of the Opposition. Only the Andrews government can be trusted to properly fund and deliver mental health services.

#### NON-GOVERNMENT BUSINESS PROGRAM

**Ms CUPPER** (Mildura) (14:28): My question is for the independent member for Shepparton. Why is there a need to debate the procedural—

**The SPEAKER**: Order! I just ask the member to wait for a moment. When the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are ready. The member for Mildura.



**Ms CUPPER:** Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the independent member for Shepparton. Why is there a need to debate the procedural motion in the member's notice of motion 40 on the notice paper, which seeks amendments to the standing orders to make provision for a non-government business program in this house?

*Members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! As the member for Mildura probably knows, there is a narrow ability for members to ask questions of other members around the timing of matters that are on the notice paper. So the member for Shepparton will answer the question in a manner that fits within the forms of the house—that is, in relation to the timing of the matter that she has got on the notice paper.

**Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (14:29):** I thank the member for Mildura for this outstanding question. This is a matter that has been on the notice paper for a very long time, just as have many other notices of motion that are on the notice paper, and in this place we do not get the opportunity to debate those notices of motion. I am raising this issue now because it is a question of the time. There are five weeks left to this Parliament. I have been raising this issue in this place for a very, very long time. Everybody knows that I have been raising this issue for a very long time. This is the only lower house of any Parliament in Australia that does not make provision for a non-government business program.

The time has come for that to be reinstated. There has been a long journey of removing the capacity of this lower house to provide members on this side of the house the ability to represent their electorates and to bring matters before this house—to, for instance, introduce a private members bill. There are many, many things that we are not allowed to do on this side of the house because we have lost that capacity to have a non-government business program. With only five weeks left, with a federal election that has just occurred, people might think that it is strange that an independent has asked another independent a question, but let me tell you, no less than the current Prime Minister did the same thing in the federal Parliament some 20 years ago. If this is the only way that an independent member or indeed anyone on this side of the house can raise certain issues, then that is not good enough, and it is time that everyone in this place took note of the fact that it is not a true exercise of democracy that is happening here. There are things that have occurred over a long period, a period when back in the 1990s during the Kennett government a government business program was imposed and gradually the non-government business program was whittled away to the point now where we do not have one. That has a massive impact on everyone on this side of the house, on independents—and, let me tell you, the independents are on the march. We have just seen that in a federal election with the biggest crossbench in the federal Parliament—

**The SPEAKER:** The member is going to need to come back to timing and procedure.

**Ms SHEED:** that we have ever seen. So these issues are critical. This has been on the notice paper for a long time, and I have tried to raise it in many other forums. I ask the government to hear it.

**Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:32):** My supplementary question to the member is: what are the implications of not bringing on a debate on notice of motion 40 on the notice paper in the member for Shepparton's name?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member that in answering the question she needs to limit her remarks to timing and procedure.

**Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (14:32):** I am indebted to the member for Mildura for again asking such an important question in relation to the operation of this house and to the fact that the timing of this has really become critical, with only five weeks left in this Parliament for this issue to be debated. In so many other houses people on this side have the opportunity to raise issues. I often think of the independent member for Murray in the New South Wales Parliament, who has been able to introduce bills before the lower house of her Parliament—important water bills, important issues around what matters to her community. It is truly time for us to have a look at how this place runs, and this issue

that I have put on the notice paper—number 40—sets out the changes that need to be made. I would absolutely call on the government to take notice and do this.

### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EMPLOYMENT

**Mr PALLAS** (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations) (14:33): Since the election of the Andrews Labor government Victoria has led the nation in creating jobs—in fact more than 575 000 jobs right across the state. 436 000 of these jobs are full-time jobs, giving workers and their families the comfort and security of a job that they know they can depend upon. Since November 2014 we have seen about 80 000 jobs created in regional Victoria, with approximately two-thirds of those jobs being full-time jobs. Despite the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and on young people, I am pleased to advise the house that in both of these groups employment is now above prepandemic levels. We have created nearly 300 000 jobs since September 2020, more than any other state, and we are well on our way to meeting our jobs plan target of creating 400 000 jobs by 2025. Our state's jobs growth is so dramatic that one in every six jobs in the Victorian economy today did not exist when we first came to government eight years ago.

Sadly, it has not always been this way. When we came to government the unemployment rate had a six in front of it, the participation rate was 3 percentage points lower than it is today and the youth unemployment rate was 4 per cent higher. In May 2011 the member for Rowville pledged the coalition government to create more than 50 000 to 55 000 jobs a year. They were not exactly shooting for the stars, yet even with that low-ball target they did not even get close. They averaged just 30 000 jobs a year. Our record is 73 000 jobs every year since coming to government—more than double those produced by the opposition. Only the Andrews Labor government can be trusted to create jobs for all Victorians.

### HEALTH SYSTEM

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (14:35): My question is to the Premier. Earlier this week Crystal Jones from Moyhu's young son was struggling to breathe. Nurse-on-Call advised her to take him straight to the emergency unit, which she did, at Wangaratta hospital. Overworked staff advised her there was a long wait and they would need to wait outside as the emergency department was full. Waiting with them outside in the cold was a woman in labour. Crystal waited outside for 4 hours before being able to move inside. After eight years in office can the Premier advise: is this what his government considers country Victoria's gold standard hospital system?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:36): Firstly, can I send my best wishes to Crystal and her child and express my regret if in any way Northeast Health or ambulance or any part of our health system has not been able to provide her with the support and the care and the service that she has every right to expect. I know the community that the member represents very well, and I know the hospital that the member cites very well. I have been there and have been very pleased to be involved in various elements of rebuilding that facility. They have been the recipients of a number of grants provided not by a former government but provided by this government.

I was asked about eight years—yes, eight years backing Wangaratta hospital, eight years backing our nurses, eight years legislating nurse-to-patient ratios, eight years of more funding and 22 000 extra health workers. That is what the eight years has been all about. The member asked what eight years has been all—well, again, it was not eight years of cuts and closures and privatisations. If the member is unwilling to acknowledge that we are in the midst of a one-in-100-year event and that when I speak with Premier Perrottet in New South Wales we talk about exactly the same pressures, exactly the same challenges, because there seems to be a degree of reality with the Premier of New South Wales and a degree of acceptance that no-one chose this as an outcome, no-one made decisions to deliver this outcome—this in fact is global. It is beyond the control of any of us, regardless of our political persuasion. It seems that those of the same political party here in Victoria simply refuse to acknowledge that our staff are doing the very best they can in incredibly difficult circumstances, that the government

is providing them with record support and that there are more patients presenting than we have seen for a very long time and indeed more people calling for support than has ever been the case.

We, over our first period of time in office, repaired so much of the damage done by the government we took over from, and we will again—not by cuts and closures and privatisations, but by investment and hard work alongside our workforce. We will repair the damage that this pandemic has done, we will make sure that each and every patient who needs care gets that care, we will honour our workforce—not spend all of our time bagging our nurses and doctors and ambos. We will respond to any case where we are provided with sufficient information to identify that person and will ask the hospital to chase those matters up. If there is any further information that the member wants to provide to me, I give him and his constituent that undertaking.

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) (14:39): Thank you, Premier. I am pleased that you care about the staff, because despite her son having a serious medical issue, one of Crystal's major concerns was the staff and other patients having to wait or work outside on a Wangaratta winter's night. How is it acceptable to have a situation where pregnant women, sick kids and healthcare staff are working or queuing outside of a hospital emergency department in the cold for hours because the government cannot manage Victoria's health system?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:39): Well, again, it should not come as a surprise to the honourable member that I 'care' about the staff. We have hired 22 000 more of them and given them legislated ratios. We have not been giving them the bird. We have not been going to war with them like others chose to do. The member can make all these comments. Let us be very clear about this, there are more people presenting to emergency departments than we have seen for a very long time—perhaps ever.

Our staff are doing their level best to provide care and support to each and every one of those patients and their families. Our staff have our full support. They are doing the very best they can in extraordinary circumstances. I would not like to think that any member of this place would essentially spend each and every day bagging the very health professionals who are working so hard for each and every one of us. However, it does seem to me that there are some who are addicted to bagging our nurses and doctors and ambos, and we will not stand for it.

#### MINISTERS STATEMENTS: LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

**Ms ALLAN** (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:40): The Victorian community recently celebrated the removal of the 64th level crossing at Bell Street, Preston. This level crossing has held up more cars than any other level crossing in Melbourne, and with both level crossings on Bell Street gone, it has been transformed. You can travel all the way from Bulleen to Essendon with a much smoother travel time, thanks to the removal of those level crossings. With 64 gone, we are on the march to remove 85 by 2025. These removals are transforming our city.

The integrated approach to our Big Build projects means that they will combine to slash travel times. When you bring together level crossing removals, the Metro Tunnel and the Melbourne Airport rail, in the future it will mean you will be able to go from Melbourne Airport all the way to East Pakenham without changing trains and without bothering a boom gate. It means the members for St Albans, Footscray, Melbourne, Albert Park, Prahran, Malvern, Caulfield, Oakleigh, Clarinda, Mulgrave, Keysborough, Dandenong, Narre Warren North, Narre Warren South, Gembrook, Bass and Cranbourne will all be able to get from the airport to their electorates without bothering a boom gate. On the Lilydale and Belgrave lines the members for Evelyn, Croydon, Bayswater, Ferntree Gully, Ringwood and Box Hill will all be able to catch a train right here to Parliament without bothering a boom gate.

Sixty-four sets of boom gates are gone for good, and we are not stopping. There are another 21 projects underway across Melbourne, and they are at places like, but not limited to, Parkdale, Surrey Hills, Glen Huntly, Deer Park, Sunbury, Ringwood, Cranbourne and Pakenham. Six thousand Victorians

are working on these level crossing removals right now, and there are thousands more in the supply chain in small business. Eighty-five projects, 85 level crossing removals, that are under budget and ahead of time—all opposed by those opposite, all backed in by the Andrews Labor government.

**Constituency questions**

**FERNTREE GULLY ELECTORATE**

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) (14:43): (6406) My constituency question is for the Treasurer. Knox families and small businesses are being left behind as the state suffers, with many residents struggling to cope with the soaring prices of housing, the increases in power and heating costs, the price of food going through the roof, educational costs and of course the spike in fuel costs—which I know we cannot control; however, it does not diminish the impact and effect it is having on our residents. Many people who live in Knox rely on cars. Not everybody has access to public transport, so they must be able to fill the tank if they need to go to the doctors or get their kids to school or need help to go to work. The government, however, has responded by introducing 42 new taxes and charges. My question is: Minister, why is the government introducing these new taxes and charges and not providing support for Knox families to deal with their cost-of-living challenges?

**BUNINYONG ELECTORATE**

**Ms SETTLE** (Buninyong) (14:44): (6407) My question is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. I welcome the announcement of \$3.75 million to complete renovations at Grant Lodge in Bacchus Marsh. As the minister knows, Grant Lodge is a 30-bed residential care unit providing 24-hour care by nurses in Bacchus Marsh. It provides a safe, homelike environment. Thank you for meeting with the wonderful staff and management. The care and compassion that each and every member showed was absolutely evident, and I extend my heartfelt thanks to all of them. We know that it has been a difficult few years, and they all went above and beyond to protect and keep safe the elderly patients in their care. My question is: when are works expected to be completed at Grant Lodge?

**GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE**

**Mr D O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) (14:45): (6408) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I want to know when the government will be able to guarantee a reliable and efficient electricity service. My constituents in the areas of Devon North, Tarra Valley and Won Wron in the last week have suffered four or five different power outages. We have been in touch with AusNet over what the issues are, and there are some issues there. But this comes a year almost to the day after the disastrous storms last year that saw many of my constituents offline for over two weeks. The government has undertaken a review, and I have been calling for that to be made public and to allow the public to have their say and have since, just recently, been advised by the minister that in fact that has now closed and that only a select group of the public were allowed to be involved in that review. I need to know: what are the results of that review, and what is the government doing to actually improve the resilience of our power system so that we are not constantly suffering blackouts, like the people of Devon North, Tarra Valley and Won Wron have done this week?

**NORTHCOTE ELECTORATE**

**Ms THEOPHANOUS** (Northcote) (14:46): (6409) My question is to the Minister for Local Government. What is the latest information on the work of the local government culture project? This project is helping councils improve their cultures, behaviours and governance and bring public trust back into local government. The work has significant implications for the whole state but unfortunately has particular relevance for Northcote. Over the last few years I have regularly been contacted by residents deeply concerned about the behaviours of some Darebin councillors. This includes numerous personal stories from residents containing serious allegations of bullying, allegations of racism and allegations of serious conflicts of interest and bias. These incidents really hurt people. Some residents are even worried there is something more sinister at play at Darebin council, with questionable decisions being made behind closed doors, like in the case of the hugely significant Northcote Plaza

redevelopment, in which the public have had no access to council's decision-making process. These issues have endured even with the municipal monitor in place. Residents feel they are being kept in the dark, sidelined, silenced and bullied. The culture project is an opportunity to make a positive change.

#### GEMBROOK ELECTORATE

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) (14:47): (6410) My question is to the minister for infrastructure. It is in relation to a sewer pipe that was put out the back of some houses on O'Shea Road in Berwick. The question I ask is for information on the consultation that took place with residents through that area. Mr Lawrenson, who is one of the people who lives down there, said if he was aware that there would be a 9-metre sewer tower installed within 6.5 metres of his property, he would not have purchased this property and built his dream home. People have gone on to say that Major Road Projects Victoria have been disrespectful and deceptive when they have contacted them in relation to concerns they have had about the consultation about it being located in that spot. However, one of the biggest issues that has been raised by the constituents down there is that one of the people that came out to the property said that they should construct their homes around what the design of the pipe is. However, the pipe went in after the houses were there, and now they are concerned about the health crisis that could eventuate with it. So we need information on what consultation took place.

**The SPEAKER:** Just before the member resumes his seat, the minister that the question was directed to—

**Mr BATTIN:** Major infrastructure. Transport infrastructure—sorry.

#### NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE

**Mr MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (14:48): (6411) My question is for the Minister for Agriculture and concerns the recently announced pet census initiative. Minister, how will the pet census benefit constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South? I recently had the pleasure of working on the Taskforce on Rehoming Pets, which raised my awareness of how important pets are in our community and the issues confronting the services trying to protect and rehome animals. I am glad to hear of the pet census initiative. Only now are the social and mental health and wellbeing aspects of pet ownership really being appreciated. Anything that will assist to improve animal welfare will also be a step in the right direction. I would appreciate any further information that the minister can provide on the state's first-ever pet census and how it will benefit local pets and my constituents. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

#### MILDURA ELECTORATE

**Ms CUPPER** (Mildura) (14:49): (6412) My constituency question is for the Minister for Ports and Freight, and the information I seek is in relation to rail freight infrastructure in Ouyen. According to a business case commissioned by Mildura Regional Development, by 2023 the volume of intermodal freight transported from far north-west Victoria to Melbourne is expected to be greater than 1 million tonnes or 65 000 to 75 000 shipping containers. In other words, we produce a lot of stuff and we have to transport it a very long way. That means we need freight rail infrastructure that maximises our efficiency, not only to ensure decent profit margins but also to minimise carbon emissions. The town of Ouyen is centrally located in the northern Mallee. Additional freight infrastructure in that town would deliver significant economic benefits to farmers of grain, fruit, mineral sands and other commodities within a wide radius from Murrayville in the west to Robinvale in the east. Can the minister advise whether the government is considering additional freight rail infrastructure for Ouyen?

#### BOX HILL ELECTORATE

**Mr HAMER** (Box Hill) (14:50): (6413) My constituency question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. What plans are being put in place to accommodate and assist the sporting clubs that are affected by the removal of the two dangerous and congested level crossings at Union Road, Surrey Hills, and Mont Albert Road, Mont Albert? The lower oval at Surrey Park is already being utilised by

the Level Crossing Removal Project in preparation for the major project works that will occur in 2023. This lower oval is home to the Melbourne Baseball Club, and while the oval itself is not marked as a baseball diamond, it is regularly used by the club's junior teams for training purposes. Yesterday the LXRП issued a notification that it also proposes to include the north-east oval at Elgar Park within its planning boundary, as it too will be temporarily required for construction purposes and storage. The north-east oval at Elgar Park is used as a home ground for junior teams of the Mont Albert Cricket Club. While there is overwhelming community support for the removal of these level crossings, my community is keen to know how the Andrews government is looking after the needs of these two fantastic local sporting clubs. I look forward to the minister's response.

#### BRIGHTON ELECTORATE

**Mr NEWBURY** (Brighton) (14:51): (6414) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: when will the minister commit to moving the proposed signal pedestrian crossing in Elwood to where the safety issue actually exists? The Elwood community has been calling for a proper crossing on Glen Huntly Road for over a decade. We need a safe place to cross over busy Glen Huntly Road where the two sides of the Elster Creek track intersect, especially as the site services several schools and a childcare centre and is heavily utilised by pedestrians. VicRoads has acknowledged the urgent need for a crossing, confirming it is 'a high priority'. I understand the department has engaged on installing a new crossing, but it has proposed a location near Mitford Street, 100 metres from where the crossing is actually needed. At the last election the Liberal Party committed to funding the crossing. Labor instead installed a sign 200 metres down the road. Rather than getting it wrong twice, can the minister install the crossing on Glen Huntly Road where it is needed, joining the Elster Canal Path?

#### ELTHAM ELECTORATE

**Ms WARD** (Eltham) (14:52): (6415) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, at the last state election the Andrews Labor government committed to a new dog park for the Eltham electorate. This was a welcome project given the large dog population in our community and our eagerness for more open spaces where our dogs can safely run, play and socialise. Nillumbik Shire Council subsequently decided to construct the new dog park on Wattleree Road near the Diamond Creek. I understand that there have been delays on this project, and a number of locals are very keen to see the dog park finished. Minister, what are the next steps needed to realise this project?

#### Motions

#### BUDGET PAPERS 2022–23

#### Debate resumed.

**Mr M O'BRIEN** (Malvern) (14:52): Prior to adjourning for lunch and question time I was discussing the investment in my local state schools in Malvern. Let me give them a name check: Armadale Primary School, Lloyd Street Primary, Malvern Primary, Malvern Central School and Malvern Valley Primary School. My mentioning them in Parliament is more than any mention they got in the budget papers, because there was no investment in those schools. All of these schools are great schools. All these schools service my community. I have sent my own kids to local state schools. But they deserve investment. They deserve a fair share, and they are not getting a fair share in this budget. We should be making decisions about education based on merit, not based on margin and not based on politics, and that is what we are seeing at the moment.

In my 15 years in this place this is the most disappointing budget I have seen as a local member, because there is literally nothing in it. I did the old control-F and scrolled through the entire set of budget papers looking for any mention of my electorate, and there was nothing there. My constituents really need upgrades to noise walls on the Monash Freeway. This is something they have to live with day in and day out, and yet the government simply says, 'No, we're not going to invest in that'.

However, the government is quite happy to put a 40-kilometre speed limit on Malvern Road, which nobody in my electorate is asking for, and not just during peak pedestrian times but right through till about 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock at night. The government did this on High Street, Armadale and Malvern. It does not work. No-one likes it. It is not making anyone safer. And yet the government is going to take that same issue and make it worse by expanding it to Malvern Road as well.

My Malvern State Emergency Service unit does a fantastic job. They are out there when the rest of us are huddled up inside. On a cold, wet and windy winter's night the men and women of the Malvern SES are out there clearing roads, taking trees off homes and securing properties. They were out there just last weekend when a huge tree came down around Orrong Road in Toorak, and I pay tribute to the men and women of my local SES branch. But again, why should they have to wait for a Liberal government to be elected before they get investment? I mean, yes, when I was in government, when I was Treasurer, I made sure that they got the extra truck they needed. But they should not have to wait for a change of government just to get a fair share of investment. I mean, in the work they do they service all of us. They do not check your electoral boundary, they do not check your margin—if you need help, the SES are there to do it. This government should be supporting local SES branches not on the basis of which electorate they are in but on the basis of fairness.

Sport and particularly junior sport really are the lifeblood of my community. I am fortunate to be very involved with a lot of junior sporting clubs in my electorate, partly through my children playing in them but also because one of the best jobs as a local member is actually to engage with junior sport in the community. To hear the members on the Labor side talk about the great investments that this budget makes for their community sporting facilities—the lights, the pavilion upgrades, whatever it may be—well, why is there absolutely nothing for the young kids of Malvern? They deserve the same opportunities as kids who live somewhere else. I am pretty sick and tired of this government playing politics every single time, every single budget—but it is worse in this budget than in any other that I have seen.

There is one thing that is not a Malvern-specific issue but one that every single parent in my community worries about and every single person, I think, worries about, and that is when you call 000 you want someone to pick up the phone. When you call 000 you need that call answered and you need to know that an ambulance will be sent out if you need one, for you, for your mum or dad, for your grandparents or for your kids, and at the moment we do not have that confidence. The government has talked about investment, but we need to see results. It is not good enough to say, 'Look at how much money we're investing'. That is rhetoric; it is spin. It is not a result that actually changes people's lives. The test for this government is: they can make the promises in the budget and they can use the rhetoric about record investments, but until we see the improvement, until we see the change and until we see that confidence that the call will be answered and the ambulance will be sent and the ambulance will arrive on time to save lives, my constituents, as all Victorians, will remain worried that their call will go unanswered.

In the brief time remaining I would just like to talk about—wearing my Shadow Attorney-General hat—the massive problem in our courts system in Victoria and our tribunal system. We have got the largest backlogs of any state in the country. Some of that is COVID related, but some of it was before COVID. We have not seen a significant investment in this budget to try and reduce those backlogs, and frankly that is a concern. There is an old saying in the law that justice delayed is justice denied. Well, if people cannot get into a courtroom to have their day in court, be they a plaintiff or a defendant, be it a criminal matter or a civil matter, it means we are living in a society where justice does not actually take place. I have had situations brought to me where there have been tenants who have left a rental property and there has been a dispute with the landlord over the bond because the landlord has claimed there has been some damage and the tenant has disagreed, and until that matter can be heard by VCAT the tenant does not get their bond back. People can be waiting over a year—they can be waiting 18 months to get into VCAT to simply get their own bond back. And quite often renters do

not necessarily have a lot of cash lying around, which does not make it easy for them to find a bond for the new place.

What has the government done about this? How has the government made it easier for tenants to get access to justice? Well, the answer is they have not. We still have too many people thinking that justice is something you can do by sitting at a computer. We need to get our courtrooms and our tribunal systems opened again. We asked at public accounts how many extra magistrates are provided for in this budget. Now remember, we have got the worst backlogs in the country in Victoria, and the answer was—it came back through questions on notice the other day—that this budget provides for one new magistrate. Well, when you are looking at years to get into the Magistrates Court, one new magistrate is a drop in the ocean, and it is not good enough.

Let me finish by referring to IBAC. IBAC is our anti-corruption commission. It was established by the former Liberal-Nationals government. I was proud to be a member of the cabinet that did that. Victoria is not special. We are no more immune to corruption than any state in the country, and that is why this is so important that we have a well-resourced and well-empowered anti-corruption watchdog. This government actually cut the budget for IBAC in 2021. It was supposed to be \$46.6 million. They brought it down to \$42.2 million—a 10 per cent cut. Now, the Liberals have said that if we are elected, we will increase IBAC's budget by \$10 million a year, and we will do that because we believe corruption needs to be stamped out.

Robert Redlich, the current IBAC Commissioner, was on ABC radio recently. He admitted that only 2 per cent of the matters referred to IBAC that meet the threshold can be investigated by IBAC, and that is because of resources. Well, it is not good enough. Ashlynne McGhee did an outstanding report on the ABC's 7.30 recently which looked at all the issues that are facing IBAC, including the fact that this government and this Premier are before IBAC on a number of them. Now, you would not have to be too much of a conspiracy theorist to draw a parallel, wondering why this government is cutting the budget of IBAC at the same time as this government has got arguably three separate investigations into it. We have got the Sandon issue around John Woodman and Casey council, we have got the United Firefighters Union deals and we have got the issue of politicisation of officers and use of government entitlements. This government needs to clean itself up, and the best way to start is by properly empowering and resourcing IBAC. Labor will not do it, but a Liberal government will.

**Mr J BULL** (Sunbury) (15:01): I am delighted this afternoon to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the take-note motion. We are a government of action that gets things done, and what we know and understand is that at each and every opportunity this government has through successive budgets ensured that we have invested in the things that matter—in health, in education, in transport, in the environment and in all of the services that we know matter to local communities right across the state. This is a government that puts people first, and we are a government that puts patients first. We know of course—we have just seen recently—the result of the federal election, and I take the opportunity to congratulate Anthony Albanese and his team on that win. But I think, making some reflections—and there are many and they are varied, and the federal election will be scrutinised for a long time to come—that one observation that is incredibly clear is that the people of this state know and understand that it is this government, the Andrews Labor government, that stood with them at each and every opportunity through some of those darkest moments through the global pandemic. I think we have seen that reflected in the federal election result, and I think within this budget—a budget that is all about putting the needs of patients first through that \$12 billion investment—this is what the Andrews Labor government is fundamentally focused on. We know that getting on and repairing the damage done by the pandemic and continuing to deliver in health, education, jobs, transport and the environment is the focus of this budget.

When it comes to the pandemic, there have been monumental sacrifices that have been made by Victorians, especially our healthcare workers, our emergency service workers and our police, and for their service I extend my heartfelt gratitude and thanks—and this morning's announcement was indeed a significant and important one. We know that 95 per cent of Victorians have heeded the call to be up



to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations. I want to thank each and every Victorian that has stepped forward and will continue to step forward as we move through third-dose and fourth-dose vaccinations.

But I want to go back to that significant investment of \$12 billion: \$124 million to boost paramedics and ambulances, \$333 million for 000 services and \$25 million for the Metropolitan Health Infrastructure Fund. It is probably, I would assume, Acting Speaker Richards, without making any reflections on you, an important fund for your local community, as of course are those local health services—whether it be the establishment of a community hospital, as within my Sunbury community, turning the Sunbury Day Hospital into the Sunbury community hospital, making sure that we are providing high-quality health care locally, close to home, is incredibly important. We know that the budget invests \$2.9 billion in health infrastructure, including a new hospital not so far from my electorate, the \$900 million that has already been mentioned within the budget for the brand new Melton hospital, with a 24-hour emergency department, surgical beds, intensive care, maternity and neonatal services and more mental health services—a significant investment. But we know there is more to do: the \$500 million to deliver the Barwon women’s and children’s hospital; the \$1.5 billion that was mentioned today through the course of question time to increase surgical activity beyond prepandemic levels, providing 40 000 extra surgeries in the next year, building up to a total of 240 000 surgeries annually by 2024; and of course the significant and important investment that is being made in Frankston, making sure that we are scaling up to 9000 public surgeries within the state, a really critical investment and another significant investment within the budget.

I could go on, but I do want to get to many of the local investments. But I did want to touch on mental health. Members across all sides know and understand the importance of mental health within our own communities. That is of course why we had the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, and the royal commission provided the road map and an opportunity for us to come together to reflect on a broken system but most importantly to address the needs of local communities. Whether you live in the city, whether you live in Sunbury, in the suburbs, where I am from, or whether you live in rural and regional Victoria, you should have the opportunity to be able to receive the support you need for mental health issues when and where you need it. This was a critical finding within the royal commission. The 2020–21 budget invested \$869 million to lay those foundations for the new mental health and wellbeing system, and we provided extra funding for mental health services through the pandemic. This was followed by a record \$3.8 billion in last year’s budget, and we know that that investment will continue. It continued in the last budget and it will continue again, because we know this is long-term reform, and this is what the Andrews Labor government is all about.

I am moving quite quickly. I just want to rattle off a couple more key statewide announcements: the senior secondary pathway reforms, \$277 million, a once-in-a-generation transformation of senior secondary education; the \$15 million Living Local Fund, an important community fund; an \$88 million boost to community sport infrastructure and participation—we know it is a really important element; and the one-off \$250 payment for Victorian households for the power saving bonus. The cost of living is indeed a very important issue within our community. It is an important issue within my electorate. I am sure it is across all electorates, and this is a really important saving for those who need it the most. There is a \$6.4 million increase to the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund and nearly \$50 million for the Solar Homes boost. We know of course as we continue to invest in cheaper, more environmentally friendly energy, solar energy is incredibly important—and popular, I should say—within our local communities.

This government, I am proud to say as the local member and a local within my own community, has delivered in record terms within the Sunbury electorate. Since we have had the great opportunity to be in government I am delighted that we have invested in local health care, in roads, in infrastructure, in education and in community facilities. There is \$13.4 million for Diggers Rest Primary School, a terrific local school within my community, for the next stage of the master plan, including a new school community hub and senior learning centre. I had the opportunity to visit with the Deputy Premier, an amazing opportunity to be with staff, with students and with friends of the school, to make a really

significant announcement for a school that has experienced incredibly high enrolment growth over the last five years. This is a significant investment. It is \$13 million, and it is outstanding that this government will get on and be able to deliver that project.

There is \$2.2 million for Jacksons Hill—very important community facilities within my electorate. I have spoken about Jacksons Hill and the heritage-listed buildings that are there many times in contributions to the house. We have got a master plan. It was created by the Victorian Planning Authority, the VPA. It is an opportunity to create a really important precinct within my community.

There is funding within the budget for new traffic lights at the intersection of Macedon and Barkly streets, a really important but quite busy and congested part of Macedon Street within my community, just out the front of my office. Many local residents talk to me about the need for perhaps signals at that location. This money is for planning, and that planning money will enable us to assess, to scope and to have the opportunity to investigate further the installation of those lights.

There is \$2 million for the Sunbury and community Bulla fund, and there is also a new bus route from Sunbury to Diggers Rest. I spoke about population growth before. We know of course that within our local communities around Melbourne in areas of high growth we need to constantly be reviewing those bus routes as the population grows and increases and we have new estates and new homes and new people and families—and we welcome everybody within our community. There is also \$275 000 for a new dog park in Gowanbrae.

I did mention how terrific it was to join the Minister for Education at Diggers Rest Primary for the announcement of that funding, but as other members have said in reflecting on the work of the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, and the department, it is incredible to have been part of investments not just at Diggers Rest Primary but at Sunbury Primary, Gladstone Views, Gladstone Park, Tullamarine, Kismet Park, Sunbury Heights, Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School, Sunbury Downs, Sunbury College and Salesian College, ensuring that we are building the Education State school by school, project by project and giving local students within our community the opportunity to reach their full potential, to be able to be their best. That is something that as the local member and part of the Andrews Labor government I want to make sure of—that we are giving our students all of those opportunities to be their best. They are of course supported by terrific teachers and the wider school communities, but these are incredibly important projects.

I mentioned the Macedon Street and Barkly Street intersection, so I will not go over that one again, but I did just want to take the opportunity to mention the incredible work that is occurring through the level crossing removal program. The Minister for Transport Infrastructure mentioned it today. This is an incredibly transformative project—85 level crossings to be gone by 2025, one of those being at Gap Road in Sunbury. I am absolutely delighted that just last week on a chilly, cold Wednesday night at about 11.00 pm I had the opportunity to join the really hardworking team at Rail Projects Victoria to physically remove those boom gates.

**Mr Halse** interjected.

**Mr J BULL:** I am glad the honourable member interjected. I was offered gloves, but I chose not to take the gloves because the rest of the team were not wearing gloves. Look, I should just say although there was some feedback through the Facebook page about my contribution to lifting those gates, some from my own family in fact—

**Mr Pearson** interjected.

**Mr J BULL:** I should just say, Assistant Treasurer, that it was an incredible opportunity. The Assistant Treasurer I know got on in our first term and removed a level crossing at Buckley Street within his own community. I live about 5 minutes away from where the crossing is being removed, and there is an urge to get in the car every morning—although we are telling the community to change their route

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around the community—nice and early to drive down to have a look at the incredible work that the project team is doing to get on and remove the Gap Road level crossing. It is absolutely amazing.

I do just want to put on the record my thanks to the project team and to the community for their patience and for all of the work that has been done. This is going to be a transformative project. There are two crossing points within my community over the rail line. One of them is the Macedon Street bridge, which was upgraded in fact by a former Labor government, and I acknowledge the work of Jo Duncan in that project. But this project will enable a safer, less congested, better community and it will open up all of those access points. So we are getting on. We are getting it done. It is a terrific local project.

There is also of course the upgrade of Sunbury Road and design and planning works around the Calder Freeway and the Bulla bypass projects. There are hundreds of new car parks being built at Sunbury station. There are sporting pavilion and precinct upgrades at Boardman, Langama, Salesian, Meadow Park and Leo Dineen Reserve within my community.

There is a very long list—a very, very long list. Every time we have the opportunity to come into this place and have the privilege, the honour and the responsibility to be on the Treasury benches we will continue to be creative, we will continue to be bold and we will continue to invest in projects that transform local communities, to give every single person within our electorates and right across the state the opportunity to reach their full potential and to move around our local community safely and efficiently. For them to be able to have the opportunity to find a path in life that that individual chooses is something that should motivate every member of the government and indeed every member that has the opportunity to come into this place and to represent their local community.

Delivering our pandemic repair plan, creating meaningful jobs, building a world-class education system, getting Victorians home sooner and safer, helping families, making Victoria fairer and building stronger communities—that is what the Andrews Labor government is about. We are a government committed to making Victoria the best state we can possibly make it, the fairest state, a place where everyone is equal and everyone gets the chance to be their best, and I proudly commend the motion to the house.

**Mr TILLEY** (Benambra) (15:16): I wish to make a number of observations and comments in relation to the take-note motion on the Appropriation (2022–2023) Bill 2022. Since that day in May some time has passed, and all of those privileged members of the Assembly have been able to get back to their electorates and assess what has been detailed in those budget papers. Similarly, we have been able to observe the myriad of media releases, newspaper articles and spin and the rest of it that come with that one day in May.

Anyway, we in the north-east of Victoria, in the Benambra district with the High Country, have one of the 10 regional cities, and just yesterday we heard the matter of public importance with members from the government benches saying how wonderful regional Victoria is, how well this government has been representing them and how much money is being invested. But I must say, it is not our lived experience in probably at least seven of the regional cities throughout Victoria. As the Shadow Minister for Regional Cities (including Border Communities) I have had the great opportunity to be able to get around our great state—all of our great state—and to be able to talk with community representatives, to talk with local government, to talk with those responders and all those Victorians that love their communities regardless of their politics. I think it is responsible for us to be able to have a robust conversation with each and every person so that we can use to our own advantage the best ideas. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas, and I wish that this place was a bit more appreciative of that, because this Assembly has changed significantly since I was first elected how many years ago.

Notwithstanding that for all of us that one day in May draws similarities with Rod Tidwell out of *Jerry Maguire*—you know, ‘Show me the money!’—the budget papers reflect significant amounts of money like it is pocket change, but it is seeing what bang for the buck is being provided to us, what is coming out of the ground, how our respective communities are being best facilitated. With the other

portfolios I have been given the privilege of holding, with the opposition, admittedly, one day—you never know, dreams are free—I would like to implement some of the policies that I have been working on over the last several months. They actually complement some of the policies of successive governments in the state of Victoria.

Notwithstanding that, the high promises and the stuff that has not been delivered—I would like to draw on those. For example, the Better Boating Fund is a policy that is certainly bipartisan; both sides of the house here agree significantly on that. The reason I say that is I like to consume seafood—great Victorian wild-caught seafood. Now, that is done through the commercial catch, and there are hardworking generational families that are working in that industry. I am not going to get into the war and the debate about recreational fishers and commercial fishers in Port Phillip Bay or other areas, but there are some things that need to be looked at. The finance in this budget addresses some of those anomalies, particularly for recreational fishers, where the Better Boating Fund—and there are some great people working behind the scenes at the Department of Transport—is an initiative that comes both from the Labor and Liberal parties which has been worked on. But putting that aside, in these budget papers we only see \$15 million of that funding, which is drawn from the revenues from boat registration and boat licensing. You know, we know how much is there, but if you go through budget paper 5 and try and find a line number or the exact amount, it is hidden in an amalgam of other regulatory fees. So we are trying to get a straight answer out of the government.

These are questions that are asked by organisations including rec fish Victoria and fishing clubs. They are significantly confused. I would like to be able to give them an honest answer on their money and their contribution to the infrastructure that the current government provides them. It is a long way short. I have been out there. I am a rec fisher. You know, I share a little tinnie with my wife. I have got to tell you, she is a Gippslander, and jeez, she is competitive when we get out there on the boat. There is no taking prisoners when we are out fishing. But it is a great experience, and with that experience is being able to fish in our rivers, in our estuaries and in our bays—both freshwater and saltwater—chasing a whole range of species of fish. For us, we only keep what we are going to eat that day. It is no good prepping it and throwing it in the freezer. I wish there were many other recreational fishers that would not take so much of their catch, because it tastes better when it is ideally caught, put on ice and cooked fresh that evening or that day. But anyway, that is a whole other story. It is through education that we can do that, and there is other funding in the budget that is best suited there.

But for regional cities, decentralisation is a great opportunity. It goes hand in glove with our 10 great regional cities in Victoria—Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Latrobe, Warrnambool, Shepparton, Mildura, the regional City of Wodonga, where I live, and Wangaratta. I think I have pretty well covered them all, and I hope did not miss any there. But significantly there is a lack of balance. Of course the data suggests more money, but we have some great policies that would make this budget work even better if we were given the opportunity. It is not a class war of those who have and those who do not have; this is about finding an equal balance for all Victorians that choose to raise their families, run their businesses and have their employment in regional Victoria. You know, currently it is just not fair. It is not fair, and we seek to change, in November, this government so that we can provide a fairer, level playing field for everybody.

But while I am talking about the portfolio and the Better Boating Fund and recently being able to travel and visit those areas, it was great today: I was able to join both the member for Polwarth and the member for South-West Coast in relation to the challenges particularly that South-West Coast has had with the City of Warrnambool having to maintain a wholly state-owned asset, the Warrnambool breakwater. It will probably take only one decent storm, I think, with the weather events we are having at present, and that wholly state-owned piece of infrastructure will come to grief and probably fall apart. But notwithstanding that, in this budget there is nothing for the Warrnambool breakwater. There has been enormous energy that has been put in from the member for South-West Coast, from the Warrnambool council and from surrounding councils, recognising how important that state-owned infrastructure is—yet we will remedy that. If you guys do not do it, we will certainly do it after

November. That is an absolute commitment. But anyway, that breakwater is crumbling; it is falling down. There is not a lot of time there.

Some of the other policies in the budget—there is underbudgeting of the 13FISH line. The estimate for 2021–22 was that around 1750 calls would be addressed by the Victorian Fisheries Authority—the problems of people getting into channels, people with illegal catches, people doing the wrong thing. We ask people not to do people in. As a former career policeman the one thing I used to say to a person that had committed an offence—I was there on the other side trying to prove something—was that if they gave their mates up, that was un-Australian and a bloody disgrace. The crook was on the other side of the table because I caught them; I did not want to hear stories about them dropping their mates in. It is important, though, that we have information and intelligence. It can be anonymous. Some of the Australian principles I just spoke about are not always accurate. Nonetheless we are seeing an excessive amount of calls coming in. There were 2150 in 2021–22. The estimated number of calls that have been budgeted for in 2022–23 is 1950, which is significantly less than what they actually were, and we do not know how that is going to turn out by the end of this financial year. My gut feeling is that with the introduction of riverfrontage camping, 13FISH is going to see a hell of a lot more calls—no doubt. Having inspected some of those 29 sites that have already been created by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, we are going to see a hell of a lot more complaints there. We have under-resourced in this budget the number of fisheries officers. Anyway, by and large it is a dog's breakfast.

But moving on, I would like to talk about my electorate for the last time. No doubt for those that have bothered to listen or look, they have heard about Albury Wodonga Health. The coalition has been making every endeavour to prosecute the health crisis in Victoria. In this place we hear 'I said' and 'she said' and the rubbish that goes on, but there are people on the front line, there are people in all of our electorates, regardless of whether it is a Liberal, a National or a bloody Labor seat, people are working there, people are living in these electorates around Victoria. It is not about any of us. It is about them on the front line. It is about our communities, and they are hurting. The greatest responsibility for any of us that get elected to this place is to serve them. It is about servicing them. It is not about us.

The thing is that for many years Albury Wodonga Health has been a great initiative—firstly, from the Stephen Duckett report. I campaigned on that. I was a Liberal; it was a Labor idea. I wholly supported the joining of Albury Wodonga Health because the efficiencies that could be found between those two hospitals was enormous. The Premier today, the Premier that sits in that chair over there now, had a significant hand in how that played out. He was the first health minister to sign up New South Wales and Victoria to a single health service. I tell you our community and the surrounding community has a hospital that is the second, outside of Geelong, servicing a catchment of 300 000 people on the border of New South Wales and Victoria—regional areas—but they are in such desperate need. If you could click your fingers and build a hospital tomorrow, we need that. But the thing is it is a crisis now, and it is funding towards that now which needs to be done. I would like to see a bipartisan approach—and, yes, I asked a question in this Parliament a number of weeks ago, and I have got to pay credit where credit is due. The Premier and I did have that cup of tea. Unfortunately we did not have that other thing—something stronger. Nonetheless the cup of tea was good—and the conversation. It has been a couple of weeks now. I think that hopefully, when the Minister for Health is able again, he does what the Premier in our private conversation said he was going to do.

On that note, regardless of this budget and the announcements that keep coming out—\$12 billion for health—let me say this: if this government was to commit to a new public hospital for Albury-Wodonga, which I think should be built in Victoria because it is a Victorian-administered hospital, it would solve a lot of problems that are going on up there now—the waiting list, the ramping. But the cooperation between two state jurisdictions can be met very easily. It is the recent phenomenon where we have seen \$30 million from the New South Wales Treasury to build and repair the base hospital, which is the campus in Albury, sitting there; it was transferred from the New South Wales Treasury

two budgets ago and has only just been released from the Victorian Treasury for commencement of the work to the emergency department at Albury Base Hospital. It is unacceptable. It should not have happened. But people do not want to hear excuses; they want to hear reasons. If there are legitimate reasons, you can accept that, but the time wasting and continual blaming of COVID as the reason why this state has been underperforming is a real cop-out, and we need to be strong and be committed—all of us in this place—and meet those challenges, oil those cogs and make the wheels keep turning into the future. But the billy is on the boil; we need the hospital.

There are a number of things to mention just quickly. Wooragee CFA have given 95 years of service to protecting life and property in rural areas, yet they have got the land but they have not got the shed. There is nothing in the budget that will support this great brigade at Wooragee. I have worked with them on the fire front, and I tell you, they are trained well and they are ready. I condemn this motion to the house.

**Ms COUZENS** (Geelong) (15:31): I am absolutely delighted to rise to talk about the amazing Victorian state budget and what that means for my community in Geelong. But I do want to start by thanking the Premier and all the ministers, who listened to us as MPs about the priorities in our electorates and helped to get those commitments made. So I want to give particular thanks to them.

I really believe this budget is about delivering for all Victorians, particularly some of the most vulnerable in our community. We know health and housing have been two really strong issues, particularly as we have moved through COVID. The Minister for Housing, who spoke earlier in this place, was very passionate about his commitment to housing, and I believe he will leave us a strong legacy on behalf of this Labor government with all the work that he has done. The same goes for the Minister for Health. The work that he has done has been absolutely incredible. Our commitment to health right across Victoria, including in my electorate of Geelong, has been extraordinary.

I do also want to make note of the Minister for Creative Industries, who is actually in the chamber today, and his commitment to the Geelong Arts Centre, which has happened over a couple of budgets now. Stage 1 was completed a couple of years ago. Stage 2 is about three-quarters of the way built—an extraordinary building for everyone in the Geelong region to enjoy and use, and I know there is lots of excitement about that. This budget includes funding to activate the redeveloped areas, so I thank the Minister for Creative Industries because it is that sort of funding that provides those much-needed creative activities in our community of Geelong. I know the arts centre trust is very excited about getting that funding.

*Members interjecting.*

**Ms COUZENS:** I know. It is going off; it is absolutely amazing. So thank you for that commitment.

The budget has seen such a huge commitment to mental health and making the system work for Victoria. We know the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recommendations have been rolled out. Certainly in my electorate there has been a huge commitment. We are now seeing the mental health and drug and alcohol hub being built in Geelong, due for completion very soon. In this budget we have committed the ongoing funding to ensure that that continues in my electorate. That is so important. We know how important mental health is in our community and getting access to services. We have had a commitment for the youth beds in Geelong—construction is going to start—and the acute mental health facility is about to open in Geelong.

There have been a raft of commitments that this government has funded over the last few years and certainly in this recent budget. Pouring money into regional Victoria—there is no doubt we are doing that. Geelong has seen unprecedented amounts of funding in my electorate and in the surrounding electorates that make up regional Geelong. New schools, upgrading schools and upgrading our health facilities—those really important things are all being rolled out, and they are being done by the Andrews Labor government. They have been done in every budget that we have had over the last almost eight years that I have been standing in this place. For the opposition to say that regional

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Victoria has been left behind is absolute rubbish, and my electorate knows that. It knows the commitment that this government has made not only to regional Victoria but to my electorate of Geelong. We have seen, as I said, unprecedented funding come into the seat of Geelong, which is absolutely amazing.

We have also of course had the significant announcement of the funding for the women's and children's hospital in Geelong—over \$500 million has been committed—and this is such an important piece of infrastructure for Geelong. A huge shout-out to Barwon Health and all those workers: what a great opportunity for them to get that \$3000 bonus that has been announced this morning. They all deserve it, and right across Barwon Health they will get that wonderful \$3000 bonus. They have carried us, in particular over the last couple of years through COVID—and are still doing that. We are still getting cases in Geelong, just like every other place across this country. It has not gone away, we are still dealing with it, but what is fantastic about this government is we have continued to move forward and have delivered on the commitments that we have made. And we are delivering on the women's and children's hospital. We need it in our region. As I said, we have a major hospital, but our population is growing so fast. It is one of the fastest growing populations in the country. We need to be keeping up, and that what is so great about this government—that we look at those things and acknowledge that we need to continue to build that infrastructure to ensure that we are meeting demand. Obviously COVID has taken its toll, and as the Premier has often said, it is a one-in-100-year event that we have no control over. But the investment in our health sector has been absolutely extraordinary, and that commitment is what will see us through. It is something that obviously was very unexpected, but we have been able to deal with it. The investment in nurses, in infrastructure and in all the allied health areas that we need has been very welcome, particularly by my community.

One of the other projects that I am really passionate about is Cherished Pets. The organisation Cherished Pets deals with animals who are left when someone passes away and there is no family member to take on that pet, when there is family violence or when a person with a disability is suddenly put in hospital—but family violence was the catalyst for Cherished Pets taking on that role back in 2015. I was at a family violence forum in 2015, and they were one of the guest speakers. It is just a couple of vets that have got together and initiated this amazing project. They were talking about the constant referrals that they were getting in the region from family violence workers, from family members and from people themselves who had experienced family violence and could not support their pet any longer and had to do something about that. They talked about it back then, in 2015, and since then they have managed to build up a facility through volunteers and through the two vets that were heading up the program.

So I was delighted that the Minister for Agriculture actually allocated \$465 000 to Cherished Pets to do all the work that they need, to get equipment, to get pens and to provide the support to those animals and in some cases to the owners as well. This was a great announcement, and people in Geelong thought it was fantastic because we are not going to see pets having to go to inappropriate places. They will look after them and, in some cases, rehome them. It is a really exciting project, and I am really grateful that this government has seen the importance of funding a program like that to protect those pets that people basically love and want to care for but have not been able to for a whole range of reasons.

I think the funding to Barwon Health for the emergency mental health and drug and alcohol hub is a really important one for my community. As I said earlier, that hub is almost due for completion, but obviously it has to have funding to run it. The fact that we have committed that in this budget is fantastic, and what it means is that people with mental health issues that are really struggling can walk off the street into a facility and get the immediate support they need and an appropriate referral.

As we heard in the royal commission into mental health, many people talked about not being able to access the support that they needed for their mental health issues, and the introduction of those hubs is really important for communities like mine. We know the demand is there, so to have that hub in the middle of our city, where people with a mental health issue know they can walk in and get that support and assistance they need, is absolutely critical. I am really looking forward to the grand

opening of that facility, and I know very well that people with mental health issues and their families are really looking forward to the opening of that facility. That is something only a Labor government will deliver, so I am really proud that we are actually doing that.

We also received funding to build a basketball court on the Geelong waterfront, and the reason I was really strong on that bid was because during my consultation with young people late last year and early this year we were talking about the impact of COVID on them, and one of the things was that there was nowhere they could go to throw a few hoops or have a bit of sporting activity with their mates, because most places were locked up. In particular, during the lockdown when they could go out for a bit of exercise, there was actually nowhere for them to take up some sporting activities. So they talked about a basketball court on the waterfront and having that there so they could go down and have a game or throw a few hoops or whatever with their mates. We have now funded that to be built on the waterfront, and along the Geelong waterfront—it is a beautiful waterfront; there is no doubt about that, and it has been well taken care of—we see there are limited opportunities for teenagers. There is a skateboard park down one end—

**A member:** Do you skate?

**Ms COUZENS:** No, I do not skate. But it is mostly for little people—a carousel and a Ferris wheel and bungee jumping for little kids, that sort of thing—whereas now we will be adding a basketball court for young people that complements the skateboard park.

Young people were very clear about not being left out of infrastructure in Geelong. They have got a voice, they are entitled to a voice, and I encourage their voice. They had a very strong voice about having this basketball court on the waterfront, so I am really pleased that we have been able to deliver that. We have delivered the funding. Now there is a process to identify a location along the waterfront, but young people are really excited about that opportunity, which is really important to them.

I think there are many other areas that I could focus on, but I do want to focus on the First Nations people and our commitment to the First Nations people and the funding of the assembly and the treaty process and all those things that are so important to making this work. There is \$36 million to protect culturally significant Aboriginal Victorian sites. That is so important. It is important to the Wadawurrung people in my community, and I am sure in everybody's electorate they have a relationship with the First Peoples of this country and know just how important those sites are.

There is \$2.8 million to deliver the certificate IV in teaching a First Nations language. I was so excited to join the Minister for Training and Skills a couple of weeks ago to make that announcement at the Gordon TAFE in Geelong, and it was so welcomed by the Wadawurrung people but also by other Aboriginal people around the community and in other areas. This is really important. This is about their language having been stolen and now giving them the opportunity to get that back so that they can then teach their children and young people the language—although it will take some time, because there are many elders that want to learn their language. It was stolen from them; they were never able to speak their language. Some have language and have been teaching it across community. This is a really important piece, and so I commend the budget.

**Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:46):** This budget is highlighting really a whole lot of failures—things that this government has not been able to deliver for Victorians, that it has certainly not been able to deliver for constituents of mine in Caulfield. It is ironic that we have a budget that is termed on the front of every budget paper 'Putting patients first', when we in the opposition have been for months now talking about those very patients that have been put last. We have raised time after time after time in question time real examples, real stories, of Victorians that are absolutely hurting, the 90 000-plus people that are on a waiting list for serious surgery. This is not something that is cosmetic in nature, but this is serious in terms of whether those people can continue comfortably in their lives—people that are on painkillers, people that are traumatised and people that are not being taken seriously by the government. The fact is that we have raised in this Parliament again today matters which have been



raised numerous times, and yet the government has not responded to these individuals. It seems that we have a health system that is run through question time in that the only way that we can elevate any type of situation and make it important is to bring the case here—and even then those constituents are not responded to.

So for a government to highlight that they have a budget ‘putting patients first’ is so hypocritical. It is so far from the truth when we have seen even within the budget itself \$2 billion that has been cut from the health system. And now the government are trying to play catch-up. There are the 4000 beds that were promised that were never delivered and the 000 crisis, where it is effectively a lucky dip whether an ambulance arrives. We have shown case after case of a person having to use a taxi or an Uber to accommodate their loved one to get to a hospital, only to then be waiting for some kind of treatment.

Can I say this is not an indictment on our health workers, because our health workers have been working tirelessly through this pandemic and beyond. This is an indictment of the leader at the top and the government, which should be funding the health system. The Premier talks about the health system which has all of a sudden miraculously fallen during the pandemic. Over 15 years or 16 years for 12 of those he has been the health minister or the Premier, and yet the government says that in four years of us coming into government we miraculously wrecked the place and now they are fixing it. Well, we just do not buy that. This Premier had plenty of time to lay the foundations, to invest in hospitals, to invest in health care and to invest in ambulance workers, our emergency services workers, and yet they have failed.

Only yesterday I spoke to a doctor that was completely beside himself in terms of what he has had to deal with. So many of his nurses are resigning. He said to me after the first lockdown, ‘I always knew the lockdowns were going to cause a whole lot of additional not just financial trauma but health trauma’. And he said, ‘I’m seeing it now more than ever’. Victoria’s were the longest lockdowns in the world, the strongest lockdowns in the world, more than any other state.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** The government can interject, but we only have to look across the border, which had nowhere near the lockdowns Victoria had—nowhere near the toughest lockdowns. Now, when the government—

**Ms Ward** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards):** Order!

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Acting Speaker, do we need the barking dog from the opposition interjecting?

**Ms Ward:** On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask the member to retract. I take offence at being called a barking dog.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** I withdraw.

**Ms Ward:** Thank you.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards):** The member for Caulfield will continue, but if I could hear the member in some quiet.

**Mr SOUTHWICK:** Thank you very much. But can we have some sense of fairness in this chamber, Acting Speaker.

This government has failed Victorians. They have failed Victorians on so many different accounts. They have failed Victorians when it comes to small business, which has struggled, absolutely struggled, when it comes to lockdowns. We have seen the situation of so many small businesses, some 600 000 small businesses in Victoria, which employ 1.27 million people across the state—so this is not just those small businesses, this is the workers and also the communities which they are part of—struggling all the way through the pandemic. They have struggled through the lockdowns, and they

have struggled in terms of compensation and support, particularly now, when they need the support the most. A lot of the red tape, a lot of the process in trying to get the money out, was very, very difficult for many of those small businesses. You only have to take a walk, whether it be in many electorates around the state or in the CBD of Melbourne, to see how many 'For lease' signs there are, how many businesses did not survive during the lockdowns, how many businesses unfortunately went to the wall. Now they are looking for work; many of those small business people are now actually trying to find jobs as opposed to employing people.

It has been tough—it has been so tough—for those people from a health perspective. It has been tough for schools. It has been tough for certainly our nurses and doctors and all of our healthcare workers, who have done an amazing job—an absolutely amazing job. But for the government to say that they are putting patients first is an absolute joke, because in fact what they are doing is putting patients last. That is what it is, and we know it. You cannot sugar-coat it. That is what has been happening in this state.

I would have thought that in the budget we could have looked at some of the precincts particularly that could have had more support, and I do talk about the CBD of Melbourne because the CBD of Melbourne has really struggled to get back on its feet. I know that the CBD is very much the gateway to the rest of the state. When the CBD is pumping, that actually brings people in and helps so many other things in terms of tourism, in terms of trade, in terms of investment, in terms of the culture, the arts, the food and really the smile on the dial, which has been lost because the government have no way of being able to recover after instilling fear and controlling for the period that they have and not being able to properly compensate those businesses.

I was out in Ballarat with the upper house member Beverley McArthur in the other place and seeing some of those businesses that were not able to trade during the difficult periods, and now there are road activities outside their businesses that have been going on for six months and will go on for another six months. And there is no financial support, no budgetary support for them.

If I look more locally in Caulfield, there were lots of opportunities that were missed by this government, and we have been calling for them for some time—opportunities around education. We talk about the kids that have been homeschooled for so long, that have been traumatised for so long. We would have expected that some of our schools could have been supported and funded, even not in my electorate but in neighbouring electorates. I mentioned St Kilda Primary School, which wants to be able to have a recreational space, a hall—that was not funded in this budget. That borders on Albert Park, the Minister for Health's electorate. Most constituents that go to that school are in his electorate. They met with the government, and they were promised they would get something in this budget. They received nothing in this budget.

If you look at schools like Caulfield South Primary School, I have fought for years trying to get funding for them. They want a shade sail so they can eat their lunch under some kind of shelter and so they can have assemblies under shelter and not in the rain. They have not got any of that. I mean, they only got toilets fixed for them after we took the matter to Neil Mitchell at 3AW, because they would not even fix the toilets, which were not fit for purpose. Finally the Minister for Education caved in and gave some money to repair toilets which you would not put anyone in quite frankly.

Caulfield Primary School and Caulfield Junior College—both of those schools are desperate for upgrades. Both of those schools, Caulfield Junior and Caulfield Primary School, are over 100 years old and have a rich history, but unfortunately hardly a dollar has been put in them over that time. We have been advocating for a long time. I know a member in the upper place, Nina Taylor, is very quick to go and do photo opportunities at these schools but has not delivered a dollar when it comes to actually helping those schools. Those schools need more than a photo opportunity, they need money to actually help those kids. It is the same with Ripponlea Primary School. They want some basic support for accessibility for those kids with a disability and help for things like ramps, which they have not been able to get—basic stuff which they have not been able to get for that school. So our schools have certainly been let down.

The Caulfield Hospital, Alfred Health—the government gave some money a few years ago to do a study on the future of that hospital and what they could do in terms of better utilisation of that space. We are in the middle of a health crisis. You would think that this would be a priority—a hospital that was accommodating veterans in the First World War, when you had 18 000 veterans repatriated at that hospital. That hospital has hardly had a dollar spent on it since. You go through the wind tunnels of that hospital, and a lot of areas are just completely shut down, not used. There were no facilities—there were patients that were treated on the floor. I mean, no money has been spent on Alfred Health over those years. There have barely been equipment upgrades. The acquired brain injury unit was a new facility, but that was predominantly done by the Liberal federal government. So the Alfred hospital absolutely needs funding. The government have done a study, and they did the study before the pandemic. We are in the middle of a pandemic—well, we have been in a pandemic for a few years. We have been calling on funding for the hospital, and they have received a doughnut. We really need funding for that hospital in terms of its future. It is under-utilised. It is already a great hospital in terms of staff. It could be a great hospital in terms of facilities, but it certainly is not when it comes to those facilities.

Open space, green space—there is none of that in terms of opportunities from this budget. Particularly I look at the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, where a new trust was formed by this government after a lot of advocacy by me and the member for Oakleigh. We worked on that. A land management plan was put together and properly advocated for, and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change came along to the Caulfield Racecourse and announced it and said, ‘This is fantastic’. It is a \$295 million plan for parks, for recreational passive space, for a lake for people to walk around and for sporting facilities—a really quite detailed plan. We might not need \$295 million spent on it. We might not need the whole box and dice, but it has not had a dollar. Literally two budgets ago the minister went out and announced the land management plan and said how fantastic it was. There was nothing in the budget that followed. That was in April 2021. There was nothing in the following budget, and there was nothing in this budget.

So we have at the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve a trust that barely has enough money to pay for its trustees. In fact the head of the trustees said to me that if they do not get money before the next budget they will be broke, they will be put into receivership. So if the government is serious about upgrading the open space in the middle of the Caulfield Racecourse as a big, major project, then the government needs to put its money where its mouth is and ensure that that actually occurs.

This budget is a budget of missed opportunity. It is not a budget that puts people first. It is not a budget that puts patients first. It is not a budget that will fix the healthcare crisis because this government created the healthcare crisis. How could you trust a government to fix the very thing that it created? You cannot trust a government that promised 4000 beds that never occurred. You cannot trust a government that has promised certainly a whole lot of money that has never come. You cannot trust a government that took \$2 billion out of a budget and then said it was putting patients first. Certainly we are in the middle of health crisis. It should be a priority. It should be a focus, and the mental health crisis is also something that should be a focus and should be a priority. People are suffering. People are hurting, and this government has absolutely turned its back on all Victorians.

**Mr BRAYNE** (Nepean) (16:01): I also rise today to speak on the take-note motion on the Victorian budget 2022–23. The Victorian budget 2022–23 is my fourth budget as the member for Nepean. It complements four years of actually getting things done for my electorate through good funding outcomes in the annual state budget. This budget shows the ongoing commitment to building a stronger, fairer future for all Victorians—that is the reason we all entered this place—and budgets offer the opportunity to put that into practice. Whether it is delivering the pandemic repair plan, providing meaningful jobs, building a world-class education system or getting Victorians home sooner and safer, this budget is providing Victorian families and our communities with the things that matter most to them and to me.

After the past two years the thing that Victorians most want to see is a government that is putting patients first and getting on with the job of delivering for our state. As we all know, our budget is only

as strong as the economy allows it to be. Despite the challenges of the past two years Victoria is in a strong position as we continue to recover from the pandemic. During the pandemic it was this government that used its balance sheet to support Victorian households and businesses. It was this government that provided our communities with more than \$44 billion in support to respond to the pandemic and keep workers in jobs and businesses afloat. And now, as Victorians to return to doing the things they love, we are seeing a remarkable economic recovery.

Since November 2014 the Victorian economy has generated 560 000 new jobs. This government has a plan to create an additional 400 000 jobs by 2025, with a target to deliver half of them by 2022. Today, despite the challenges of living through a global pandemic, Victoria has already far exceeded this goal. Employment has risen by 280 000 people since September 2020. We are on track to reach 400 000 jobs by 2025. This job growth in part has been driven by this government's infrastructure agenda. Since 2014 infrastructure programs pursued by this government have supported or will support more than 191 000 jobs, and this includes 14 000 jobs supported by new infrastructure projects announced in this budget.

Getting people back to work is at the heart of any economic recovery. It is a credit to both the strong foundations of the Victorian economy and the continued commitment of this government that Victoria has experienced one of the strongest recoveries in the nation. Victoria's economy is strong. The unemployment rate is 2 per cent lower than when we came to government. Demand for workers is high, business conditions and confidence are elevated and all of this has been achieved with fiscal responsibility, with this budget helping to deliver an operating surplus of over \$650 million in 2025–26.

This is my fourth budget, as I said earlier, since being elected as the member for Nepean in November 2018. Since that time the southern peninsula community has seen record achievements in our local schools, our public transport system and our local environment. We have had record funding outcomes and investment from government in the southern peninsula. This is not some sweeping statement; this is fact. It is being felt on the Mornington Peninsula. And not to labour this point, the Mornington Peninsula getting some attention has not always been the case. For decades the Mornington Peninsula was taken for granted by politicians who got elected time after time without any genuine challenge to their position. The by-product: nothing ever getting done on the Mornington Peninsula.

Issues were allowed to build up, and our local community came to expect as the status quo subpar services, subpar investments and no election promises from our politicians. This was the status quo. There had consistently been a backlog of issues that had built up over decades on the Mornington Peninsula that had needed to be resolved, so when I got unexpectedly elected I made it my priority to resolve as many of these issues as I could and to fix the decades-old problems that had been affecting our community—my community—for too long. There is always more work to do of course, but this budget is yet another step towards the Mornington Peninsula getting its fair share. As someone who has lived their whole life on the Mornington Peninsula, who grew up there, went to kindergarten there, went to primary school there, went to high school there and had their first job there, I can say that we have never seen the level of investment into our community that we have had during the time I have been fortunate to be the member for Nepean.

During my time we have prioritised schools on the Mornington Peninsula. I continue to be proud to have overseen huge upgrades to schools in Nepean. \$13.77 million was invested to rebuild Rosebud Primary School—I am never going to get tired of saying it. The learning neighbourhood, which houses the senior students at the school, has been open since the beginning of term 1. We have workers on site this week finishing the gymnasium and the landscaping. I look forward to the community celebration when all of this is completed. Nearly \$10 million has been invested to upgrade Dromana Primary School, with the removal of portables having already taken place, and obviously many people who have driven down McCulloch Street in Dromana will have noticed that these works have already begun. As I was at Dromana Primary School on Saturday for election day it was also good to catch up with the volunteers, including principal Andrew Haley, at their democracy sausage sizzle. Ten million dollars will upgrade Rosebud Secondary College. Principal Lisa Holt has been regularly in contact

with me to talk about their plans and how we can set this school up for the long term for the Rosebud Secondary School students now and in 20 to 30 years time, and the builder has now been appointed. These are real investments that will make a real difference to the lives of local Mornington Peninsula students. If we invest in our schools on the Mornington Peninsula, not only will we have our students learning in the best facilities and taking pride in their schools but we will be able to offer drawcards to teachers to want to teach and work on the Mornington Peninsula and not at other schools in the south-east suburbs.

In this budget I was so excited to announce as well that Peninsula Specialist College will be receiving \$9.4 million to upgrade and modernise the school, including the construction of a completely new classroom complex. I know that parents, students and teachers who are part of this school community are thrilled with this announcement, and I cannot wait for construction on this important project to begin. Every student should be given access to the best education with the best facilities to achieve their best potential. I know the school communities that have had their rebuilds—Rosebud Primary, Dromana Primary, Rosebud Secondary and Red Hill Consolidated—are ecstatic. And to those school communities who have not had rebuilds yet, I will keep fighting for your school every single day I am in this role—every single day.

In this budget the government's investment in Nepean does not stop with our schools; it extends to our iconic heritage sites that have been needing repair for too long. It is exciting that in this budget the Point Nepean forts will be receiving \$6 million in major structural repairs to keep the fortifications safe and accessible. Fort Nepean is one of our most special locations on the southern peninsula. For those who have not been down in a little while, there are a considerable number of sections that have been closed off to the public due to safety issues. It is critical that we preserve and restore our heritage on the peninsula for our local community but additionally for the over half a million people who come and visit this site annually. This initiative will repair and stabilise fortifications, including gunning placements that have been closed to the public or are at risk of further closure. With these works, taken alongside the recently completed refurbishment of the iconic McCrae lighthouse and the saving of the Flinders Pier, I am committed to keeping the Mornington Peninsula's heritage sites available to our future generations for many years to come, because I believe in preserving the past, the present and the future of the Mornington Peninsula, from our heritage to the green wedge.

As I just mentioned, in the Victorian budget \$1.5 million was allocated to begin the planning of the restoration works on Flinders Pier. This followed a huge campaign by a group of local Flinders residents with a simple aim to save Flinders Pier. Since the campaign first began a year ago, the pier itself has been recommended by Heritage Victoria for listing on the heritage register. The final decision is due this month. In my opinion the pier should be listed on the heritage register. The tireless hours spent scrutinising the history of this pier, and its importance to our community, should be reflected in a listing. But even if it is not listed, this budget begins the process of rebuilding the timber inner section and repairing our Flinders Pier. It is an important part of the peninsula and holds significant value to locals and visitors alike. I recall speaking at the first Save Flinders Pier town hall meeting on 8 June 2021. It is comforting to say that this beautiful icon is now saved.

We are also upgrading the Sorrento Surf Lifesaving Club facilities so they are fit for purpose and can accommodate the increased popularity that our local beaches are seeing as we get out of COVID. Victorians are back out in all corners of the state. Ensuring that our lifesavers have the best facilities will be so important for safety at our beaches for years to come.

In this budget, I am excited to announce, a further \$2.96 million has been provided to rebuild the outer section of the Rye Pier to return it to its full functionality, to finish off rebuilding this pier completely. Once completed, locals and visitors alike will be able to enjoy another one of the peninsula's many iconic piers. These are just some of the investments that the Andrews government is making in Nepean in this year's budget. However, over the last 3½ years I have steadily worked to get stuff done on all the issues on the peninsula. Recently I was blessed with the opportunity to give a sort of summary of the many things I have worked on in my time in this role in the form of a question on my Facebook

page. The question came from resident Beverley Baltissen, who asked—and I can only imagine she meant it with goodwill:

Chris, what exactly have you achieved since the election?

So I responded with:

Beverley, this is such a great question and thank you for asking it. I have been able to rebuild Rosebud Primary School, including the addition of an incredible modern gymnasium. We are rebuilding Dromana Primary School, with construction starting in May. Rosebud Secondary College, with the rebuild starting in term 2. Red Hill Consolidated School has new classrooms being built, open for term 2. Dromana College has a new year 11 building. I was so excited to open Rosebud Secondary College's wellness pavilion a few weeks ago. The 788 bus is now running every half an hour—huge for those of us who caught those buses growing up. The new 887 express bus runs Rosebud–McCrae–Dromana, straight up the freeway to Frankston. The new flexi ride bus gives local residents the opportunity to get to hubs within my electorate of Nepean much easier. The Flinders community hub is being replaced with a new modern facility. I brought Dromana Pier back onto the table with community consultation already having been undertaken about the best design for its replacement. The new youth hub in Rosebud is finally happening thanks to a huge investment by the state government. The Rye township plan is revitalising the Rye precinct, and the Rye Pier is now getting fixed as we speak. Rosebud Cricket Club has new nets. Main Ridge Cricket Club is getting new nets. I fought the McDonald's at Safety Beach and the Hillview Quarry expansion at Arthurs Seat. And yet perhaps most significantly it is the fundamental shift that has now taken place. Politically the Mornington Peninsula will never be taken for granted again. There is always more to do, but I have been able to shake up this area to finally get some things done for this incredible community, the place I have lived my entire life.

So once again I take this opportunity to thank you, Beverley, for asking. As someone who has lived on the peninsula their whole life, who has seen the issues piling up, I can say that there has never been a better time to call the Mornington Peninsula home. It is important to look at where we came from. I remember writing to my predecessor asking for improvements to the bus network, when Terry Mulder was transport minister. The response I got back was standard fare: 'We will keep it in mind. No improvements to the peninsula's transport network'.

Finally, Dromana and Rosebud residents can catch an express bus to Frankston. These improvements did not just happen. They happened because I wanted to use my role to actually get stuff done, and finally it is happening. It forced other politicians to work harder too. Shortly after my surprise election victory, the member for Flinders, Greg Hunt, announced he would deliver Jetty Road if he won the 2019 federal election. Why did he wait 20 years into his term to announce a solution to an issue that had been an issue for literally decades? Our politicians on the peninsula had been taking us for granted for far too long.

This Victorian budget is good for many of my colleagues as well. I know that many members will be excited to announce their own local projects as this budget is implemented. In this budget we set about implementing the pandemic repair plan, with more staff, better hospitals and first-class care. Even just this morning we announced the healthcare worker winter retention surge payment, which will offer payments of \$3000 to all staff working in public hospitals and ambulance services. They can be nurses, doctors, allied health professionals, midwives, ward clerks, paramedics and patient services assistants. This is one small way that we can say thank you for everything that they have done to help us get through to this side of the pandemic and continue through this winter.

I, like many of you, have family and friends who are or were nurses or doctors. But I also want to do a quick shout-out to my mate, Luke Milligan, for his dedication to his work and to our patients right across the state. After two years of an unprecedented global pandemic and record growth in demand, the \$12 billion pandemic repair plan will see 7000 healthcare workers trained and hired; 5000 of those are nurses. As part of this plan, rapid access hubs are being established and will draw on the capacity of private hospitals to deliver public surgeries. This includes transforming Frankston Private Hospital into a public surgery hub that will perform up to 9000 public surgeries a year once it is fully operational.

In this budget there is a new round of the \$250 power saving bonus. This has been hugely welcomed by my community on the Mornington Peninsula. In the last round of the \$250 power saving bonus, we had hundreds of locals get in touch with us for assistance to obtain their bonus. Now there is a second round. From 1 July every Victorian household will be able to go to the Victorian Energy Compare website to claim it. Find a cheaper power deal and you will get \$250. You do not have to make the switch. Seven out of 10 people who do, though, can find a cheaper deal. There is one \$250 power saving bonus available per house and there is no limit. They are not going to run out.

Whether it is the many investments in my electorate of Nepean or one of the many announcements that will help Victorians across the state, it is clear that this government is getting on with the job that it was elected to do. That job is to deliver for all Victorians, for peninsula residents, to make a real difference in their lives. That is exactly what this budget does.

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) (16:16): It is a pleasure to rise to talk on the budget take-note motion. I think this afternoon I will use my time to talk about the many needs in my electorate, but I preface that by saying I am both pleased and proud with a lot of the advocacy work I have done over many years. I have had success both in government and in opposition at securing funding for local sporting clubs, community groups, schools, roads, community safety, transport—lots and lots of issues that all our electorates face. The advocacy work to secure funding and play a small part in the delivery of those important improvements and upgrades to our local community has been enormously pleasing, and I am proud.

But of course there is always more to do, and I want to highlight perhaps the next set of priorities or the next list of priorities that I see in the electorate of Croydon and surrounds that were not delivered in this budget but are worthy of consideration and certainly in an election year might be where both sides of the house focus efforts so that these community projects can be delivered win, lose or draw. The first that comes to mind on my list is funding for stage 3 of Melba College. Melba College has got a long history. People that have been in this place a while might remember the Maroondah regeneration project. Certainly my friend and colleague the Minister for Education is fully aware of this, where a number of schools were going to merge or join or set up a Maroondah regeneration project to upgrade a number of schools. Some campuses were coming together and becoming new campuses, and Melba College was one of those. It did not sort of follow the plan that was expected, but it is pleasing to say that Melba College went it alone. The old Croydon Secondary College junior campus closed and went to the senior campus, which was Melba College at the time I think from memory and became Melba College. As an aside, we are now seeing the construction of the new Croydon Community School on that former site of Croydon Secondary College. That is another successful outcome there. But back to Melba College. They have had stage 1 and 2 funding, and it has become enormously frustrating for the school community and the council, the parents group, as they wait to see stage 3 of the rebuild, which they were promised many years ago. Stage 3 funding is urgently required to enable the school to finalise their school rebuild.

The government has got form here. I go back to many years ago, and I think Steve Herbert in the other place might have been minister at the time, to when Yarra Hills Secondary College was funded. We fought hard to get funding for stage 1 of that school. The old Pembroke High School closed, became Yarra Hills and went to a new site on Reay Road. They waited some 10 years for stage 2. It became ridiculous, because those schools, while they are either across two campuses or waiting on more funding, throw good money after bad. If you know that your old school is going to be pushed over and knocked down in the next six to 12 months, you might not fund a couple of hundred thousand dollars on a leaking a roof. However, if you know that it is going to be a lot longer, if the government says, 'Look, we're providing your funding, but it won't be for five years or something', you might commit to some of that maintenance funding to keep the school functioning and in order over that time.

At Yarra Hills it was a long story where we fought very, very hard. In fact when we got into government I delivered stage 2 after a 10-year wait, which was a great outcome for Yarra Hills. But I see it being repeated with Melba College, which need that stage 3 funding to upgrade their oval, which

is presently in a poor condition, and to upgrade the Melba theatre, which is a performing arts space that has a capacity of over 200 seats. It is a great community asset. This belongs to the school, but it can be used by the community. I will continue to advocate, fight for and lobby the minister for that stage 3 funding. Embarrassingly, Melba College actually saw the funding not in this budget, maybe not even in the last budget, but in a budget prior where the funding was there, but then the government or the department said, 'Oh, no, that's a mistake'. So it got their hopes up on the delivery of that stage 3 funding, but then of course it was not delivered. If you go on that site now and you look in one direction, it is a beautiful, brand new, fully developed college—wonderful. If you look to the other direction, though, you have still got the cyclone fencing up and old buildings—some with asbestos in them that needs to be removed so that stage 3 can be funded. They have missed the opportunity in the last budget to fund stage 3 for Melba College, but we need to fight, advocate, lobby and secure that stage 3 funding so we can finish the project and leave the community with a fantastic, fully redeveloped school.

The next one on my list of priorities is the Mooroolbark Heights Reserve clubrooms, where the Mooroolbark Cricket Club and the Mooroolbark Football Club operate out of. Again these current clubrooms were built in 1970 and are in desperate need of an upgrade. We see how sports evolve, particularly over the last few years with the growth in women's sports and the growth in veterans, juniors and any number in cricket and football and indeed in numerous sports. But particularly at Mooroolbark you have got women players that do not currently have access to change rooms—or they are now in portables to the side of the club. In this day and age that is totally unsatisfactory. Unfortunately the Mooroolbark cricket and footy clubs have probably been their own worst enemies in the sense that they have spent their own funds, resources and volunteer people hours on actually redeveloping that club—adding a verandah and doing some improvements internally to some toilets—but it has all been piecemeal. You know, you have still got these clubrooms that were built in the 1970s. They are in desperate need of an upgrade so we can bring the portable women's change rooms into the one facility.

Of course as we see with other sporting clubs, where we have had these successful upgrades then clubs can start running their own functions and events at the clubs. The South Croydon football and cricket clubs are good examples. The Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club is a great example. As all those clubrooms get upgraded they start being able to hold functions and events there, so there is money they can put back into the club. The Mooroolbark Heights clubrooms are in desperate need of an upgrade. I note that federal candidate Aaron Violi made a federal commitment. It is good that Aaron got in and held his seat—but they no longer are in government, so we would now look to secure some funding from the Albanese government and secure some funding from the state so that we have federal, state and local money getting put into that project to see that delivered.

There are a number of organisations in my electorate that provide terrific charitable work to those in need in the local community, and there are a lot of those that run on the smell of an oily rag or provide those services with little or very limited support. It would be great if we actually got some funding, even small amounts of funding, to be able to assist those organisations. We have got ADRA Community Care, and I have spoken about them in this place before with their dedication and support that they give to the local community. They run the Vive Cafe, which serves free three-course meals every week to those in need. The Vive Cafe serves approximately 100 nutritious meals each Thursday to disadvantaged and isolated members of the community and has an enormous impact on the health and wellbeing of those who experience tough times in the local community. The cafe provides approximately 7000 meals a year along with 3500 food hampers, and the cafe has not missed a service for more than five years, during COVID too, I might add—terrific work. We have promised that if we get elected we will give \$25 000 to ADRA, so again, small amounts of money can go a long, long way with the terrific work that these organisations do. They are not just in my electorate, they service a number of electorates—I think the member for Gembrook, who is beside me in the chamber today, has done some terrific work with ADRA and knows about the good work that they do. They are a very, very worthwhile organisation.



The Dining Room is another one. It provides a meal service every Tuesday night. I have been across there; I have taken off the suit and tie and gone across there, helped serve and clean up and helped the volunteers there. You see firsthand 80 to 100 people, and growing numbers, every Tuesday go across and have a meal. For many that is the only hot meal, nutritious meal, that they get in a day. The Dining Room provides some other meals and bread and non-perishables for those people to take away, and so providing a small amount of money to the Dining Room for them to continue that terrific work would go a long, long way.

We have the Babes Project. We know the Babes Project and the terrific work that they do providing services to women, the amazing work that they do in delivering support and empowering women in their pregnancy and early parenting. They have got trained and experienced volunteers there who work with women who are facing crisis and who have challenging pregnancies, offering a perinatal support program. They have got a centre in Croydon and they have got a centre in Frankston, and again they do a lot of work that perhaps arguably—or indeed—the government should be delivering. They assist women in many, many ways and do terrific work—amazing work. Helen Parker is the founder there. You only need to hear Helen speak about the amazing work they do—but again, they are in need of funding and support. And credit where credit is due: I brought Helen in, and she met with the Treasurer and they secured a small amount of funding 12 months ago—or it might even be in this budget; I will stand corrected. But with that advocacy work I was able to help deliver that, and I think the member for Frankston had a hand in that too in terms of delivering some money for the Babes Project. But they need more; it was a small amount of money. To continue the terrific work they do they need more.

There are community groups such as the Karen community and the Chin community. I have worked with the Chin community over many, many years and helped them get a new church site in Lusher Road. For years they went to other churches in and around the Croydon area to worship on a Sunday afternoon and run many of their programs, but they desperately wanted their own home. I worked through planning provisions for a site that they found in the Yarra Ranges. That then was unsuitable, and then they found a site in Croydon and now they have a fantastic new church. But I have also supported them for many years with the difficulties in Myanmar. Indeed from my work, before I got elected as the state member for Croydon, in the Migration Review Tribunal I got an understanding of refugees and migrants that make the decision either by choice or by force to relocate to another country and some of the challenges in employment, language, housing and those sorts of issues that face those communities, so I will continue to support them and work with them. But again, small amounts of money to help them run festivals, support their cultural activities and everything they do and enrich the local community are a very, very worthwhile cause.

There is a long list there, but the other one I did want to mention is Elishacare. Elishacare is a not-for-profit community organisation and social enterprise aimed at rehabilitating drug- and alcohol-affected people, often with complex needs, including poor mental health. They restore hope and health through employment in their social enterprise and through housing and support services. The strength of their program rests with their peer support, provided by participants who have become free from addiction through their involvement with Elishacare. They do fantastic work. Geoff Marsh—I cannot sing the praises of him and his people highly enough. They do fantastic work, but they need help and support to continue those services.

I also wanted to quickly mention SALT, Sport and Life Training. I mentioned them earlier in the week in this place, and indeed I have mentioned them a number of times here—the terrific work that Dave Burt and his highly motivated volunteers do in the local community, delivering mental health, cultural and leadership education to sporting clubs. Since 2015 this not-for-profit organisation has worked with 21 different sporting codes and has won the trust of sporting clubs, leagues and peak bodies. They also partner with some leaders in health education, such as Beyond Blue and Our Watch.

The list goes on and on. There is the local BMX track that needs about \$40 000 for a new starting gate. I will continue to work with them and advocate for their cause. The Male Hug is another one. Again, time will run out, so I cannot continue to espouse the virtues of some of these programs. Tony Rabah

and his team—you hear about the tremendous work they are undertaking in the area of men’s mental health, but they need support, they need funding, and I will continue to advocate for them. I will continue my advocacy, which has delivered success in the past, but I raise these matters and will continue to raise them and advocate for them because they will improve and deliver such great upgrades to facilities and make improvements in our local community.

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) (16:31): It is a real pleasure to rise and speak on the 2022–23 Victorian budget and how this contributes to a more prosperous and hopeful Victorian community and invests in key infrastructure and services as we come out of the pandemic and look towards the future. This budget in a number of ways delivers for Victorians and my community, which I am so proud of representing, in the City of Kingston areas and the Greater Dandenong areas in the Mordialloc electorate. I want to focus on some of those key elements and put on record our great appreciation for some of the key service areas, like health and education, that have been so extraordinary during this time.

Firstly, let us look at the headline of this budget. It puts patients first, it invests in our health workers, and it invests in the people on the front lines of some of the challenges over the last few years. In putting patients first, we are investing in our health workers, with more than 7000 more health workers coming online over the coming years. Of those, more than 5000 are nurses—a really important testament to the work of the Andrews Labor government to invest in our health, to invest in our hospital services and to make sure that we are doing all we possibly can. Twelve billion dollars will be allocated, and it is not a one-off, it is year-on-year record support for our health system—unprecedented levels of investment as we build new hospitals, build our capabilities and respond to the challenges of a once-in-a-hundred-year pandemic.

I wanted to take this opportunity to place on record our deep sympathies to those that are waiting for surgeries. It is called elective surgery, but there is nothing elective about some of the things that people need—the vital surgeries to make their lives easier as well. Rest assured that our health workers and our communities and our systems are doing everything possible to make sure Victorians get the surgeries they need as quickly as possible. It is one thing to say that; it is another thing to invest in that. And that is what budgets provide—that opportunity to invest in our health services, to invest in our communities and to make sure that we are putting patients first in everything we do. So just down in our neck of the woods, at the end of the Nepean Highway, the Frankston Private Hospital will be converted into a dedicated public hospital—9000 surgeries each and every year—making sure that we are supporting patients in everything we do. I am so proud of that announcement. It is about listening to the experts. It is about seeing what capacities we could achieve. And that will make a massive difference in the south-eastern suburbs, so it is a really important investment—

*Members interjecting.*

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Can I ask members to quieten down a little bit, please? Thank you.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I will just keep going. I will just keep roaring through. That is all right. Thanks, Deputy Speaker. Yes, sorry, that has just thrown me.

There will be 36 000 patients during that time. The investment will be substantial, and it will put patients first in every element as well. Now, we embarked as a government on the biggest reforms to our mental health and wellbeing system—a broken system that was stretched to its limits during the two-year pandemic. Mental health and wellbeing touches everyone in their lives over the course of their journey. We know someone that is impacted; we might be impacted ourselves. We invested record funding in the last state budget. We build on that \$3.8 billion investment in reforms of our mental health and wellbeing system with a further \$1.3 billion invested.

This is record funding that eclipses the contributions and allocations that we see across the commonwealth. It puts mental health and wellbeing at the front and centre of this government’s agenda. It is about curing and supporting Victorians in every element that we do. Fifteen hundred more

mental health workers will be provided and 400 mental health and wellbeing nurses as well as 100 psychiatrists and 300 psychologists and more than \$490 million in acute hospital-based care, reducing waiting times for Victorians. Again, budgets are about priorities. We had the work put forward by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the 65 recommendations and their subparts, and now we are seeing that investment and that delivery. It delivers on implementing 90 per cent of the recommendations of the royal commission in this budget alone—a generational report, giving the government answers, but then it is actually taking those actions and making that investment as well.

I wanted to take the opportunity to run through some of the significant investments in education. Over the past four years I have had the great honour of representing my community in education policy and implementation, but then as Parliamentary Secretary for Schools it has been an honour to work with the Deputy Premier on landmark reforms. But one of the best things in this budget is one of the absolute values of this government. You can look no further than the investment in specialist schools by this government. Thirty-six specialist school settings will be substantially upgraded. It gives me goosebumps to think of the journey that has been taken by all those education leaders, the education support staff, the families, the parents, the volunteer efforts that are provided at these schools and the fundraising efforts. Now to have a champion on their side in the Victorian government, the Andrews Labor government, upgrading 36 specialist and special developmental schools is truly remarkable. All 83 specialist and special developmental schools would have gone through a funding investment and upgrade during this time. It is so amazing to think of the actions you can take and the decisions you can make and what that will mean. In every corner of every state, it does not matter what education setting you are in, it does not matter your circumstances or the postcode you live in, you should get the very best outcomes. That is what we believe and that is what we want to see each and every day as we deliver for all students. Investing in 36 specialist and special developmental schools is a real hallmark of this budget.

We see expenditure in growth funding eclipsing other states. Growth in our per capita funding in government schools over the last few years has been over 16 per cent. Our average infrastructure spend over the last eight years has been \$1.6 billion. It absolutely dwarfs the contributions from 2011 through to 2014 and shows that what you fund is what you value. We are investing more in education and we are investing in our teachers and our education support staff all across Victoria as well. We are recruiting more teachers. We want more teachers and more early childhood educators. So to the millions tuning into this speech around our communities: if you want to be a teacher and you want to be an early childhood educator, we want you in Victoria. There could not be a greater profession that you could choose than educating the next generation, and whether it is three-year-old kinder and early childhood educators, whether it is teachers in our schools that join the tens of thousands of people who have done an incredible job over the past two years, our teachers do an outstanding job. We want you to choose teaching. We want you to choose education as your profession. You know that you have got a government that is backing in and investing in our teachers and our students and values your profession and everything that you do. We need you to choose that.

Obviously this budget goes into further rollouts of the universal three-year-old kinder, a truly transformational investment in education the likes of which we have not seen ever before. We know that there is no differentiation between three-year-old and four-year-old kinder in the substantial benefits that that provides to a child in their early years. We are really excited to see what generational change that makes. In the very first briefing I had as Parliamentary Secretary for Schools the department talked to me about the fact that they can see the difference in children all the way through to their teens, the impact, if they have had that early childhood education. When you think of the opportunity costs and the benefit that that provides to kids and to their outcomes and opportunities, you wonder why this was not done sooner. It took an Andrews Labor government to deliver universal three-year-old kinder and make sure our kids get the very best opportunity, so we give a big shout-out to all our educators as well.

It would be remiss if I did not focus a little bit on the transformational infrastructure that is going on in our communities. One in six jobs did not exist before the Andrews Labor government came to office. Hundreds of thousands of people now have a job and more certainty, putting food on their tables and supporting their families because of the efforts of this government. In my community things that were never contemplated before have happened in such a short period of time, and in our eighth budget we build on that legacy. No-one thought the Mordialloc Freeway was possible—lines on a map, talked about for decades, delivered by an Andrews Labor government, nearly 60 000 vehicles each and every day, giving local roads back to local residents.

Everyone took the micky out of us when we said we would remove level crossings—50 level crossings by 2022. My good friend the member for Carrum and I have seen the transformational benefits that this has provided to the Frankston train line. We were out there while we were being chastised about whether it was possible. We said we would remove 50 by 2022. Well, 64 level crossings have been removed by 2022, delivering on our promises and commitments. We have reimaged communities. We have transformed and uplifted suburb after suburb and futureproofed them as well. It is a really exciting transformation.

This budget builds on that legacy and that work—85 level crossings by 2025. We have had 16 removed on the Frankston train line and 11 brand new stations built. By 2025, 20 level crossings will be gone for good and 13 stations built. We are just about to do piling work for the Glen Huntly and Neerim level crossing removals, and very soon early works will be underway at Parkdale as we remove Parkers Road and Warrigal Road and reimagine Parkdale. It has opened spaces and community linkages. There literally is a divide between Como Parade East and Como Parade West, named as such because of the rail line. We are uniting the community, increasing accessibility and safety—20 000 vehicles each and every day pass through this area; it is one of the biggest populated areas for schools in our community—making it safer and more accessible for our kids getting to school and for our communities getting to work and getting them home safer and sooner.

As the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel comes online in 2025, we will run more trains along the Frankston train line, and we will save you time getting home. But as we run more trains we need to decouple the gridlock between level crossings and our road infrastructure. So in such a short period of time, in just over a decade, to have 20 going—there were 30 when we came into government—on the Frankston train line is one of the most extraordinary outcomes. We have not seen that kind of change since the Frankston train line came down the line back in the 1880s—so a really transformational investment. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel is well underway. We are seeing that transformation.

Then there is the big visionary policy that Victorians strongly supported and voted for: the Suburban Rail Loop, connecting all major train lines. It will start in the Southland area and run through to Box Hill—26-kilometre twin tunnels. It will take 8000 passengers in its usage, and it will provide a 10-minute service from Cheltenham through to Clayton. It reimagine how we get around our communities. As the traffic estimates through our areas increase, we need to make sure that we are getting on more sustainable and more environmentally friendly passenger services, and heavy rail is a large part of that along with our incredible bus networks. Linking up all the major train lines, providing linkages to employment, to education precincts and to health precincts as well, really does reimagine that. To think that my local crew can get on the train at Chelsea, change at Cheltenham and be up in Monash or up in the Burwood or Box Hill precincts in less than an hour is a truly extraordinary achievement as well. That visionary policy is just outstanding. Victorians supported it and voted for it, and we are delivering it. We have early work already underway. Just think: 20 000 people are directly employed in our Big Build program, with 5 million hours clocked up by trainees, apprentices and cadets, so we are training the next generation of workers who will work on these major projects—\$98 billion worth of investments in road and rail projects.

Generational change that is being delivered to our communities is an outstanding achievement across the Kingston and Greater Dandenong communities. People thought it was not possible, but now they see it, they are realising it. They are seeing the transformational benefits at Cheltenham, Mentone,

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Edithvale, Chelsea and Bonbeach—those level crossing removals and brand new stations—Parkdale just around the corner as well and those level crossing removals and then the most amazing projects, with the Mordialloc Freeway, the Suburban Rail Loop and the metro rail tunnel.

Now, I wanted to touch on something that is really important and close to so many of our hearts and that is taking meaningful action on climate change and investing in renewable energies. It makes sense to transition our economy. We want to continue to be first movers in technology and in the advancement of renewable energy technology. We are literally enabling Victorians to put solar on their homes—to power their own homes and their destinies as well, as they lower their power bills and as we create more jobs—with a million households able to access the Solar Homes project. This budget again invests substantially in renewable energy. We have delivered more funding for the program, with 64 000 solar panels and 1700 battery storage rebates available in this budget alone. And a really important way that we are supporting people in their cost of living in their households is through the power saving bonus. We are making sure that we are supporting Victorians across our local communities to compare their electricity and gas bills to see if they are getting the best deal. Some people will save hundreds of dollars through that compare tool as well, but then they are able to access the power saving bonus, the \$250 that takes some of the pressure off. People are doing it tough—we hear that when they are talking to us in our local communities—and we need to support our communities as much as possible in those times ahead. This budget delivers. Its values are lived large: putting patients first, investing in education, putting mental health at the forefront and investing in renewable energy and infrastructure like we have never seen.

**Mr ANGUS** (Forest Hill) (16:46): I am pleased to rise this evening to make a contribution in relation to the budget take-note motion on the 2022–23 budget. I want to focus most of my contribution on the local areas and the local needs and how they have not in fact been funded by this government and what a disappointment that is to me and what a disappointment that is to our local community.

I want to start off by looking at some of the schools in relation to some of the needs there, and I particularly think of Vermont Primary School. That is one of my many very successful and growing local primary schools, and I have been meeting with them on an ongoing basis for many, many years of course and visiting them for various events and so on. They have got a very hardworking community there in terms of the principal, who I note has just retired after a very long time—and I wish her well in her retirement—but also in terms of the staff and the acting principals and assistants and so on. All the staff and the whole community up there at Vermont Primary School are outstanding. They have got a great school council, and they were working very, very hard in relation to trying to continue to improve that school.

I have raised the issue of Vermont Primary School in this place many, many times in relation to some of the needs, and those needs are extensive. The school community has banded together to work around the lack of capital investment by this government over many, many years and has made the most of it. But we have got major issues with plumbing, drainage and sewerage works. We have had ongoing issues with those in relation to the student toilets over a long period of time. We have had termites, we have had asbestos and we have had a range of other issues there in terms of the very, very old building that is the main admin and classroom building. That is basically a 1960s-odd building, and so not unexpectedly at the stage of its working life, some 60-odd years later, it is not in tiptop shape—although I must say, as I said before, it is maintained extremely well by the school community. They are certainly looking after it. But the fact is that there were no funds—I have advocated in this place for many years for funds to be allocated by the government to this school because of these needs, and it was such a disappointment that when I got the budget papers this year those needs had not been addressed. That is my first primary school with significant need that has been ignored by this government.

The next primary school I can cite is Orchard Grove Primary School, and that is another wonderful local school of mine where again there is a growing population of students. It is high achieving, like virtually all of my schools are—very high achieving and a very desirable place for students to go and for families and so on. The situation they have got is that they have received a little bit of money for

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some staff toilets. We advocated for that some years ago, and that was just trying to solve another horrendous problem and another area of gross neglect from the current government in relation to not providing adequate student toilets for the students. But the government has not provided any funds at all for the other serious needs at that school, and that is to do with the administration area and in particular to do with the staff toilets.

I have spoken in this place numbers of times about that and about the fact that there is effectively one female toilet in the main building for the staff to use during the breaks. You can imagine with a predominantly female staff, as many primary schools have, there are significant queueing issues during the breaks that the teachers get—and that the other staff get. So it was an incredible disappointment to see that the government had not addressed these very important needs, both the toilet need but also the administration area need, because as I said, the school has been growing for a long time, and the administration area where the administration staff, the principal and that are located is a very crowded area, shall we say. It has also got steps in it, and it is not conducive to an efficient and effective operation of an office. It is very disappointing that that has not been dealt with in this budget.

Another one of my splendid primary schools is the Camelot Rise Primary School. Again, I have spoken in this place numbers of times about the needs down there. I particularly think about a rather straightforward but vitally important need, and that is the need that I have raised for the refurbishment of their oval. I have spoken in here several times, including times when I have spoken about students that have been injured because of the surface of that oval. It is so uneven. Students will run along, particularly in the summer months, and they will fall over, and it is like falling onto concrete because there is not full grass coverage on the oval, so they bang their head on the very, very hard ground. Despite the fact that we ended up at one stage with a student significantly concussed and needing medical attention, the government has continued to ignore this school, to ignore the needs down there. It would not take much money, and you just think of how much money this government wastes. Just a few dollars off the table would fix this very straightforward project for the oval refurbishment down there at Camelot Rise.

They have got a number of other areas that need to be addressed as well. There are various buildings that again date right back to the 1960s, and as you can well imagine, they are nowhere near state of the art and require a lot of maintenance to keep them up to the operational standard that they need to be at. To their great credit the principal, the staff and all the team down there and the school council work together with the broader school community—they work hard together—to make sure that the school operates effectively and efficiently and is a beautiful school for the local students.

I also think of Livingstone Primary School. Again, this is such a minor matter in the sense of the dollars involved. It is just mind-boggling that the government could not find a few dollars for this—and this was to build a staff car park. They have got the space, they have got the gates, they have got everything, except they just need it to be bituminised and to be marked up with lines so that the staff can come in off busy Livingstone Road there, off the side streets and off other parking areas and park their cars on the premises. Particularly in winter the staff have to park further away. That means they have got to often walk back to their cars in the dark and so on. It is not an ideal situation, and it would not take very much money. Again, I have advocated in this place on numbers of occasions for Livingstone Primary School to receive that modest amount of money just to solve this significant local issue that continues to plague our community up there in Vermont South.

There are a range of other schools as well—I have not got time to detail them; I could talk for ages on them alone—that have got many inferior buildings and facilities. They need that TLC; they need that capital injection to bring them up to the standards that parents and families and indeed the broader community expect at this stage of the community's development. It is a big disappointment for the Forest Hill community there.

In relation to some other matters, we have got other areas that have also very sadly missed out. I think particularly of the Whitehorse SES unit. Again, I have raised this matter in here numbers of times.

They operate basically in a temporary building like a site office. You may be aware, you may not be, but the Whitehorse SES is one of the busiest SES units, certainly in metropolitan Melbourne but probably in Victoria. Because of the beautiful area that we live in out there in the district of Forest Hill and the City of Whitehorse, there are so many trees, and in the big winds and storms, which we seem to get a few of in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, numbers of those trees go over. So they are always out doing various essential jobs in the community, and here they find themselves in this temporary shed. In the heat over the summer, when there are other issues going on as well—and indeed in the winter—it is very substandard accommodation. I must say, despite that, they do an outstanding job serving our community and the broader Victorian and Australian community as well when needed. But it would not have taken much. It would only have taken a couple million dollars for that to be fixed, for it to be replaced and for a proper office, a proper radio room and a proper control base command centre to be established to make life a lot easier for all those wonderful volunteers that do such a great job protecting and serving our community.

I now turn to some of my sporting clubs. Again I could talk for ages on this as well, but I think particularly of the East Burwood Football Club, one of my wonderful football clubs. It has got more than 100 years of heritage, so it has been around for an extremely long time. They are a very successful club. They have rebuilt after some very challenging years in the last few years, but they are going from strength to strength at the moment. Yet they have not got facilities for female players, and that is just not on in this day and age. We have been trying to work with the council, but we have also been seeking funding from the state government to put some money in there to bring those facilities up to the 21st century. Sadly again they have missed out.

Similarly, I have got the wonderful Forest Hill Football Club, again a tremendous local club that has got a very long and wonderful history in the local area. Their facilities go back probably to the 1960s as well and are clearly not up to the standard that the community would be expecting in this day and age. It is a great disappointment that there has been no funding to rebuild those facilities, to provide proper changing facilities for females and to provide proper changing facilities for umpires, because we have got the situation—and particularly these days—where there are female umpires as well. They have to go out and stand outside while the opposite gender gets changed—the men go out and the women go out at different times—and really in this day and age that is not good enough. It is such a disappointment that the government has not provided small amounts of funds for these particular projects.

I think of the Bill Sewart Athletics Track. It would have been a great opportunity for the government just to put in a few dollars, perhaps \$1 million or \$2 million—which is nothing; crumbs off the table of this government—to put in some more toilets. That is one of the best athletic tracks in Melbourne; I think it is in the top two or three. They have countless school carnivals there, and they have to bring in portable toilets every time there are school groups there. So it is a great disappointment that the government could not find the funds to do that particular project either.

I think particularly of a project that goes back many, many years. It goes right back to 2014, and it is in relation to the Healesville freeway reserve. I have said many times in this place that the now Premier came out and stood on the stump and promised to keep that as public open space. Subsequent to that there were other promises made, including a 3.5-kilometre joint walking-cycling track for the community to use. That was in 2014, and subsequent to that we have heard other matters from various ministers, including the current Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. But the sad thing for the community is that nothing has happened, so we have got the situation here all these years later—eight years later—that it is still the way it was, or virtually the same as it was, eight years ago. The community has been ripped off there by this government. That could have been addressed. There could have been funds earmarked for that. They went against the promise that they made to the community and sold off various components of the Healesville freeway reserve. That was a disappointment to many, because it has narrowed the area that is available for other uses, including other very much-needed sporting facilities and other facilities for Vermont Secondary College in particular. So that is very disappointing for the Forest Hill community.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have to interrupt the member. The time for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

**Bills****CHILD EMPLOYMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Mr PEARSON:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (NAZI SYMBOL PROHIBITION) BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms HUTCHINS:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Circulated amendments***Circulated government amendments as follows agreed to:**

1. Clause 2, line 9, omit “before the first anniversary of” and insert “within 6 months from”.
2. Clause 2, line 11, omit “that day” and insert “the day after the end of that period”.
3. Clause 4, line 19, omit “second” and insert “first”.

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

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

**CASINO AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ms HORNE:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**



*Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

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

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

**The SPEAKER:** The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

**ECHUCA CEMETERY**

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) (17:01): (6416) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and it is on behalf of the Echuca Cemetery Trust. I ask that the minister re-examine the issue of access to Nolan Street for the trust for a parking area. I previously wrote to the minister, and she wrote back, and the department explained that they believe the land was in the urban flood zone overlay—which it is, or some of it is, and the trust is well aware of that—but given that it would probably flood only once every 40 to 50 years, I think they could actually live with the fact that they could not park there while there was a flood on, and there probably would not be an interment while there was a flood on anyhow, so I do not believe the department's reasoning about it being in the urban flood zone is a valid one to deny them access to that land for parking.

The other thing that the department wrote back saying was that in addition to being flood prone, the site also contains good-quality native vegetation, enhancing the ecological and amenity values of the area. It is not appropriate to use props, but I have a photo from an article in the *Riverine Herald* from when I went down to that particular site with the chairman of the trust, David Jones, and it is covered in prickly pear. There is absolutely no ecological value in the prickly pear, which is a noxious weed which covers this land. So I would ask the minister to re-examine that response and actually have the department inspect it and have a look at the fact that it has effectively no ecological value at all.

This land was a road. The Campaspe shire actually took it off their roads register because they do not need it as a road. It does not serve any useful purpose for anyone. The trust is happy, if someone needs it for access in the future, to allow egress across that land. They actually want this land as an area for parking so the land they currently use for parking within the cemetery proper can be used for interments in the future. If they do not get access to this land, they will have to start planning for a whole new cemetery in Echuca, but if this land is made available for parking, it makes available the current land for future interments, and that will futureproof that cemetery for quite a while. The current cemetery trust members have been working on this for a number of years with the department. They would like to see it resolved so as they finish their time on the trust they can hand it on to the next trustees as an issue that is resolved rather than handing it on as an issue still to be resolved, so I ask the minister to please re-examine this issue—have the department inspect the site and it will prove that their response denying the trust that land is for all the wrong reasons.

**ENERGY POLICY**

**Mr TAYLOR** (Bayswater) (17:04): (6417) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action that I seek is for the minister to update my community on the Andrews Labor government's nation-leading rollout of renewable energy to create lots of clean jobs. Whether it is Victoria's Big Battery, the biggest battery in the Southern Hemisphere; our game-changing Solar Homes program, which is putting nearly 800 000 solar panels on roofs across the state; or our huge investment to back in offshore wind recently to power 1.5 million Victorian homes,

Victoria is absolutely leading the way. All of this and so much more did not happen overnight or by accident. This has been a consistent and purposeful approach by this government, which gets and understands the importance of investing in renewable energy sources to get us to net zero emissions by 2050.

Getting to net zero emissions will mean we need to continue to be bold and invest in Victorian-made renewable sources. We will achieve our 50 per cent renewables target by 2030, and that is why we have set an ambitious target to bring online Australia's first offshore windfarm. In doing so, we will be creating lots and lots of clean jobs as the world continues to transition to cheaper and more reliable renewable energy sources, and we will be safeguarding Victoria's future as a powerhouse in the energy market. I am so proud to be part of a government that does not let ideology get in the way of these things but backs in local industry and backs in local jobs and is truly working towards a clean future we can indeed all be proud of. There is a lot more work to be done, and I know this government, which has led the way on renewable energy and our emissions reductions targets nationally, will get it done. I indeed thank my local community for their commitment to investing also in renewables, and I thank the minister for her consideration of my question.

### SMYTHESDALE HEALTH SERVICES

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) (17:06): (6418) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that he step in to restore GP services to Smythesdale. Smythesdale currently has a GP practice that is provided by Ballarat Community Health, but Ballarat Community Health has recently advised the community that it will be ceasing that service largely because it is having difficulty recruiting another GP after one left. The community is now going to be left without a GP—any GP. They have gone from two GPs to none on virtually no notice. The community are therefore unhappy about this, and I do not blame them. What needs to happen here is for the government to work with the federal government to come up with a funding policy that will require regional cities to offer some sort of outreach service to their peri-urban areas. It is not good enough that people have to go into Ballarat from Smythesdale. I note that we have recently announced that we will provide a bus from Smythesdale into Ballarat every 30 minutes so people will actually be able to get into Ballarat more easily than they can at the moment, because it is only three times a day at the moment. People are now currently left in a very difficult situation if they want to go to the doctor. Yet at the same time, the government sees fit to spend money on half-page ads in the local paper about their so-called health achievements—at the same time that services are being removed from the Smythesdale community. So rather than the ads boasting about what they think they are getting on with in health, perhaps they could get on with actually saving GP services in the growing community of Smythesdale.

### KAMBRYA COLLEGE

**Mr MAAS** (Narre Warren South) (17:08): (6419) The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Education, and it concerns Kambrya College. The action that I seek is that the minister provide any further information on the school's upgrade works as announced in the state budget. I was so pleased to see that \$18.94 million has been allocated to Kambrya College for their upgrade. It really is a fantastic school that is delivering a top-class education to our students. The principal, Keith Perry, and his team are looking forward to the modernising of the school and have already engaged with the relevant department on preliminary planning. The school is also looking forward to the options for a performing arts centre as part of this planning.

The south-east is one of the fastest growing areas of the state, and we must continue to invest in our schools to meet that growing demand. The funding at Kambrya builds on recent investments in other local schools, including Strathaird Primary, Hampton Park Secondary College and Narre Warren South P-12 College. It is great to see that Kambrya is one of the 1850 school upgrades that have been done over the last eight years, which have created around 17 400 local jobs and delivered better facilities for our staff, teachers and students. Our students deserve the best facilities and learning environments to support them as they strive to reach their true potential. I would appreciate it if the

minister could provide any further information and a time line on the planned upgrade works for Kambrya College.

### GEMBROOK ELECTORATE

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) (17:09): (6420) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I ask for from the Premier is that he come out to the Gembrook electorate and the Berwick area and speak to my constituents. They have sent in many questions for me to ask for them, and I hope he can come out and answer them.

They have asked about mandates and the return to work for many positions, particularly throughout the community. The most popular question is when will the Premier resign. After that is: how does an agency like the one he has formed to monitor the Victorian public have any room at all in our democracy? What is the Premier's problem when dealing with women whether it is political or not? When are you going to fix the health crisis, especially emergency departments? Can you please provide a balance sheet for Victoria? Will you ever tell us who hired the private security guards for hotel quarantine? When will you tell the truth? How do you get away with everything? Why have you forgotten the outer suburbs while governing just for the inner city?

What has happened to the promised Pakenham community hospital? Why did you take the pay rise in Parliament when Victorians lost their jobs due to lockdowns? When will you release the health advice? What is IBAC questioning you about? How can you justify the overruns on major projects and then have no money to fix our health or 000 systems? What are you doing to assist the backlogs in psychologists and occupational therapists in the state? When are expectant mothers going to be given a guaranteed safe place to give birth?

Can you apologise to Victorians please? Why are you fighting in court to prevent the release of information that was used for your COVID response? How many people are on surgery waiting lists this month? How many operational hospital beds did Victoria have in 2019 and how many do we have now in 2022, considering you promised a further 4000? Why are unvaccinated people allowed to drink at a cafe but not work in one? Why are you not resigning after being questioned by IBAC like the other past premiers have in other states? If you say you put people first, why do you always put us last? Why are you not enforcing public servants to return to work in the CBD at least three days a week because the CBD is dying?

These are questions that have come through when we put out on social media what would you ask the Premier with just five weeks to go—five sitting weeks here in this Parliament. It is a great opportunity for this Premier to come out and tell Victorians why he continues to avoid these questions. When he eventually does release them, he redacts everything. He redacts so much information that he makes it impossible here in Victoria. The man that won government in 2014 on the basis of integrity has zero integrity here in this state, and the action I seek is for the Premier to come out and explain to the community in the Berwick area why he has lost his integrity and what he is going to do to answer these questions to ensure that my community can get health care, can get treatment when they need to, can get a police officer when they need to and ensure the investments are in the right locations.

### TAFE FUNDING

**Mr FOWLES** (Burwood) (17:12): (6421) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Higher Education, Minister Tierney, in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to accompany me in visiting one of the TAFEs offering the diploma and advanced diploma level courses in Auslan and Auslan interpreting, which have been added by the Andrews Labor government to the free TAFE program.

There has never been a better time to train for a new career, and our expansion of the free TAFE initiative makes it easier than ever. But there have of course been worse times to train for a new career, like when those opposite were in power. In 2012, in typical fashion, the Liberal-National government

completely cut all sign language interpreting courses from TAFE. In fact the entire Victoria TAFE and training system was comprehensively gutted by those opposite between 2010 and 2014. In contrast, not only has the Andrews Labor government brought those sign language interpreting courses back, it is also investing \$4.8 million to add the diploma and advanced diploma level courses in Auslan to the free TAFE program. We have invested \$3.2 billion since 2015 to rebuild the TAFE and training system, and since free TAFE was introduced by the Andrews government in 2019 it has delivered \$240 million worth of fee-free courses, with more than 100 000 people having commenced a free TAFE course.

The work of Auslan interpreters during the pandemic showed just how important interpreting work is for the wider community. There are an estimated 3200 signing deaf people in Victoria. However, only 300 qualified and accredited interpreters exist in the whole of Australia. Building capacity in this sector is critical for our deaf and hard-of-hearing community who use sign language. When an Auslan interpreter is not available it can be incredibly difficult for signing deaf people. It is a barrier that can stop them from attending medical appointments, court hearings, work meetings and social opportunities. By boosting the interpreter workforce we are opening doors that should not be closed and bringing an essential communication tool to thousands of people. I look forward to seeing our investment in action alongside Minister Tierney.

### COST OF LIVING

**Mr HIBBINS** (Prahran) (17:14): (6422) My adjournment is for the Premier, and the action I seek is for the Premier to go further and faster in reducing cost-of-living pressures on Victorians. So many Victorians, in particular young people, are facing rising housing, transport, energy and day-to-day living costs along with flatlining wages. The Premier said he does not have a magic wand to wave when it comes to the cost of living, but I want to put on the record a number of practical measures the Premier could take to reduce the cost of living. Housing costs, rents in particular, are rising fast. Young people are looking at the prospect of never being able to afford their own home. I urge the government to take strong action, to put controls on rents and cap unfair and excessive rent increases and also to reverse their decision to cave into the property industry by dumping their social housing levy, which would have paid for thousands of public and affordable homes.

Petrol prices are sky high. The government needs to seize the opportunity and support people to make the shift to cleaner, cheaper forms of transport, make public transport temporarily free, encourage people back onto public transport and give incentives for people, particularly on low incomes, to make the shift out of their petrol guzzling, expensive-to-run cars and into cheaper-to-run electric vehicles.

When it comes to education, we have got so-called free public education in this state; well, it is not free. Look at uniform costs, textbooks, digital devices and subject costs. These should be essential parts of the curriculum, and schools need to be properly funded so parents and families are not lumped with the costs of what should be a free education.

When it comes to energy, lowering energy costs means getting homes off gas, not connecting them to gas, as is now occurring. All of these rising costs are occurring at a time of flatlining wages. The government needs to abolish its public sector wages cap, which is suppressing wages across our entire economy.

### MCCRAE LIGHTHOUSE

**Mr BRAYNE** (Nepean) (17:16): (6423) The action I seek is for the Minister for Planning to come down to Nepean to visit the refurbished McRae lighthouse now that the Victorian government's restoration is complete. Ensuring that our heritage sites are protected and restored is so important. Whether it is for the local community or tourists visiting our area, of which there are many, landmarks like the McRae lighthouse have historical significance and need to be preserved. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the McRae Lions and the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council in this matter and thank them for working in conjunction with Heritage Victoria to preserve our peninsula's

important landmarks. Once again, I invite the minister to come down and visit one of my community's most important landmarks, which has been magnificently restored.

### TOWONG SHIRE LAND REZONING

**Mr TILLEY** (Benambra) (17:17): (6424) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning, and the action I seek is for the minister to give certainty or advice to the Towong shire over the expensive and time-consuming restructuring plans that continue to underdeliver. Towong shire, as most of us know, is a rural shire with a small rate base but carrying the burden of a massive road network and geological footprint—geographical footprint, that is, but geological as well; there is plenty in the ground there, believe me. It sits next to Wodonga and Albury, and the growth in the twin cities has created great interest in developing parts of the Towong shire for residential estates, creating dormitory, outlying suburbs.

It could be a win-win for people looking for an idyllic lifestyle and could create relatively affordable land, as well as the council growing its population and rate income. But it has turned into a series of frustrating and fruitless exercises. Repeatedly the potential rezoning of land for rural living is whittled down to a fraction of what is intended. I am informed that one rezoning had the potential to create almost 1100 lots, but by the time various exclusions were applied, including the assumption that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate demand, the rezoning created only 36 lots. Surely a rezoning that ends up with about a 3 per cent success rate must ring alarm bells somewhere.

There is a peace offering, however. The recommendation was that the council could look to rezone some land around the township of Tallangatta—again, about a 30-minute drive from Albury-Wodonga. But after two years of energy, time and dollars, about four properties are now deemed suitable. Towong has been offered the opportunity to do further rezonings around Corryong and Bellbridge—and do not get me wrong, they are certainly thankful for that opportunity—but they rightly ask, 'What's the point?'. If the end result is a piecemeal approval of a handful of lots, there is none. I understand the council has reached out to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as the overseer of this process, asking, pleading, for advice on how this could be better done and how they could overcome the failings. I will be honest with you; the answers are less than informative and forthcoming.

Rental properties in our region are at a premium. The official line is that the vacancy rate is less than 1 per cent, but really it is zero. Blocks of land have all but dried up. The lack of water infrastructure is a massive handbrake on the release of any new housing estates. It seems a no-brainer that the opening up of more land for cheaper housing, improving the financial viability of a small shire and putting roofs over the heads of people should be a priority. Towong is not asking for a magic bullet; they just want to know how they can address the perceived shortcomings of the past and how they can improve the outcomes of this rezoning. If you do not, we certainly have a good shadow minister who would love the minister's job when he retires, and we will do it.

### PASCOE VALE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Ms BLANDTHORN** (Pascoe Vale) (17:20): (6425) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is an assurance from the minister that the Pascoe Vale Girls College will remain a girls-only school and that the government will continue to work with other local secondary schools in my community so that each of them is a school of choice for zoned families. Pascoe Vale Girls College has been a highly respected, extremely valued part of my local community since 1956. For more than 60 years it has provided unique learning opportunities for young women, including many who may be vulnerable or at a disadvantage. The college prides itself on its vision in providing students with equal opportunities to thrive in their academic outcomes and raising competent and confident world citizens.

I regularly meet women of all ages who attend or attended Pascoe Vale Girls College. Of every generation, these women speak openly, happily and indeed passionately about their time at this

wonderful school. Fundamental to their experience is the environment of a girls-only school. Personally I believe that girls schools can provide a unique educational environment free from sex discrimination, where every girl is supported and assisted to happily achieve their full potential in whatever endeavour they pursue. But of course there are research reports and expert opinions which suggest both that single-sex schools are better for girls and that co-educational schools are better for girls. The reality is that neither option is for everyone, but they are options, and a state girls school should remain an option in the northern suburbs of Melbourne just as it remains an option in the city and on the eastern side of town. Indeed, remove this option and there is the very real possibility that some girls will be denied access to secondary education altogether.

It is clear to me, at least in part, that the community campaign to make Pascoe Vale Girls College co-educational is really about some families not wanting their children to go to John Fawkner College or Glenroy College. Some people effectively want the local co-educational school boundaries to be redrawn. John Fawkner College is not in the electorate of Pascoe Vale, so I do not know it well. I have, however, built a strong relationship with Glenroy College, and I have come to know the teachers, the support staff and so many students as hardworking, passionate, caring and absolutely committed, despite many challenges, to good student outcomes. Indeed the Premier and the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education have joined me on several occasions at the school, not least in relation to the \$9.2 million upgrade of the school.

Notwithstanding the investment in facilities and programs at Glenroy College, there is always more that can be done. As such I would be pleased if the minister would ask his department to consult with the respective communities zoned to Glenroy College and John Fawkner College regarding these individual schools to ensure that they can eliminate any false perceptions, address any legitimate concerns and better meet community expectations. And I ask the minister to rule out the possibility that Pascoe Vale Girls College will be made co-educational. It is not the answer to the concerns being raised. It would only create greater angst and uncertainty in our community in relation to not only the loss of a state girls school as an option for families in the north but also the consequential effect it would have on the boundaries for the surrounding co-educational schools, including Strathmore Secondary College and Coburg High School.

### RESPONSES

**Mr MERLINO** (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health) (17:23): I will start with the member for Pascoe Vale, particularly in relation to Pascoe Vale Girls secondary college but also Glenroy and John Fawkner. I thank the member for her adjournment and commit to this house, and through the member to her community, that the Andrews Labor government is strongly committed to providing outstanding education for all students right across Victoria—every school, every student, every community. That is the promise of the Education State. Part of this is about infrastructure—the investment we make in the physical fabric of schools. That includes \$50 000 in the 2020–21 budget to develop a master plan for John Fawkner secondary college to support future upgrades and modernisation. The funding for the development of a master plan at John Fawkner demonstrates our long-term commitment to the provision of high-quality schooling in Melbourne’s northern suburbs.

As the member outlined—and I was delighted to visit the school with the member for Pascoe Vale—there was \$9.2 million in the 2019–20 budget to replace dilapidated facilities at Glenroy College, and \$11.9 million in the 2021–22 budget to build a new arts and technology centre at Pascoe Vale Girls secondary college. This funding is in addition to the \$2.3 million for the school in the 2018–19 state budget for performing arts, food technology and music facilities. So that is the capital story with those three schools, and it is important.

We have experience in shifting enrolments and pride in local schools, be it through planning and infrastructure investment, strong leadership at the school or both. There are schools like Beaumaris college and Preston High School which we reopened after they were closed and neglected. We reopened those schools, and they are so popular—more popular than ever. We have so many examples of schools

with strong leadership where we have seen dramatic shifts in community pride and enrolments, like Greensborough secondary college, which you, Speaker, would be aware of; Mordialloc College—my colleague the member for Mordialloc is in the chamber; Mount Alexander College; Reservoir High School; and St Albans Secondary College. I have also had some discussions over recent months with the member for Ripon about schools in her community about this very issue: how we address enrolments and how we improve community pride in and perceptions of those schools.

Perceptions can turn around. It might take a year or two—it lags behind the excellent work that is happening in the school—but it can turn around, and they will go from residualised schools to schools of choice. The way to do that is that you back the community, you back the school leadership and you invest in them, and you ask them what they need to make the improvements at their schools. Mount Alexander College—and I encourage all members to look at the story of this fantastic school—is one of the best examples of how we can turn community perceptions around and a school can go from a residualised school to a school of choice, which is what we want for every government school in the state, indeed every school.

We are working closely with schools across the Pascoe Vale electorate to continue to make all schools schools of choice. Dr Lisa Vinnicombe has been appointed as the principal of John Fawkner secondary college following the appointment of the previous principal as the inaugural head of the new Greenvale Secondary College. Dr Vinnicombe was previously assistant principal at University High School. Her thesis, which she completed for her PhD studies, was on effective change management in schools, so a perfect appointment for that school. Glenroy College is being fantastically led by Graham Stevenson, an experienced former principal who has recently been in a regional leadership role. Mr Stevenson has returned to a principal's role to lead Glenroy College, and he is doing a great job.

Dr Vinnicombe and Mr Stevenson join Kay Peddle, the principal at Pascoe Vale Girls secondary college. Ms Peddle has been principal since 2015 and has achieved outstanding results, with 26 per cent of year 7 students achieving in the top two bands of NAPLAN reading in 2021, up from 17 per cent in 2019—a brilliant achievement. I am particularly enthusiastic about the science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, or STEAM, program offered at Pascoe Vale Girls, which provides the students with hands-on experiential learning opportunities in science and technology, so excellent programs and outstanding student outcomes.

As the member for Pascoe Vale has rightly said, our government girls schools are a popular choice for many families, and I want to make it absolutely clear that Pascoe Vale Girls secondary college will remain a girls-only school. Providing the option for a girls-only school means parents in the northern suburbs of Melbourne have exactly the same opportunities as families living near the Canterbury Girls Secondary College, Melbourne Girls College, Mentone Girls Secondary College or Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College. In addition, to make Pascoe Vale Girls a co-ed school would result in a significant reduction in the Coburg High School and Strathmore Secondary College zones, which many in the community would not support.

The Department of Education and Training is working with John Fawkner secondary college, Glenroy College and Pascoe Vale Girls secondary college to expand their current programs to ensure every student is provided with the best possible support to reach their full potential. For example, Glenroy College will ensure more students can access the Victorian high-ability program by offering the mentoring and tutoring support they need to ensure they can benefit from this highly successful program. Across the three schools students are now offered instrumental music, interschool sports and lunchtime and after-hours extracurricular activities, including programs such as drama and debating. The department is working with the schools to expand these programs further. The principals of all three schools have commenced planning to determine how they can maximise the benefits of the new single VCE for all their students. This includes new opportunities for vocational education and training as well as planning for the provision of more senior secondary subjects. All three schools work with their local primary schools to make sure that every student graduating primary school, no matter their

circumstances, knows that they will be able to reach their full potential in each of these three secondary colleges.

The department is continuing to work with the local community to celebrate the successes of the schools and to address any concerns. I have directed my department to continue to work with local community groups, such as the RISE group in the Moreland area and, importantly, with my colleague the member for Pascoe Vale and others in the other place to ensure we are delivering the quality of education local families have a right to expect, and we will ensure that happens. I thank the member for raising this matter with me.

The member for Narre Warren South raised the issue of the fantastic upgrade to Kambrya College, which received \$18.94 million in the most recent budget, and asked me to outline any further information or steps that will be taken to make this project a reality. Member for Narre Warren South, I have visited Kambrya. This is a fantastic school, and I am really excited, particularly with the VCE vocational major. This is already an exceptional school when it comes to both VCE and VCAL, and with this reform of senior secondary Kambrya will be one of the leaders in this state, I am sure. It is a great school, and I am delighted that through the advocacy of the member for Narre Warren South and the school community we have been able to deliver this funding. It builds on previous investments that we have made. The new senior learning block at Kambrya College received \$3 million in the 2016–17 budget, and now this additional funding will deliver an extra 400 student places, so we will replace temporary buildings and build more permanent classrooms.

In terms of the process, architects will be appointed by August of this year. We have really sped up the process from the budget announcement to the turning of the sod and to the ultimate opening of the new facilities. We will have the architect by August. We will have the builder in the second half of next year—as close to the middle of the year as we can, but in the second half of next year—and be completed by quarter 3 of 2025. The appointment of the architect and then that engagement is often the most exciting process before you actually get the students into the new facilities. There will be priorities and ideas that the school have but there will also be some innovative ideas that will come from the architects, and that is a really exciting design process. So that is the pathway for Kambrya, and my congratulations to the school leadership, the school council and the broader school community on what will be a massive transformation, really matching the quality teaching and education that I know occurs at Kambrya with the very best facilities. So again, I thank the member for Narre Warren South for raising this adjournment.

Eight other members have raised particular matters with ministers: the member for Murray Plains with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the member for Bayswater with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the member for Ripon with the Minister for Health, the member for Gembrook for the Premier, the member for Burwood for the Minister for Higher Education, the member for Prahran to the Premier, the member for Nepean to the Minister for Planning and the member for Benambra for the Minister for Planning. I will ensure those matters are addressed and responded to.

**The SPEAKER:** The house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 5.35 pm until Tuesday, 21 June.**