

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 31 AUGUST 2022

hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

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

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

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Ms Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Maas, Mr Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	McGhie, Mr Stephen John	Melton	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Brayne, Mr Chris	Nepean	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma	South-West Coast	LP	Newbury, Mr James	Brighton	LP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Cheeseman, Mr Darren Leicester	South Barwon	ALP	Read, Dr Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Connolly, Ms Sarah	Tarneit	ALP	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
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Ryan, Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Settle, Ms Michaela	Buninyong	ALP
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Fowles, Mr Will	Burwood	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Fregon, Mr Matt	Mount Waverley	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hall, Ms Katie	Footscray	ALP	Tak, Mr Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Halse, Mr Dustin	Ringwood	ALP	Taylor, Mr Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Hamer, Mr Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Theophanous, Ms Katerina	Northcote	ALP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Vallence, Ms Bridget	Evelyn	LP
Horne, Ms Melissa Margaret	Williamstown	ALP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Kennedy, Mr John Ormond	Hawthorn	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP—Labor Party; Greens—The Greens;
Ind—Independent; LP—Liberal Party; Nats—The Nationals.

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Couzens, Mr Eren, Ms Ryan, Ms Theophanous and Mr Wakeling.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

Ms Addison, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Ms McLeish and Mr Morris.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

Mr Angus, Mr Battin, Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Ms Settle, Ms Theophanous and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee

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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Wednesday, 31 August 2022

The SPEAKER (Ms JM Edwards) 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.

Petitions

Following petition presented to house by Clerk:

CURDIES RIVER MANAGEMENT

The petition of residents Victoria draws to the attention of the House the urgent plight of the Curdies River Catchment located on Eastern Maar Country in Victoria's south-west. After decades of neglect and poor stewardship, the Curdies is at a crisis point. The river's health has worsened to the point where it is suffering recurrent and worsening blue-green algae blooms, mass fish kills, and the overall degradation of a fragile ecosystem with devastating impacts on rare and protected bird and fish species. There are extensive impacts on the local economy: farmers, commercial fisheries, tourism, and recreational users; alongside threats to the health and wellbeing of local residents and their communities.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

We require relevant Ministers to approve an urgent Remediation Action Plan for the Curdies River Catchment. The Plan will strengthen stewardship and accountability by vesting overall responsibility on one statutory agency, and deliver the actions needed to restore the river's health in the immediate and long terms. It will involve robust participation of local communities including Traditional Owners and organisations like Landcare. The plan will specify timelines, targets, and how funding and responsibility is allocated to statutory and/or other organisations. This will deliver a program of rapid and coordinated actions to regenerate and maintain the health and bio-cultural values of the Curdies River Catchment for the benefit of all Victorians.

By Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (582 signatures).

Tabled.

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

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

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

Auditor-General—Follow-up of Protecting Victoria's Coastal Assets—Ordered to be published.

Bills

ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SEXUAL OFFENCES AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (09:34): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Environment Legislation Amendment (Circular Economy and

Other Matters) Bill 2022 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Bill 2022.

Committees

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:34): I have received the resignation of Mr Barton from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective from today.

Members statements

EILDON ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (09:35): The residents of the Upper Yarra are dismayed at the state of the Warburton Highway. They tell me that they have never seen it in such bad condition. I drive it regularly—most recently last week—so I know what they mean. They want to know what works are planned to fix it and when they will occur. The Goulburn Valley and Maroondah highways are both in deplorable condition. The road between Yea and Mansfield is plagued with potholes, crumbling surfaces and shoulders, and uneven camber. Repair work and resurfacing are inferior and do not last. I implore the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to take action to ensure urgent repairs are made.

LIAM AND HAYLEY WILSON

Ms McLEISH: Congratulations to Liam Wilson of Mansfield, who took home three gold medals for dance and modelling at the World Championships of Performing Arts in Los Angeles recently. With hundreds of participants from over 50 countries performing, Liam was the only male solo dancer to reach the grand final and one of two competitors in the world to receive a scholarship to Millennium Dance Complex in LA. Liam walked away with a grand final gold medal for solo dance and modelling, a gold medal for formal modelling, a gold medal for swimwear modelling, a silver medal for dance solo and was the overall champion of the world division for swimwear modelling—very impressive. It turns out his modelling skills are just as good as his dancing and his acting. He was in *The Elephant Man*, a Mansfield Musical and Dramatic Society production, on the weekend as well, and did a fabulous job there. Liam and his sister Hayley are examples of wonderful young people who are doing such a great job in their chosen fields of skating and dance and modelling.

WILLIAMSTOWN ELECTORATE KINDERGARTEN FUNDING

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:36): We all know the importance of early learning and the impact that it has on children's lives, which is why I rise today to talk about the massive investment that is happening in kindergartens right across the Williamstown electorate. Last week it was great to have the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place, Ingrid Stitt, come and announce the investment that will be occurring in two of the fantastic local kinders.

Home Road Kindergarten in Newport is the recipient of approximately \$180 000 worth of funding that will completely transform its playground into an accessible, contemporary play area for the children. This builds on the grants they received a couple of years ago that transformed another part of their outdoor play area with fabulous natural-based play equipment. Despite the chilly weather, the mud play was particularly bustling.

Robina Scott three-year-old kinder in Williamstown will also receive a grant for a similar amount to transform their outdoor play area, and what a fantastic kinder this is too. Passionate about play-based learning, it provides that first important era of learning before the kids then transition into four-year-old kinder up the road in Ferguson Street. And let us not forget too that just a couple of months ago

the Range Children's Centre celebrated its upgrade with \$300 000 from last year for an inclusive all-new play area as well.

LEONGATHA DAFFODIL AND FLORAL SHOW

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:38): Spring is here, and in beautiful Leongatha it is always heralded by the daffodil festival, which was back bigger and better this year after pandemic disruptions. Congratulations to Clare Williams, the Leongatha chamber of commerce and all other organisers for capitalising on the festival with the cleverly named Leon 'Gather' Street Festival on Saturday. Glorious sunny weather, the subsiding of the pandemic and a great offering of stalls, entertainment and local shops brought thousands of people out for a fantastic day. Bair Street was chock-a-block full of people, particularly families and children, who seemed to be craving the opportunity to get out and mingle in a crowd.

LEONGATHA FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB

Mr D O'BRIEN: While in Leongatha, congrats also to the town's senior football team, which has finished the season undefeated and is raging-hot favourite for the Gippsland League flag. This Saturday's second semifinal clash against their arch rivals, Wonthaggi, will be a titanic South Gippsland clash.

KORUMBURRA RAILWAY STATION

Mr D O'BRIEN: On Friday night I attended a public meeting to discuss future community use of the old Korumburra railway station. This beautiful building has been slowly ageing, but thanks to funding from the community use of vacant rail buildings program it is currently being restored. There are many potential uses being discussed, and while finding volunteers to manage the facility will be a local challenge, I urge the government and VicTrack to be flexible to allow the community to get the most out of this beautiful asset.

ROSEDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr D O'BRIEN: Likewise, the Rosedale community is anxious about the future of its sole basketball stadium, located at Rosedale Primary School. I attended a public meeting there last Monday night, where a strong turnout expressed a clear desire to maintain this important facility for the town. I am happy to work with the community, the government, the school and Wellington shire to increase usage of the stadium and make sure it is maintained for a town on the verge of another growth spurt.

MELBOURNE-KILMORE ROADS, GISBORNE

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (09:39): I am delighted the works on the Melbourne–Kilmore roads intersection in Gisborne are now complete. With the new roundabout surrounding a preserved oak tree, upgraded lighting and new shared-use paths for pedestrians, this project will improve safety for all road users. It will also enhance traffic flow at this notorious intersection and throughout Gisborne's town centre. I want to thank all of the workers from Regional Roads Victoria, Negri Contractors and Dome Traffic who contributed to this wonderful project. I would also like to thank my constituents in Gisborne for their patience while works were completed. Closure of the intersection helped the project finish months ahead of schedule, a fantastic outcome. I made a \$12.5 million election commitment in 2018 that we would deliver this new, improved intersection for the people of Gisborne, and that commitment has now been delivered in full.

KYNETON KINDERGARTEN

Ms THOMAS: It has also been a big month for kinders in Macedon. I was delighted to join Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, Ingrid Stitt, council staff and councillors to announce the opening of the new Kyneton kinder. Built adjacent to Kyneton's primary schools, the new kinder will help local kids make a smooth transition to school and make drop-off and pick-up times simpler for parents and carers. We all know how important play-based learning is, and it is only an Andrews Labor

government that is rolling out free kinder for three- and four-year-olds from 2023 right across Victoria. We are making sure that we have the facilities in place and the early educators in place to make sure that our children get the best start for the best life.

GARFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (09:41): I speak today on behalf of Garfield Primary School, which spoke with Kardinia Communities for Children in relation to bushfires and lockdowns. They have put out a book, which people can get access to, which goes through some of the things and the concerns that these children faced during lockdowns. They are simple statements like:

We hated lockdown.

It was lonely.

We were sad.

Remote learning was hard.

Our parents couldn't explain the work to us ...

which I think many of us experienced. Maths in grade 6 seems to be a lot harder today than it was when I was in grade 6. They said:

Some of us only had a phone to work on.

When you look through this book, it goes through some of the issues that these children faced, including missing friends and the time at school that they missed out on. Some of the things they said were that it was no fun because they were stuck at home not seeing their friends and having no swimming. But I think it really hits a note when you see things like:

RIP

Pa

on the page or on gravestones in relation to people that lost their lives during that time of COVID.

However, there is also a silver lining when some of the children start to talk about the opportunities to go back to school, catching up with their friends, getting back on with life and getting back on with learning. They do say that with on-screen time the average was up by 46 per cent. Whilst as a parent, I go, 'That's just horrific', some of the kids simply come back with:

We are loving that.

Some other things were good.

Friend smelling a flower.

The Sun is helping the flower to grow.

These kids have had to face some real challenges in Bunyip with fires and lockdowns. I just wanted to make sure that recognition of them is put into Parliament today.

GEORGE AQUILINA

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (09:42): I rise today to wish my good friend and local community leader George Aquilina a very happy 70th birthday today. George represents the very best of our state. He has contributed to the west for over 30 years and worked as a volunteer seven days a week, and is an integral part of the Maltese community and the wider community in the west, serving as president of the Klabb Ghannejja Maltin in St Albans. He has given much of his life in giving back to our community, and I want to acknowledge his tireless hard work and pass on my very best wishes on behalf of the community of St Albans.

REBECCA VAS

Ms SULEYMAN: On another matter, I would like to send my deepest condolences to Sydney Vas on the sad passing of his wife, Rebecca. Sydney's family are very well known for their generosity, their work and their volunteering in our community. My thoughts and prayers are with Sydney and his family during this very difficult time.

JACKSON SCHOOL

Ms SULEYMAN: On a final note, I would like to say thank you to Anthony and all the teachers at Jackson special school. I was extremely pleased to attend and see firsthand the great work, the excitement, the programs and the support available to the kids. It was truly inspirational. I had the opportunity to see their Book Week parade and the fantastic artwork competition that was on display by the kids. Keep up the great work. I am very proud of Jackson special school, and in particular all the teachers and the students. They are absolutely inspirational for our community.

CAGED HENS

Dr READ (Brunswick) (09:44): With my Greens colleagues, I call on the Victorian government to bring an end to the use of battery cages for egg-laying hens as soon as possible. The commonwealth Department of Agriculture has, after seven years of discussion with industry, announced these cages will be banned in—wait for it—2036. Europe stopped using them 10 years ago, New Zealand stopped this year and several US states are in the process of stopping them or have done so. The Victorian Greens have been calling for the sale of caged eggs and the use of battery cages to be phased out for many years. In 2014 we introduced a bill in Parliament to ban the use of battery cages for laying hens and to prohibit the cruel practice of de-beaking hens. The great majority of Victorians oppose the use of battery cages, which coop hens in such a small space that they cannot stretch their wings and the confined hens turn on one another, leading to the painful practice of de-beaking. We must also ban the cruel practice of forced moulting. We do not need to allow an extra 14 years for the transition away from these cages when the Victorian government can and should make it happen faster.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (09:45): It was absolutely fantastic to see the Premier and the Minister for Health announce a \$270 million boost to our healthcare system on Sunday that will see more than 17 000 nurses and midwives recruited and trained as part of a massive hiring and upskilling initiative. More than 10 000 students will have the cost of their nursing or midwifery undergraduate studies paid for with scholarships for those, and thousands more who complete postgraduate studies in areas of need, including intensive care, cancer care, paediatrics and nurse practitioner specialties. This is an outstanding announcement, and it is all part of the \$12 billion pandemic repair plan, bringing those numbers of nurses and midwives being supported right through the system to over 20 000. It is all about making sure that we are providing a healthcare system that is terrific for our community.

GAP ROAD, SUNBURY, LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

Mr J BULL: I was also delighted to be able to join the Premier at the Gap Road level crossing in Sunbury, in my electorate, last week to meet with Rail Projects Victoria. We walked along the newly constructed road, looking at the incredible artwork along the new rail bridge, inspecting the shared-user paths and speaking to those who have worked day and night right through the coldest parts of winter to deliver this project. Only the Andrews Labor government gets rid of dangerous and congested level crossings.

ROTARY CLUB OF SUNBURY

Mr J BULL: I was also absolutely delighted to be made an honorary member of the Sunbury Rotary club last Tuesday. It was terrific to hear from David McPherson, the district governor, and I look forward to working closely with him going forward.

BAYSIDE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RELIEF

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): A big thankyou goes to Bayside Community Emergency Relief and especially their president, Deb Brook, for spearheading a recent food drive, which will support those in need. The food donated by Haileybury families was recently delivered to Bayside Community Information and Support Service. BayCISS is a not-for-profit charity that provides a range of much-needed services to my community—and welcome to new executive officer Rose Paduano.

HAMPTON BOWLS CLUB

Mr NEWBURY: Despite having a competitive streak, my form certainly was not up to that of Claire Smyth, the club champion at Hampton Bowls Club. On Sunday we both bowled the first jack to declare the greens open for the grand season opening day. The club is much loved in Hampton. My congratulations go to club president Ivan Silver and the team on a fantastic day and terrific club.

DENDY STREET, BRIGHTON, PEDESTRIAN RAIL CROSSING

Mr NEWBURY: Together with the Brighton community we have spent years calling for the upgrade of the pedestrian rail crossing at the New and Dendy streets roundabout because of a lack of funding in our community and ongoing neglect. The Labor government has finally been shamed into funding an upgrade. This upgrade is a win and an acknowledgement of the tireless advocacy of my community.

BRIGHTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr NEWBURY: An elected Liberal government will provide Brighton Primary School with \$9 million to begin transformational improvements to the school. The \$9 million commitment will ensure that students and teachers will be able to enjoy a multipurpose library, STEM, an arts facility and the development of a master plan for future works. Labor has forgotten my community. The Liberal Party is a champion of Brighton.

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:48): It was great to join recently the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services to visit paramedics in the Mordialloc electorate and hear of the outstanding work and commitment that they have shown over the last few years. They are an extraordinary bunch at the Mordialloc ambulance branch, and we give them a big shout-out. They know that the Andrews Labor government backs and supports them. Hundreds more paramedics have been recruited. We do not go to war with our paramedics; we support them in their work, we empower them, we have funded resources and we have funded them to build for the future.

Then we went down the road to Parkdale, where we visited the Central Bayside Community Health Services. Of course that was the site of the old Mordialloc hospital. What was it before Kennett came to government? It was a hospital, and then it was closed. It took the community to save it and make it a community health service for the future.

We are investing \$2.7 million to upgrade Central Bayside Community Health Services, providing a range of different services—GP, NDIS and dental services—to our local community. It is about investing in health, from our hospitals, with upgrades at Frankston Hospital—we have seen upgrades at Monash, Dandenong, and we are supporting all of our local health services—all the way down to the grassroots, where our paramedics are being supported each and every day. Labor backs our health system, we support our paramedics and we support our nurses. There are another 7000 health workers on the way, and 5000 of those will be nurses. This adds to more than 22 000 health workers, and guess what—10 000 more people can be nurses as we pay for their degrees into the future.

GOULBURN VALLEY HEALTH

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (09:50): This week Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton, now a major regional health service, is short 80 doctors, 130 nurses and 40 allied health workers. The COVID

pandemic has had a dramatic effect on the impact and capacity of our hospital to deliver services across the region, which encompasses southern New South Wales and as far down as Seymour and Wallan. I have been advocating strongly for additional support for our health service for as long as I have been a member in this place and am very proud that we have attracted huge investment in the redevelopment of our hospital and associated services, but there is always a need for more to be done. I was disappointed this week when five priority primary care clinics were announced, four in metropolitan Melbourne and one in Ballarat. Just yesterday a further 20 clinics were announced by the government, with the location of 10 of them announced and 10 yet to be announced. I plead with the government to consider the extreme staff shortages, the difficulties in recruitment of professional staff to regional areas, the overworked health workers in our hospital system and the extraordinary burden on our emergency department that has been brought about by the burden of illness, which has dramatically increased during the pandemic. A priority clinic established in our hospital in partnership with GPs to ease pressure on emergency departments and give people faster care for urgent but non-critical conditions would really make a huge difference to the day-to-day operations of the hospital.

TRUGANINA P-9 COLLEGE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnet) (09:51): It was great to be out last week in my electorate visiting Truganina P-9 College, one of our fantastic local schools. This school was lucky enough to share in the \$11.2 million of our government's high-ability learners program, which is ensuring that students who are academically excelling in areas such as literacy and maths can continue to receive help from enrichment and extension programs at their local school. They are also engaging in the challenge and enrichment series, linking up students with tech schools and other expert education organisations. In fact they have been running these programs for the last three years since we started this program. When I visited the school, I got to meet some awesome students enrolled in these programs. They are an outstanding 20 students that are taking part this year. Over the past three years that these programs have been running, over 160 students at Trug P-9 College overall have received help from these programs. When I spoke to these students, I could tell that they are bright, they are engaged and they are amazingly enthusiastic in the classroom, and it is so good to see. Children who excel academically at school should not have to go and get a private school education to thrive, and this program makes that possible. I also want to give thanks and a huge shout-out to principal Nicole O'Brien, who took on the role of principal this year. Nicole, you gave me such a warm welcome to the school, and I really look forward to going back and working with you in the future.

ST PATRICK'S PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:53): Last week I attended the opening and blessing of the new junior wing at St Patrick's Parish Primary School in Mentone. I would like to sincerely congratulate principal Tim Noonan, all staff, educators, students and parents on this wonderful addition to their school. This new wing has 11 learning spaces and upgraded facilities to make sure that every student has the very best environment to support their education. The ceremony was led by Archbishop Peter Comensoli and attended by the parish priest, Father Cameron Forbes, and leaders of Catholic education together with parents, students and teachers.

SANDRINGHAM COMMUNITY FORUM

Mr ROWSWELL: Last week I hosted the Sandringham community forum, a local gathering of community leaders. Over two sessions it was attended by more than 70 local clubs, groups, organisations and associations. It was great to join so many selfless and extraordinary community leaders who are all committed to making our community a better place. My thanks especially to Cait Eves and Matthew Gallop from the community bank of Sandringham, Guireh Darar and Rick Iversen from the community bank of Highett and Erica Breedon from Bayside City Council, who shared grant and sponsorship opportunities with those in attendance.

TREVOR BARKER BEACH OVAL

Mr ROWSWELL: Trevor Barker oval is home to the Sandringham Zebras VFL team and the Southern Saints VFLW team and hosts many other local competitions. However, their existing facilities do not fulfil club or community demands or standards, and they have an inability to cater to girls and women's football. That is why last week I announced that a future Victorian Liberal government will provide \$1.5 million towards modern and inclusive facilities that will transform Trevor Barker Beach Oval and will help boost all levels of female participation in local grassroots sport.

NELSON PARK SCHOOL

Mr EREN (Lara) (09:54): It is great that as my time in this house is coming to a close I am still seeing the benefits of the record state government investment in the electorate of Lara. Just last week I had the pleasure of hosting the Treasurer at Nelson Park School at the Illinois campus. We took a tour of the school and heard firsthand from acting principal Melissa Vago and her amazing team of teachers and students. They showed us how they are going to put to good use the massive \$6.4 million they received at the last state budget to replace relocatable buildings with permanent facilities.

PETSPIRATION, AVALON

Mr EREN: I was also delighted to be with the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery to turn the sod on our new Petspiration operational centre. Petspiration has selected Avalon for the location of its national distribution and operations centre, and that will create 190 new full-time jobs in regional Victoria. I am sure pets and pet owners will rejoice as well. The project will strongly contribute to Victoria's economic recovery through private sector stimulus in the construction industry. The team at Petspiration Avalon and the Linfox group have worked extremely hard to bring this project to fruition, and it is a testament to their commitment and excitement for what the future holds at Avalon. It is when collaboration like this happens that we see the best results for our local communities.

**OSBORNE PARK, NORTH GEELONG, AND EVANS RESERVE, NORLANE,
LIGHTING**

Mr EREN: Lastly, it was fantastic to join members of the North Geelong Magpies and Corio Bay Cobras to officially launch the new lights at Osborne Park and Evans Reserve respectively. These two venues have received \$2.25 million.

SHORTEN RESERVE, WEST FOOTSCRAY

Ms HALL (Footscray) (09:56): The West Footscray 'Roosters' Football Club and the Druids Cricket Club are a huge part of my community in Melbourne's inner west. These large, growing clubs deserve to have the best possible facilities, but unfortunately their home ground of Shorten Reserve has fallen into disrepair. Built on an old tip site, the current state of the oval is horrendous. The oval is currently flooded and is probably the only oval in Victoria where you can choose to kick downhill or uphill. It is very important that you win the coin toss at Shorten Reserve. To borrow some words from social media:

It's so bad kids from other teams sledge the Roosters ...

about the state of the ground. Only three days ago the Roosters junior club started a petition to upgrade Shorten Reserve, and in that short time the petition has amassed almost 900 signatures and is growing.

The upkeep and maintenance of community sporting facilities is a council responsibility. However, with Shorten Reserve I feel the need to step in. To the hundreds of people who have signed the petition calling for upgrades to Shorten Reserve: I want you to know that I have spoken to the minister and I am working on a solution to support council to get the job done once and for all. To the Roosters and the Druids: I am standing with you, and I will get back to you on a plan for the future of Shorten Reserve.

MELBOURNE CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (09:57): I recently had the honour of representing the Minister for Youth at the Man Up! Creating Respectful Relationships program launch at Lyndhurst Secondary College. I was joined by the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools; the CEO of Melbourne City Football Club, Brad Rowse; the principal of Lyndhurst Secondary College, Eloise Haynes; and students and football players as well. The event launched Melbourne City's new program, which is aimed at creating respectful relationships between our youth. City in the Community, which is Melbourne City's charitable arm, runs the program and uses football to reach out on topics such as mental health, healthy relationships, coping strategies and respect. The program incorporates dynamic classroom workshops and football activities connected to the club and its promotion of equality across sport. Over 3000 young people across the south-east will benefit from the program. City in the Community's aim is to develop and grow the club's existing programs to create a positive social impact. Melbourne City really have been making a concerted effort to connect to the south-east since they moved to the area, and this is another program that benefits our community and shows that the club's contribution extends beyond only football.

3RRR

Mr MAAS: A very quick shout-out also to public radio station 3RRR, who had their radiothon this week.

RINGWOOD ELECTORATE WORKERS

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (09:59): In what might be my last members statement I want to thank the workers of the district of Ringwood and right across Victoria for the work that they have done over the last three years as we have confronted a once-in-100-year global pandemic. I want to thank our transport workers and couriers. I want to thank our food services workers, our retail workers, our supermarket workers and our education workers and teachers. I want to thank our public servants and council workers, our construction workers and builders, our factory workers and farmers, our community services workers and all of course in our emergency services sectors. But a special thanks goes to our aged care, disability care and healthcare workers. They have never given up. They have continued to work to care for people in my district and to care for the most vulnerable in our community. Our nurses, our doctors, our paramedics, our hospital clerks and orderlies, our aged care workers—24/7, 365 days a year—have continued to work, have continued to care for all of us within our community, including my family, who have had the misfortune of being at a public hospital on numerous occasions. So I want to thank those healthcare workers and all the workers across my district for the enormity of the work that they have done.

GEE LONG WEST KINDERGARTEN

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:00): Geelong West Kindergarten was established in 1922, making it the oldest kindergarten in Greater Geelong, and in March this year celebrated its 100-year anniversary. Last week the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep joined me for a visit to this amazing kinder to chat to the teachers and parents and check out the painting and mud pie making. Geelong West Kindergarten is an independent sessional kindergarten managed by a very active and engaged committee of management. Its fantastic outdoor space, which includes a 100-year-old peppercorn tree as part of the play environment, is enjoyed by everyone. The Geelong West Kindergarten has focused on sustainability, having installed solar panels to minimise costs, and has developed Indigenous gardening spaces. I had the pleasure of opening the Indigenous garden a few years ago and watching the children enjoy this beautiful space.

The Geelong West Kindergarten operates three kinder groups for four- to five-year-olds and three pre-kinder groups for three- to four-year-olds. The three- and four-year-old pre-kinder programs offer different timetables, allowing flexibility and choice for families in my community. The Geelong West area has a growing number of young families accessing kindergartens, toddler time, the local library

and the recently fully upgraded Ashby Primary School, thanks to the Andrews Labor government. Since 2015 kindergarten services— *(Time expired)*

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:02): Workplace deaths should not happen. They can be avoided by taking workplace safety seriously and caring about human life. Pipecon Pty Ltd in Ballarat is a business with owners that sacrifice safety to squeeze out every dollar for themselves. They are responsible for the deaths of three workers in the space of two years. Charlie Howkins and Jack Brownlee died at work at Pipecon in a trench collapse in 2018. Pipecon was charged and convicted of an indictable offence in November 2021. A third worker, Leigh Suckling, died at Pipecon in 2020 and the case is with the Director of Public Prosecutions.

It saddens and angers me to hear that Pipecon has recently been awarded a local government contract in Ballarat. The City of Ballarat has selected Pipecon from five business tenders to do work and put more workers at risk. Ratepayers, including ratepayers whose family members died at Pipecon, will be footing the bill. Has council audited the work of Pipecon? Has it checked if safety practices have changed? Does the City of Ballarat always support businesses that are convicted of indictable offences? Does it care about its residents working in the city? The state Labor government has introduced the fair jobs code, which comes into effect in December. This is why we need such regulation: to make sure our workplaces are safer and companies with bad safety records are not rewarded with public contracts.

AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES IN THE EAST

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (10:03): It was a pleasure to join the Eastern Legal Community Centre, IndianCare, the Centre for Holistic Health and the Communities Council on Ethnic Issues to celebrate the Amplifying Community Voices in the East project last week at Box Hill town hall. The project, which was funded from a grant from the Victorian government, aimed to increase cross-cultural understanding and fight racist attitudes and behaviours. The project supported culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders to become anti-racism ambassadors through participation in workshops which focused on challenging racism and sharing their voices and experiences of racial discrimination. Racism is a scourge on our society, and the increase in racism that has been witnessed during the last couple of years has only emphasised the importance of standing up against racism in each of our communities. Combating racism requires strong advocates, and it is by sharing and elevating the voices and experiences of people who have faced racial discrimination that we will ultimately create systemic change. It has been great to see how the Amplifying Community Voices in the East program has been able to build the capacity of community leaders from our culturally diverse communities to become anti-racism ambassadors. Congratulations to the five anti-racism advocates who participated in the project: Dr Chris Mallika Bhadra, Eva Lam, Dr Neha Gogia, Ritu Dahiya and Houg Yu Ngee.

BLACKBURN HIGH SCHOOL

Mr HAMER: It was terrific to visit Blackburn High last week with the Minister for Education and see their fantastic new STEM centre almost complete—\$10 million, money well spent. I cannot wait to see it happen.

MOUNT WAVERLEY NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (10:05): On Saturday I popped in to the Mount Waverley North Primary School open day—a huge shout-out to principal Natalie Grieve and her team for a fantastic day along with the parents and friends putting on the sausage sizzle. It is such a community school, Mount Waverley North— *(Time expired)*

Statements on parliamentary committee reports**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE***Report on the 2022–23 Budget Estimates*

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (10:05): Today I rise to speak on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee *Report on the 2022–23 Budget Estimates* that was tabled yesterday. I am particularly interested, in reading this report, in chapter 3, which is the Department of Health report, and the minority report. These two things are in fact linked. When we go to page 29, section 3.2, for the Department of Health, it says:

However, compared to the 2021–22 revised budget, the 2022–23 Budget represents a decrease of \$2 billion (7.5%) in funding.

The report further goes on to say that the Department of Health's:

... output appropriations are budgeted as \$12.6 billion for 2022–23, a decrease of \$2.5 billion (16.5%) compared to the 2021–22 revised budget.

...

DH's 2022–23 Budget for other operating expenses of \$7.6 billion declined by \$2 billion (21.2%) compared to the 2021–22 revised budget.

And the PAEC committee, in finding 20, says:

The 2022–23 Budget for the Department of Health ... represents a 7.5% reduction from its 2021–22 revised budget ...

Why is this important? Let us start with the fact that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is a Labor-dominated committee. This is a government majority committee with a government chair and a government majority. And this committee has found—finding 20—that the 2022–23 budget for the Department of Health represents a 7.5 per cent reduction from its 2021–22 revised budget. The minority members of this committee agree with this. They have put in a minority report, and they say that they:

... support the majority report and note that it has highlighted areas for budget improvement, including around transparency and clarity of reporting.

However, why they have particularly put in a minority report is that, and I will read from their report:

The minority is concerned by the propensity of the Premier and his Ministers to simply deny the facts when presented them as written in the budget papers. This trend has grown in recent inquiries.

It then has a quote from *Hansard* that goes directly to the question of health funding, where the member for Gippsland South, who is in the chamber and is a member of PAEC, asked the Premier about these cuts to the health budget. He asked him directly and gave him the chapter and verse—the page number where these cuts appear. The Premier came back and said there is no cut to the health budget. Well, the government's own people say there is a cut to the health budget. I mean, this government cannot even get its own lines right if the budget papers say, which they do in black and white, this government has cut \$2 billion from the health budget.

They are a government, I might add, that is out there at the moment saying that they can do transport and they can do health—they can do them both. They are cutting the health budget by billions of dollars when we have got tens of thousands of people—up 70 per cent since March 2020—on elective surgery waiting lists and when we have got people dying because an ambulance does not turn up. What does this government do? It goes and cuts the health budget by \$2 billion. Then the leadership of this government seeks to deny the truth. They seek to say that black is white, that what is in the budget paper is not the truth in some way. In fact the Premier went on to say that it was a ridiculous suggestion. His own committee members can find the truth—because it is in the budget papers—that in fact the government has cut the health budget. This is an outrageous thing to happen in the middle of a pandemic when we are just coming through that and with all the health crises that we have now.

And what do they do? They go and cut the health budget. The PAEC report proves it. It is time the government leadership owned up to it.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (10:10): I rise today to speak in relation to the inquiry into support for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds. As the former chair of the Legal and Social Issues Committee, I am very pleased to speak on the inquiry. As many would know, the report was tabled on 3 August this year. This is a very comprehensive report exploring how state and local government, service providers and community organisations can better support culturally diverse older Victorians to access services, live healthy and active lives and also age with dignity and respect, together with making sure that those support services are available regardless of the postcode that you live in.

The committee heard during the inquiry that culturally diverse older people often face barriers to accessing services—barriers such as language, transport, digital exclusion, visa status, and the list goes on. Some multicultural older people are unaware of available supports, and it was a theme throughout the inquiry that many older multicultural people were just not aware of what services were available and who was providing the services, and they struggled actually navigating through the process. We also heard about the cultural stigma from some older people associated with accessing and reaching out for care and how service providers often do not meet their cultural and spiritual needs. As we know, Victoria is a very diverse multifaith and multicultural community, and that in itself can also present, as we can see, older Victorians with more and more barriers to accessing health and social services through the sector. We looked closely at issues such as social isolation, economic and civil participation, digital literacy, elder abuse and aged care.

As a daughter of migrants and a passionate advocate for multiculturalism in Victoria, I hope that these recommendations are all implemented, because I believe this will address the challenges and be a step towards helping older people to thrive as they age. We know that an extreme challenge for older Victorians is making sure that they have adequate supports and, most importantly, that there is support and funding for ethnospecific and multicultural organisations to provide those essential services. These are the organisations that are trusted by people and, importantly, help culturally diverse older people to find and access services close to where they live through care finders or community connectors, consulting with culturally diverse older people to design and improve services and policies that directly affect them. Also a recommendation was for greater support for bicultural and bilingual workers through a bicultural worker strategy. This was an important note, that most often older Victorians felt much more comfortable with care and support in their language—whether it is from their culture or whether it is from their same ethnicity, this really is important.

I could go on and on about the recommendations. This is a very important report. I want to thank the 73 submitters. We held five public hearings—in Coburg, Geelong and Ballarat and online. I also want to thank my colleagues the member for Geelong, the member for Buninyong, the member for Clarinda and the member for Forest Hill, and in particular the secretariat, Yuki Simmonds, Marianna, Katherine and all the team, for their hard work throughout these challenging two years. We have been able to deliver some pretty significant reports to table in this place. I strongly believe that these recommendations will enhance the wellbeing of our culturally diverse older Victorians and lead to better care outcomes, and I hope that we have the recommendations speedily supported by the government. I commend the report to the house.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Report on the 2022–23 Budget Estimates

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (10:15): I am pleased to rise to say a few words on the *Report on the 2022–23 Budget Estimates* by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, of which I am deputy chair. It is quite possibly—hopefully—my last experience of eight years on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. I have got to say, and I have said this to the secretariat and the members of the committee, I actually think this is the best budget estimates report we have done in those eight years. There are some really good recommendations and some actual things that hold the government to account. I recommend it to members throughout the chamber, particularly those opposite, because it astounds me quite regularly when I hear people from the government side get up and speak about the budget and it is very clear to me that they have not actually looked at the budget papers, so having a read of the budget estimates report might be good.

As the member for Ripon pointed out, in particular there is the issue that in the budget this year, despite the claims of those opposite, there was in fact a \$2 billion cut to the health department budget. If you are not sure and if you are not understanding, you can go to budget paper 3, page 220, and you will see there that in last year's budget we spent \$27 billion on the health department and this year it is \$25 billion. It is there in black and white, and as the member for Ripon pointed out, members of the opposition highlighted this in a very brief minority report at the end of the main report. It highlights the barefaced denial of facts that we saw from the Premier and the then Minister for Health—and I gave another example of the Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education—as just a couple of examples where ministers would simply say that white is black or black is white when the evidence was there in front of them. In particular, as I said, when it comes to the health budget the minister and the Premier simply denied the facts in front of them in the hearings that we had. The government members should have a read of that, because again I heard one yesterday talking about the wonderful investments in health, and clearly that member has not actually seen the budget papers.

The other issue I want to touch on, which is also addressed in the minority report, is the increasing propensity of government ministers and particularly public servants, especially departmental secretaries, over recent years—and it was heightened in this year's hearings—to get a question from the committee and say, 'We'll take that on notice, Mr O'Brien'. That is fine. We do not expect, as we say in the minority report, that everyone will have all the answers—particularly when it comes to data, we do not expect they will have it on hand—and that is one reason to take questions on notice. I might say just as an aside, though, it is astounding to me how often we ask the same questions every year at PAEC hearings and the bureaucracy comes with reams and reams of folders of paper and is not able to answer those questions and says, 'We'll have to take that on notice'.

Now, as I said, taking questions on notice is not a problem. What then happens, though, is the government does everything in its power to possibly avoid answering the question asked, and there are a couple of examples that we have given in the minority report. One in particular that I am sure many members opposite will be interested in was the funding of the Foo Fighters concert that occurred in March this year. Now, why would taxpayers be funding a Foo Fighters concert—one of the most popular bands in the world that tours regularly—that people will pay good money to go and see? Well, that is a very good question, and that is why I asked the question: 'How much did it cost taxpayers to put on a Foo Fighters concert in Geelong?'. Of course the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, Mr Phemister, said, 'Yes, we can get that information for you, Mr O'Brien. I can tell you it was a very successful event'. Well, that is good, but that was not the question I asked. After three attempts we still did not get an answer to that question from the secretary. This is just one example of where secretaries, ministers and department officials are consistently saying, 'We'll take that on notice', then giving an answer that does not actually answer the question and hoping that the members of the committee will not notice and follow it up.

Ultimately we were told that the Foo Fighters concert was put on by Always Live Limited and ‘It’s an independent organisation, so we don’t have access to that information, Mr O’Brien’. Well, just a few days after I got that answer the government put out a press release headlined ‘Always Live is all it takes—falling in love with Victoria again’ and loudly proclaiming in the first sentence ‘the Andrews Labor government’s Always Live program’—so not so independent when it does not suit the government.

This is a very good report. It is well worth the read. I highly recommend it to members to actually understand what the government is in fact doing with our state taxpayers dollars.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Report on the 2021–22 Budget Estimates

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (10:20): I refer to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee’s inquiry into the budget estimates for 2021–22 and the contribution from the Minister for Economic Development on how Victoria is trying to strengthen economic performance through a range of mechanisms. I want to continue my contribution on how we reach globally, lead nationally and deliver for Victoria.

The plan I am proposing is to establish AUKUS health. The aim is to deliver worldwide health breakthroughs in a time of global pandemic and accelerate opportunities from the Cancer Moonshot. Results can be driven by leveraging the relationship Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have forged for defence and national security into health security. The AUKUS health strategy aims to harness collaboration founded through the Cancer Moonshot initiative to establish a brain gain between Australia, the UK and the US. My original proposal that Australia partner the US and the Cancer Moonshot brought Joe Biden to Melbourne in 2016 for the opening of the billion-dollar jewel in Australia’s medical research crown, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, Australia’s only comprehensive cancer centre, and internationalised this quest. Extending the Cancer Moonshot through AUKUS would be defining in the mission to crack the code of one of the world’s biggest killers.

The next step for Australia is to partner President Biden in his plan to translate the US model designed for national security, leading to discoveries including the internet and GPS under a defence department agency, to focus on health. This collaboration would target breakthroughs to prevent, detect and treat diseases including Alzheimer’s, diabetes and cancer under the National Institutes of Health. President Biden’s method is to adapt artificial intelligence and other technologies to supercharge breakthroughs predicted to outstrip half a century’s advances in the next decade.

Step 3 is to drive institutional clout to accelerate breakthroughs with our research institutes and universities. The UK has €2 billion it wants to invest in science, but the European Union has frozen it out of the world’s biggest research and development fund, the €95 billion Horizon Europe. I proposed expanding partnerships with Australia and creating new ones at the recent Australian British Health Catalyst, an idea greatly appreciated in London and being pursued. This initiative aligns with the Australia-UK free trade agreement that both countries have signed, which will soon be debated in Australia’s Parliament. I proposed to British government officials that the value of the free trade agreement be raised from the exchange of Vegemite and Marmite to life-saving vaccines in a time of pandemic. The direct importance plays out in Broadmeadows, where one of Australia’s leading companies, CSL, has been manufacturing more than 50 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines from Britain, saving lives at home and abroad. A \$1.8 billion deal for new vaccines against influenza will establish a new lucrative export industry nearby soon. Melbourne, like Boston and London, is a world leader in medical research based around our major universities. These are the anchors for these ecosystems. Monash will be first to manufacture mRNA vaccines on campus with Moderna, and then step 4 is citizen science, forging partnerships between patients, medical researchers and governments, vital to tackle our biggest health challenges, killers and sources of insecurity.

Australia is close to the top of the survival list for most cancers and plays a major role in future discoveries through the elegance of our science and the value of our data being distilled into understanding, knowledge and then remedies, because big dreams require big data. Joe Biden praised the significance of the agreement between Victoria and the US to share patient histories with full privacy protections during his tour of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, noting:

You are making cancer research a team sport ...

This connection is our foundation for a quest that is as personal to the President as family. It provides a universal opportunity to renew bipartisanship during a new era of counter-enlightenment. The Cancer Moonshot is designed to accelerate progress in cancer research and make more therapies available to more patients while improving our ability to prevent cancer and detect it at an early stage.

This proposal on the AUKUS health plan has been well received in Washington, and then there is the added value from philanthropy. Just in breaking news today—this is a wonderful development again, with Victoria leading nationally—there is \$250 million that Canadian philanthropist and businessman Geoffrey Cummings is donating to the University of Melbourne to establish a centre to fast-track the design and development of life-saving treatments. The Victorian government is investing \$75 million in the next 10 years. This shows why the Andrews Labor government matters.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Dr READ (Brunswick) (10:25): This morning I want to talk about the Environment and Planning Committee's report that came out about six months ago on their inquiry into environmental infrastructure for growing populations. There are some really interesting recommendations in this report, and findings, which I enjoyed reading. I could not help but think of my inner-city electorate, one of the smallest electorates in the state by area, at about 4 kilometres by 4 kilometres, and a mere 20 minutes north of here on a bike. Just on that point, recommendations 2, 3 and 5 all refer to active transport, particularly bike riding. I will just read one of them, recommendation 5:

That the Victorian Government work with local councils to identify opportunities for increased separation of walking and cycling paths.

Recommendation 2 is similar but is about separating cycling paths from motor traffic. I think these are really important, obviously because of the health benefits of active transport—that is, walking and bike riding—and also because in the context of Brunswick, being so close to the CBD, a lot of people chose to live there because it was close, and they actually walk or ride bikes into either the city or the nearby hospitals or universities or the biomedical precinct. The problem is that the environment in which we walk and ride is dominated by cars—often fast-moving, noisy and polluting—and it is detrimental to our safety, not to mention our respiratory and mental health, to be surrounded by heavy traffic all the time. That brings me to the very first recommendation of this report:

That the Victorian Government investigate all options for the identification and development of walking corridors.

Whether you are walking or on a bike, the report finds that it is important that we are protected from traffic but also in a pleasant environment, something that cheers you up to walk through rather than something in which you have to worry about taking your life in your hands. I have spoken many times in this place in support of separated bike paths, and I will not dwell on that this morning, other than to encourage the government to pick up this report and think about it in the context of important state government roads.

I want to talk a bit more on walking corridors. Particularly, I got a letter from a constituent who lives in or near Breese Street, which runs north-south, parallel to Sydney Road, between Sydney Road and the Upfield line near Anstey station. It is an area that has been selected for high-rise development. This would have to have one of the highest population densities of Melbourne. There are a series of roughly 10-storey apartment towers either completed or going up there. One of the most famous that many

people will have heard of is known as The Commons. The population density in the area is very high, but as the buildings have gone up and as the population has gone up, the streets have not got any wider. What that means is that it is a concrete jungle with a lot of cars squeezing through narrow streets. I think it is urgent that the state government observe some of the report's recommendations here. I note finding 31, which is:

Rapid population growth in inner metropolitan Melbourne presents an ongoing challenge to maintaining the standard of environmental infrastructure currently enjoyed by Melburnians.

It is important that the government help cash-strapped councils to invest in providing shade, greenery and seating and to deprioritise car transport in these areas. There is a lot more that can be done, not just in my electorate of Brunswick but in inner-city electorates generally, where population density is high, car density seems to be growing and humans have to live there.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (10:30): It gives me great pleasure to join the committee reports part of the Parliament today to speak about the report on the inquiry into apartment design standards, which was tabled earlier this month and was undertaken by the Environment and Planning Committee, which I am a member of. I am pleased to see that my friend the outgoing chair of the Environment and Planning Committee, the member for Tarneit, is sitting behind me in the chamber at the moment, and I want to congratulate her on her work and her leadership on that inquiry. Also I acknowledge the deputy chair, the member for Mornington; the members for Burwood and Box Hill—great friends of mine; and my neighbouring member who is also in the chamber, the member for Eildon, for their contribution. Just the one downside to this committee and its report is that I think the National Party really needs to take a look at maybe the example of the member for Gippsland South, who just spoke about the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and has obviously been a very active participant. I cannot say the same for the member for Ovens Valley. I am not sure he even attended one of the deliberations for this report or any of the hearings, and in my four years on this committee he has barely attended anything. I really think the National Party need to look at if they are going to contribute, and if they are going to contribute, actually do the job. I think that the constituents of Ovens Valley have really been let down, particularly when for a previous inquiry he did not even come to all the hearings that were held in his electorate. But onto the positives—

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member on her feet is actually speaking about somebody, which I think is out of line. She needs to be focusing on the committee report itself rather than using it as an opportunity to bash a member of the opposition.

Ms GREEN: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think that the member for Eildon knows full well the poor attendance record of the member for Ovens Valley.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Yan Yean, that is not a point of order. Let me go back to the original point of order and just caution the member to deliberate on the committee report that is before the house.

Ms GREEN: Before I was interrupted by the member for Eildon, that is exactly what I was doing. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

It is actually a report that is very timely. We received the reference around the time that we were all midway through living through the lockdown and the impacts of the pandemic, and it was really very timely that the Parliament was looking at this issue about how people live in apartments, because so many more people had to work from home. It really has meant that people have looked at the way they do things, particularly with the number of children now growing up in apartments. I want to commend my friend Kos Samaras, who is writing extensively at the moment about housing affordability and the cost of living. I think this report can be read in the same context as the work that

he is writing in that we do need to do housing and housing affordability better in this country, and this report will contribute to that.

There were many witnesses to the inquiry, and I want to particularly single out the Australian Institute of Architects' Paul Zanatta, Tim Leslie, Bill Krotiris, Sarah Buckeridge and James Legge for the tour that they took the committee on to apartments in Elwood, West Melbourne, Fairfield and Burwood. They were really great examples. We looked at light, amenity, how children interact and communal spaces, and it really did form a strong basis for the recommendations that are in the report. It is a robust report. It has 35 recommendations and 64 findings. I want to commend the committee staff and commend the work of this report to the Parliament.

Bills

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms HUTCHINS:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:36): Deputy Speaker, have I congratulated you on becoming the Deputy Speaker? Congratulations.

I also rise to make a contribution on the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. In true form it is Labor governments that really make the big contributions to education, care and increasing opportunities for young people in our country. It was the Gillard-Rudd governments that introduced the national quality framework for early childhood centres to ensure that our young people are given the best of care and that they are also protected within those childcare settings. This national framework, which of course all states and territories signed up to, needs at various times to be refined, to be reviewed and to be looked over to see whether it is doing what it needs to do. Times have moved on. Community standards and expectations have increased. With the need for and reliance on good-quality child care, demand has also been growing. There was a review over something like five years, and as a result of that review we are now at this point when we are talking about or debating today some amendments to early childhood legislation to ensure that we continue to protect children in childcare and kindergarten settings, as well as ensuring that they do get the best possible care both in their educational standards and also in the environment in which they are being cared for.

The Andrews Labor government is proud to be embarking on a whole lot of early childhood investments and radical reform. You need not only to think about the recent announcement that we are going to address families' concerns around cost of living by announcing that both three-year-old and four-year-old kindergarten next year will be free, thereby reducing the cost burden on families, but also of course to look at the revolutionary announcement around kindergarten—expanding to 30 hours per week, rather than the 15 hours at the moment for both three- and four-year-old kindergarten. This is because all the study and the research show that organised play-based learning is very, very important for the development of children. We want to make sure that children in Victoria and across the country really do get the best opportunity to be their very best throughout life and to do the things that they need and want to do. So this is another step in terms of that, because while we further formalise or try to bring in a system of 30 hours paid early education, we want to make sure that the standards are high, the best that they can be, and we also want to make sure again that our children are safe and protected within those environments.

I know many kindergartens have been built, and long day care centres as well, in the Thomastown electorate, particularly in some of those newer areas, such as North Epping and Wollert. I think there have been about four. Really they are combined centres for all things. There is the primary school. Then we have got the kindergarten/childcare centre and the child and maternal health centres, and there are also community centres—all built within the one site. So it really becomes a hub of activity,

where young families can go, meet, talk to each other and have events as well as of course have services such as maternal and child health care, child care and early learning such as the kindergarten programs. The minister at the table, the Minister for Corrections, was involved in the accreditation of kindergartens and the Kinder Tick so that kindergartens that have the full accreditation can put signage up to show the public that they are fully accredited and that they meet certain standards, so parents have an even better opportunity and the full information upon which to make an informed decision about where it is that they want their children to go.

We have also announced the establishment of 50 government-operated childcare centres over the decade. In fact we have been very excited since the changing of the federal government to a Labor government. I think we can all expect a whole lot of work going on to support and enhance child care across the whole of Australia, and of course Victoria are looking at doing their bit to make sure that they are part of that reform and those improvements.

Just getting on to the actual elements of the bill, the bill strengthens the safety of children in early childhood services and improves oversight and compliance tools for the Australian regulatory authorities. The bill has two main objectives: to implement the outcomes of the review of the national quality framework, which I mentioned earlier, and the national regulatory scheme for early childhood services; and also to enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing regulator, which is the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training. I know when I was on the inquiry into institutional child abuse we did look at schools, sporting bodies, churches and other organisations and made many recommendations around how to make institutions safer for children to prevent abuse occurring. We did find that there was not much in terms of regulation or protections within the early childhood settings, and this legislation builds on ensuring that there are stronger protections within early childhood settings when it comes to the treatment of children.

The national quality framework operates as an applied national law scheme, and the national law is enacted by Victoria. We are the actual host jurisdiction. Once it is enacted here it will be applied to other jurisdictions as their own law, except in Western Australia, where there is corresponding legislation. Changes to the national law included in this bill will act to address gaps between the national principles for child safe organisations and the national quality framework; require that all family day care coordinators complete child protection training prior to commencing employment; improve safety and oversight in family day care by enabling improved access for regulatory authorities to family day care residence-level information that is on the family day care register—so access to better information with which to make an assessment of the standards at that family day care; and reduce the burden for education and care services through an update of the guide to the national quality framework, which will provide better resources and tools to help providers and services more easily comply with regulatory requirements.

We know that in some circumstances while we require the utmost regulation to ensure there is protection and good standards we also want to balance that with the additional requirements that we impose on organisations and people in order to carry out their obligations under those regulations. The state Andrews Labor government is mindful of that balance and those concerns, and that is why in this legislation we are also looking at not reducing the standards of the regulations and the requirements but making sure they are done in such a way that it is as easy as possible for the organisation, early childhood educator, education centre or childcare centre to comply. Also the bill will improve oversight and compliance tools for regulatory authorities by specifying that the regulatory authority can administer questions to an applicant for provider approval in relation to their fitness and propriety. This is about something we talk about quite a bit—the idea that legislation is a living thing in a way and you often have to be updating it and making sure that it fits. This is also about ensuring that the legislation we have is working as best it can and making sure that there are no gaps in that system. These transitional reforms really speak for themselves. This is part of our ongoing reform to the early education sector.

Mr EREN (Lara) (10:46): I am delighted to be able to speak on this very important bill before the house today, and I am happy that the opposition is also supporting this bill. The Andrews Labor government understands the importance of getting it right. Education is the key to everybody's future, the economy, and an early start is the best start, so giving children the best start to life is so important. We know from scientific evidence now that the years from birth to about seven years of age are the learning years and what children learn in that time they carry with them for life. Obviously it is a very important aspect of our society. Everybody is entitled to a decent education, and that is what we do best.

We have invested record amounts of money into education to make sure that no child misses out on a good opportunity to educate themselves and have a better life. That is why we have got record investments from early learning all the way to completion of secondary school. I am proud of the investments that are ongoing in my electorate, in Lara—all the early childhood learning centres and including the primary and secondary schools in my electorate. Every single school has had an upgrade in my electorate, which is such an important part of making sure that we have a fair society, a society that does not judge on socio-economic background. I have this saying: 'What if the cure for cancer was in the mind of a child that could not afford proper education?'. I think it is important to make sure that all children have a level playing field in terms of education. That is why this bill before the house is such an important aspect, working collaboratively with the national government to ensure that we have the best standards when it comes to early childhood learning.

These amendments are to improve educator practices, qualifications and understandings. They intend to also improve, in families, understanding and awareness of service quality, safe practices and risk mitigation. The bill has two main objectives: to implement the outcomes of the review of the national quality framework, the national regulatory scheme for early childhood services, and to enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing regulator in an integrated manner.

Education ministers have agreed nationally that the national quality framework review changes will commence from July 2023, and passage of these amendments through the Parliament is time critical obviously. Victoria is the host jurisdiction of the national law and needs to ensure that the bill is passed this year to enable the implementation of the outcomes in mid-2023. The passage of the bill this year is also critical to ensure the integrated sector regulator provisions for the child safe standards can commence on 1 January 2023, along with the rest of the new enforcement regime for the standards. The bill also makes maternal and child health amendments to safeguard the prerequisites to become part of the MCH workforce and is consistent with the government's commitment to deliver a high-quality service into the future.

The Andrews Labor government is proudly embarking on the largest early childhood investment in this state's history to give every Victorian child the best start in life. As part of this government's landmark reform agenda we will be making kindergarten programs free from 2023, which will increase access to quality childhood education and give Victorian families more choice, more flexibility and more money saved. The cost of living is a big factor in our communities, and this is one way of alleviating one of those costs associated with having a family. I am certainly proud of these investments that are being made by the Andrews Labor government.

We will also establish 50 government-operated childcare centres over the decade, ensuring that childhood education is available in areas with the greatest unmet demand and that it can provide convenient access for working parents. Again, we do not leave anyone behind, as I have indicated, and we are proud of that on our side of politics. Everybody deserves equal access to educational institutions, starting very early on.

Obviously we will transition four-year-old kindergarten to pre-prep, with 30 hours of learning by 2032, creating a high-quality universal program to give four-year-old kids the opportunity to learn through play. This is all in addition to our ongoing nation-leading rollout of 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten for Victorian children by 2029. These transformational reforms speak for themselves.

This government is absolutely committed to delivering quality, safe and accessible early childhood education for every Victorian child, and this bill is yet another example of that commitment.

Building on our track record by amending the laws that regulate the quality and safety of early childhood services, this bill will ensure that oversight and compliance tools for early childhood regulators are as robust as possible. This bill is important so that we can implement the outcomes of the five-yearly review of the national quality framework. The national quality framework amendments will strengthen the safety of children in early childhood services and improve oversight and compliance tools for the regulatory authority. The amendments are likely to lead to improvements in educator practices, qualifications and understandings and improvements in families' understanding and awareness of service quality, safe practices and risk-mitigation.

The bill will also support early childhood services to comply with child safe standards so that protecting children from harm and abuse is embedded in the everyday practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This government consulted with the early childhood sector in late 2021. They expressed a strong desire to have integrated regulation of the child safe standards to minimise confusion, duplication and uncertainty for their services.

This bill also contains amendments to the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 relating to maternal and child health nursing services. The Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service provides comprehensive and high-quality nursing care to Victorian families in the important early years. The Andrews Labor government is committed to protecting the prerequisites for maternal and child health nurses to maintain the high standard of universal primary health services for all Victorian children and their families from birth to school age. Also the maternal and child health amendments in this bill safeguard the prerequisites to become part of the maternal child health workforce and are consistent with the Andrews Labor government's commitment to delivering high-quality maternal and child health services into the future. The amendments will not only safeguard the quality of maternal and child health nurses but also ensure that Victorian families will receive continued support from birthing services in the community where they live. It will support critical aspects of post-birth, infant and maternal care, such as breastfeeding, and maternal health and wellbeing.

The health, safety and wellbeing of children attending early childhood services is of the utmost importance for our government. The vast majority of Victoria's early learning services do a great job in providing education and care to children, but when non-compliance is identified the Department of Education and Training and the regulator take action, especially if the safety, health or wellbeing of children is at risk. That is why it is so important that we ensure that the early childhood regulator is well equipped to uphold quality and safety across these services.

In the short time that I have available I do want to mention how proud I am of the extraordinary early childhood centres in my electorate of Lara, including the new Korayn Birralelee Family Centre, which was funded by the City of Greater Geelong council with \$1.6 million from the Andrews Labor government. It is a fantastic facility which is linked to the local primary school so that the transition from early learning to primary school is there—and that is the model that is superior in terms of getting children ready for future education opportunities. I am so proud of that facility.

This bill further complements the Andrews Labor government's life-changing reforms to early childhood, giving our youngest Victorians the best start and the best opportunities in life. That is why I am proud to be part of this government. With my term in office coming to a close as my retirement comes nearer, those investments continue, and I am so proud of them. That is why I am really proud to be a member of a Labor government that cares for all Victorians. That is why I commend this bill to the house and wish it a speedy passage.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (10:56): What a pleasure it is to follow my friend the member for Lara in what will sadly be one of his last contributions in this place. He has had an outstanding career. He was a terrific Minister for Sport, and I had plenty to do with him when he was in that role. I want to

take this opportunity to thank him for all of his service to the people of Geelong and thank him for his very, very hard work for that community and for the people of Victoria over a long period of time. I wish you well, brother, and I hope that your retirement is full of grandkids and joy and long lunches and other sources of delight and happiness.

It is a pleasure to get on my feet for the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, which I think is being supported by those opposite, which is good news. It gives me an opportunity to talk first about the reform principles that this government is bringing to the early childhood sector. We are embarking on the largest investments in the history of our state to give every Victorian child the best start in life. And frankly, as parliamentarians and as a government, I am not sure that you could really take more delight in any other fields of influence or any activities of government than ensuring that kids get the very best start in life and get a fantastic education. The best start in life of course includes some of the maternal child health matters, and I will come to those in a moment, but really it is a core tenet of this government that we want to give kids a terrific start. I know that the former Premier of South Australia Jay Weatherill has been very active in this space.

It is important for governments right around the world, and Australia has been a bit of a laggard in this regard, to consider preschool education—three-year-old and four-year-old, whether it is kindergarten, whether it is pre-prep; it has many names—as part of the educational journey for all kids, not just those who can afford full-time kindergarten privately, but all Victorian children. We are moving, historically, to a model where four-year-old kinder will become a genuine pre-prep year with 30 hours of learning by 2032. Now, it is over a decade, and I appreciate that will not be fast enough for some. But let us talk about just how significant a change this is. We are moving from a model where we go from 13 years of education to 14 years. That is a significant increase. The 14th educational year will provide kids with all the tools they need to make sure that when they do commence prep at their local primary school they are beautifully equipped for that learning experience and will continue to get the best out of their educational journey.

Of course it is not just the educational outcome that is important here. We know that childcare costs are substantial. We know that working families are struggling with a whole range of cost-of-living pressures at the moment. One of the most important aspects of this reform is that by freeing up primary caregivers for those 30 hours a week we do some wonderful things for the economy and some wonderful things for those primary caregivers. This is a reform that is not just an educational reform, it is an economic reform. It is a reform that means that primary caregivers, who still—the majority of them—overwhelmingly are women, will be able to re-enter the workforce and will be able to do so in a way that is not cost prohibitive. They will not be left with that decision of return to paid work but actually only net pennies in the dollar, sort of thing, out of that transition economically. To be able to say, well, the education piece, the fact that I will have 30 hours of child care, albeit in an educational setting, delivered up to me means that I can go to work and not be deducting the cost of that child care against the net of tax income earned and ending up with a pittance—this is an important structural reform. We know that there are a great many pressures attached to skill shortages right across the economy at the moment and it is critical that we do everything we can to boost the participation rate and, in particular, support women back into work.

In addition to this transition of four-year-old kinder to pre-prep, with 30 hours of learning by 2032, we are of course making kindergarten programs free from next year. That is one of the reasons why it is important to get this legislation passed in this—the 59th—Parliament, because we need to make sure that the framework is in place. I am pleased that the free kinder program is bipartisan policy. I am pleased that the opposition have chosen to support it, because it is one of the many good ideas that this government has advanced. I note that some members opposite have described us in recent times as bereft of ideas but have, in the same breath, adopted various measures that we are putting before the Victorian people or we are implementing as a government. I think that speaks to the fact that all of the innovation in government, all of the innovation in education and all of the innovation in health is delivered by those on this side of the chamber.

With the rollout of free kindergarten also, in addition to what I have spoken about—the 30 hours a week of four-year-old kinder—we are going to get up to 15 hours of three-year-old kinder by 2029, again delivering enormous benefits educationally and delivering enormous benefits economically and delivering enormous benefits, particularly for women, who so often are the primary caregivers.

I do just want to in the time left talk a little bit about some of the other pieces of this bill, including regulations for early childhood services. There is a national quality framework. That is a very good thing. There are child safe standards in there, and we need to make sure that that framework is in place and that the child safe standards are adopted in our legislation. That is all about strengthening the safety of children in early childhood services and improving all the oversight and compliance tools for the regulatory authority.

This is regulation with a purpose; it is not arbitrary. It is all about, within the sector, improving the educative practices, improving qualifications, improving families' understanding and awareness of service quality and improving the management of risk. Nothing could be more important than the safety of children, and our consultations with the sector made it very clear that we want the child safe standards integrated rather than sitting to one side, to make sure that they are fully breathed into life by the service providers but also to make sure that their work in doing that is not unnecessarily hampered by red tape.

There are also some amendments which go to the quality of maternal and child health services. The Victorian maternal and child health service provides comprehensive and high-quality nursing care to Victorian families in those very important early years—early years that, particularly for first-time parents, can be marked by periods of anxiety when children are unwell. As we know, with the journey we have been on in the last couple of years, early years are when so many of those critical vaccinations are given to children, and that is a very, very important part of the maternal and child health program. The Andrews Labor government has committed to maintaining the high standard of universal primary health services for all Victorian children and their families from birth right up until school age. The amendments in this bill safeguard the prerequisites to become part of that maternal and child health workforce, and they are consistent with delivery of quality and having quality standards for all people—all of our magnificent frontline workers who are dealing with people in the health and allied services. These amendments not only safeguard the quality of those services but also ensure that Victorian families receive that continuity of support in the community where they live. I think, again, to go to that sort of first-time parent anxiety, it is just critical that there is a touchstone—a first point of contact, a first port of call—for those parents in navigating the trials and tribulations of the first few years of having made a person.

We do need to pass this bill. We need to pass it this year. We need to do that to ensure the implementation of the outcomes of the five-year national quality framework review, which will be coming in mid-2023. There has been agreement right around the nation on this from all state and territory education ministers. I will finish by just saying that Victoria leads the nation in delivering quality early childhood education, with 28 per cent of our services exceeding the national quality standard rating. That speaks to the strength of the sector and the strength of the government in delivering these important reforms.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (11:06): I am always pleased to follow on from the hardworking member for Burwood. The member is absolutely right in identifying and highlighting those key and critical investments that we can make in our smallest Victorians, making sure that through a whole series of reforms, through initiatives, through local projects, through early investment, this government is continuing to support those young people wanting to get the very best start in their lives. As other members have said, I am also very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is another piece of legislation that goes to the Andrews Labor government's commitment to and passion for supporting the youngest Victorians right across the state. This is a government that knows and understands the critical importance of early investment, of

supporting young people, of investment in their education and in their future and of helping our children be their very best as they go on and navigate life.

This is a reforming government. We are all about making sure that we are investing in those critical areas, those big reforms and those new ideas and changing the way that we do things within the state. That is why recently we have had—other members have mentioned it in their contributions this morning—that significant investment, over \$9 billion, to reform kinder, to provide free kinder and to save families up to \$2500 per year. We know of course from all of the research and all of the data that are provided to us how important those early years are within a three- and four-year-old's life to make sure that those lessons and that education are provided. That is why this reform is so important. It is also why this bill continues to ensure that we are doing the things that matter most to young people in their lives and to their families. Whether you live in the city, whether you live in the suburbs or whether you live in rural and regional Victoria, we are making sure that we are following the advice provided by experts around the research and the data and that we are doing those things and making that investment right across the state.

What other members have mentioned also in their contributions this morning is an acknowledgement and a recognition that that work is fundamentally important. But of course I do want to take the opportunity to mention all of those workers in early childhood education who do an incredible job. Acting Speaker Halfpenny, I am sure within your local electorate and your local community, and as I think all members will recognise, our early childhood educators play an extraordinarily important role, making sure that our young people are getting the very best opportunities, working hard to work with them, to listen and to learn. Helping their development and providing those key lessons is incredibly important. We know that early childhood educators have throughout the pandemic—as have so many other workers right across the state—had an incredibly challenging 2½ years, and in my contribution I do want to thank each early childhood educator for their passion, for their commitment and for everything that they do to support young people in our state.

We know the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is all about strengthening the safety of children in early childhood services and improving oversight and compliance tools for the Victorian regulatory authority. The amendments will lead to improvements in educator practices, qualifications and understandings and improvements in families' understanding and awareness of the quality of the service, safety practices and risk mitigation.

The bill has two main objectives, those being to implement the outcomes of the review of the national quality framework, the national regulatory scheme for early childhood services, and to enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing regulator in an integrated manner. We know that education ministers have agreed nationally that the national quality review changes will commence from July 2023, and the passage of these amendments through the Parliament is time critical, so that brings us to today. We know that our jurisdiction is the host jurisdiction of the national law, and we need to ensure that the bill is passed this year to enable the implementation of the outcomes by mid-2023.

We know that the amendments revolve around safety and quality assurance. Safety measures in family day care are of a particular focus, and we know this is where regulatory measures can be strengthened, with an over-representation of incidents and cancelled licences. This goes to quality, to safety and to being able to ensure, through the biggest of reforms, the \$9 billion investment that I mentioned—and if I have the opportunity, I do want to come back to some of those investments a little later in my contribution—that we are continuing to strengthen the sector and continuing to strengthen the experiences and the opportunities that our young people are provided with each and every day. The regulator and the Department of Education and Training will have improved access to information about the types of homes and buildings that family day care operators are working from, which will assist in emergency situations, and the regulator will be able to more rigorously assess the fitness and propriety of the service providers across the sector, including asking those key questions around assessing their knowledge against those national quality standards. This is of course a piece of

legislation that brings providers right across the country in sync, making sure that we are working with other jurisdictions, with other states and territories, so that the outcome and the experiences and the opportunities of those being educated each and every day is a safe experience and a good one.

I did mention I wanted to come back to some of those investments. We know that the government values those early years and has made those unprecedented investments in early childhood education. I mentioned those earlier in my contribution. The \$5 billion for universal funded three-year-old kinder to be delivered across the state in 2022 also includes a nearly \$1.7 billion investment for infrastructure. We know that to be able to scale up in terms of hours and to be able to scale up in terms of delivery infrastructure needs to be provided, and that is exactly what this government is doing. That also creates important economic activity and increased opportunities for employment. Making sure that that infrastructure is running parallel to the investment around scaled-up hours and the provision of three-year-old kinder is fundamentally important. There was the \$9 billion that was invested recently to make three- and four-year-old kinder free in participating centres from 2023; to build 50 government-run, low-fee childcare centres in the areas of greatest demand, with many of them to be built next to government schools; and to introduce a year of pre-prep, doubling four-year-old play-based learning hours to 30 a week. The first of the 50 centres will commence from 2025.

We know of course that all of those investments combined have the opportunity to create more than 11 000 new jobs. We are committed to providing more employment opportunities across the state, and this is why an investment of this size and of this scale is so important not only to be able to provide the safety, the quality and the regulatory standards within the sector that are fundamentally important to young people's lives; also to be able to see those benefits in employment and to be able to see those benefits for those who want to work within early childhood is fundamentally important.

Added to that, the investment around building and infrastructure that is required to run alongside the announcement is fundamentally important and a key part of the legislation. Whether it is free kinder, whether it is free TAFE, whether it is the sick pay guarantee or our huge investments in education right across the state to create the Education State, to build new schools, to upgrade and modernise schools across Victoria; whether it is the massive investments in the Big Build, the Victorian renewable energy target or so much more; or whether it is reforming kinder in a way that has never been done before, this government, the Andrews Labor government, will continue to provide Victorians with the very best of opportunities to ensure that they have every opportunity to be their best individually—their best self. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (11:16): I am glad today to be speaking on the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The amendments contained within this bill will make vital changes to improve the safety and quality of the education children receive. I look back just on my own life, and in many ways I regret that I did not have that early childhood education—it was not around in the late 1940s and the early 50s—but I certainly recognised its presence and its value when my own children were growing up and now with my own granddaughter. The opportunities to have awareness of people around you, of giving and taking, of learning even at that very early age of two and three, I have noticed from firsthand observation, have just been fantastic. So I will always be a great fan of early education from personal observation.

I am proud to say today that the Andrews Labor government is embarking on the largest investment in early childhood care in Victorian history. This is because every Victorian child deserves the best start in life. That is why kindergarten programs will be free from 2023. Every Victorian family will have more choice, more flexibility and more left in their hip pockets. Our ambitious reform project does not stop there. We will also establish 50 government-operated childcare centres over the next 10 years. We will do everything we can to end the scourge of childcare blackspots.

This bill accompanies these headline-grabbing changes with important regulatory amendments, principally implementing the outcomes of the five-yearly review of the national quality framework. It will also enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing

regulator, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training. These regulatory changes will serve to improve the existing childcare system, improving both the regulations themselves and their enforcement. We are not just carrying out the broader reforms. We are also getting into the regulatory standards and enforcement mechanisms that make these reforms work. This bill is yet another example of this process as we improve the laws that regulate the quality and safety of early childhood services. Consequently, we are ensuring that the oversight and compliance tools for early childhood regulators must be as robust as possible. There are a number of sessional standalone kinders in my electorate, and I am also glad that the government is providing up to \$20 000 to assist these kinders with the transition to free kinder.

The most important practical effect of our policy reform is that this gives families the choice as to when a parent goes back to work, and let us be honest, most often it can be the mum. Our childcare reforms mean that when both parents are ready to go back to work they can. Different families will have different needs, and if parents decide to stay home with their young kids, that is of course completely understandable. This policy is about making sure that a family's choice is based on their needs, not the price of kinder. I have heard from constituents in Hawthorn and family and friends about the impact of this policy. One my own staff told me as soon as this policy was announced that she would have been able to return to work earlier if this policy had been in place a few years ago, and so this becomes really a clear game changer. Every single Victorian family will now be able to enrol their child in free kinder.

Our childcare system was not set up with the intent to fully benefit working families. While we know that more dads are increasingly staying at home with their kids, it is still mothers doing the vast majority of the child care. That is why this bill is ensuring that quality child care is accessible to all, with benefits for all. We have spoken about the impact of this policy on families. Let us also reflect on the impact on our state. When parents stay home longer than they would willingly choose to, our economy misses their skills and experience, costing our economy \$1.5 billion per year in lost earnings. Over 26 600 women are taken entirely out of the workforce. This bill makes it easier for some of these women to rejoin the workforce when they are ready. We know there is a gender pay gap. If mums are required to stay at home for longer than they need to or want to, that pay gap only increases.

I myself spent my career previous to sitting in this Parliament in our education system. I know from firsthand experience how important it is to give our youngest the best start to their lives in our education system. It is impossible to overstate how pivotal these years are to our children's development. That is why the changes contained within this bill are so important, because the health, safety and wellbeing of our children are our absolute priority as a government. Where non-compliance with our education and care standards is identified, the department of education regulator will act.

We already lead the nation in quality of early childhood education. As of 13 June 2022, 90 per cent of Victorian services with a quality rating received an overall rating of meeting national quality standards or better. The national average, in comparison, is 88 per cent. Indeed there are no Victorian services with the lowest rating. This exhibits the consequence of our unequivocal commitment to child care. However, we must not rest on our laurels. It is imperative that we continue to work to ensure the best outcomes for our children and our families. The evidence on this matter has consistently shown that children who attend kindergarten consistently achieve better educational outcomes than those who do not. We know that early brain development is integral to the shaping of the learning, development and health of children. Sustained positive parenting along with high-quality early childhood education is the combination that benefits children the most.

This bill is about fine-tuning the early childhood education system so that it is as good as it possibly can be. It is important to remember throughout this debate that by the time a child turns five around 90 per cent of the child's brain development has already occurred. I would like to assure the house that this legislation has been guided by the science. For example, the decision to favour two years of kindergarten instead of one is because it has been shown by peer-reviewed research to improve learning outcomes at the same time as improving social behaviours. I know my electorate of Hawthorn

contains a large number of young families. Time and again I have heard from them about how they are squeezed by rising cost-of-living pressures. Whether it be a fuel price, grocery price or housing price, many of these families are doing it tough. Indeed there is a misconception that my electorate is purely one of privilege. This could not be more wrong. Many young families stretch their budgets to live in Hawthorn, with its excellent schools, green spaces and services. It is these families doing it tough that will be helped by the broader childcare reform that this bill offers. This bill will form a vital part of our broader reform package that will, I believe, transform our state. Hence I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (11:26): It too gives me tremendous pleasure, indeed tremendous pride, to rise and speak to the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. It is really great to follow the member for Hawthorn. As he was giving his speech, I noted he had in the public gallery his grandchild together with his wife. They were just so pertinent, the words that he was saying, knowing that each of those words relate to a very core Labor value and would apply to his granddaughter as well. It was a very poignant moment in the house, may I say.

This government has said that it will deliver for Victorians, and indeed it is delivering for each and every Victorian, beginning right at the very early stages of child development. If I look at my electorate of Narre Warren South, just recently I had the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep come and we visited one of my local kinders, in Coral Drive, where the government has just made a small investment—some \$9000—for some sensory equipment. It is with that tiny investment that we got to see children learning and developing through the playtime that they were having. It was so special. From there, across the road, you can go to one of the local primary schools. Again, there is investment in buildings and developing the sporting facilities so that that further education step and that development can take place. From there, again, you can go over the road to one of our local secondary colleges, and I pick Hampton Park Secondary College as an example. There we are seeing investment in a STEAM centre so that sciences can become first and foremost among our students as they attain adulthood. From there, there is a huge investment in TAFE, including the expansion of courses into free TAFE.

When we talk about the core Labor tenet of education and equity or the core Labor tenet of equity of access to education, what you are seeing is the delivery of these very large scale projects across the suite of education, from very early childhood right through to early adulthood, providing the very, very best start in life for Victorians. We are indeed proudly embarking on this—the largest early childhood investment in our history. It gives, as I said, every Victorian child this tremendous start in life. As part of the government's landmark reform agenda, we are making kindergarten programs free from 2023 as well as increasing access to quality childhood education and giving Victorian families more choice, more flexibility and more money saved. We are establishing 50 government-operated childcare centres over the decade, ensuring that early childhood education is available in areas with the greatest unmet demand and provides convenient access for working parents as well, and of course we are transitioning four-year-old kinder to pre-prep with 30 hours of learning by 2032, creating the highest quality universal program to give four-year-old kids the opportunity to learn through play. That is all in addition to our ongoing and nation-leading rollout of 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten for Victorian children by 2029. As I said, it is again with a tremendous sense of pride that I get the opportunity to speak to this bill.

There are two main reasons for the amendments in this bill, and they are, firstly, to implement the outcomes of the five-yearly review of the national quality framework and, secondly, to enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing regulator, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training. The national quality framework amendments will strengthen the safety of children in early childhood services and improve oversight and compliance tools for the regulatory authority. These amendments are likely to lead to improvements in educator practices, qualifications and understandings and improvements in families' understanding and awareness of service quality safe practices and risk mitigation. The bill will also support early childhood services to

comply with child safe standards so that protecting children from harm and abuse is embedded in the everyday practice of leaders, staff and volunteers. This government consulted with the early childhood sector in late in 2021, and they did express a very strong desire to have integrated regulation of the child safe standards to minimise confusion, duplication and uncertainty for their services.

There is of course a really pressing need that the legislation passes this year and that is to enable the implementation of the outcomes of the five-yearly national quality framework review so that that can take place by mid-2023. Further, all state and territory education ministers around the country have agreed that the regulatory changes recommended by the national quality framework review should commence from 1 July 2023, and this is also the strong expectation from stakeholders in the early childhood sector. The national quality framework operates as an applied national law scheme. The national law is enacted by Victoria as the host jurisdiction and is applied in other jurisdictions as their own law or in Western Australia through corresponding legislation. The passage of the bill this year is also critical to ensure the integrated sector regulator provisions for the child safe standards can commence on 1 January 2023 along with the rest of the new enforcement regime for child safe standards too.

The health and wellbeing of children attending early childhood services are of the utmost importance to our government. The vast majority of Victoria's early childhood services do a great job in providing education and care to children, but when non-compliance is identified the Department of Education and Training and the regulator take action, especially if the safety, health or wellbeing of children is at risk. That is why it is so important that we ensure that the early childhood regulator is well-equipped to uphold quality and safety across services.

The bill itself builds upon our very strong record of supporting the regulator, including ongoing investments to make sure our regulator is well resourced. Victoria does in fact lead the nation in delivering quality early childhood education. As at 30 June 2022, 90 per cent of Victorian services with a quality rating received an overall rating of meeting national quality standard or above, which is a tremendous standard that we have met. This is well above the national average of 88 per cent. Five Victorian services have been rated as excellent and 28 per cent of services have an exceeding national quality standard rating. This is above the national average of 27 per cent. Currently there are no services with the lowest rating.

To conclude my contribution, this bill is about ensuring that Victoria continues to be a nation leader in providing our very youngest Victorians with quality early childhood education that sets them up for life. It is part of the Andrews Labor government's core commitment to education and of course to delivering for Victorians. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HALSE (Ringwood) (11:36): It is great to rise to speak to this bill and to follow the member for Narre Warren South and his considered contribution to this debate. This might be the last bill that I speak on in this place, and it is a great bill to speak on. Every opportunity you get to speak on education is a great honour. I know the minister at the table, the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, is a strong supporter of education throughout our state, whether it is the youngest of our students or the oldest. The point that the member for Narre Warren South mentioned is that we, as the Andrews Labor government, see education not in a siloed manner but as education throughout the course of someone's life and their life journey. It starts from the very first days, doesn't it, and it continues, and education never stops. That is what this Andrews Labor government has been about with the magnitude of the reforms that we have implemented over the last four years, and previous to that as well.

You either believe that education is central to a modern society—that access to education is central to providing people with opportunities and making sure that young people have the ability to excel in all of the very different plains that our educators help to educate them in and to equip them in—or you do not. I know that our government has always had education at its very core, because it is about equity, it

is about opportunity, it is about equality and it is about making sure that people have that potential to get ahead and can explore that opportunity within their own lives and the lives of their families.

It has been a privilege to be the member for the district of Ringwood and to see firsthand the enormity of the work that this government has done with respect to education, from the youngest right through to adult education. I am often reminded of and often quote a famous passage from Nelson Mandela, who said that education is the greatest weapon we have through which to change the world. Access to education of course does that—it equips people to set upon their own path and to seek their own opportunities. So it is a wonderful thing to be talking on this bill as potentially the last bill that I speak on in this place.

For anyone who has a family—many people in this chamber do have young children; I have got a young son, who is two and a half today, and today he is at his local—

Ms Green: Teddy.

Mr HALSE: Teddy; Edward Alexander. He is at his local early childhood centre. I am always blown away, I must say, by the enormity of the work that is done by our early childhood educators. Before I became a father I was not quite aware of the magnitude and the significance of what it meant to be a parent or of the consistency of care that you provide to your children. Today when our family dropped off our young son, I knew that he would be there for the next 12 hours or so, and they will do a brilliant job of not only caring but also educating my young boy, Teddy. They do it with a great sense of seriousness, commitment and professionalism. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we often talk about hospitals, aged care centres and the disability sector, but our schools and our educational facilities have also been crunched and hit by this pandemic. At one stage, just to be slightly indulgent, half of the staff at my son's local childhood education centre were furloughed with COVID, and of course you know the amount of viruses and germs that young children pick up in those places and often transfer to parents.

A member interjected.

Mr HALSE: Yes. I must say that is correct. But they continue to work and push through, and they care so diligently for our young ones. They shape their minds, and they give them that education that they need.

All of the research has been very clear, and that is why this government has latched onto it—the Minister for Education and the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The earlier we start that formal process of education the better the results and the outcomes are for those young people. Education does not start at primary school in prep and in year 1, it starts before that, and that is why this government has invested in initiatives like free kinder and is moving towards free pre-prep, as that really important foundational year transitioning into that primary school experience. It is these programs that are difficult to quantify with respect to the outcomes that they will produce, but there is a large body of research in which we have located these educational reforms, which points to the educational journey not being siloed, as I mentioned, but extending beyond those traditional pivots and those roadblocks. So that is what this government is doing. That is why this government has made an intergenerational reform with respect to early childhood education.

Most speakers have gone through the technical aspects of the bill before us. The two main reasons for the amendments that have been brought within this bill—to implement the outcomes of the five-yearly review of the national quality framework and to enable the child safe standards to be enforced in early childhood services by the existing regulator, the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training—have been noted. We know that the national quality framework amendments will strengthen the safety of children in early childhood services and improve oversight and compliance tools for the regulatory authority and that these amendments are likely to lead to improvements in educator practices, qualifications and understandings and improvements in families' understanding and awareness of service quality, safe practices and risk mitigation. That is a really important

component. Every single day if you are a parent—like me this morning and our family—you drop your child or children off to an early childhood education centre, and you might get an update throughout the day. You might get a picture of someone in the sandpit or sometimes you might get a phone call saying that someone has been a bit naughty and has decided to throw the playdough at someone else’s head or something like that.

Mr D O’Brien: You’ve never got that, have you?

Mr HALSE: I have got a few of those recently.

Ms Green: It just sounds like Parliament.

Mr HALSE: Yes. It just sounds like Parliament.

I have had a few of those recently. But we place our faith in our early childhood educators. We need to make sure that the system is as strong as can be but also that we support our early childhood educators and that we acknowledge the work that they do. It is a highly feminised workforce; it is wholly underpaid. There is some organising work to be done in dragging the sector to make sure that they are acknowledged for the work that they do, that they are not left out, and we need more progressive wage regulation in this space.

But this bill before us today is a good one. In the final throes of this parliamentary term, that this government is continuing to implement bills, to speak to education and the importance of public education and to support local families, making sure that we support our education workers, is a fitting tribute to this government.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (11:46): Like the member for Ringwood, this is one of the last few bills that I might actually get to speak on in this place. I am so glad that the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 is one of the last few bills that I will get to speak on as a member of this place. Really, early childhood education, child care and support for parents have really been fundamental to my political journey. Being a mum at 19, had I not had access to paid maternity leave because I was a career public servant and a year’s leave without pay, and then access to good-quality child care, I do not think that my journey would have ended up here. It is certainly something that politicised me and motivated me to want to make sure that all women and men have access to that support, but just for our children.

I want to speak to the values from which a bill like this comes. Before the Andrews Labor government took office I was pleased that the then Leader of the Opposition and the then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Monbulk, made the announcement at Hilltop Park in Mernda that Victoria would be the Education State. In everything that we have done since then, with our reforms to schools but with this early childhood legislation as well, no longer is early childhood considered a community service; it is considered to be a valid form of education. Education should not be considered as beginning at the school gate at the age of five. I think that reforms like this come from a group of people that work collaboratively, think through these things, have a fundamental respect for the people that work in this sector and also have a dedication to the public sector, to the idea of publicly provided early childhood education.

I remember being absolutely incensed during the Howard government when the minister, I think it was Senator Kay Patterson, said in talking about the provision of child care that really it was up to the market. She compared childcare centres to bakeries, saying that if there were three bakeries in a town that could make money, well, if there were three childcare centres that could be okay too. I remember as a mum who then had one child still in primary school, I was so incensed. I thought it showed a lack of understanding of the class structure and the need to have these things, a lack of respect for mothers, women and women’s work but also a lack of respect for our children and the importance of supporting their development early on.

I think that having a close to gender-equal parliamentary party and more than 50 per cent women in our cabinet have really been fundamental to why we bring forward reforms like this. I stand here 40 years after Labor provided the first female minister in this place, Pauline Toner. I am leaving now, after some 20 years in Parliament, and there have been a majority of women MPs in the northern suburbs for the whole time that I have been in and now we have almost a gender-equal parliamentary party. With the candidates we have in the field now it may even be possible that there will be more women than men in the next Labor caucus, and I certainly welcome that. I think that you come from a different place when you have that gender equality belief at your core. I am disappointed that the opposition, rather than wholeheartedly supporting this bill, are merely not opposing it. In the 21st century anything to do with early childhood and the reforms that we are making deserve to be supported by the broadest possible political spectrum. I hope that the coalition might rethink that when this bill gets to the upper house and offer their wholehearted support.

I wanted to acknowledge some who I think have been the early pioneers and the giants. I mentioned Pauline Toner, but her successor, Sherryl Garbutt, was I believe the first minister for children in this Parliament during the Bracks government. It was in my electorate, with its massively growing suburbs, where we saw the first—and it is becoming standard—early childhood services co-located with schools in South Morang—Acting Speaker Halfpenny is nodding—the Morang South Primary in my colleague the member for Mill Park’s electorate, and then the Lakes in South Morang in what was the Yan Yean electorate. Now it just absolutely is standard, and then when the Gillard government were in, they adopted that as policy nationwide. It really does make a difference when you have strong women advocating for those things, and a critical mass of us.

I do want to give a shout-out to the member for Euroa. I was deeply moved by her contribution yesterday. She is one of the many neighbouring MPs that I have. I feel really sad that someone as young as her has said that family is the reason why she is not continuing to make a contribution in this place. I absolutely support her call for child care for all MPs and also the staff in this place. As she said, it does not actually have to be in the house, it can be in the precinct. But I do want to commend previous Presiding Officers Languiller and Atkinson, who oversaw the development of the new annexe that does have parenting rooms now. I did have mixed feelings in a way, and I do support what the member for Euroa called for, but I have to say I would not exchange for anything the beautiful times that I have had when my colleagues have given birth to babies—fortunately not in the chamber or in the Parliament, but when they have had them here breastfeeding. I think particularly of the Deputy Premier and the times that I was able to hold Peggy and Cormac here. That was when we used to have dinner breaks, and she had babies here quite late at night. And the member for Northcote and her little girls—the amount of times that I have been able to give them a cuddle or rock them off to sleep or push the pram around. But I actually do think that shows the difference—when you have a large caucus of women, you act to support each other even if the structures were not there in terms of child care. But the time has come, and the member for Euroa is right. We have 18 regional MPs in this place, 15 of whom are women, so it does show that you can be a mum and work here. But it does need greater support, and I hope all parties do that.

I want to also give a shout-out to the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership for the work that they did in bringing forward one of the many great projects, called the By Five initiative, which was a partnership between the Department of Education and Training and the then Department of Health and Human Services along with support from the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. I really think that those five trials were groundbreaking, which led to our policy change for three-year-old kinder. I want to commend the current minister and previous ministers for the rollout of that three-year-old kinder. The National Party will always try and give us a touch up and say that we are city-centric, and I think that rollout of three-year-old kinder showed absolutely that we as a government are values based and do things on need—particularly with places like the Wimmera Southern Mallee partnership—and we are driven by research. It was shown where the areas of greatest social disadvantage were, where children were not hitting their milestones and where there were childcare deserts, and that is where those kindergartens were rolled out.

I am particularly proud that some of our initiatives are around providing child care in childcare deserts. A number of National Party MPs have referred to that, and the member for Ripon. However, I do not recall them ever lobbying. Child care is a federal responsibility. I do not ever recall hearing them in this place lobbying the Morrison government about that, and that is where it should have been. I am so glad that child care and early childhood is firmly on the agenda at the two-day jobs summit now, and I think that we will have some action. It is great to see that we have been working with a coalition government in New South Wales, with Victoria taking leadership on the national stage. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (11:56): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I want to firstly acknowledge the great work of the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. This is really significant policy reform that we have been talking about. I do also want to acknowledge the member for Carrum, who did a lot of early work in early childhood reform. I want to pay tribute to her and the work that she did and of course all of those women, as mentioned by the member for Yan Yean, who have been part of Labor governments over a very long period of time, who have gradually worked towards these sorts of significant reforms. This really is good government policy. I say time and time again that the difference good government policy makes to the lives of people in our community is just so significant.

I also want to acknowledge the early childhood workforce, who as we know have dealt with the pandemic issues over the last couple of years and really stepped up, done the hard yards and looked after our children and kept them safe in those environments. I want to give them a huge shout-out. Many of them in my electorate I have spoken to over the last couple of years, and not only have they been very appreciative of what this government has done in terms of dealing with the pandemic but they have shown great respect for their roles as early childhood workers, and they have not fallen away from that. They have stepped up and done what they needed to do. So I do really appreciate the work that they have done.

Of course women dominate the early childhood workforce. We know that. There are a few men around—there are in my electorate, and I have met with a number of them—but it is predominantly women that are in that workforce. They are women that are providing services to generally women and their children, because it is usually women that take responsibility for getting the kids to kinder or to child care or whatever it might be—that early learning that is so important.

Having been a very young mum, I had the opportunity to send my children to kinder, and sometimes it was a big relief to get them out the door for 2 hours—most times, I have got to say—particularly with my boys. That was a great opportunity I had, but we struggled to pay for that kinder, for the couple of hours a week that they went. I know how difficult it is for many families. It is an affordability issue when you are on a low income and struggling to put food on the table. Those sorts of things have to be considered—whether you can actually afford to do that.

I know for me as a young mum that was one of the things I had to consider, but I am so glad that I did and that my kids did attend kinder, because from talking to early childhood professionals and other parents there is a really significant difference between children that went to kinder and those that did not. I relate it to how when you have your first child they make their developmental process, but when you have your second and third and fourth children, as I did, they develop much more quickly because they are around other children. It is a similar thing when they are going to kinder or to child care or whatever it might be; that interaction and social development is so important.

So this policy reform that we have gone through is absolutely significant for children and for their parents. This is an amazing and exciting opportunity for all children—the three-year-old kinder, four-year-old kinder. Having the 30 hours a week in 2025 will make such a difference to many, many families, particularly around child care. I have been talking to lots of families in my electorate. They are so excited about the reforms that we have made. They talk about ‘Well, I can go to work for 30 hours a week and not have to pay childcare fees’. I mean, that is life-changing for some of these

families in my community and I am sure right across the state. I recently had the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep visit my electorate, and we went to the Geelong West Kindergarten. The parents and teachers were talking about how significant these reforms are for them and the difference that they will make. They are already running three-year-old kinder and seeing the difference that that makes to families and to those children, so they can see this being an enormous benefit for the entire community, particularly those who now have little people that will be able to get great benefit in the coming years. That has been really important, and again it is about good government policy. So I am really proud that the Labor government has actually put these reforms in place, and obviously the reaction is really important.

This is the largest early childhood investment in this state's history, which will give every Victorian child the best start in life. It also allows for those opportunities to identify issues that those children might have, whether it is learning disabilities, sight or hearing, or family violence. It is about having those expert early childhood workers there who can assist parents, provide that guidance and make referrals to where those children can get the support they need. Providing safe facilities with well-trained staff across our state is really, really important.

As part of this government's landmark reform agenda we will be making kindergarten programs free from 2023. As I said earlier, this is life-changing for a lot of families in my electorate, and as I mentioned earlier, I know how tough it was for me to get my children through kindergarten, having to pay fees. To not have to do that will be so significant for so many families. We have such a growing population of young families moving into the electorate of Geelong, particularly in the western and eastern suburbs of Geelong, who will rely very heavily on these services. Our population growth across Geelong is really strong. Keeping up with the services is really important. What these reforms will do is ensure that every young child that comes into our electorate or families that are living there now and are planning to have children over the next couple of years will get the absolute benefits of what we are going to be able to provide in the early childhood space.

So this bill is really, really important. Our reforms are really important and really significant. I am really proud of the fact that, as a government which is made up of around 50 per cent women, we have a cabinet with over 50 per cent women. It is really important when you have women sitting around the table and making those decisions, putting the issues on the table. As the member for Yan Yean said earlier, there have been many women on this side in previous Labor governments that have fought hard for these changes. I know we had Fanny Brownbill, who was the member for Geelong back in the—

Mr Edbrooke: We need a statue of her.

Ms COUZENS: Yes, we do need a statue of her—who actually fought hard for issues impacting on women. You know, being able to get prams on buses and trams—those sorts of things might seem small to us now, but they were so significant back in the day, just like early childhood education is so important to our communities right now. I know in my community of Geelong people are really excited about what this is going to bring. It is an important bill. Overall our reforms of early childhood are really, really significant. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:06): It is a great privilege to rise in support of the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Can I just start by acknowledging the fantastic work by the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep and her team. It is always a big portfolio under a Labor government, but it is certainly made even bigger with our recent reforms. Of course we know about—and I will talk in a bit more detail—some of the huge reforms we are making, starting next year and over the next decade, but there are reforms we made that we announced at the last election around three-year-old kindergarten which are absolutely making a huge difference in communities not just across the Bayswater electorate but right across this state, which is extremely exciting. So a great deal of thanks to the minister and her team and to the department for the work they put into this legislation which will strengthen our early years system and support our early years educators and staff. I do say thank you.

I am very proud to be part of an Andrews Labor government, a government that is absolutely committed to supporting education each and every single day, every single step of the way, because it is the great leveller in society. It is the one way that governments can support people from a young age and of course people of all ages—as our government does through our education system, a very proud education system that gives people the skills they need earlier in life and builds within them life lessons they will take with them for the rest of their lives and obviously into their own careers. We know that that starts with a fantastic education in the early years.

This government has a huge commitment when it comes to our early years space. We know it is supporting the existing four-year-old model that we have got, which will be changing to a 30-hour play-based pre-prep model in 2025. We know that that is going to take an extra 5000 fantastic educators to roll that out, and we will get that job done. We will work with the sector, we will work with stakeholders and we will, as we have done, get the job done. That is going to make a huge difference, a profound difference. Just listening, the member for Geelong talked about—and of course it is much the same in my community and I am sure in all of our communities—how the response has been absolutely next level, for lack of a better phrase.

We know that the childcare system is not getting any cheaper. I know the new federal Labor government is looking at reforms to make that system more equitable so families are not paying up to 25, 30 per cent of their income, so women—the majority are women—are not getting punished for going back to work and to encourage them, if they want to, to make that choice to get back into work. Our new play-based 30-hour pre-prep program will help them to do exactly that. It will take the cost-of-living burden, that pressure, off them and put some money back into their pocket; we know at the moment that is absolute gold.

We know that that work has already started. We will start to roll that out in 2025, but we have already started that work with three-year-old kindergarten right now across the entire state—5 hours of subsidised kindergarten. We will get to the free part next year, but we know that that is going to roll out up to 15 hours of access to three-year-old kindergarten across the entire state between now and 2029. We are well on the way to hiring, recruiting and getting skilled-up 6000 early years educators, and I obviously thank the entire sector for the fantastic work that they are doing to that end. But that is also another great way that this Andrews Labor government is taking a lot of pressure off families who otherwise may have had to rely on the childcare sector—no disrespect; I do not mean any ill will towards the childcare sector. They do incredible work as well. I take my cap off to anyone in the early years space. I often visit a lot of kindergartens, childcare centres and primary schools, and I am so glad I am only there for 30 to 60 minutes because I am like, ‘Great, I’m off. See you later’. The level of patience, the level of care, commitment and dedication—I know that all members in this place who get across schools and early years facilities in their electorate, whenever they go, talk to the educators and hear about their work and the commitment that they have to show each and every single day they turn up and the attention that they have to pay to young people because, you never know, three-year-olds can quickly get away from you. So they are just doing incredible work. We know that our commitments in the three-year-old kindergarten space are absolutely game changing, and we will move that up to 15 hours by 2029 and do that hard work and that heavy lifting with recruiting those extra 6000 early years educators that we know we will need.

We know that our government’s commitment in the early years space also includes making kindergarten, three- and four-year-old, free next year. I must say I think we have done some fantastic things, but when you go out to your community and talk to families, particularly with all of those cost-of-living pressures I have been discussing throughout my contribution today, and you say to them the simple words, ‘We’re making kinder free’, so many families I am talking to—understand that in some settings it is \$2000, for others it is up to \$2500 per child every single year that they are in a kindergarten program—are absolutely relieved. That is a big part of our commitment to kindergarten: making sure we make it even more accessible to families and making sure that that money is put to other uses in the family budget, particularly at a truly difficult time for many in our community. So that is a huge

thing that our government is getting on with, and I am very, very proud of the work of the Andrews Labor government, the minister, the entire team and department and of course our educators who are supporting that great work.

We know that that does not stop in the early years space. Our government are reforming, improving and making our education system more accessible not just for those in the early years but also through our primary and secondary government schools. We have got a number of things we have done in low-fee non-gov and Catholic schools, and that is also critically important work. When we talk about making education more accessible, a great example was in the last budget, where we announced \$1.6 billion for the disability inclusion package. That is not something you hear every day. I know members on this side are absolutely talking it up, and I am sure others are as well, even though they did not implement it, because it is obviously difficult when you are not in government. Indeed I know we should all be very proud of this. This is making sure kids with difficulties who obviously need that extra care and support are absolutely getting that. So this is doubling the amount of support to students right across our government schools.

In the eastern area where I am that is exactly what we are doing. I sent out some correspondence, and I know the Department of Education and Training did so earlier this year, and the response from principals on this program was fantastic. Some of the stories I hear about some of the students who are getting extra support, perhaps even some students who were not able to get some support who are now receiving it, the difference it will make to them and the pressure it will take off families, making sure that they can get an even more equitable education in our system, are just absolutely incredible. The tutor learning initiative is another great example. I was out at Wattleview Primary the other week in Ferntree Gully, and the principal there is absolutely raving about the tutor learning initiative. In fact it is not just the principal there, it is principals right across the area that I represent, and it has been fantastic to see. Of course we know it has been a tricky couple of years. Making sure that students are able to catch up and get that extra bit of support whilst they are at school has made the world of difference to many. I want to really thank the staff and the educators who are involved in running that program and the schools for implementing it.

Then once you leave primary and secondary, there is our TAFE sector—so critically important. We are supporting people across all ages but of course younger people primarily, who are accessing those free TAFE programs. 115 000 people have gone out and studied a free TAFE course, and many of them are now working and have got very good paying jobs in those priority sectors, whether it is across the healthcare, construction, horticulture or cybersecurity sectors. That has just been a fantastic and well-received initiative. It is making sure that people of all ages can get the skills they need for the jobs they want and the jobs of today and tomorrow. So I am really, really proud of the investment we are making.

Locally we have delivered over \$70 million in school upgrades right across the Bayswater electorate. We are delivering a new kinder in Boronia as well. We have made a number of announcements around some smaller upgrades. Look, this legislation goes to strengthening our early years system. It goes to backing our educators and making sure that Victoria continues to well and truly be the Education State not just in name but absolutely each and every single day in practice. I commend this bill to the house.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (12:16): I also rise to support this legislation. It is great to come after my incredible colleague, my hardworking colleague, and it is great to see his passion for early learning. It is something that we on this side of the chamber have an immense drive to achieve—world excellence in early childhood years and in early childhood learning and education. We know that as a state we will become better, stronger, smarter and more inclusive when we have got wonderful environments for our children to learn in, and we know that this learning starts from day one. This government bringing in free education through three- and four-year-old kinder is just a phenomenal game changer.

In talking on this bill, I firstly do want to thank everybody in the early childhood sector for the incredible amount of work that they have done over the last three years. Trying to work with small

children during a pandemic would have to be one of the most challenging jobs that Victorian and Australian educators, and in fact those around the world, would have had to face. Working out how to create programs for children remotely, doing things online as well as helping children adjust as they came back into their kinder or childcare community would have been an incredible amount of work. I thank them so much for all that they have done—for their resilience, for their perseverance, for their dedication to these children and for doing everything they can to, this year, bring their children to a developmental stage that we would expect them to be at at their age.

This bill is another example of the Andrews government getting on and getting things done. It is a bill that will implement the recommendations of the 2019 national quality framework review. We are introducing changes that will bring about new policies, new procedures and risk assessments that will ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of our young children—whether in care or in education—are maintained and improved and enhanced. We know that investment in and support for early childhood is vital. We know how important it is for our kids to get that education. We know that it is important from a social aspect. It is also important from an economic aspect, because the more prepared our kids are for school and the more that they are encouraged and supported in their learning the better they are going to be all through their schooling, and they will also have those fundamental platforms in place for when they are adults. So much of what we do in those early years influences how you are, who you are and what you are as an adult. Universal access to up to 30 hours of pre-prep foundation years education is massive. It is an incredible change for kids but also for those families who want to access those early years learning spaces but find the cost prohibitive.

We have opened up opportunities for cohorts of people who may not have had these opportunities otherwise. This is a fundamental right, and it is something that on this side of the house we fully understand: that access to child care, access to education and access to learning through play should be available for every Victorian child regardless of their background and regardless of the income that their parents earn. With this we are creating up to 5000 jobs—real jobs, jobs that are respected, jobs that matter—and that will create up to \$2500 of savings for families. We know that the cost of living is a challenge for families at the moment—in fact for many people—and we know that this is hurting families, and this creating access for three- and four-year-old kinder is one way that we can help. Our kids should not miss out on their educational needs because wages are not keeping pace with inflation.

Acting Speaker, with your indulgence, I do want to give a shout-out to Eltham South kinder, the kinder that my kids went to a number of years ago. It is a wonderful bush kinder. The opportunities that those educators create are phenomenal. I really want to shout out to Sue, Jenni, Michelle and Kerry, the women who helped our girls go through kinder and who helped develop and support them at the start of their learning journey.

I also want to give a shout-out to La Trobe Uni child care, who are incredible educators and who take their role so seriously. It is wonderful to see that as a community we are really starting to respect the hard work that early years educators do—the hard work, the education and the training—that is required to help young children learn. I know that anyone that is a parent understands how hard it is to not only wrangle three and four years or even younger children but to help them learn, to help them develop attention, to help them understand learning through play, to help them understand sharing and to help them understand social engagement and all of those activities that help them be good, rounded humans. It is hard work. It is such hard work. They deserve such congratulation and respect for the work that they do.

I also want to talk about Diamond Hills Preschool. We have recently invested \$2.9 million in redeveloping that kinder. It is a fabulous kinder—a community kinder—with an amazing amount of volunteers who do so much work to look after the kinder, to look after staff and to create an environment that is wonderful for kids to learn in. It was great to go up there a couple of months ago with the member for Bundoora to celebrate this important investment.

We also recently last week had a visit by the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, who came to Panorama Heights Preschool, where we have funded a beautiful play space but also a magnificent fort and climbing area. I will share with you that the minister and I did get a bit of a dance going. When you have got a bunch of three- and four-year-olds bouncing around shaking their instruments, you have got to join in. It was a great start to the morning, and it certainly warmed us up. I have got to say the minister was able to bust out a few moves. She did pretty well.

What was also really beautiful about this kinder visit was their acknowledgement of country. We had a collection of young people standing around talking about their respect for the earth and their respect for the sky and using the motions that come with it. We know that moving as they learn actually helps kids learn. We know that our early years educators through all of their research have learned that and are now teaching kids by using that as one of their tools. There was a beautiful understanding of the importance of Indigenous culture and of Indigenous culture to our own story as Victorians for those of us who were there at Panorama Heights and for those of us learning, walking and living on Wurundjeri lands. Our children are those who are able to come through the education system and help the wider community understand the importance of so many things and so many social aspects, including respect and acknowledgement of our First Nations peoples.

We have also invested really strongly in Eltham South kinder, Briar Hill kinder, Eltham Woods, Greenhills, Yandell, Apollo Parkways Preschool and Lower Plenty preschool. We have also invested in the Eltham co-op, which is a fantastic childcare centre that offers three- and four-year-old kinder. It is a beautiful space that has been created. I want to give a quick shout-out to the level crossing removal authority, which is delivering car parking quite close to this childcare centre, for the work it has done with the childcare centre in enhancing their space as well.

Before I finish, I do want to talk about the importance of our maternal and child health nurses. They are wonderful people, and through this legislation we will be safeguarding delivery of maternal and child health services in Victoria, requiring providers of maternal and child health nursing services to employ or engage nurses only if they have met a prescribed prerequisite. Our maternal and child health nurses are so important. These are the people that you go to every other week with your baby and talk through your baby's experiences and talk through what is happening with you as a mum. It is also the place where if you are experiencing challenges, particularly with postnatal depression, it will be picked up. It is where women are introduced to their first mothers group, which is also such an incredibly important support for young mums. I can only imagine how difficult the last three years have been for our maternal and child health nurses and how hard they have worked—how incredibly challenging their workplace would have been during a pandemic to be looking after small babies, to be nurturing mothers and to be helping families have the best environment that they can for their newborns. I do want to congratulate the government and the minister for the work that they have done on this bill, and I wholeheartedly support it.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (12:26): I am really pleased to be able to make a contribution on the Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, one of the important last pieces of legislation that we deal with in this place in the 59th Parliament. It demonstrates this government's commitment to an Education State for all ages and stages of life. I would like to begin my contribution by noting that next week, on 7 September, it is Early Childhood Educators Day. I want to thank all of the early childhood educators in Victoria, and in particular, with indulgence, the early childhood educators who I see every day at my son Ned's early learning centre. Yesterday was little Neddy's fourth birthday, and it was so lovely to receive messages from the centre throughout the day of the children celebrating Ned's birthday and learning through an occasion like that. They took the opportunity to make a cake for Ned, and I really appreciated receiving those updates while I was here in Parliament. To Simone, the manager at the centre, and Caitlin and Michael, who are the main educators in Ned's room, they do a terrific job to educate the children. They are doing three-year-old kinder.

Of course the Victorian government has led reform in three-year-old kinder. It is really remarkable to see the way the children learn, from Book Week, which was last week, seeing the kids in their terrific

costumes and learning about Australian authors and books and having book-themed food, and also through music and play. Michael, one of Ned's educators, is a guitarist and brings in his guitar and sings with the kids. They are really just exceptional educators, so happy Early Childhood Educators Day to all those amazing educators out there. I do think that jurisdictions around the world that invest in early childhood education—in public access, and well-funded access—are really markers of progressive and civil societies.

We acknowledge that early childhood education is absolutely crucial to the development of our young people of course but also to the economy. We know that the reforms that we have introduced here in Victoria will be transformative for women re-entering the workforce—predominantly women who take time off as primary carers. To be introducing this huge, landmark reform agenda, making kindergarten programs free from 2023, will just be a game changer for our workforce productivity and also for those young minds which will benefit from 30 hours of a pre-prep year, which is just such an exciting change to see happening.

In my community of Footscray, I feel like the government is really absolutely innovating in this area. We have co-located early childhood education with Footscray City Primary School, and across the road of course are Footscray High School and Victoria University, which also has a kindergarten. What we are doing through the Footscray learning precinct is providing the opportunity for local children to progress from long day care and three-year-old kinder all the way through to university in the same block in Footscray. So there is really exciting reform happening. It is really smart reform, and I am thrilled that it is happening in my electorate of Footscray.

I am also really excited that we are establishing 50 government-operated childcare centres as part of our reform agenda. We know that there are areas where there is not sufficient access to early learning. I am very excited that people in those communities where there are childcare droughts, as they have been called, will have access to early childhood centres co-located with schools, and they will be government funded, because public education is so crucial—high-quality public education is the great leveller. So we are investing in public education at the early childhood level, funded by government. It is expensive. I heard the member for Geelong speaking about her experience. It needs to be affordable and accessible for there to be equity of access. Of course the minister has been a great champion of that in her role. I would like to also acknowledge the hard work of the minister and also the member for Carrum, who did a huge amount of work on early childhood reform in her role when she was the parliamentary secretary.

We know that transitioning to pre-prep with 30 hours of learning will create a high-quality universal program, providing four-year-olds the opportunities to learn through play. This is in addition to our ongoing nation-leading rollout of 15 hours of three-year-old kinder for Victorian children by 2029. These reforms happening in Victoria are really nation leading, but it is very exciting that we now have a Labor federal government, which also believes in the importance of equity of access to early childhood education. Minister Rishworth is doing a terrific job. I think there was resounding support for early childhood reform and access to child care at the last federal election. They know how important it is. They know how important our educators are. The member for Ringwood rightfully acknowledged in his contribution that our educators in early childhood are not paid well enough. There is a huge amount of work to happen to support people to choose a career in early childhood. It is so important. It is such important work.

The member for Eltham spoke about the importance of these reforms with respect to our maternal and child health nurses. They are exceptionally highly qualified nurses. I think to become a maternal and child health nurse you need to have a qualification in nursing but you also need to be a midwife, which takes many, many years at university. I have been speaking to my neighbour, who is currently a midwife and wants to transition into becoming a maternal and child health nurse. You never forget your midwife and you never forget your maternal and child health nurse. They are very important people, not just for children but for parents as well, who rely so much on their wealth of knowledge and their ability to support parents and babies as they establish a new life. Often when it is your first

baby and all of a sudden you have a small child to look after, it is a huge change in your life, and they are there almost weekly for the first couple of months to support you in that transition, identifying issues such as postnatal depression but also of course potential health issues that the child may have. They do crucial work, and these reforms that we are speaking on today will provide those maternal and child health nurses with the support they need in terms of the national quality framework amendments. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action, Minister for Solar Homes) (12:36): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ROYAL COMMISSION IMPLEMENTATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms HORNE:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:37): It is a pleasure to rise on my first bill as the Shadow Minister for Gaming and Liquor Regulation and to speak on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. In doing so I will begin with a bit of background. This is the third tranche of legislation in what has been a fairly sordid story when it comes to Crown Casino and the Labor government in this state. I would like to pay credit to my predecessor, the member for Euroa, for her role in helping to push the government towards action on what has been going on at Crown for a number of years that ultimately resulted in the Finkelstein royal commission. The royal commission, whose report was handed down last year, came about as a result of the Bergin inquiry in New South Wales. So it was not something that actually was highlighted by the Victorian regulator or the Victorian government but it was pressure from an inquiry in New South Wales which highlighted many issues with respect to Crown, including that Crown Melbourne facilitated millions of dollars to be laundered through a bank account of one of its subsidiaries and that Crown Melbourne allowed operators with links to organised crime to arrange for junket players to gamble at the casino. That finally brought about the institution of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, as it is formally known, overseen by commissioner Ray Finkelstein AO, QC. He handed down his final report in October last year, and there were 33 recommendations. A couple of statements from the commissioner really get to the nub of what had been happening at Crown and its behaviour. He said:

... 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.

Those are pretty strong terms to reflect on what had been going on at Crown Casino under the Labor government and under the watch of the then Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR). It was probably no surprise to most Victorians who had been paying any attention to what had been going on with Crown, and I will come to that in a moment. What the commissioner then did was he basically, although Crown was found to be an unsuitable operator of the casino licence in Victoria, stopped short of recommending that that licence be taken away from it, predominantly because of the risk that the cancellation of Crown Melbourne's licence would cause considerable harm to the Victorian economy and innocent third parties, and that includes the thousands of staff, obviously, at the casino, and the suppliers, contractors and many others of course that rely on the casino.

The government agreed in principle to all the royal commission's recommendations. We have had two sets of legislation, the first last year that acquitted nine of the recommendations, including establishing the special manager, who was ultimately appointed in January this year as the very respected Stephen O'Bryan QC, and also establishing the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to replace the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation. Then there was a second tranche of legislation in June just gone that implemented a further two recommendations, while another recommendation has been actioned directly by the VGCCC.

This legislation implements a further 12 recommendations of the royal commission, but I would like to just return to some of the background to this. We first had concerns raised, I guess, about the casino's behaviour in 2016, when 19 Crown employees were arrested in China for allegedly promoting gambling illegally. That set off significant alarm bells. There was concern obviously within Crown, but significant reports of what was actually going on in Crown's attempts to get the high rollers over here set off some concern.

In 2017 the Auditor-General found that money laundering by high rollers at Crown was not being properly scrutinised by the regulator. So it is a concern that the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation was not doing its role in actually properly overseeing the casino, particularly with respect to money laundering, but there were various other areas that I will come to. In 2018 the VCGLR itself completed its sixth casino review, and it included the line:

The VCGLR, other regulators and law enforcement agencies are aware of the significant potential risks of money laundering through casinos, particularly through junket operations.

It was something that was on their radar, but clearly there was very little that actually happened. In 2019 we had then Fairfax and *60 Minutes*—so the Nine group—run an exposé in which they alleged Crown was working with junket operators backed by organised crime. This was another alarm bell ringing here. Then in the same year we had the ABC obtain leaked footage of a man literally carrying in a blue cooler bag and pulling out bricks of cash—\$50 and \$100 notes—at the casino and just handing them over, and there was not a question raised and there was no-one batting an eyelid. This is a further concern.

All of this was happening at a time that the Andrews government was in charge and that the VCGLR was meant to be overseeing the casino. It only came about from evidence at the New South Wales Bergin inquiry that there were serious problems and the government acknowledged that there were serious problems. I go back to what the Premier actually said in relation to some of these issues that were raised in the media. On 30 July 2019 the Premier said:

They've got the powers that they need. And anyone who's got any concerns around Crown or any other operator within our gaming industry should with confidence go forward either to Victoria Police if they think it's a criminal matter or go to the VCGLR ...

So the Premier was effectively saying, 'Nothing to see here. Let's all move along. There is no particular issue'. I think that is symptomatic of the problem. We then had questions raised at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. The minister said in response to those questions:

... the independent regulator has undertaken an enormous amount of work. Without a doubt they have been incredibly thorough in their investigations and also, too, been working through a pretty robust process.

We had allegations of organised crime links and allegations of money laundering, and yet nothing was actually done because the minister thought that there was a 'pretty robust' process underway. This is where credit goes to the member for Euroa—the opposition started to raise concern and take action here in this Parliament. It was not until it looked like there would be the numbers established in the other place to establish a select inquiry into Crown, into the government and into the regulator that the government was finally forced to act. The member for Euroa did her own research at the time and discovered that in the last 20 years there had never been a royal commission announced without the Premier of the day. Yet in this case it was the minister sent out on her own at 4 o'clock on a Friday afternoon to announce the establishment of this royal commission. Everyone in politics knows that

Friday afternoon is taking out the trash time. It was deliberately designed to limit exposure for the government, and the Premier was nowhere to be seen. We can only speculate why this has always been the case, but we know that the government has been pretty close to Crown over the years. Indeed, going back to the 2014 election, the casino founder, Lloyd Williams, told the Premier—unfortunately for him within earshot of the cameras—that James Packer was going to ‘kick every goal he can’ for Labor at that year’s election. The full quote was:

You should probably know I am the executor of the Packer estate, and James—
Packer—

is going to kick every goal he can for you ...

I will let Victorians draw their own conclusions as to why the Labor government was so absolutely bereft of action when it came to Crown Casino and the illegal activity that was going on there.

Members interjecting.

Mr D O’BRIEN: I am hearing tut-tutting from those opposite. Can I say it again—Crown had:

... engaged in conduct that is, in a word, disgraceful. This is convenient shorthand for describing conduct that was variously illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative.

What did the government do about that? For years, they did nothing. They did nothing. Finally, when it looked like an upper house inquiry would be established—

Mr Edbrooke: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am reluctant to be on the record as saying ‘tut-tut’ and being misquoted. My question actually asked for the opposition to show the Hotmail email from the Leader of the Opposition.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blackwood): That is not a point of order, and you well know that.

Mr D O’BRIEN: I do not really know what the member for Frankston is on about. That was simply bizarre, and I am glad he has left the chamber. ‘We’re bad, but look at you’—that seemed to be the comment that was being made. The government has got plenty to be embarrassed about here. There is absolutely no question that their failure of oversight of Crown has been well and truly exposed by the royal commission that was ultimately established.

I want to go to the bill itself now in some detail. There are 12 recommendations of the royal commission that are implemented by this bill. I understand further recommendations will be implemented in the next 12 months, including one more through legislation. It is up to the government to explain why that is not occurring in this legislation, but as I said, this is the third piece of legislation to implement the recommendations of the royal commission. Part 1 and much of the first part of part 2 are minor technical amendments. In clause 6, with respect to reports of the special manager, there are changes to the time lines. I will come back to the detail on clause 6 because it is important when it comes to the reports of the special manager.

Further into this part is the implementation of a supervision charge. Effectively this is requiring Crown to be responsible for the costs of oversight by the VGCCC. As I understand through both the legislation and the briefing that we received, at the end of the financial year the VGCCC will tally up its ‘reasonable costs’ and then a charge will be applied retrospectively to the casino for those costs. I understand that there will be verification of those costs from the Department of Treasury and Finance, but I do note that there is no appeal mechanism at all for the casino to challenge whether those costs are reasonable or not, and that is interesting. I would hope that the word ‘reasonable’ is applied judiciously.

Division 2 of the bill makes changes with respect to associates and changes the meaning of an associate as it relates to the casino and its ownership. There are, further into this division, the clauses with respect to corporate ownership. What the bill does in effect is implement recommendation 28, which is to ensure that no-one holds more than 5 per cent of the casino ownership without approval from the VGCCC. Again, there is a process for any person or corporation seeking to own more than 5 per cent,

and again, the bill enables the costs of any investigation to see whether those people or organisations are a suitable person to be recovered, and I do not have any issue with that.

New division 3 going into the principal act, the Casino Control Act 1991, implements recommendations 29 and 30, and that is to ensure that directors and executives of the casino are in fact independent. That is to address the issue raised in the royal commission about the influence of a significant shareholder—in the case previously, with respect to Crown, of James Packer—and the influence that he exerted both on directors and staff. There will now be a requirement for independent directors and staff.

Division 3 goes into the transition provisions for the management of the casino. In effect, if Crown is unable to satisfy the conditions that have been put through in this bill and previous legislation as well and it does not qualify to retain its licence, then there need to be some transition provisions. These are appropriate. Effectively it is putting in a manager that will run the casino in the interim until such time as there is a sale or transfer of assets. The bill sets out the actual area of the casino that this applies to and also the rules by which the manager will operate. That includes dealing with third parties. It includes providing a fair rate of return to Crown in the interim while a manager is in operation and indeed also includes, not surprisingly, that any profits that may be remaining after that are returned to the Consolidated Fund. There are also obligations for the casino operator with respect to third parties. I can understand that. I would be concerned that if there were a situation where Crown were to lose its licence, there would be a whole lot of contractors and suppliers turning up wanting their equipment and wanting their payments and everything. The arrangement for a manager in a transition period will allow us to manage that.

There are a number of other changes. There is the introduction of exclusion orders and fines. Part 5 is a change to the Tobacco Act 1987, which is to ban smoking. That is a nice little headline in the minister's media release, but the reality is that Crown had already done that. Where it had an exemption for its high-roller rooms, that exemption is now being legally removed as well. Given that Crown had already chosen to do that, it is legally important but practically redundant at the moment.

Division 5 is probably the most significant part of the bill, and that is with respect to the changes to how people can gamble—so the introduction of carded play and precommitment. This will be a world first—so the government says; I understand New South Wales has recently passed some similar legislation. The effect of these, as I understand it—and I am not a casino punter—is that if you want to play the pokies or play a table at the casino, you will have to go up to a cashier or a window, for example. You will need to provide your ID. You will need to get a card. You will need to set a limit. You will not be able to put more than \$1000 cash onto that card. And then you will go to an electronic gaming machine or a table and play. The challenge with this is that the technology for implementing this does not yet exist, and that is why there is a three-year period. I am not sure whether that is going to be enough time, but I hope that this will be enough time for the casino and for suppliers around the world to deliver this.

I now want to just go back to part 2, clause 6—the reports of the special manager. As I said, this section changes some wording on the timing of when the special manager should report. As it stands, the minister or the VGCCC may release those reports if they believe it is in the public interest to do so. We think on this side that it is important to actually ensure that it is available to the public, and so under standing orders I wish to advise the house of amendments to this bill and request that they be circulated.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr D O'BRIEN under standing orders.

Mr D O'BRIEN: The amendments effectively ensure that the reports that are produced by the special manager into how Crown Casino is meeting its obligations to this legislation and prior legislation should be tabled in this place. As I said, at the moment section 36G(4) of the Casino Control Act 1991 basically says it is up to the minister to decide. We think that should be publicly declared,

publicly provided, because it is an important principle of transparency and accountability. As I demonstrated earlier, there has been very little transparency and accountability from the government as to the oversight of the casino or to the performance of the former VCGLR, and in that context in particular we think that the reports of the special manager should in fact be made public and done so by tabling them in this house and the other place. I go to the point that was actually mentioned in the second-reading speech by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, that:

... Commissioner Finkelstein made clear in his final report, holding Victoria's casino licence is a privilege, not a right.

Well, we agree, and in that context we think it is the right of Victorians to have full transparency on the assessments of whether Crown continues to deserve that right or not. We know that once again the government is refusing us the opportunity to go to consideration in detail and to actually debate this amendment. There are other questions I would have. I would be more than happy to go into consideration in detail with the minister and further prosecute the 60-odd pages of this legislation and to ask some of the detail of how the government intends it to actually work and certainly to debate those amendments.

We moved similar amendments to the bill in 2021 to ensure that these reports were tabled, and of course the government decided not to support those amendments. As it stands, Victorians will not get to see the reports of the special manager unless the minister or the VGCCC actually believes it is right to do so. If there is something a little bit controversial or a little bit embarrassing for the government in what the special manager has found with respect to Crown's management of the casino, it will be locked away until we know the final decision as to whether Crown will get to keep its licence. So we think it is very important for transparency and accountability that these reports are made public.

There are a series of reports over the next few months, and clause 6 outlines the details of when they should be. I would encourage all members in this place and indeed in the other place as well, when the opportunity comes, to support those amendments. But we are not opposing this legislation. We have also agreed in principle to the royal commission's recommendations, and we look forward to its passage.

Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Members

PREMIER

Absence

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:02): I rise to inform the house that for today and tomorrow I will answer questions for the Premier.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister explain why it is now government policy to force all Victorians, including the families of the deceased, the parents of sick children or the brothers and sisters of those who could not get an ambulance when they needed it the most, to now sign consent forms simply to have their health matters responded to by the Minister for Health?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:03): I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Leader of the Opposition's question, which is an absolute mischaracterisation of what it is that the government is seeking to do.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister will be heard in silence.

Ms THOMAS: Thank you, Speaker. Seeking the consent of a patient when an inquiry is raised by a third party, whether it be a member of Parliament or anyone else, is not new. Informed consent has always been required by health services before providing patient information to a third party. There have been a number of occasions in this place when those on the other side have raised issues in relation to their constituents. It is my wish as the Minister for Health to genuinely inquire and support those people to access the information and indeed to respond to these inquiries. But do you know what? I cannot just ring up a hospital and say ‘Can you tell me about so and so?’ because that would be entirely inappropriate. Patient confidentiality is vital, so we require their consent. I need to know that the patient consents to their information being shared. Of course it is important that we reinforce this approach, particularly after learning of at least one patient who, upon being contacted by the department, indicated that they had not given their consent to have their matter raised in this place. Once again we see from those on the other side they are all about the politics, never about the patient.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): The minister said that patient confidentiality is vital and consent has always been required, but noting these consent forms have only been sent to non-government members of the Parliament, does the minister and this government now differentiate on their response to Victorians’ health concerns based on who their elected representative is and where these Victorians live?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will be removed from the chamber without warning.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:06): Yet another inaccurate statement from the Leader of the Opposition. All third parties, including all members on this side of the house, are required to get the consent of their constituents before I can follow up—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Health.

Ms THOMAS: I have actually completed my answer.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:06): The Andrews Labor government is getting on and delivering the Suburban Rail Loop and the 20 000 jobs it will create. That is right, 20 000 jobs will be supported by the Suburban Rail Loop. Today I just want to share one example. A couple of weeks ago with the member for Eltham I met Dylan, a young man who started his career as a rail industry electrician through our government’s Big Build. Dylan told me he was very excited that the Suburban Rail Loop was a project that would ensure his career would continue to flourish into the future. Dylan also told me he was very concerned that the Liberal cuts to the Suburban Rail Loop would not just end his job but end his career. It is young men like Dylan and young women who work across all of our programs—the Leader of the Opposition wants to cut their future career by cutting the Suburban Rail Loop.

Through our Big Build program we have been able to support tens of thousands of Victorians like Dylan across a range of industries but particularly in rail. The skills that Dylan is working on are particular to the rail industry and the huge supply chain of small businesses that support our rail industry. The Suburban Rail Loop is the jobs pipeline that will keep these careers progressing, give young Victorians a head start and provide an income for tens of thousands of Victorian families. This is what the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals want to cut. They want to cut these jobs. They want to cut these opportunities. They want to cut the future for young people like Dylan, and that is

why tomorrow's jobs and skills summit in Canberra is also so important. It is about supporting a future construction industry pipeline, making sure that we are doing the training of young Victorians and having the projects that they can work on into the future.

Mr Cheeseman interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Minister for Health. Brodie Jones from Corio has a chronic reflux condition. She has been on a waiting list just to see a specialist for over two years. She stated, 'I'm on strong medication every day. I get terrible reflux which keeps me awake at night and causes me anxiety. I have been referred to Barwon Health and I'm on a semi-urgent waiting list for their gastroenterology clinic category 2. My waiting time is now approximately 26 months just to see them'. There is concern that Brodie's condition may worsen if she is not properly diagnosed. What does the minister have to say to Brodie, who is having to wait now 26 months just to be seen due to an overworked and under-resourced health system?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:09): I thank the member for his question, and my thoughts indeed are with Brodie. Reflux is obviously very uncomfortable. What I would suggest, however, is that Brodie continue to meet with her general practitioner and ensure that she receives the care from her GP that she obviously needs and deserves.

I will make this point: as everyone in this house well knows, our health system here in Victoria, just like the health system in New South Wales, as indeed the Premier noted yesterday, is under unprecedented pressure as a consequence of the global pandemic. We are just coming out of a period when, thankfully, we are seeing a decline in cases and indeed a decline in the number of people getting sick and requiring to be furloughed from health care. Thank goodness we are seeing that. But I want to remind those on the other side that at its peak we were seeing more than 2000 healthcare workers unable to attend work because they were furloughed at home with COVID. We have also seen a big winter season with unprecedented presentations for flu and many children being impacted by the childhood respiratory illness RSV.

However, our government is implementing our \$12 billion pandemic repair plan. We are employing more staff, we are employing more nurses, we are backing our healthcare workers and we have a comprehensive plan in place to ensure that we can deliver to Victorians the health care that they deserve. We are getting on and implementing it. As I said, it is backed in with \$12 billion, and that of course, I might say, is exclusive of the investment that was announced on Sunday, which will see an additional 17 000 nurses recruited and trained here in Victoria so that we are growing our workforce. We will not be cutting our workforce like those on the other side did, and we will not be cutting doctors or nurses from our public health system.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): Brodie is concerned that not only does she have to wait 26 months to be seen but that she will then be put on a waiting list with another 87 000 Victorians to be operated on. Brodie is here in the public gallery today. Can the minister now tell her why Victoria's elective surgery waiting list has risen by over 35 000 people at a rate of three times that of New South Wales over the last two years, meaning people like her will have to wait longer than ever to get the surgery they need?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:13): Our government is also investing \$1.5 billion in our COVID catch-up plan, which is the plan that we have in place to ensure that we can grow planned surgeries in this state to 245 000 by the middle of 2024. There are two key initiatives fully funded by this government to help us achieve this. They include the purchase of the Bellbird hospital and its conversion—the conversion of a private hospital into a public

surgical centre—and the taking over of Frankston Private Hospital. It will be converted into a public surgical centre. This will enable us to deliver an additional 15 000 surgeries every year. I might also add that it is this government that has employed more than 4000 doctors in our system since we came to government.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:14): Today I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's record of investing and growing jobs and skills in Victoria's healthcare sector, a record strengthened by our landmark \$270 million nursing and midwifery package, which will recruit and train an extra 17 000 nurses and midwives across our state. Whether it be our nurses, our ambos, our doctors, our allied health professionals or the cooks, the cleaners or the clerks, these workers have all put in a mammoth effort throughout the COVID pandemic. We will continue to back in these workers, just as we have every day that we have been in government.

When it comes to the empty promises of those opposite, Victorian health workers have a long memory. Indeed this is what the secretary of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, Lisa Fitzpatrick, said recently:

Nurses and midwives have difficulty trusting the Victorian Opposition because they promised to keep mandated, minimum nurse patient ratios in the lead up to the 2010 state election. Within six months they broke that promise ...

In contrast, our record investments in the health system have seen significant growth in all areas of our health workforce. Of course it was our government that legislated nurse- and midwife-to-patient ratios. We have invested and recruited more than 9400 nursing and midwifery staff, more than 4000 doctors and indeed an additional 2200 paramedics. We have been doubling their annual investment in order to deliver the care that Victorians deserve. When it comes to standing with our healthcare workforce, those healthcare workers know that only Labor can be trusted to deliver and grow our healthcare workforce, unlike those who will cut, slash and go to war with healthcare— (*Time expired*)

HEALTH SYSTEM

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:16): My question is to the Minister for Health. Oliver is two years old. Having suffered severe tonsillitis since birth his doctors advised that his tonsils were abnormally large and needed to be removed. Oliver has been waiting for an appointment to see an ear, nose and throat specialist since December 2020. During that time his condition has significantly impacted his quality of life. He constantly suffers colds and infections, can only eat soft foods and winces in pain when eating, has trouble sleeping and now needs to see a speech therapist. I raised Oliver's situation with the minister on 8 July, yet in the minister's response last Friday she indicated Oliver had attended an ENT specialist appointment that provided no date in relation to vital surgery. Oliver's father was told his son would be on a three-month wait list for surgery. That was more than four months ago. How is it fair that a two-year-old child who is unable to eat, sleep or speak properly is still waiting after 18 months to receive life-changing surgery?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:17): Can I say firstly how pleased I am that Oliver has received his ear, nose and throat appointment with a specialist. Again, I invite the member, subject of course to her having the permission of Oliver's parents, to write to me, and I am happy to follow up.

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, in the letter the minister sent me at 8.36 pm on Friday—

The SPEAKER: Member for Evelyn, that is not a point of order. The member for Evelyn will resume her seat. You have been here for four years. You should know that that is not a point of order.

Ms THOMAS: Again I will point the member on the other side to not just the challenges that our healthcare system have experienced but, more importantly, the plan that we are implementing right now in order to deliver more planned surgeries in our public system than were being delivered

prepandemic. Of course you cannot do this unless you work hand in hand with your healthcare workforce. That is what we have been doing right through the pandemic. I might say this: we have done this, and we have kept doing this. It has been very disappointing that at every step of the way those on the other side of the house have done everything possible either to denigrate the health advice that has been delivered or to denigrate the ideas that have come up from the workforce in order to deal with the challenges. They have rubbished our ideas. They called it a ‘socialist manoeuvre’ to deliver 15 000 additional public surgeries in our public healthcare system. Our government is implementing our plan, and I am very confident that only an Andrews Labor government can deliver the healthcare system and service that Victorians deserve.

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:19): Victoria’s health system under this tired Labor government has failed Oliver and his family.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Questions will be heard in silence.

Ms VALLENCE: This tired Labor government has failed Oliver and his family. Oliver’s health problems are taking an extreme emotional toll on Oliver and his parents, creating mental health issues for them. What assurances can the minister provide to Oliver’s parents that their son will finally receive the vital surgery that Oliver so desperately needs without further delay?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:20): I thank the member for her supplementary question. It was very interesting listening to the Premier of New South Wales, Dom Perrottet, the other day. This is what he had to say in relation to the experiences of our healthcare system in relation to New South Wales: ‘We’ve seen in our state over the past 10 years a 30 per cent increase in presentations in our emergency departments, and that is not a unique experience, that is happening around the nation and around the world’. But here is the difference: here on this side of the house the Andrews Labor government has a plan to repair our health system, to increase the number of planned surgeries that are being delivered in this state, to massively invest in our workforce and to bring in 10 000 nurses, who will receive the equivalent of their HECS courses as a scholarship. Only our government has a plan.

Ms Valence: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was quite narrow about surgery and the surgery no longer being delayed for Oliver, who cannot eat, sleep or speak properly. I would ask you to ask the minister to be relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: The member was being relevant. It was about assurances around receiving surgery.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: RECREATIONAL BOATING AND FISHING

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (14:21): I rise to update the house on the important work that our government is doing in fishing and boating. Over the past eight years the Andrews Labor government has invested \$128 million towards new boating and fishing initiatives. In addition to this, we are reinvesting \$33 million per year into boating projects through the Better Boating Fund. Our investment is helping Victorians enjoy the great outdoors while also creating more local jobs.

It has been my pleasure to celebrate in the success of our investment with so many in this Parliament in recent weeks. The member for Nepean and I recently visited the Rye boat ramp to discuss how our \$100 000 investment will address the condition of the jetty. The member for Cranbourne and I gave fish stocking a red-hot go at Casey Fields Lake in Cranbourne. I joined the member for Bass at the Tooradin boat ramp to announce that we have signed contracts for maritime engineers to develop plans for a future upgrade. Over in the mighty west I joined the member for Melton to don the waders at Navan Park. The member for Narre Warren South and I released rainbow trout at the Berwick Springs lake. The member for Clarinda and I braved the cold waters to stock fish at Karkarook Lake in Heatherton. The member for Mordialloc and I visited the Governor Road boat ramp car park to

announce the completion of our upgrade. The member for Sunbury and I heaved rainbow trout over at Spavin Drive Lake. And in the other place a member for Southern Metropolitan Region, Nina Taylor, and I got into the spirit of fish stocking at Albert Park Lake.

Our record investment in fishing and boating is critical to support the more than 50 000 fishing and boating workers across Victoria. We are investing in fishing and boating and delivering and supporting thousands of jobs because this is a government focused on delivering jobs for Victorians, whether that be through the Suburban Rail Loop, our health system or fishing and boating.

MILDURA ELECTORATE HEALTH CARE

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:23): My question is for the Minister for Health. My electorate has secured great wins in health care during this term thanks to strong community advocacy and a government that has listened to us. We are on the edge of achieving a trifecta that has never been achieved in a single term, at least to my knowledge, and that is: bringing a privatised hospital back to public management, securing the funding for a master plan for redevelopment and securing the capital funding to fulfil that master plan. We have two out of three—maybe 2½ if you count the election commitment made by the opposition, but an opposition promise does not count for much unless they win government. Our electorate needs certainty. We need a funding commitment from the government in line—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am having trouble hearing the question.

Ms CUPPER: with the recommendations of the master plan. We were told the master plan would be released in mid-August. Today is 31 August. When will the master plan be released?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:24): I thank the independent member for Mildura for her question. I would like to begin by acknowledging her strong advocacy every step of the way for her community, the beautiful Mallee and Sunraysia districts up there. The independent member for Mildura has worked very hard to ensure that the people of that community have a strong voice in this place. With the work of the member for Mildura, the Andrews Labor government has been able to return the Mildura base hospital to public hands, absolutely where it belongs. It should always have been there. It should never have been privatised.

Ms Settle: Who did that?

Ms THOMAS: Fancy that! It was a hospital privatised by a former Liberal-Nationals government, because that is their approach to public health care. Since returning the hospital to public hands we have been working closely with the health service and with the member for Mildura to ensure that we are planning for the future needs of the Mildura and Mallee communities. The 2021–22 budget did include that \$2.1 million to develop a master plan for the Mildura Base Public Hospital. I want the member to know that that work is very well underway and is very close to being finalised. I look forward to having more to say shortly in relation to this once the work is finalised. Importantly I look forward to continuing to work with the independent member for Mildura in doing all that we can to ensure that the people of Mildura, the Mallee and Sunraysia region get the very best health care, the health care that they need.

I might make this one final point: we will do the work to get it right. When our government makes a commitment you can be sure that it is appropriately funded, that we have planned it with the community, we have done the clinical service planning—there are no half-baked promises here—and most importantly of all we will have a plan to deliver the workforce, because at the end of the day we all know it is nurses, doctors, ambos, allied healthcare professionals that are the ones that deliver health care, and we will make sure that we work with the member for Mildura to deliver that.

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:27): For more than a decade the federal coalition government performed poorly on rural health care. It froze the Medicare rebates for five years, undermining the

viability of GP clinics and the attractiveness of general practice as a career. New rules about supervisor ratios were changed to improve the quality of practice; however, little to no effort was made to prepare for the inevitable service vacuum that would occur when bulk-billing clinics like Tristar became unviable, so here we are. In Mildura the closure of Tristar has left at least 15 000 patients without a GP. When they need medical care they will be fronting up to the hospital. Mildura's hospital building was built for profit, not patients. It was never big enough in the first place, let alone now, and it is about to be overrun. Short-term emergency solutions to the crisis are being discussed with the federal and state governments, but the medium and longer term solutions are going to require a bigger, better Mildura Base Public Hospital to underpin them all. Can we rely on your government to deliver it?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:28): I thank the member for Mildura again for her question. She is absolutely right: it is not good enough that the people of Mildura are now without access to GPs because of nine years of neglect by the former Liberal-National federal government. The local member up there, National Party member Dr Anne Webster, should hang her head in shame that this situation has been able to develop under her watch with the Liberal-National federal government, completely neglectful of communities just like Mildura. Our government is doing all that it can and will work with the college of general practitioners, with the Murray Primary Health Network, with the local hospital and indeed with my federal Parliament counterpart, the Minister for Health, to do all we can to ensure that we can deliver on primary care for the people of Mildura.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MAJOR EVENTS

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:29): Just last month we hit a milestone: 4.5 million attendances at major events across sport, art, theatre, food and fashion, delivering a huge number of visitors to Victoria. This does not happen by accident. It is a result of the Andrews Labor government's sustained investment supporting jobs and powering the state's economic recovery.

The year started with the Australian Open, followed by record crowds at the Formula One Grand Prix, and I was there when a sea of red turned out to see Manchester United at the MCG. Melbourne's renowned theatre district was one of only three places in the world to stage *Harry Potter*, *Moulin Rouge!* and *Hamilton* all at once. We have had blockbuster exhibitions at the NGV, *The Picasso Century* and much more.

And it is not just in Melbourne. As you know, Speaker, a record number of visitors travelled to Bendigo Art Gallery to see *Elvis: Direct from Graceland*, as did the Deputy Premier. We have also had the Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach. My good friend the member for Geelong knows the impact bringing the Foo Fighters to Geelong had on the community, and the Ballarat International Foto Biennale was warmly welcomed by the member for Wendouree and her community.

In 2019 Victoria's calendar of major events delivered \$2.5 billion in economic value for the state. Major events are key to our tourism offering, and in 2019 the industry provided 259 000 jobs to Victorians. We invest in major events because Victorians deserve the best the world has to offer right here on their doorstep and to put Victoria on the global stage. And it is about jobs: jobs for performers, designers, event organisers and planners, event staff, gallery staff, hospitality workers, riggers, roadies, technicians—the list goes on. Our events are the envy of the country, but so are our people, our workers who bring these events to life, and we have so much more to come.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:31): My question is to the minister for child protection. Victoria's independent Commission for Children and Young People has confirmed that growing numbers of vulnerable children in the care system are being kept in hotels and serviced apartments. The commission describes this situation as 'deeply concerning' and says that the whole system is 'underfunded and not fit for purpose'. The commission highlighted these exact issues three years ago,

and they have worsened. Why has the government failed to act to protect the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children?

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (14:32): Can I say at the outset of my first question as the minister for child protection a big thankyou to all of the people who work in our child protection sector, our carers and those people who work in our family services sector. I want to say that our broad policy direction, the *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families, Safe Children*, is a sound policy agenda. It is all about ensuring that we intervene early to support families—to get in to help families before they end up with children in the child protection system, to avoid families getting into crisis. This has been backed in by \$2.8 billion worth of investment by the Andrews Labor government over the last three budgets. Since 2014 we have funded an additional 1180 child protection practitioners to ensure that we keep our children as safe as possible. Due to these policies and this investment we have the lowest per capita rate of children and young people in out-of-home care of any state or territory in the country—the lowest per capita rate of children in out-of-home care in the country. Of the 9500 children and young people in care approximately 5 per cent are in residential care, 17 per cent are in foster care and the vast majority, 78 per cent, are in kinship care. Our investment in the sector has delivered nearly 50 more residential care beds, with over 40 per cent of these now therapeutic placements.

Removing a child from their family or home is always a decision of last resort and one that is made with the safety of the child or young person as a paramount concern. There are circumstances where, as an example, a child might be removed in the middle of the night, in complex situations or where a sibling group could otherwise be separated. These are temporary contingency accommodation placements that are utilised. This is a rare type of placement, representing less than 1 per cent of the out-of-home care placements at any one time. This is most often in department-owned or -managed properties. Children and young people in these situations are always supervised by appropriate staff and continue to access a range of services.

I am surprised to hear the comments from those opposite, because in 2014 the Victorian Auditor-General found that those opposite had been running the residential care system over capacity and it was unable to meet the demands of children. In fact, on contingency care, it was a Liberal government who purchased additional contingency placements of some \$24 million. More importantly, it was the previous Liberal-National government, where the Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table, and the now shadow minister was an adviser to the then government in this very portfolio area, that cut 500 jobs from the Department of Human Services, which was charged with the protection of vulnerable children and young people. On this side of the house, we are not going to take lectures from those opposite about the care of vulnerable children and young people.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is an important matter. I ask the house to come to order.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:35): It is actually the children's commission that has been speaking about deep concerns around vulnerable children in Victoria. As the children's commission said today, the children entering Victoria's child protection system have experienced major trauma, with significant mental and physical health needs. Therefore the commission has criticised the government's use of so-called 'contingency placements' due to the inadequate quality and suitability of placements and the lack of continuity of staff. Why is it acceptable to this government that growing numbers of Victoria's most vulnerable children in child protection are not having their mental and physical health needs met?

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (14:36): I reject the premise of that question. The Andrews Labor government support our child protection workers and those people who work in the care sector and our family services, rolling out programs to intervene early to support families before they come into

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contact with child protection services and to ensure that children and young people are kept safe. So I reject the premise of the question that has been put by the honourable member.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: EMPLOYMENT

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade) (14:37): It gives me great pleasure to address this chamber to update it on the incredible job creation that is happening right across the state of Victoria. Our unemployment rate is at a record low of 3.1 per cent. But that is not all: our regional unemployment rate is even lower at 2.9 per cent. That is the lowest of all the states, and it is the lowest on record. With the national jobs summit this week, Victoria can proudly say that there is no better place to study and to work than Victoria. Since we took over from the sloth and indolence of those opposite, we have added more than 600 000 new jobs, including more than 325 000 since September 2020. We have slashed the unemployment rate by more than half since November 2014. This record is built on the back of our large infrastructure agenda, our nation-leading free TAFE initiative and our targeted investment in growth industries.

Of course Australians are starting to notice the economic revolution that is going on in Victoria. I saw that Peter Dutton recently ventured into Victoria for the first time in recent memory. I trust that he felt safe choosing one of Melbourne's fine restaurants or indeed that he enjoyed one of our fine shows. The Leader of the Opposition, if he is looking for some alternative employment because the opposition leader gig does not work for him, I would invite him to consider moving to Victoria to try his hand at something new. In Warrnambool, in the south-west, for example, unemployment is at just 1.2 per cent. Geelong has 2.4 per cent. Metropolitan Melbourne is at just 3.3 per cent. Things are happening in this state, and people are getting employed in droves.

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, on unanswered questions on notice 6644 and 6645, if you are able to draw the Minister's attention to those unanswered questions, that would be much appreciated.

The SPEAKER: The questions will be followed through.

Constituency questions

CROYDON ELECTORATE

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (14:40): (6506) My question is to the Attorney-General on behalf of my constituent Mr Carnie who lodged a VCAT hearing application in August 2020 and is still waiting. Attorney-General, when can Mr Carnie be given a date for his VCAT hearing? Mr Carnie has contacted VCAT numerous times over the past two years only to be told the system is facing delays. When it was approaching the two-year mark without a hearing date, Mr Carnie contacted my office in April seeking our support. My office emailed you in April and is yet to receive a reply. Upon calling to follow up on this email my office received acknowledgement that you have the email and are still working on a response. Mr Carnie is awaiting a hearing date so he can process an insurance claim with his insurer. The delays mean Mr Carnie cannot lodge his insurance claim and move on from the events that occurred back in 2020, putting undue stress on his situation. Attorney-General, please advise how much longer Mr Carnie is expected to wait for a hearing date for an application made in August 2020 and when the backlog will be cleared.

BELLARINE ELECTORATE

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) (14:41): (6507) My constituency question is to the Minister for Community Sport, and I ask: what immediate steps are being taken by her department to ensure that the City of Greater Geelong commences stage 2 construction of the Drysdale sports precinct project? This project is one of a number of community-based sporting projects that we have funded across the Bellarine, and we completed stage 1 in 2018 thanks to the state government contribution. That has provided much-welcome modern facilities for the Hawks football club, the cricket club and the soccer club in Drysdale. The precinct is also utilised by local schools who bound the area. But on stage 2,

which we funded in the 2019 budget, unfortunately little has been achieved. It is to do a new soccer pitch, a multipurpose oval and pavilion and other infrastructure. The clubs have been very frustrated over the last 18 months that nothing has been done and no progress has been made, and they want to see construction start.

OVENS VALLEY ELECTORATE

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:42): (6508) My question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Action on behalf of Lesley Smith of 3 Swanston Street in Wilby. Lesley was approached by a company who install Victorian-backed, energy-efficient hot-water services. The company is called Sailax Group, who fit the free hot-water services. After an inspection by the business back in June they told Ms Smith that in order for them to fit the hot-water service at the house she would need to pull up some of her decking to fit the hot-water service in. Ms Smith has had the deck ripped up to cater for the hot-water service, but the company has not returned to fit the hot-water service. Most frustratingly they have ripped up the deck, it still cannot be used and there is still no hot-water service. The process began in June, and we are now basically in September. I request the minister to engage with the company to establish if or when the hot-water system will be fitted or if Ms Smith should have her deck put back together again.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:43): (6509) Templeton Primary in Wantirna is a fantastic local school, and I am super proud that the Andrews Labor government is delivering a major upgrade to ensure they have the 21st-century learning facilities they absolutely deserve. So my constituency question is to the Minister for Education: when will construction start on the \$9.2 million of works committed to by the Andrews Labor government? In last year's budget I was stoked to secure these funds to deliver new state-of-the-art learning spaces and new facilities for Temps. I remember announcing it and the reception was next level, not far off in fact the level when the Premier came down to check and inspect works and how it is tracking. Now, since the announcement the school community has been working with principal Rod McKinlay to progress the project with the building authority. I have seen some of the concepts, and they look absolutely amazing. I know the community and I are keen to know when we can expect works to start on these really, really huge upgrades at Templeton Primary.

SOUTH-WEST COAST ELECTORATE

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:44): (6510) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. Can the minister outline why Portland District Health was overlooked for funding for new equipment announced last week? The government announced \$125 million would be shared among 38 health services and hospitals across the state. The government spruiked how 21 regional Victorian health services would benefit from 178 items of equipment either upgraded or replaced in operating suites, surgical wards, intensive care units and neonatal areas. Moyne Health Services and South West Healthcare in my electorate were included. Portland District Health, however, was a glaring omission. Despite claims from the Premier, services at PDH have diminished over the past 12 months—not grown. The birthing service was suspended for months only to recently return. Ophthalmology has gone. Anaesthetic training has been scrapped and moved to Hamilton. If there was ever a health service that could have benefited from investment, it is Portland District Health, yet it has been ignored again. So I ask the minister to explain to the Portland community why this government has once again abandoned them.

BASS ELECTORATE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:45): (6511) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Can the minister please update me on the work being done to fix the potholes and maintain the roads across my electorate of Bass, particularly after the recent flooding on the South Gippsland Highway between Caldermeade and Lang Lang earlier this month. Regional Roads Victoria maintain

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more than 19 000 kilometres of the roads across Victoria. It has been great to see the crews out there doing fixing. The recent weather obviously has exacerbated efforts to fix the emerging potholes. I advise everyone who contacts my office, 'Please don't just mention it on Facebook, report it directly to VicRoads through their feedback form or calling their number'. There are more than 1100 maintenance and renewal projects that are being delivered on the state's regional roads since September last year, with an investment of more than \$464 million supporting this work to maintain regional road assets. I look forward to an update on how the Andrews government has continued to maintain roads across Bass and Victoria.

PRAHRAN ELECTORATE

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:46): (6512) My constituency question is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, and I ask: will the state government provide funding for Stonnington Community Assist to employ a paid full-time coordinator? Stonnington Community Assist is a volunteer-only agency which provides information, referrals, advocacy, emergency relief, no-interest loans and other crucial support to those who face disadvantage or are suffering from financial hardship in our community, and they have been doing this for over 50 years. It is a valuable and vital community resource that supports over 650 vulnerable clients each year, and being able to employ a paid staff member would enable the organisation to provide more in-depth casework with clients, help to manage the recruitment and support of volunteers and oversee administrative tasks. This would be of immense benefit to our local community, particularly for people in need.

NEPEAN ELECTORATE

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (14:47): (6513) My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment and Climate Action. In the budget this year the Victorian government announced that the Point Nepean forts would be receiving a \$6 million investment to repair the structures to keep this iconic site safe and accessible. Part of an overall package worth \$16.5 million, these works will help preserve and restore the forts not only for our local community but for the over half a million people who visit this site annually. With several areas of the forts closed off to the public, I know that locals and visitors alike will be eagerly awaiting the beginning of construction on this iconic Mornington Peninsula landmark. My question to the minister for environment is: when will works begin on the forts and how will these works make this iconic site safe and more accessible for members of the public for years to come?

FERNTREE GULLY ELECTORATE

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (14:47): (6514) My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The Knox community is greatly concerned about the constant actions of this government in destroying Lake Knox. The community are gravely concerned about recent activities which have seen works undertaken on the site without any community consultation. These works that are being undertaken are potentially impacting on the breeding season for the blue-billed duck. There are concerns about the spillover of the outflow of water into Blind Creek. The government has also apparently instructed construction staff to not talk to residents about the works that are being undertaken on this site. This is gravely concerning. My community is deeply opposed to the actions that this government is taking without any consultation. So my question is: why is the Andrews government undertaking these concerning works at Lake Knox without any consultation with the affected Knox community?

CRANBOURNE ELECTORATE

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (14:48): (6515) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. How is the government supporting Malayalam language in the Victorian curricula? The Keralite-Australian community in Cranbourne is strong in number and in character, known to be both altruistic and aspirational, which is a terrific combination, and of course the focus of the community is on education and opportunities for children. On Sunday I was honoured to join with the Malayalee

Association of Victoria and many distinguished guests, including the Honourable Bill Shorten; the Victorian Minister for Education; the mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong, Cr Jim Memeti; Crs Tan and Lim; Mr Tarlamis and Dr Kieu, from the other place; and the extraordinary member for Holt, Cassandra Fernando, for a wonderful celebration of the Onam festival. Having an energetic woman like Cassandra as a colleague is wonderful for Melbourne's south-east. I thank the organisation and particularly Mr Madanan Chellappan for the generosity of the community and the whole diaspora, numbered at over 25 000 in Victoria, for their contribution, and I look forward to reporting back to the community on the minister's response.

Bills

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ROYAL COMMISSION IMPLEMENTATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr WYNNE (Richmond) (14:50): I am delighted to rise to make a contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and in doing so also, as this has been my first opportunity, to congratulate you, Speaker, on your ascension to the high office of Speaker of this house. It truly is a very esteemed position, which of course you have really trained for as the Deputy Speaker. We had quite a deal of fun throughout adjournments, which I miss and no doubt you will—

Ms Crugnale interjected.

Mr WYNNE: and the member for Bass misses as well. But it is fantastic. Congratulations to you. It is a much deserved and very honourable position.

This piece of legislation is really very, very significant because it comes off the back of and is a further tranche of the government's commitment to implementing all the recommendations of the Finkelstein review into Crown Casino. I do confess at the outset that whilst I have been to the Crown complex, as all of us have on many occasions to attend functions and so forth, I have no experience of the gaming floor, as I think it is called, where these activities actually occur. But nonetheless I am fully aware of and have followed in some detail both the hearings of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence and indeed the recommendations of the Finkelstein review itself. I was familiar with that also because a counsel assisting, Mr Adrian Finanzio SC, was—of course in a different part of his legal career—and he continues to be one of Melbourne's most esteemed planning barristers, so it was a matter of particular interest to me.

The bill introduces nation-leading reforms to tackle gambling-related harm and address money-laundering risks at Crown Casino, as I said, in response to the Finkelstein royal commission. As members know, the royal commission handed down its report in October last year, and we immediately legislated its priority recommendations. At the time we said that further legislation would be introduced this year, 2022, with other major reforms recommended by the royal commission, and of course this bill acquits that commitment.

The package of reforms, I would put to you, is a world first in scale and will establish the strongest measures in any casino in Australia. We have seen the royal commission, we have seen the New South Wales Bergin inquiry and we have seen inquiries in Queensland and Western Australia as well in relation to both Crown and other casino operations. This particular bill actually deals with the next tranche of those measures, as I indicated, and it sets up a framework necessary to start holding Crown to account, including of course the establishment of the role of the special manager. Stephen O'Bryan QC, who was Victoria's first IBAC Commissioner, has been appointed to the role, overseeing every single aspect of the casino's operations and reporting on its suitability to hold a licence over the next two years.

This is quite an onerous oversight but one that indeed is absolutely appropriate, because when you go through the evidence that was provided to the royal commission itself, in so many respects the evidence that was provided was truly shocking as it related to junkets or alleged money laundering that was going on through the casino—behaviours that in many respects were quite reprehensible, particularly as they related to people who were vulnerable to the addiction of gambling.

And in that respect we owe a great debt of gratitude to Mr Finkelstein for both shining the light on the operations of that casino here in Melbourne but also giving us a pathway forward, because whatever we may think about casinos more generally, that facility is a really significant employer of people in this state. Mr Finkelstein no doubt had to weigh up these, in many respects, competing elements in his decision-making, and I think he has landed, with his 33 recommendations, on a particularly good and considered response.

The bill will prohibit a casino operator from issuing a player card without following prescribed requirements for identity verification and from allowing a game to be played in a casino other than by using a player card. It will limit cash transactions to amounts of up to \$1000 in a 24-hour period. Obviously we are aware of circumstances where people get trapped in these casinos and stay on for literally days, and it is a wicked thing. It truly is a wicked thing. The cash transaction limit of \$1000 will in fact curtail some of this activity. The bill will provide for mandatory precommitment; strengthen statutory management arrangements where a casino licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered; and introduce an approvals process by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission for shareholdings in the casino operator and its holding companies. The bill will require the independence of directors and senior managers, strengthen the casino exclusion provisions, place controls on patron deposit accounts and reintroduce the casino supervision charge.

Yes, this is important legislation. It is important legislation because it has gone through a thorough process that was implemented by this government through the Finkelstein royal commission. It absolutely shone a bright light on the operations of Crown Casino. I think that there would be nobody in this Parliament or indeed in this industry who is not aware of the crucial oversight that Mr O'Bryan will bring and the powers that attend to Mr O'Bryan's position and that Crown Casino, frankly, is on notice. It is on notice that it has to change its governance structure and has to recognise that its modus operandi to date has been completely inappropriate.

They really have got a chance now to rectify what have been glaring, glaring inadequacies in their operation, and the reforms that are embedded in this bill are really important to Crown moving forward as, can I put it bluntly, a good corporate citizen, because to date you would have to say that they have failed very, very badly in that respect. But there is an opportunity for them. There is an opportunity for them to make good and to recognise the deficiencies that were so apparent and abundant. We know that there has been a change in their corporate structure and ownership, and now there is an opportunity for this new owner to demonstrate that they have learned the lessons of the royal commission, that they have taken on those lessons absolutely as an organisation, that they will implement all of these recommendations in full and that they will provide a venue that is in fact in accord with proper governance structures and proper legal practices as well, particularly of course to protect people who seek to go to the casino and play these games from the worst elements of, for some people, tragically, the addiction of gaming and gambling more generally. I commend this bill to the house, and I commend the Finkelstein royal commission's work.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (15:00): I appreciate the contribution from the member for Richmond. I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Greens on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. This is the third bill implementing recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, and we are pleased to see that this government is continuing to take the findings of the royal commission very seriously and that it is following through on its commitment to implementing the recommendations. The bill we are debating today addresses the recommendations relating to money laundering and harm minimisation, including implementing mandatory precommitment for gaming at the casino. We are

very pleased to see the latter introduced in this Parliament and sincerely hope it sails through the other place. Given the government's less than stellar track record on minimising gambling harm and given the record gambling losses sustained during the life of this Parliament, we were not sure that precommitment would actually be legislated before the end of this parliamentary term, so it is reassuring to see it in this bill, which we support.

The bill is phasing out the use of cash in the casino by introducing compulsory carded play, or cashless play. This will mean that if you want to gamble at the casino you will need to have a player card and you will need to provide proof of ID to receive a card. The intention here is to remove the risk of the casino being used as a money laundering front by removing cash altogether and to stop people from anonymously accessing the casino. Cashless play is a really interesting reform for gambling in Victoria, and we will be watching the implementation of this reform closely. We know it has real potential to transform gambling at the casino for the better by removing the ability for players to launder money through the casino, but we also understand that unless implemented with robust and mandatory precommitment, it can be quite dangerous, because the physical sensation of inserting money into a machine can help alert a patron to how much money they are losing. This is in part a reason why gambling reform advocates recommend bet limits and load-up limits, as making a person insert more money more often means they are more aware of the amount they are spending—and the amount they are losing. Carded play may create a disconnect between a gambler and the amount of money actually being lost during gaming. And to properly reduce harm, carded play has to be implemented alongside really strong harm-minimisation measures, like enforced player breaks, more staff supervision and precommitment. That is why it is good to see the government following through on this royal commission recommendation. This scheme will require all players to set a limit on how much they are willing to lose at the pokies at Crown or a limit on how long they can play, or both, before they start gambling.

The mandatory precommitment scheme for gaming at the casino will be fully implemented by December 2025. We understand that this long implementation time is because the technology needed to enforce the scheme does not yet exist. The fact that the technology does not exist is a reflection of the industry's priorities. Pokies are designed basically to siphon money from players with no way to track spending or enforce limits. We would encourage the government to work closely with gambling reform advocates like the Alliance for Gambling Reform on the design of the scheme and new technology to ensure it is as robust as possible. In the meantime, as a starting point, the bill will make YourPlay usage compulsory for Crown's loyalty scheme members. We understand that this is a starting point, but it is a fairly inconsequential reform. YourPlay, which is the government's existing voluntary precommitment scheme, has been a complete failure. Hardly any players use it, and it has done nothing to stop skyrocketing pokies losses. In the 2017–18 financial year YourPlay cards were used in sessions amounting to just 0.01 per cent of gaming machine turnover in Victorian hotels and clubs. It was not used at all in 170 venues. At the casino YourPlay cards were used to unlock the more harmful machines that spin faster and accept higher bets than other machines.

We would also prefer to see loyalty schemes phased out completely. It is difficult to see how you can minimise gambling-related harm if you link it to a scheme that offers perks to encourage people to return more often, gamble more and lose more money. In fact members of Crown's loyalty program are more likely to experience gambling harm than other Crown patrons. That said, it is at least a step in the right direction towards mandatory precommitment at the casino gaming machines, and we look forward to watching it develop.

But it cannot stop at just the casino. While we acknowledge the serious harm caused to gamblers at the casino and Crown's total failure to do anything about it, the scale of the harm done by the gambling industry in Victoria is much bigger than just the casino. It extends to all gaming venues in the state and particularly to all of the pokies out in the community. Crown has 2600 poker machines of the 26 321 in the state—in other words, almost 10 per cent. The rest are in clubs and hotels out in the

suburbs. In July \$270 million was lost—in just that month—at pokies in Victoria, approaching \$10 million a day, a record loss.

If the government is serious about minimising gambling harm, this precommitment scheme needs to be rolled out to every poker machine in the state, not just in the casino. Otherwise there is nothing stopping a player from leaving the casino once they have hit their precommitment limit and playing on a machine in a club or a hotel that has no limits. We know the government is proud of going further on a number of the recommendations of the royal commission, but not this one. This is a missed opportunity to go further on harm minimisation, which means protecting Victorians, and to ensure that every gaming venue in the state has mandatory precommitment, player time limits and other harm minimisation measures in place. We can speculate on why the government has not gone further in this instance. Perhaps it is because the government's budget relies on the money they get from pokies and because they are pretty cosy with the Australian Hotels Association and the clubs industry, but that is just speculation.

One other good thing about this bill is that it will remove Crown's exemption under the Tobacco Act 1987 so that smoking will now be banned in all areas of the casino, something that I think is particularly important. So the Greens support this bill and commend the bill to the house.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (15:07): I am glad to be speaking on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. This bill is a continuation of the rapid progress being made in the field of gambling reform following the Andrews government supporting every single recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence.

I would like to briefly begin by referring to the comments from the member for Gippsland South and the member for Brunswick and to acknowledge that we have a lot in common on both sides of the house in regard to this matter. I note that the *Age* journalist Sumeyya Ilanbey has produced her book *Daniel Andrews*, which came out yesterday, and there are just a couple of excerpts that I would like to treat you to, because when the member for Gippsland South was talking you would think that the problems associated with the good and bad of gambling and all that sort of thing were only on one side of the house and that the Liberals were squeaky clean and altruistic and all the other great adjectives that could be applied. Well, Sumeyya points out a few things which are interesting. She says:

... Crown would donate just over \$2 million in total between 2000 and 2020 to the Liberal and Labor parties ...

and I am sure there is no suggestion that the Liberals returned that money. She also says, interestingly:

Crown's significance to the state's economy and politics cannot be overstated. Ever since Labor's Joan Kirner gave the green light for a casino in 1990 ...

and

the Liberals' Jeff Kennett turbocharged things in 1993 ...

every

Victorian premier has had a cosy relationship with Crown, which has enjoyed significant concessions ...

Crown, in another comment:

has been politically untouchable in the three decades since it opened its doors. And senior Liberal and Labor politicians have courted the Packers.

I found that comforting, and also this:

Crown's economic contribution to the state is unrivalled, and the money from the taxes the gaming giant pays helps fund schools, hospitals, roads and public transport.

Having said that, Sumeyya then goes on to say:

But integrity, transparency and accountability are critical pillars of democracy.

I think that this represents another bona fide attempt at trying to introduce a greater emphasis on integrity, transparency and accountability in the gambling industry, so I am very pleased to commend this piece of legislation.

As you know, the royal commission handed down its final report with 33 recommendations in October last year, and we have responded in record time. I want to make one point relating to the outcomes of the royal commission crystal clear to everyone here—that unless Crown can demonstrate to the regulator that it has become suitable to hold its licence, the licence will be automatically cancelled. This is just one of the important legislative steps we have taken in the wake of the royal commission. The bill before the house today delivers on 12 recommendations. These are a key part in the most significant reform in casino regulation in decades. This bill tightens regulations around money laundering, implementation time lines and corporate governance.

Just to say a little bit now about gambling harm, to be blunt, the gambling industry does an incredible amount of harm to everyday Victorians. The Alliance for Gambling Reform estimates that over 528 residents of Boroondara, which includes my electorate of Hawthorn, have a severe gambling-related problem. That is hundreds of my constituents being victims of this cruel industry, and it is simply not good enough. That is why I completely support the recommendations of the royal commission, and it is why I support this bill.

It will also fulfil the royal commission's recommendation to introduce a nation-leading mandatory precommitment system on all pokies at Crown. Consequently, all Australian residents at the casino must fix a maximum limit on how much they are prepared to lose before gambling on the pokies through the YourPlay system. This is the first of its kind in Australia. This is just one of the innovative measures that form part of our gambling reform agenda. I would just like to emphasise how important this is. I am sure that many of you have observed the plethora of pokie machines in pubs and venues around your electorates and the effect this has on problem gamblers. Every single day Victorians lose \$7.4 million to the pokies. This system will serve to limit losses on the vast number of pokies at Crown, protecting everyday Victorians. These reforms are a solid beginning to fixing the process, and I am proud of our commitment to the royal commission recommendations. But it is also important for us to be forward-looking and aspirational in our attempts at future gambling reform.

I am extremely concerned about the pervasiveness of gambling advertising in our society. It is everywhere, from the television to the football. It is a great concern for me that our children are growing up in a society saturated by the presence of gambling. If I could just say again how absolutely devastated I am every time I see those advertisements on TV associated with sport. The advertisements are incredibly seductive, but they always finish with this absolutely dishonest line, 'Only gamble responsibly'. It is just a joke, when you think about it. There is seduction, seduction, seduction, and then it finishes with 'gamble responsibly'. Well, how on earth can you?

The proper approach to this issue is one of harm minimisation. This is why the Andrews government has done more to tackle problem gambling and the harm it creates than any previous government. We have a strong track record in this area, which this bill adds to. With measures like increasing funding to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation to \$153 million over four years, we are committed to protecting Victorian gamblers. This bill represents an innovative approach to gambling reform as we continue to legislate our nation-leading changes. These reforms are to ensure that the disgraceful conduct that was unearthed at the royal commission never occurs again. We have already implemented a litany of priority measures, like establishing the office of the special manager to oversee Crown's operations. We will implement the remaining nine recommendations made by the royal commission and will implement them over the next 12 months through further legislation, directions and administrative mechanisms.

I have said it before in this chamber, and I will say it again: the paramount focus when it comes to gambling reform must be on harm minimisation. Within this bill, it is not just the YourPlay system that forms part of the harm minimisation approach but also measures like the amendment of the Casino

Control Act 1991 to allow for short-term exclusion orders to be made by both the casino staff and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to allow them to give a verbal direction to patrons to take a break and leave the gambling area. Even more stringent regulations over ownership are imposed by this bill, with VGCCC approval required to acquire or increase an interest in 5 per cent or more of shares in Crown or any of its holding companies. It is also updating the definition of an associate of a casino operator to include any holding company officer or owner of a casino. These provisions are required simply because we have seen casino owners in the past abuse their powers. We have already seen the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission commence disciplinary proceedings against Crown. The simple fact is that we cannot trust Crown to do the right thing. Whilst this state cannot afford to lose the jobs that Crown provides, it must be kept on a tight leash. Too much damage has been done to this state through a laissez-faire approach to gambling education in the past. Jeff Kennett's gambling-led recovery was simply bad policy, and there is no escaping that. I commend the bill.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (15:17): I move:

That debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Business of the house

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (15:18): I move:

That consideration of government business, orders of the day 3 and 4, be postponed until later this day.

Motion agreed to.

Motions

BUDGET PAPERS 2022–23

Debate resumed on motion of Mr WYNNE:

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

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:18): Thank you, Acting Speaker McCurdy. It is lovely to see you in the chair this afternoon.

A member interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: No, he is a good Acting Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to rise and speak on the budget take-note motion. As we have seen in question time today, there are some remarkable statistics coming out from the ABS at the moment, and that is because of a government that has made a plan and stayed with that plan throughout a global pandemic. In many ways, this 2022–23 budget is one of the most important budgets that the state of Victoria has ever seen, coming out of a crisis that the world experienced. It is a budget that makes a foundation for recovery across the board. We have seen the pandemic repair plan and we have seen the Victorian Future Fund, and the figures out today show that all the work that has gone in—the long-term work and that vision for our economic future—is actually working.

If I can take you back to 2012, the unemployment rate was 5.8 per cent, the highest on the mainland. I think in 2014 that got above 6 per cent—it might have been 6.2 per cent from memory. Since the pandemic, since the tranche of economic policy that has been put in place, which I will go into in a minute, we have seen those statistics rapidly decline, which is a good thing. Unemployment as of June

this year was 3.7 per cent. As of July, the next month, it was 3.2 per cent, and we have now heard the Victorian Treasurer talk about 3.1 per cent unemployment in Victoria, which is the lowest in the nation. That is right, Victoria is leading the nation on unemployment. It is the lowest in 50 years, and it is interesting when you put in perspective that that national average is 3.9 per cent. We do hear from those opposite from time to time, or maybe every day, about what is not happening correctly with the Victorian economy. There are many, many states and nations in the world that would be jealous of the comeback that Victoria has had and that credit to a huge extent can be apportioned to the Treasurer of Victoria and good governance, of course.

I will get into some of the budget features that affect Frankston very soon and be very excited do that. But I know I could take up my whole 15 minutes doing that, so I did just want to talk about some of the things in the budget that I think meant a lot to people in Victoria. We have been through a really hard time, and everybody knows that. But Victorians are definitely not whingers. When they see a problem, they want a plan and they want to see it fixed. They do not want to see someone just standing there waving their arms around, saying words that mean nothing. This budget certainly brought a huge amount of policy to bear, and it was a lot to digest for a lot of Victorians. But we will go through a bit of a list, and you can see how this budget has been the catalyst for our economic recovery.

There were some obvious issues around ESTA, and there was record investment and recruitment, with \$330 million in there. We had 90 new paramedics, 500 new officers and 50 new PSOs over two years, funded and catered for in this budget. We also had that aforementioned pandemic repair plan. We had the funding to train and hire 7000 new healthcare workers and a statewide investment of \$2.9 billion in health. We had many upgrades of emergency services facilities. I see the State Control Centre was funded \$36.2 million and SES \$28.5 million to maintain and upgrade the facilities that those absolute heroes in orange use every night and every day. Often when we are in our beds sleeping they are out there doing the hard yards. Also the CFA received \$16 million to upgrade 40 CFA facilities to be female friendly, which is really, really important. There was \$44 billion funded into the Victorian community response to COVID, essentially for workers, businesses and people's jobs as well.

On another level, the international level, it is very clear to international businesses that Victoria is open for investment, well and truly. It is attractive to international investment. I recently met with a company called LeadSquared and their CEO, Nilesh Patel. It is a fantastic story of a startup that has now become a unicorn—so it has achieved more than \$1 billion worth of investment. They started in a room that was accessed via a garage. They basically run out a customer relations management system with software as a service, and they have just made Melbourne their Oceania base. It is a billion-dollar company, a unicorn to come out of India that has made Melbourne their Oceania base, which is amazing. It is very, very important for people to realise that the statistics around these businesses, unicorns and startups, are huge. We are dealing with data that suggests that unicorns and startups created 60 000 jobs in Victoria since 2017. That is not a figure to be sneezed at, and these companies are coming internationally to Melbourne because they see an economy that is growing. They see unemployment is down. They see partnerships that they can make with universities over here and other educational institutions, such as the partnerships with Deakin University and partnerships with RMIT, which were spoken about at length at the Australia India Business Council, an event which I attended recently.

We have also got of course the all-important Suburban Rail Loop. It has been in the media a little bit lately. I think there have been a lot of people talking about that. In my neck of the woods in Frankston any time you talk about the Suburban Rail Loop and you want to talk about the faux choice between public transport and health, people in Frankston turn around and they say, 'Well, why can't we have both? What is the issue?', because in Frankston we are building a \$1.13 billion hospital. It is huge. It has got its own childcare centre, a community centre, car parking, 12 storeys, 130 beds, oncology, new theatres, a special care nursery, a women's clinic, new paediatrics and obstetrics, mental health, children's services and new maternity. People know that the Suburban Rail Loop is a visionary project. It is one of those projects that, as the Premier has said so many times, we will not see completed while we are in government perhaps, and that is the great thing. I think that people see it is about projects

that create the future and not just looking through the lens of a three-year term or a four-year term at the state level.

The Suburban Rail Loop means a lot for people in Frankston. At the moment people in Frankston get on the Frankston line and they have to go all the way to Richmond or Caulfield to get on the Cranbourne line to go east. That would be, say, a 20-minute drive usually for us. The Suburban Rail Loop means you will get off somewhere near Cheltenham and you can go straight east, just like on any modern railway in a metropolis internationally—so that would be Tokyo, London and many, many other countries which we would compare ourselves with, some of their major cities.

There has been a huge investment in education. It has been spoken about quite a bit, but one of the proudest moments I had in here, in Parliament, this term was hearing that the Andrews Labor government would fund the redevelopment of every single special school in Victoria. That is a huge commitment to make sure that we redevelop those schools to the standard reflecting the kind of education they are providing for those children. Of course, yes, I might have a special stake in it, being a former special school teacher, but what those families go through, what some of those kids go through and what those teachers do to support those children growing up, well, they deserve this. That was something that made me very, very proud to be a member of this government.

We know that the cost of living has become a huge issue for many, many families in Victoria. We have seen interest rates rise through the RBA. They are trying to pour some cold water on the economy, giving us less money to spend in the market. So there have obviously been actions taken by our government, and one of those actions has been the power saving bonus—hugely popular in Victoria. Even if Frankston is just a test of what people are thinking about this project, I was in a shopping centre at a table for 7 hours the other day, and four of us, four people, did 167 power saving bonuses for people that might have been elderly and not able to understand the internet or did not have access to the internet. These people were able to compare their bills. It was amazing to hear one particular person who came along, shouted me a coffee and said, ‘Hey, this is the least I can do; I just made \$250 with 4 minutes time, and I walked away and I compared my energy bill and I am going to save \$1400 a year’.

Of course this is on top of everything else that this government has done, including removing so many level crossings. We promised 50. I think we are up to 85. Member for Sandringham, do you know how many level crossings we are up to?

Mr Rowswell: Not Highett and Wickham roads.

Mr EDBROOKE: I have lost count it is so many. Rental law reforms, building 100 new schools—

Mr Rowswell interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE: I can tell the member for Sandringham is continuing his celebration of those level crossings. We have banned embedded networks, which is essential. When you look at some of these bills people are getting, these power bills, they just do not make sense to even an educated person who might work for a power company. They cannot even explain it to us, and embedded networks do not do anything to improve that.

We have also seen free TAFE. It has had some amazing uptake in Frankston. We have got stage 2 of Chisholm TAFE being constructed as we speak, \$67 million. The slab went down the other day and the hands went up; everyone was cheering in Frankston. There are some great courses there, free TAFE courses that have been added to that TAFE as well, which is quite amazing. I noticed signs on the way home the other night for free entry for kids to the Melbourne show too. It might not mean much to you and me, Acting Speaker, but it does to a lot of people. And also of course we have got the free kinder announcement, so three-year-old kinder, pre-prep and four-year-old kinder—15 hours. That is about two and a half grand a year in savings for people at home. But importantly, as has been pointed out so many times, it means people can actually go back to work without paying for child care.

Their child can go to pre-prep or kinder and can get an education and the best start to life, and at the same time there can be a mum or dad working as well—and not just working to pay off the child care.

We have seen the public transport Night Network rollout. We built Australia's first pride centre. This budget saw the rollout and completion of 1800 school upgrades across the state, which is quite amazing. We have criminalised wage theft. We have brought in the Smile Squad buses for free dental but also two sets of glasses for children in schools too, which as I spoke about yesterday, is an absolute game changer for early diagnostics for children who cannot explain why they might not be able to read or why they cannot see figures correctly. We have also revived the closed regional railway stations. We have got the amazing sick pay guarantee, which I know no-one thinks they need until they actually do, but there were a lot of people signing up for that because they were suddenly realising that the previous federal government would not come to the table on this. This is five days pay—not leave, five days pay—for anyone so they do not have to go to work sick, and that is something that is very valuable.

We have rolled out free baby bundles. We have got those five new Metro Tunnel stations. I think I saw one on Instagram last night, and I was just blown away at the size of the thing. The level of construction is huge. The \$250 power saving bonus I have mentioned. Back in Frankston I just want to take you to Frankston Hospital—not just Frankston Hospital, though, the health services in Frankston. I have mentioned Frankston Hospital plenty of times in this house but not enough. I do just want to squeeze in there that the Andrews Labor government is essentially taking a private hospital, Frankston Private, which has been under-utilised at times, and making it an institution that will perform 9000 elective surgeries per year. If you stack that up with the hospital in Box Hill, it is the same model, but with 4000 elective surgeries per year—along with new GP clinics as well with 300 new consultations every week.

This government is delivering, whether it be in areas like Frankston or across the state. Whether it be in social policy or whether it be in solid economics coming out of a worldwide crisis, we are delivering. We say what we do and we do what we say, and people at the election in November will know that. They will know that sometimes leadership might not deliver you exactly the outcome you want, because you have to think of the community and you have to keep the whole community safe, but people will say that there is one thing we know about this Labor government and that is that they do what they say and they deliver.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (15:33): I rise to speak this afternoon on the take-note motion on the 2022–23 budget. I have already spoken on the budget earlier, so this is my second go at it, and there is plenty to say about what is wrong with this budget. I am going to start of course with health. When we think about health and we are thinking about particularly Ripon, the major project in health in Ripon is the Maryborough hospital. Now, that is a commitment that was made by the government and by me in 2018, and I remind the house that at the time the opposition felt that that project would be done over two terms. I remember the government put out media releases shrilly trying to savage me for saying that we would take two terms to do this important project in Maryborough, but when we go to budget paper 4 and we go to page 68, what we see there is that there has not been a sod turned on this project, and we are now well into time-on in the fourth quarter, so they are not going to get it built in this term. But when we look at where we are going next term, there is the ominous remaining expenditure line that is out past the budget estimates, which is \$94 800 000 of a \$100 million project.

The government are not even prepared to front up and suggest when they are going to finish this project from the last budget that they have brought down in this term. The people of Maryborough are absolutely right to be concerned, wondering where this project is going, why it is taking so long and why we are only getting pretty pictures but no actual design schematics yet—they are still doing consultation. I can say with absolute certainty that if the Liberal-Nationals are elected in November, we will build this hospital. We will not constantly put it off in the way this government have—it is always on the never-never; they have not started it. We will build this hospital.

We will also allocate \$30 million to deliver the first stage of the St Arnaud hospital redevelopment. Parts of the St Arnaud hospital were built in the 19th century. The main building was built in the 1930s. It is not fit for purpose. The patients rooms are on the first floor; they are highly inaccessible. It is one of those buildings that was built with a big verandah around the front, and the idea was that you would be able to convalesce there and sit out on the verandah. Well, the verandah of the St Arnaud hospital has so much concrete cancer that it is closed; you cannot go out on it. As a result, it has very small rooms, shared bathrooms—it is not fit for purpose. We will rebuild that facility. Labor has no such plans.

Similarly, when we go to Beaufort, the Beaufort hospital is a lovely little hospital. It has got a lot of aged care in it. Again, the facilities are tired, and the board and CEO have come up with a great plan to redesign their site and get all of the aged care into one building, which is where it needs to be now—we do not really have high care and low care anymore, we have ageing in place. Again, the government has shown no interest, in this budget or any other budget, in funding that.

Similarly, I cannot go past the Daylesford hospital. Daylesford is not in Ripon; it is of course in Macedon. Macedon is represented by the current Minister for Health, the government's fourth health minister for this term—but nonetheless she is the health minister. She is unable or unwilling to get that hospital \$75 million. She was wholly unable to convince the previous health minister that her community needed that \$75 million, and she has not done it now as the health minister. That is clearly one that would benefit residents in Ripon and those in Hepburn, and if the minister had any authority in her portfolio, surely she could get at least stage 1 of the Daylesford hospital redevelopment done.

The final one I would mention is the Ballarat Health Services expansion, and that is in a similar situation to the Maryborough hospital. It is a very big project; it is a much-needed project for Ballarat. Ballarat's hospital has got very high waiting lists and huge instances of ambulance ramping because its ED is overwhelmed. The government are planning to spend a significant amount of money on that hospital—at two elections they have announced it—and almost all, I am going to say over 80 per cent, of their funding is again in the never-never. It is not scheduled to be spent. Who knows when we are actually going to see any new buildings in Ballarat Health Services.

That brings me to the broader issue of health. I note that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has had a good, hard look at Labor's budget—the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is chaired by a Labor member and has a Labor majority. When they looked at health they found—finding 20, page 30, of their most recent report—that the 2022–23 budget for the Department of Health represents a 7.5 per cent reduction from the 2021–22 revised budget. That is \$2 billion. The government has cut \$2 billion out of health when we have got 87 000 people on the elective surgery waiting lists. We have people dying because ambulances will not turn up. We have got emergency departments, including that in Ballarat, overrun, and yet the government has cut \$2 billion from health. You would not make it up. But then they go further, and when confronted with this reality in the budget papers and asked about it in a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing, when the Premier was asked, 'Why have you cut \$2 billion—here's the page reference, BP 3, page 220', the Premier said:

There is no cut to the health budget ...

Well, that is not what the budget paper says. You are not meant to mislead the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. In fact that is why we now have a minority report, because over and over again senior ministers and the Premier sought to say that black is white and that what their own budget document says is not the reality of the situation. But unfortunately for them they are the ones that published the budget. The budget shows that they have cut \$2 billion from health.

That brings us to something they have not cut, and that is the Cheltenham to Box Hill part of the rail loop. The people of Ripon have never, in my opinion, had much of an interest in this rail loop. It certainly does not service their needs. It does not go anywhere near Ripon. It does not go anywhere near the western side of Melbourne even, and will not for years and years. Even the Box Hill to Cheltenham bit is going to take 15 years to build. On our side of the house we have said that we will take all of the

money that the government is planning to spend on Cheltenham to Box Hill and put it into the health system. There has never been a time when the health system has needed that money more.

Specifically when we talk about regional health, and that is a great interest of mine, we will build a new Mildura hospital, we will build stage 1 of that St Arnaud hospital in Ripon, we will build Wodonga, we will build Warragul and we will build a \$100 million cancer centre in Shepparton. I think of great interest to many country people is that many of those health services are going to be tertiary health services, and what that means is that they will train doctors and nurses on site. We know—all the evidence shows—that if you train people on site, 85 per cent of those people will stay in the region, at the health service in which they trained. That is particularly true of nurses. We have huge workforce shortages throughout country Victoria at the moment. One of the ways in which you fix that is by making the facilities where those nurses work attractive places to work—not 1930s buildings, which is what they have got in St Arnaud. So it is all part of a workforce development plan as well as providing new and fit-for-purpose facilities for country people as patients.

I now move past health to roads and rail, things that are of great interest to those in Ripon. If I go to budget paper 4, at page 87 it talks about the Western Highway. The Western Highway has appeared in budget papers now for, I would say, 20 years. It is a very big project. It started in Ballarat and is meant to go to Stawell. It has been around for so long that it was funded under the old formulas, where the federal government funded 80 per cent of the road and the state only had to fund 20 per cent of the road. Surprise, surprise, the federal government has in fact funded this road all the way through to Stawell—but it has not moved for over four years; it has not moved for seven years. There have been some monumental mess-ups by this government. They allowed a planning permit to expire. They allowed various other things to go wrong with this project. And there have been protests. I completely concede that there have been protests, but the protests came along after the government had let the planning permit expire, and had it not done that the road would have been built years ago.

We are still now left with a very dangerous road. Unfortunately not that long ago, only a couple of months ago, a paramedic died on that road on her way home from work in a head-on collision. Head-on collisions cannot occur if you have got a divided road. The simple fact is this is a dangerous road. The government has not got on with it, and as a result country people are dying. Country people are dying because this road has not been got on with.

Mr McGhie interjected.

Ms STALEY: I would just respond to the member for Melton: if he thinks it is okay that paramedics die on their way home from work, he should stand up and say so, rather than just interjecting across the table.

Apart from the Western Highway we have a number of other roads that need upgrading. There are C-class roads—VicRoads roads—that carry a lot of grain traffic that are only one lane wide; they are not even two lanes wide. They have got B-doubles on them, and of course they have got more B-doubles on them because the government has not finished the Murray Basin rail project that it so comprehensively botched and that the Minister for Transport Infrastructure completely botched and then abandoned. The result of that is we have more grain trucks on the road. They are wrecking the roads. The roads were not built for them. And then we have got these very narrow roads, and again the government cuts its road maintenance funds and then wonders why the roads are in such bad condition. We have said that we will bring back the country roads and bridges program. That is a major way for council roads to be upgraded, but we need to do more on VicRoads roads.

I note that the Parliamentary Budget Office is an organisation the government does not seem to like very much, particularly since they have found that the Box Hill to Cheltenham rail line does not stack up. But they have also done some other work. They did a report called *Asset Investment Excluding Australian Government Funding*—perhaps not the most exciting title. What it found was that per person asset investment in metropolitan Melbourne was \$15 268 in the last budget, whereas for

country Victoria it was only \$7142. This government is a city-centric government. This is proof of that. It is one of the reasons that we on this side of the chamber have said that, should we come to government, we will ensure that 25 per cent of our infrastructure investment is spent in country and regional Victoria. That is the proportion of the population that lives outside Melbourne. We deserve and should be getting the same per capita spending on regional Victorians as those in metropolitan Melbourne, unlike with this government, who sees nothing good past the tram tracks. I would also, in this last part on roads and rail, note that we understand that with population growth you need to upgrade various transport options, and one of the ones that we will do is extend the Ballarat bus to Smythesdale so that that community will have half-hourly services instead of three a day.

Despite what those on the other side may like to claim, this budget has not delivered for Ripon. It has not delivered for country people. Overwhelmingly it has projects that are either on the never-never, like the Western Highway—and we will get on with that; or are like Maryborough hospital, which they have not turned a sod on—and we will complete that; or are completely missing altogether. What people need is not coming from those sitting on the government benches.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (15:48): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the 2022–23 Victorian budget take-note motion. This is an amazing budget for Victoria and for Clarinda. Delivered by the Andrews Labor government, it is a budget that puts patients first and delivers the government's pandemic repair plan. We know the pressure that has been heaped onto our healthcare system over the course of the global pandemic. Unprecedented pressure on the health system has been felt across the state, the country and the world, and we have felt this in the electorate of Clarinda. We are a major healthcare precinct, and I just want to again say thank you to all the healthcare workers at Monash Health and across Victoria for their hard work, courage and determination as we continue to move through the effects of the global pandemic. Our healthcare workers have been on the front line in this pandemic, and we know how important it is that we support them into the future. That is why this budget delivers an investment of \$12 billion to put patients first with a pandemic repair plan, more staff, better hospitals and first-class care.

We are backing our healthcare workers, delivering funding to train and hire up to 7000 new healthcare workers, including 5000 nurses, and create 1125 new registered undergraduate nursing positions and 75 new registered undergraduate student-of-midwifery roles over the next two years. We are also recruiting up to 2000 expat and international healthcare workers through a global workforce recruitment drive.

As we know, right around the country demand for emergency services is at an all-time high. Our 000 services are dealing with unprecedented call volume, and of course when they call for an ambulance every Victorian should have confidence that one will arrive. That is why we are delivering another 90 paramedics, which means we have added 790 extra paramedics to the workforce since we came to government. To help our frontline workers reach Victorians who need them faster, we are investing another \$333 million to add nearly 400 new staff to increase 000 call-taking and dispatch capacity for 000 services, including ambulance, and training more operators to allocate calls across the state. It is good to see the hardworking member for Melton; from his previous work, before coming to this place, he knows how important it is for this assistance. So these are very important investments into our healthcare workforce.

There is also a major investment into our healthcare infrastructure which makes sure that every local community gets the health infrastructure and services they deserve. There is a \$2.9 billion contribution to building a new hospital and delivering upgraded healthcare services in every corner of our state, including \$12 million for Victoria's second mobile stroke unit at Monash Medical Centre in Clayton, in my electorate. This is a huge investment into our community and the health care of all Victorians.

I am extremely proud of the government's continuing support of and investment into Monash Medical Centre. Earlier this year we finished the second phase of the Andrews Labor government's \$76.3 million emergency department expansion and traffic improvement plan. That project has

delivered an additional 28 emergency department beds and an extra six short-stay beds as well as refurbishing 41 adult emergency bays. That project includes a specialised addition of an emergency department mental health, alcohol and other drugs hub as well as a separate, dedicated children's emergency area. This will help to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right environment. This budget will continue the important development projects already taking place. By expanding our emergency departments, adding more surgical beds to get more elective surgeries done and increasing maternity care and services, this budget will ensure more Victorians get the very best care close to home. Monash Health is amazing. It is the largest health service in Victoria and sees nearly 5 per cent of the state's emergency cases at the centre in Clayton. This Victorian government will continue to deliver, expand and improve facilities and enhance service delivery to meet the needs of our growing local community in the south-east.

As we roll out our pandemic repair plan to make sure that people get the care that they deserve, we are also getting on with delivering the schools, the roads and the public transport services that they rely on. We are continuing to build a world-class education system here in Victoria, the Education State. Since 2015 we have made significant investments in new schools, upgrades and improvements across the state. This budget will bring our total investment in improving and building new schools to more than \$12.8 billion over the past eight years. To help better meet the needs of local families, this budget invests another \$1.8 billion in building new schools and upgrading existing schools.

And there are some fantastic results in Clarinda in education. We invested \$5.9 million to upgrade Kingston Heath Primary School, giving students modern learning centres and a new oval, because under the Andrews Labor government we are giving every child the opportunity to achieve their full potential regardless of where they come from. I was very pleased to join my friend the member for Mordialloc, the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools, at Kingston Heath Primary School earlier this year to share and celebrate this fantastic investment with the school community. In addition the Cheltenham Secondary College will receive another \$413 000 to replace the current portable toilet block in the year 7 village to improve amenity, cleanliness and hygiene. This is part of our Minor Capital Works Fund, worth \$42 million. These are all fantastic achievements and fantastic initiatives for Clarinda students and families.

Moving on, there are also some really important investments to get us home sooner and safer. We are building the roads that we now need as well as futureproofing our road network by investing in planning for our transport needs. The budget kicked off planning for installations of traffic signals at North Road and Mackie Road in East Bentleigh to improve safety for locals. This is an important and welcome investment. Thousands of Victorians also rely on our local buses to get them to work, school and around our community. Thanks to the investments in this budget we will get a smarter, faster and more reliable bus network, including more frequent services between Oakleigh, Box Hill and Southland on the 733 and 767 bus routes so Victorians spend less time waiting at bus stops and more time with family and friends—a great initiative, great investment.

We also want to give our multicultural communities the chance to celebrate. That is why we are investing \$6.4 million to continue the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund so we can build and upgrade community facilities at places of worship through projects such as new car parks, kitchens and meeting places. This is great news for our vibrant and diverse community in Clarinda. It is also great news for the Wat Buddharangsi Buddhist temple in Springvale South, which will receive \$250 000 to deliver a new playground for kids attending the temple with their parents and grandparents. Congratulations to venerable Ol Sam, the committee, members and volunteers on this wonderful result. There is also \$25 000 for the Benevolent Association of Nafpaktians in Heatherton to upgrade their security system so that they can continue to come together safely in a great community space.

Another fantastic investment, more broadly, is that there are actually contributions of \$26 million for young people and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, helping them come together as we emerge from the pandemic. More than \$1.1 million will go towards multicultural festivals and events, helping communities celebrate and preserve traditions while also boosting our events and

hospitality industry as we recover from the pandemic. Newly arrived migrant services will be assisted with more than \$6.7 million to ensure critical settlement services can continue. Importantly, these services bridge the gap left by the commonwealth government, including support for community hubs, legal services and playgrounds. More than \$4.4 million will deliver the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan*, known as the VACAP, including support for homework clubs, school community liaison officers and other key initiatives. These are also very, very important for our youth to celebrate and to be together rather than spending time somewhere else. It is a great initiative.

Almost \$1.3 million will also deliver the Empower Youth program, connecting young people in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

The SPEAKER: Order! The time has come for me to interrupt business for the matter of public importance.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

HEALTH SYSTEM

The SPEAKER (16:01): I have accepted a statement from the member for Bulleen proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house notes the Andrews Labor government has presided over a Victorian healthcare crisis and:

- (1) there are more than 87 000 people on the elective surgery waitlist, 000 delays, ambulance response time blowouts and tents being used as emergency departments around the state;
- (2) despite Victoria's health crisis, the Andrews Labor government has this financial year cut \$2 billion to health funding;
- (3) the Guy Liberals and Nationals will shelve Labor's \$35 billion Box Hill to Cheltenham train project and use that money to fix our healthcare system;
- (4) the communities of Mildura, Melton, Sandringham, St Arnaud, Wodonga, Warragul, Rosebud, Caulfield, Shepparton, Werribee and Greater Melbourne will benefit from new or upgraded hospitals under the Liberals and Nationals;
- (5) Victorians will benefit under the Liberals and Nationals with a commitment to halve the waiting list in the next 4 years, provide more mental health support in schools and a \$4500 rebate for IVF patients;
- (6) only the Liberals and Nationals will provide free public transport for healthcare workers and funding for education expenses for nurses; and
- (7) instead of fixing the crisis, the Andrews Labor government will proceed with the east and north sections of the rail loop, costing taxpayers \$200 billion for a project that has a benefit-cost ratio of 0.6, and has been criticised by economic and transport experts.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (16:02): On behalf of the 87 000 Victorians who await elective surgery in this state, I move this motion in my name. On behalf of the Victorians who have called for an ambulance from our overworked ambulance staff that has not arrived, I move this motion. On behalf of those Victorians who have sought a bed in a hospital and been unable to get one because of the crowded conditions our hospital workers have to work through, I move this motion. All of us on this side of the chamber stand up and support this motion on behalf of those Victorians who are experiencing the failings of a health service that has been chronically mismanaged—

A member: Broken.

Mr GUY: a broken health service from a government that has not done the work over the last two years to fix it as it said it would. 87 000 Victorians await elective surgery in this state. That is 87 000 Victorians who cannot get surgery at a time they need it the most. It is 87 000 Victorians who are not looking for cosmetic surgery but are looking for surgery like knee replacements, gastric work, hip work, vital work in relation to their treatments and who just cannot be seen in a state because its health service is broken. It has not been broken by federal governments. It has not been broken by the

South Australian government, by the New South Wales government, by other people, by previous governments, by councils or by business. It has been underinvested in by the state Labor government that has been here for eight years—a Premier who has been here longer than Steve Bracks, longer than Jeff Kennett and who wants to be here longer than John Cain and longer than Rupert Hamer. It is all about him. It is all about his statue. It is all about record books for him. But it is not about the Victorians who are hurting—tragically some who are dying—because our health service is not up to scratch. No amount of government spin, no amount of press releases, hard hats, hi-vis vests—no amount of this—can tell Victorians about what we have been through for the last two and half years. The world's longest lockdowns were in Melbourne—playgrounds locked up, curfews, rings of steel, businesses lost by small business owners, kids mandated with masks, the people in the world locked down for the longest were here in Melbourne.

To come out of this with a health system in worse order than when we went into that pandemic, despite a Premier saying 'I will fix this health system, and that's why you're being locked down' and that 'There'll be 4000 more ICU beds waiting for you when we come out of this'—no amount of government spin will have Victorians know any different than fact, and we know the facts. We have lived it. Our children have lived it. Our parents have lived it. People like Dave Edwards in Swan Hill, who the National Party leader knows, know it. He watched his father die on the lawn of his house because an ambulance did not turn up when he needed it the most. It is not the fault of the paramedics and it is not the fault of the people who work in the system—it is the fault of a government that does not recognise we have a problem. And if you do not recognise we have got a problem, you will not fix it.

Ms Britnell: He doesn't care.

Mr GUY: And if you do not care about the problem, you will not fix it either. For the Premier, it is all about him; it is all about getting by for the next 90 days.

Mr Wakeling: A PR problem.

Mr GUY: It is a PR problem. It is a problem with spin. It is a problem not for outcomes, not for Victorians, but for managing it for himself. And that, if anything, is what we on this side of the house, the Liberals and Nationals, find the most repulsive about this debate—that there is no empathy when we raise these matters in the chamber, that there is no sense of urgency to fix this problem and that we have people on the other side of the chamber, who frankly belong in a kindergarten, whose interjections are frankly juvenile and ridiculous and make a mockery of themselves being elected to this chamber. They make a mockery of themselves.

Ms Settle interjected.

Mr GUY: I do not have the time or the crayons to explain it to the honourable member over there, because at this point in time this is a serious problem. That is why, with \$2 billion in health cuts, it is time to fix the problem. On this side of the chamber we intend to fix the health system—it is our priority. We will build new hospitals in Mildura, in Wodonga, in Warragul and in Melton and a royal children's hospital in Werribee to service the growing western suburbs, where there are more babies being born—in Werribee, Wyndham and Melton—than most other places in Australia. We will upgrade hospitals like Caulfield, St Arnaud, Shepparton, Sandringham and Rosebud, because it is the right thing to do. This will halve our hospital waiting lists in our first term—in four years. The people in Albury and Wodonga have been waiting for a new hospital for five years. They do not want a GP clinic, they want a hospital. How many times does the member for Benambra need to come into this chamber and say to the Premier of this state, 'When are you going to build us a hospital?'—because this is what the people of the border desire, and this is what they deserve. Four years ago the Labor government—I am glad the member for Melton is here—promised to build the Melton hospital. Four years it took them to purchase a block of land—four years. It is one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia and the government moved at one of the slowest paces in Australia to build a brand new

hospital. We will build it. We have got the money, and we will build it. We will build a new hospital in Warragul because it is needed, because the people in West Gippsland deserve it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Melton! Member for Buninyong!

Mr GUY: The people of West Gippsland deserve it, the people of West Gippsland need it, because Warragul-Drouin as a conurbation is growing faster than anywhere else in Gippsland and will soon be the largest population centre to the east of Melbourne. Its hospital is old, it needs to be repaired, and that is why we will do it.

We will build an infectious diseases centre in the centre of Melbourne so that should we have another event, we will make sure that those who are sick are quarantined and those who are healthy are not—a sensible, straightforward decision.

We will build training centres at a lot of these hospitals—Mildura, a new one in Shepparton, Wodonga, Melton as well, and Warragul—because where nurses and physicians train is where they will stay and work. That is how we decentralise population, regionalise it. Ask the member for South-West Coast, who was a nurse who worked in these facilities for the vast majority of her career.

Ms Britnell: Three decades.

Mr GUY: Three decades of work in the health sector. That is what you do. Not only do you regionalise and decentralise health services and population, it is about a plan, a vision, for the whole state. It is so important that Victorians know in this election and with this matter of public importance today that this side of the house believes health and fixing our health crisis is the most important thing facing our state today.

We will reprioritise every cent available for the Cheltenham to Box Hill rail tunnel; we are going to put it all into fixing our health system. We make no apology about this—no apology. I say to the member for Bendigo East, who talks about jobs, ‘Well, you don’t build hospitals out of Lego’. They are built with bricks and mortar and a lot in between. It takes thousands of jobs to build and upgrade 11 hospitals, and the ongoing jobs of the thousands who will be needed to work in them, as the member for Warrandyte says, will be another huge boost to our state—a jobs boost, a confidence boost, a health boost—and something that benefits every single Victorian, not just the pet project of one man that was thought up on a Cathay Pacific flight, business class, to Hong Kong as what he might like to leave as a legacy. Should he get a statue? No.

This is a vision to fix our health system for the whole state. It is that simple. What is more important than saving Victorians’ lives? Nothing. And that is why in a time when we have got a health crisis, which is now, it is time we invested in our health system. Who knows about the Box Hill to Cheltenham rail loop? I mean, is it \$35 billion? Is it \$50 billion? Is it \$125 billion? Is it \$200 billion? Is it one stage, two stages, three stages? I mean, we have been told in the last two weeks that it is going to go to the airport. It was going to go to Werribee originally. Now it is going to go to Box Hill. Now it is apparently going to go to Monash University and something is in between. It has got a different style of train to the current network; they are smaller. It has got a different track gauge to the rest of the network; it is standard gauge. It has got a different voltage to the rest of the network. I mean, what is this, seriously? We could have all that uncertainty under the Labor government, or we could take every cent from building that uncertainty and put all those jobs and all that money into fixing what is the most important priority for every Victorian, our health service.

When we fix the health service, when we put money—billions of dollars—into the health sector, every single cent that we can, it will mean we can build the hospitals we need to build. It means we can add 2000 mental health professionals to the system. It means we can add thousands of doctors and nurses to run our health system. It means we can halve surgery waiting lists in our first four years. It means we can provide free public transport to nurses and other health professionals to reward them and thank

them for the job they have been doing. It means we can honour our promises—unlike that for the Geelong women’s and children’s hospital, which has never been built, promised by the government four years ago; unlike the Melton hospital, promised by Labor four years ago but never delivered; and those 10 regional hospital upgrades and those around the city that were promised but not delivered four years on. Remember, we were going to come out of this better than we were when we went in. The ICU beds that were promised—4000 of them—all promised, not delivered. Is it any wonder that there is so much uncertainty in the system when we have had four health ministers in four years? We have had the biggest crisis in the state since the war—COVID—and the people managing it, four health ministers in four years.

Ms Britnell: ‘I will prepare the health system’, huh?

Mr GUY: ‘I will prepare the health system’, the government said, as the member for South-West Coast says. ‘I will make sure the health system is in better condition when we come out of it’, said the Premier. ‘I will make sure that no Victorian’s health will be worse off’, said the Premier. It is. ‘I will make sure that country Victoria has the best health in Australia’—women are having babies on the side of the road near Portland because the system is not working. We on this side of the house are committed to fixing the health system. We on this side of the house have a plan to do so, have the money to do so and have the ability, the know-how, the desire and the absolute commitment to do so.

On the other side of the house you have got all of that for a railway line. Railway lines are nice to have. Believe me, my dad loves trains. I know lots about them. But they are a nice-to-have, they are not a priority in the middle of a health crisis. When you have got a health crisis, the issue to fix is clear. Keep Victorians safe. Make sure that women have got places to safely give birth, not by the side of the road. When you call for an ambulance, one arrives, it picks you up and when it gets to hospital there is a bed waiting for you and they do not have to triage you and stick you in a tent. It is a very clear choice at this election: a government that is committed to an ego project of a Premier who has gone mad with his own self-aggrandisement or fixing the health system once and for all with a large amount of money to get on with the job to build the infrastructure that is required from Mildura to Wodonga to Warragul to Warrnambool and everything in between.

We on this side of the house believe this is the biggest crisis our state is facing. It has got to be dealt with straight up, and you cannot do both. This complete rubbish that you can somehow run up a debt like Cuba or Portugal and do everything—it is absolute rubbish. You cannot do both, and on this side of the house we are committing to doing one thing properly: fixing the health system once and for all. That is what we believe, and I have no doubt that is what Victorians want and will invest in in November.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (16:17): What an extraordinary contribution and perhaps audition from the Leader of the Opposition, who seems to have forgotten that it was he and many of his colleagues over that side of the house who sat around the cabinet table and delivered cuts, chaos and closures right through the healthcare system when they had the chance.

Ms Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast is warned.

Mr J BULL: It is like groundhog day here at Spring Street, and we have got Bill Murray over the other side, the Leader of the Opposition, and his fast-diminishing rabble of loyal followers, who have proven—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, I think it is very clear that in regard to the member for Sunbury’s contribution, referring to members of this house by anything other than their correct title is unparliamentary and against the standing orders, and I ask you to bring him back.

The SPEAKER: It is indeed against the standing orders. I ask members to refer to members by their correct title.

Mr J BULL: Thank you, Speaker. It will come as no surprise to you, Speaker, but a surprise to those opposite that good governments should not be one-trick ponies. Good governments, like this one, invest in a range of portfolio areas that continue to support the needs of Victorians right across the state to make this state a better state, a fairer state and a stronger state. We are of course repairing the damage done by the global pandemic, and we are building the Suburban Rail Loop. We will invest in transport infrastructure; emergency services; training and skills; higher education; agriculture; economic development; trade; planning; child protection and family services; disability, ageing and carers; police; crime prevention; racing; business precincts; public transport; roads and road safety; energy; environment and climate action; tourism, sport and major events; creative industries; and local government—a whole range of portfolio areas that this government will continue to invest in each and every time we have the opportunity to be on this side of the house. We are not a one-trick pony. This is a government that will continue to invest in all of our areas right across the state because that is what you must do, and that is what we will continue to do. This is a government with a significant and large-scale reform agenda.

It is about having opportunities to provide free TAFE, free kinder, free education. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about ‘no plan’ to deal with many of the challenges that have been faced within the healthcare system and I point to a \$12 billion plan, a significant plan that will deliver an extraordinary amount of support to our healthcare system, a system that we know has been under extraordinary pressure each and every day since COVID arrived on our shores in January 2020.

Indeed the healthcare system has for a very long period of time been a system in which this government has—whether it is through the budget cycle, whether it is through local commitments and announcements or whether it is through working with our healthcare workforce—worked with our healthcare workforce at each and every opportunity we have had the time to do so. The global pandemic has placed extraordinary pressure on our healthcare system. What the Leader of the Opposition has done in his contribution is simply ignore that \$12 billion and ignore every initiative and announcement that has been made by this government.

We take the opportunity this afternoon to thank and acknowledge our healthcare workers. We value our healthcare workers, and we thank them for the extraordinary work they have been able to do and acknowledge that these efforts are going to need to continue as we continue to deal with COVID. It is those opposite that have never been short of criticism. They never hesitate to attack our hardworking healthcare workers. There is no policy and no ideas. The \$12 billion plan is about training and hiring thousands more workers to support our paramedics, to build new and upgraded hospitals, to expand emergency departments and to boost surgical capacity.

There are only 10 minutes to go in this contribution, but there is a significant amount of investment: training and hiring up to 7000 healthcare workers, 5000 of those being nurses; more paramedics; more support for paramedics; and increased capacity for 000 call takers. It is an unprecedented package around recruiting, training and upskilling our healthcare workforce, helping to relieve pressure on the system. There is \$2.3 billion to upgrade and build new hospitals, \$236 million to double emergency department capacity at Casey and Werribee, \$1.5 billion to invest in the new Footscray Hospital, \$250 million for the Monash Children’s Hospital that was opened in 2017 and \$200 million for the Joan Kirner Women’s and Children’s Hospital that was opened in 2019 to offer local women and families in Melbourne’s west world-class maternity and paediatric services. None of these investments have been made possible by anyone over on that side of the house. It is the Andrews Labor government that, each and every time we have the opportunity, will continue to invest in all of these incredible projects.

Mr Edbrooke: \$1.1 billion for Frankston!

Mr J BULL: \$1.1 billion, the member for Frankston, to expand the Frankston Hospital—world-class health care for local families and to create hundreds of jobs in Melbourne’s south-east. There is Ballarat Base Hospital—local families getting the best care closer to home—and nearly \$230 million for Goulburn Valley Health and \$270 million for the Latrobe Regional Hospital.

It is incredible how when tangible, practical projects—real investments—go to the exact points that the Leader of the Opposition in his very flamboyant contribution for the cameras was making, they just do not want to hear it. They do not want to hear about real investments. It is extraordinary. It is absolutely extraordinary. In addition to that there is funding of over \$1 billion for small local projects, funding grants to healthcare services and agencies in the last four years representing more than 2000 small locally delivered projects. This is a significant investment in health infrastructure, an unprecedented investment.

Those on the other side want to talk about workforce. Let us talk about workforce and our landmark \$270 million nursing and midwifery package that this government has just announced: 17 000 nurses and midwives trained and recruited, an initiative that despite some of the criticism from those opposite is something that is going to go to the exact challenge that our healthcare workforce is facing. Again, they are not wanting to hear it—‘Ignore it, put the politics above the patient and everyone will just believe it’. Well, I do not think Victorians for one second believe that narrative. I think they believe in real investment. I think they understand the challenges that COVID-19 has presented and the investment of this government—all of the members on this side of the house—for our incredible healthcare workforce, who we will support every single day. We will be with them every single day.

It is a very, very long list, but just recently the leader of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation said there are nearly 100 000 nurses. Imagine if those opposite had been in charge during the pandemic. Imagine for just a second if those opposite were in charge through those times. They could not make a policy decision. They could not work out whether they were for masks, they were against masks or they were hunting bats. I do not know what their policy position was. It was extraordinary. That is why this government will continue to work with our healthcare workforce to make sure that we are investing in both training and recruiting the health service workforce to make sure we are there at each and every opportunity.

I want to talk about Sunday’s announcement. We know that ensuring the delivery of free university for domestic nursing students who start their studies in the next two years is a significant and important initiative for every single member on this side of the house. It was announced by the Premier on Sunday and announced by the Minister for Health. This is something that is incredibly important to attract people back into the workforce and to be able to repair the damage that has been done not by anyone on this side of the house but by the global pandemic. This is a significant and important announcement. What we will continue to do is make sure we are investing at each and every opportunity in the workforce and in the health infrastructure within local communities.

Speaker, as I am sure you know, being a regional member, finding opportunities for this government to invest in rural and regional Victoria, in the suburbs and in the city, where we are right now, is something that this government will continue to do, working with local healthcare workers and working with local healthcare providers to understand many of those issues that we are addressing within this significant investment.

We have been ensuring that since 2014 we have invested record amounts in our health workforce. We have seen continued workforce growth within that public system. There are nearly 4000 more doctors, a 44 per cent increase; nearly 10 000 more nurses, an increase of 27 per cent; and nearly 2000 more paramedics, a 56 per cent increase. And it is lucky that these investments were made. It is important that these investments were made, because can you imagine if COVID arrived on our shores with us not having had that investment? If we had continued to languish and continued to deliver the cuts and chaos and closures that were delivered by those opposite, can you imagine the scenarios we would have faced—hundreds of thousands of cases, hundreds of thousands of lives lost. But this government ensured that we took those hard decisions. None of those decisions were easy. The Premier stood up for over 100 days at those press conferences to make sure that Victorians knew that it was this government, the Andrews Labor government, that would continue to work with local communities to ensure that those within local communities and their families were safe. We will continue to do that, and we will continue to invest.

This is a government that is proud of our healthcare workers in this state. This is a government that will deliver a comprehensive repair plan of more than \$12 billion to ensure that the healthcare system, which was absolutely smashed by the global pandemic, will be rebuilt. We are continuing to make those investments that we were making prior to COVID, and we will continue to ensure that we are investing each and every time we have the opportunity. What we have seen from the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite is—always—politics over patients. We are a team that will continue to make these investments.

I want to touch on, in the couple of minutes that I have got remaining, the Suburban Rail Loop and the notion from those opposite that you can only do one thing. At the start of my contribution I spoke about the incredible investment right through our portfolio areas and our ensuring that we are delivering a pipeline of projects, whether it is the Big Build, whether it is the North East Link, the Suburban Rail Loop, the West Gate Tunnel or the 65 level crossing removals that we have delivered—soon to be 66 with Sunbury. We are investing in those services, whether it is in sports or whether it is in education and the Education State by upgrading new schools right across the state.

Those opposite had four years. There was not one project within my electorate—absolute crickets; open the cupboard, nothing there. Under this government there has been \$70 million for local schools. But apparently you can only do one thing. If we were standing here and making no acknowledgement that there is stress and pressure on the healthcare workforce, then maybe that argument would stick—maybe. But we have acknowledged the problem, we have invested \$12 billion to fix the problem, we are working hard with the healthcare workforce and we will continue to invest right across the state.

Move around your local communities over the next two months and talk to your local communities about free TAFE—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Warrandyte is warned.

Mr J BULL: about the power saving bonus, about the sick pay guarantee, about our record investment in rail and road and schools. That is what our community wants to hear about. They want to continue to hear about our plans, and with just over two months to go this government will outline our plans for the next four years of a continued Andrews Labor government.

The Suburban Rail Loop is a transformative project. It is a transformative project that somewhere along the journey the Leader of the Opposition has failed to remember is a project that Victorians in comprehensive and overwhelming numbers voted for—‘But that doesn’t matter. We’ll put that to the side and we’ll concentrate on politics over patients’.

We as a government are proud of our record of our investment in health, of our investment in transport, of our investment in education. At each and every opportunity we will continue to be bold, we will continue to be creative and we will continue to be dynamic and innovative and to work with Victorians to ensure that the challenges we face will be met head-on. And we will continue to invest in our incredible healthcare workforce, who each and every day, particularly through the pandemic, have been smashed. This government will stand with them each and every day.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:32): I rise to support the member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition, in his matter of public importance today. I do this on behalf of all Victorians who have been failed by the Andrews government and their lack of investment in the health system. There have not been enough resources put into the health system here in Victoria. It is not about the dedicated staff at all levels who have done everything they can to make sure Victorians have a good health service. It is actually a failure of government that there is not enough of those resources to support them. It is a failure of government that there is not the infrastructure for them to work in to do that.

There was nothing, absolutely nothing, in the contribution of the member for Sunbury that would give anyone in Victoria the confidence that if they ring 000, they will actually get someone to answer the

call. There is nothing the member for Sunbury said that gave any confidence of that. If that call was answered, there is nothing in the contribution that would give them confidence that an ambulance would turn up in a reasonable time, and we have heard example after example after example in this place during question time of people who have died or people who have got sicker waiting for an ambulance. David Edwards's father is a classic example of that. David and his family come from Swan Hill. There is nothing the member for Sunbury said that would actually give anyone any confidence that a repeat of what happened to the Edwards family would not happen again here in Victoria. There was nothing in the contribution that would give people confidence that when they get to a hospital emergency department they will not be put in a tent to wait for hours—put in a tent. The comment that came from a paramedic in Victoria—and it is a pity the member for Melton has left the chamber—was that it is like Guantánamo Bay. A paramedic saying that—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who are not in their allocated seats and who are yelling across the chamber are being disorderly.

Mr WALSH: There is nothing that would give confidence that it is not going to happen again. Tents in front of an emergency department to house patients is not the way to treat patients, and to have the Minister for Health say that is the appropriate level of care shows that the Minister for Health does not understand what an appropriate level of care is, and I think the Minister for Health is failing Victorians on that. When it comes to the Minister for Health, I will not be silenced by her email saying I cannot talk about issues in this Parliament unless I get consent, and I am sure everyone that sits on this side of the chamber found that email from the Minister for Health absolutely offensive. Why should the Minister for Health say I cannot raise something on the Edwards family's behalf in this chamber? There was something yesterday I raised about the woman that waited 6 hours to get an ambulance after she had had a fall and fractured her hip. To say that I cannot raise that in this chamber is an absolute impost on my rights as a member of Parliament. I think you, as Speaker, should investigate that because it is trying to silence members of Parliament who are raising issues in this place.

A member interjected.

Mr WALSH: It is intimidation. What is even worse: they cannot even spell. The people that sent the email cannot spell. To think that the Minister for Health, 'Mary-Anne Thomas', would be spelled with two Rs—

Mr Riordan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Polwarth, you are not in your allocated seat.

Mr WALSH: just defies logic to me. I will not be silenced.

We have a Premier who has presided over the health system here in Victoria effectively for 12 of the last 16 years: four years as the Minister for Health and eight years as the Premier but effectively also Minister for Health, because we have been through that many ministers for health. As soon as they do not do what the Premier wants, they are put in the freezer; they are frozen out. So the Premier actually has ultimate responsibility for everything that has gone wrong in the health system here in Victoria. The fact that there are 87 000 people on the elective surgery waiting list—that is an absolute disgrace. People are waiting in pain for literally years to get the surgery they need. We have heard the reports about prescription medication addiction. People are waiting on painkillers for years to get the surgery they need. That is leading to other poor health outcomes here in Victoria.

The people in November have a very, very clear choice. Do they want a train line from Cheltenham to Box Hill that is going to cost \$36 billion, maybe \$50 billion, maybe \$80 billion, or do they want the health system fixed in Victoria? That is a very, very clear choice.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr WALSH: As the member for Warrandyte said, there is effectively no choice: a something train line in 15 years time; or the people of Mildura with a new hospital, the people of Wodonga with a new hospital, the people at St Arnaud with an upgraded hospital—the list goes on, and there will be more to add to that—and a workforce plan that will make sure that there are actually staff to staff those hospitals to make sure the services that need to be delivered will be delivered.

Speaker, you, as one of the members in Bendigo, would understand how important the new hospital in Bendigo has been to the health services of Bendigo and the wider region. That is the sort of health service that we need in the other regional cities around Victoria. That is the health service that we need in the suburbs, like our commitment to Werribee. That is the sort of health infrastructure and service that we need right around Victoria. That is not what we are getting under the Andrews government. The health services, and particularly regional health services, have been short-changed under the Andrews government.

I get calls from people who are just worn out trying to do what they need to do because there are not enough resources. When it comes to the \$3000 bonus for the public sector health service workers, a lot of them actually do not qualify for that money. There are a whole range of doctors in Echuca who are on contract. One of them contacted me who has worked 29 days straight. She is absolutely exhausted from delivering the services that she has delivered to her community and does not qualify for that because she is not an employee of the hospital, she is a contractor. That is just so wrong. That bonus should be for everyone that has worked really, really hard to deliver the services in the community.

That is why the commitment that we have given to providing free public transport for health workers covers both the private and the public sectors. We know that if you are going to have a viable health service here in Victoria, there has to be a public sector that is well funded by the government and there has to be a private sector that is looked after as well. It is not the Premier with his ideology saying, 'The private sector doesn't matter'. They both matter if we are going to have the services we need here in Victoria, because it is funding the private sector to help deliver the surgeries that are needed that is going to help halve the waiting list over the first four years of our term in government.

No-one on the other side of the house is prepared to acknowledge that in this year's budget there is a \$2 billion cut to the health budget. With all the praising self-praise—and self-praise is no praise—for how great the Andrews government are on the health system, they actually cut \$2 billion out of the health system in the May budget. It is there in black and white. If you go to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report, I think there is actually a red arrow that points to it. I wonder who put that red arrow there?

With the mess that the health system is in, what people are saying to me and what people in my electorate are saying to me is that if the Premier wants to stay in power to get his statue in front of 1 Treasury Place, let us take up a collection, let us buy him the statue. Let us tell him he can have the statue now if he would just go away and let someone else fix the health system. If the Premier is so committed to running again, to trying to govern again, to get a statue in front of 1 Treasury Place, the people of Victoria and the people in my electorate will take up a collection. They will pay for it to happen so we can actually get a change of government here in Victoria.

As the Leader of the Opposition has continually said—and I am in absolute heated agreement—the person that got us into this mess is not the person to get us out. The government that got us into this mess is not the government to get us out. That is why in November Victorians will have a very, very clear choice: a vote for Daniel Andrews and a vote for Labor is a vote for more of the same—a vote for surgery waiting lists to stay at record highs, a vote for the fact that you will not get your 000 call answered, a vote for the fact that you will not get an ambulance when you call one in the time that you need it and a vote for the fact that you will wait in a tent in front of the emergency department to get the service that you need. That is what will happen if people vote for Daniel Andrews at this election. A vote for Matthew Guy and the Liberal-Nationals—

The SPEAKER: Order! Please call members by their correct titles.

Mr WALSH: A vote for the member for Bulleen and a vote for a Liberal-Nationals government will see the money taken out of the Suburban Rail Loop and invested in the health system—something that Victorians desperately need in this state.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (16:42): To get started on this debate, I find it fascinating that those opposite think it is a good idea to fundraise to remove the Premier. I ask them: why did they have Liberal candidates at a local festival handing out chocolate bars and seeking donations for the Liberal Party's election? That is pretty bizarre. Chocolate bars—incredibly bizarre.

In getting started on contributing to this debate, I would firstly like to thank all of those health workers who have done such an incredible job over the last three years in what have been astonishingly difficult and unprecedented circumstances. Nobody who enrolled to study nursing, nobody who became a doctor, nobody who became an orderly and nobody who works within a hospital, even hospital administration, would have thought that they would have to work not just as hard as they have but also with the stresses that they have had. And I am sorry that they have been used as a political football by those opposite. With the stresses that these workers are under, to then have it turn into a political game is ridiculous and hurtful and wrong.

I also extend my gratitude to those who have worked incredibly hard to keep our public transport systems going. These people have done incredible work keeping our PT systems clean—have been cleaning buses, cleaning trains, cleaning trams—and steering them and helping people on transport and keeping them safe. They have all done incredible work. I know that on this side of the house we are very grateful for that work and have supported them. And we have not undermined their work, just as we have not undermined the work of healthcare workers.

We have been busy. We have been very busy. We have been hiring thousands of health workers and are now providing scholarships for nurses, supporting paramedics, building new and upgraded hospitals, expanding our emergency departments and boosting surgical capacity. We have brought in the \$12 billion pandemic repair plan. For those opposite, their support of healthcare and health workers is, frankly, too little too late, because at every stage they have undermined the health message. We see this happening even now, where they still refuse to wear masks in this chamber. We have supported our state and our workforce every step of the way. And what does this look like? It looks like 7000 healthcare workers, which includes an extra 5000 nurses. It includes more paramedics, more people taking the 000 calls and more people helping with the logistics. It includes \$2.3 billion to upgrade new hospitals, including the Werribee hospital. Those opposite are saying that they want to build a new Werribee hospital. We are already working on the Werribee hospital. There is also \$1.5 billion to improve surgical capacity.

I note that those opposite want to stop or they want to pause—it is really not quite clear what they want to do with it—the Suburban Rail Loop. I am not sure whether it is just stopping the whole project and moving on to something else or whether it is going to be doing some of it but not all of it—digging some of the holes, filling them in but then not doing anything else. Do they want our city to stay in gridlock for decades and waste the money that has already been invested? It has already started—this project is already underway—but they want to stop doing it.

They have spoken about investing in a new hospital for Mildura. Well, this is fascinating. Why would the community believe them when they refused to hand over the then private Mildura hospital back to the public sector? They did not want to do that.

Mr Fregon interjected.

Ms WARD: Absolutely, member for Mount Waverley—socialist! It was socialist taking over a private hospital because it was not working. Why would the community believe that they would actually have the residents of Mildura's best interests at heart?

The Leader of the Opposition has accepted that this is the biggest health crisis since World War II, yet at every step of the way they have undermined the health message, they have tried to confuse the health message and they have made it harder for people in the community to know what to do and how to keep themselves safe. They want to give nurses free public transport, but they do not want to build any public transport. They do not want to help nurses actually get around to major hospitals like Box Hill and like the Monash Health precinct. The other thing is, in talking about free transport for health workers, I do not know how many health workers those opposite know who work night shift, who finish at 7.00 am after working 12 hours on their feet, and whether they have asked those health workers whether they want to get onto a train or a tram or a bus at peak hour to get home, particularly women in the health sector, who often on the way home pick up bread or pick up milk. They are going home, they are sorting out school lunches and they are dropping kids at school. PT is not actually going to work for those people, particularly women; it is not. And getting the train at 7.00 pm, or the bus or tram, also may not work for those women when they are starting work.

Members interjecting.

Ms WARD: Those opposite might think it is hilarious that working women have got to work hard to get around and that they are trying to juggle many things. That is sad. However, health workers have been wearing masks, and they are being careful. They are doing everything they can to protect themselves, so we really need to show our appreciation for the work that health workers have done with something substantial which actually helps them buy that bread and which helps them buy that milk. That is why we have put in the winter retention and surge payment, which is \$3000 and will mean all staff employed in public health services and Ambulance Victoria between 1 July and 30 September will be eligible for payments of up to \$3000 to support them as they support us through the busiest winter ever.

One of the biggest challenges, which those of us on this side know, is our GP shortage and the fact that nobody is bulk-billing and how much it costs to go to the doctor. This is one of the reasons we have so much pressure on our emergency services, and this is where the priority primary care centres come in. The Premier of New South Wales has said that in Victoria he is sitting with a Premier who wants to get things done and look after his people. That is exactly what we are seeing this government do, and it is exactly what we are seeing this Premier do. This is why we have invested, since 2014, \$11 billion in health infrastructure. We are not standing in paddocks like the Liberals, opposing community hospitals. I do not know how the Leader of the Opposition thinks anyone will believe they will invest substantial funding into health care when their candidates do not want community hospitals to be built and in fact campaign against them.

Let us look at the Suburban Rail Loop. There is no credibility from those opposite when it comes to investing in health care, and clearly there is no credibility when it comes to investing in public transport. A project like SRL East will benefit my community, just as it will benefit your community, member for Mount Waverley, and just as it will benefit the member for Box Hill. I know his community love this project and will be voting for this project because it matters to them. It will help them get around.

For my community, we can get the bus to Box Hill and get the train to Monash in about 10 minutes. That is a huge game changer when it takes so long for us to go down Warrigal Road or whichever way you want to go down to get to the Monash. It takes forever. This is a serious game changer and will get so many cars, so much traffic, off our roads. So we are investing \$11.8 billion in building SRL east, with the remainder coming from the commonwealth and the private sector. I want to know how the opposition plan on spending \$35 billion when there is not actually \$35 billion of state government money; it is \$11.8 billion. How do their sums add up? I am not sure that they do. Have they told the feds that they might actually want to change the funding that the federal government has allocated to us for the SRL? Have they had that conversation around 'Yeah-nah, sorry? We're actually going to spend it over here, not there'? Have they had that conversation, and has the federal government agreed to that? I suspect not. So maybe it is not really \$35 billion.

There are 25 kilometres of track that will be built for SRL east. How can those opposite not want to do this? It is an incredible investment in our community, and it will change things, so how is it that there is a Shadow Minister for Transport Infrastructure who seems not to support infrastructure actually being built in this state? Astonishingly, those opposite are basing their campaign on how much it will cost to build, maintain and operate the SRL between now and 2085. I do not know about you, Speaker, but I will be 116 then, so I am really not sure how they can talk about a \$200 billion blowout based on figures going to 2085. This is what their whole narrative of a cost blowout is based on—rubbery figures, absolutely rubbery figures. The Parliamentary Budget Office has endorsed the government's business and investment case for SRL east and has arrived at the same cost estimates as the government's business case sets out.

Suburban Rail Loop east and north will support up to 24 000 jobs—thousands of jobs for SRL east alone, 8000, and they will be in your community, member for Mount Waverley. They will be in your community, member for Box Hill. Your people want this project, and they will be voting for this project. There are so many different jobs that will be created. It is not just construction. There is admin, there are logistics, there are a huge number of jobs that will come from this project that will benefit our state. The trains that are built in regional Victoria will benefit this state. (*Time expired*)

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:52): I rise to speak on the matter of public importance. This government, the Andrews Labor government, has clearly got its priorities all wrong to be prioritising a Box Hill to Cheltenham rail project when our health system is clearly in meltdown, when people cannot get an ambulance, when people cannot get a bed in hospital, when people cannot be seen by a doctor or a health professional when they need to. This here in the state of Victoria—I am in shock to this minute that this is where we have come to. And now I am hearing that the government, who came up with an idea for a \$50 billion rail project from Box Hill to Cheltenham, has now actually been shown by the Parliamentary Budget Office that this is not a \$50 billion project. No. For only two-thirds of it it looks to be in excess of \$200 billion. That is in the words of the independent Parliamentary Budget Office. This is a project that the government—Daniel Andrews, I would actually suspect—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms BRITNELL: Sorry, Speaker; the Premier—actually made up on the back of an envelope, because even their own organisation, Labor's Infrastructure Australia, did not cost this and have actually said now that they want to look at projects with merits and take the politics out. This is a project that never went through that process. Whilst we have our health system collapsing, we the Liberal-Nationals will take the money from that project, which we will shelve, and put it into our health system, because that is the priority of Victorians. This is a state where the Premier said as COVID began, 'I will prepare the health system'. He said that and asked every Victorian to stay at home whilst he did that. Victorians did their bit. Did the Premier and Labor do theirs? I do not think so.

This was a first-class health system in Victoria. It was one that I worked in for a very long time, and I was very proud of it, but it is now broken. The system is broken, but what we do have is first-class people, first-class professionals. Be they nurses, be they doctors, be they personal care attendants, ambulance officers, kitchen staff, cleaners in the hospitals or in the clinics out of the hospitals, the health professionals have been busting their guts. They are first class, but the system that was first class has broken. It is really telling, and it is trying every single one of them. The nurses clearly talk to me a lot, because most of my friends are nurses, of the burnout and the pain, and they have suffering in their voices. When they speak to me—often actually debriefing—they want thanks through actions not words. They hear in this place the thankyou's and that they are heroes. They say, 'We don't want that. We need the resources we were told we were going to get'.

Where did the 4000 ICU beds go? They were promised by the Premier. There were 10 hospitals promised in 2018 by this government prior to the last election as election promises. Only one has had work started on it. We have got the Maryborough hospital that was supposed to be completed by this government in the first term. That has not even had the plans completed. What does that tell me? It

tells me that South West Healthcare, which is supposed to be completed by 2026, is at real risk of not being completed on time. This is a hospital that should have been announced five, six or seven years ago. It was announced in 2020, but those hospitals from 2018 have not actually been started, except for one, so I am very concerned for the staff at South West Healthcare, those fantastic nurses and doctors working in extraordinary conditions in A and E—accident and emergency. I am worried because I am already hearing that people are getting treated in the corridor, that children presenting with lacerations cannot get sutures and that an elderly woman, an 83-year-old, sat on a trolley in excess of 20 hours. This is not the staff's doing. They are busting their guts. The system that we were all so proud of is absolutely broken.

Announcing free university for the next two years is a great announcement that we have matched, but it is three months before an election. Isn't that pretty disingenuous? Shouldn't that have happened 2½ years ago? Shouldn't that have been something that was obvious? We have got less people answering our ambulance calls than there were before the pandemic. Today we have got less people answering the phone to your call if you ring up and require an ambulance. The reality is that there were 16 000 of us medical professionals who have retired who the government put a call-out to and said, 'Can you come and help?'. Well, I tell you now, there are plenty of people like me who would have been more than capable to be a call taker. We understand the medical language. We would have been easily able to be put through systems education on how to do the decision tree process that you would need to know, but no. What happened to the 16 000 people who put their name down? It has all been just to look good, with no follow-through.

I feel so concerned for how my fellow nurses are coping. I heard of a nurse who burst into tears in the corridor with a chemotherapy patient, a young man who had sat for 27 hours. He would have been clearly immunocompromised, and he had not even been given food. That is just the basics. It is not the nurses and it is not the kitchen staff; it is the system. They are running ragged, and that is what happens when you are run off your feet: you cannot possibly think of everything.

There are children I am hearing about. One in South-West Coast with a burst appendix could not get a hospital bed at the Royal Children's Hospital. There were 19 people in front of this five-year-old to get a bed first. This is someone who could have gone into shock and died. That is such a serious condition when you have a burst appendix. A five-week-old infant I heard of recently presented to A and E with bronchiolitis, using all of the accessory muscles of respiration—the classic laboured breathing with saturations of 92. That is low. That poor mother was told to go home by nursing staff, who were devastated to have to say that, because they did not have a bed, and to re-present if the child could no longer suckle, because you cannot breathe and suckle at the breast if you are exerting so much energy in trying to breathe. That mother came back two days later—I do not even think it was two days—and that child had to have a tube put down into its stomach to be able to be fed, a nasogastric. That mother said the nurses were so upset that they had to deliver that message to her.

Another young nurse friend of mine said, 'It's no fun going to work anymore. It's just too hard. It's soul destroying'. The ambulance officers just want to turn up for the calls that they know are out there. When I drive to Portland now, back and forth to and from Portland, I pass an ambulance with lights on every single time. These are ambulance officers who cannot be at the cardiac arrest or at the motor car accident because they are transferring patients back and forth from Portland to Warrnambool. The system is broken and we need a government to invest in it, not in a rail service project that has already blown out in the costing before it has begun—because it is not genuine, what the Premier thought it would cost. He did it on the back of an envelope, that is clear for all to see. Not even their own organisation that Labor set up, Infrastructure Victoria, is backing this.

We have got Portland hospital, which has been crying out for help for years. It is in a big industrial town with large industry and needing help. There are often no doctors in urgent care; ambulance officers are having to do airway support and get patients across to Warrnambool. So where are the extra ambulances that the government would have had to have known they would need? Where are the extra ambulance officers and call-takers that they could have trained up 2½ years ago, the nurses

who needed free university back then to encourage them? The nurses who have been working for two, three and four years under these conditions are the ones who needed help, and this free university would have helped if it had happened two years ago.

The AMA warned of this way before COVID. The perinatal inquiry I was part of warned of the workforce shortages before COVID. In 2017 I was part of that inquiry, which handed down recommendations. Not one recommendation—not one—has been acted on. This is not COVID that they can hide behind. This is a Premier who said ‘I will prepare the health system’ and did not, and ‘I will get 4000 ICU beds’ and did not. This is a Premier who wants to build a rail project from Box Hill to Cheltenham instead of listening to Victorians. They are dying. If I ring an ambulance now, I am frightened that it will not come. I cannot do it without an ambulance backing me up. I cannot do it without a hospital with oxygen and suction on the wall. Listen to Victorians and do what is right: shelve the project.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (17:02): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on this matter of public importance. There have been a number of contributions already in the chamber, and I think clearly there has been some drawing of the battlelines here for the upcoming state election. The member for Bulleen said railway lines are a nice-to-have—they are a nice-to-have and they are not a priority. It probably goes to some of his thinking about public transport generally—you know, having to rub shoulders with the riffraff. He might very well think that the only acceptable public transport is catching an aeroplane somewhere. But the reality is that rail is essential and subterranean rail is essential in a functioning modern city. You cannot run a modern economy without getting people around your city efficiently. It is just not possible. And those who would seek to tear up this project seek also to do untold damage to our economy in the process.

It is so important for governments to do more than just one thing at any given time. To use the phrase that has been used a bit in recent times, this is a government that can walk and chew gum at the same time. Specifically, this is a government that can recruit nurses and remove level crossings at the same time. We are not like some others—those who would just lie and eat lobster at the same time. We are a government that is getting on with the very, very important job of making sure that the health system responds to this unprecedented crisis and delivering on hundreds of new schools, growing the education system, delivering unbelievable changes in transport infrastructure and removing level crossings—because you have got to be able to do more than one thing in government. There is this implication that a Guy government would have presumably three ministers—you would have a premier, a treasurer and a health minister—because that is all they are going to be focused on. It is just not the lived reality. It might make for a cute political sound bite, but it is trite at best and codswallop at worst.

I want to spend a little bit of time speaking about Monash University. Now, I am a Monash alumnus, and since the 1960s we have been talking about the need for proper public transport connections to that campus. Right now from most places in Melbourne you have to connect to multiple services to get to Monash University. It does not matter where you are coming from: you are using rail to get out to Clayton station, say, then getting a bus, or if you are coming from the north, you are getting two separate buses. There are any number of ways of getting to the campus, but almost none involve just the one railway connection. There are 55 000 students, staff and researchers using that campus every day. Monash is an education hub, an employment hub, an arts hub, an innovation hub. It is the single largest employment node outside the CBD, and it will have 160 000 workers there by 2056. Moderna will have a facility there. The heart hospital will be there. In all seriousness, do you think any of this is possible without rail? You simply cannot service an employment, health, arts, education, innovation hub of that scale without rail, and particularly without subterranean rail.

Every modern city of size in the world has a decent subterranean rail system. Melbourne perhaps should have had one already, but we are getting it done—because if you wait, if you kick it into the long grass like those opposite propose, all you do is hand the problem on to a future generation, to a future government. This project is so big it runs way bigger than the life of any one leader, any one Parliament, any one government. Absolutely the Andrews government will not be opening this project,

but we are going to start it. We will absolutely get it started because it has to be done. You cannot have a Monash University, a Monash employment hub with 160 000 workers and tens and tens of thousands of students and all sorts of people using that precinct, without rail. It is just an impossibility. Railway lines are not a nice-to-have, they are a must-have—they are a priority—but it is possible to have more than one priority in government.

I cannot think of a single government that has literally had no priorities at all—well, perhaps the Baillieu government. This notion that there is only one thing for government to do at any one time is an absolute furphy. The carping negativity of those opposite speaks to a mindset that says, ‘We would rather the government fail than succeed’ to suit their own political interests, because they do not really exist to do good in the world or deliver for their communities; their *raison d’être* is just to keep Labor out of office.

You have to walk and chew gum at the same time; you have to be able to do more than one thing in government. If you are a government of ambition and of vision and of a real sense of purpose, then you have got to be able to do more than one thing, and this government has categorically, from the start, not wasted a day in doing way more than one thing. It is possible to deliver treaty at the same time as removing level crossings. It is possible to employ 4000 more doctors and 10 000 more nurses and 2000 more paramedics whilst at the same time making record investments in the education system. Government is way bigger than one thing. There is a reason we have a cabinet government with portfolios and there is more than one minister; it is because there is a lot going on. This notion that you should only be focused on one thing at any one time is just a trite, too cute, silly, immature little way of creating a sound bite for an election campaign, but it is miles and miles away from good government. Do not take my word for it. The Premier of New South Wales, when he was asked about claims made by those opposite that the pressures in our health system are unique to Victoria, said they are ‘not unique’ to Victoria. He said:

Every state health system around the country and around the world is under pressure and that is only natural, particularly in circumstances where we’ve come through a one in 100 year pandemic ...

He said:

The issues we face in New South Wales are not unique to the issues we face in Victoria—they’re all similar, our health systems are under pressure, and we need to work together for a better way.

No surprises—Premier Perrottet has not exactly been breaking bread with the member for Bulleen, and he said the reason for that was he was there with the Premier of Victoria:

... to not talk about politics, but to talk about people, to talk about reform of health in this great country ...

He said:

I’m sitting here with a Premier who wants to get things done and look after his people.

Dom, we agree. We are in furious agreement indeed. Isn’t it nice, isn’t it refreshing, when a Liberal leader in this country gets up and just calls it straight, tells the truth and actually leads rather than getting bogged down in this carping negativity, this endless drive to the bottom which seems to be the *modus operandi* of the Victorian Liberal Party.

It surprises no-one—laypeople understand, the people of Victoria understand—that when demand for health services goes up, as it has, not because of anything the government has done but because of the global pandemic, and supply comes down because people cannot work because they are burnt out or they have got COVID or their family members have COVID and they are furloughed, of course there is going to be disruption. Victorians understand that. Victorians are clever. They get it. They understand all of the feedback that all of my colleagues and I are getting at the doors, and we are knocking on thousands of them right now—thousands and thousands of doors. I do not know what this lot are up to; they are certainly not doorknocking in my patch. But from all the feedback we are getting, people understand that very basic arithmetic construct that when demand for a service goes

up and supply comes down, there is going to be a disconnect. There are going to be delays. There is going to be disruption.

Those opposite can build—or promise to build, rather—a bunch of new hospitals, but it is pointless if you do not have a plan to staff them. Building empty hospitals—I mean, they would be easier to run without patients, I guess, and without staff. You know, you would just keep them empty. It is a furphy, and it is an extraordinary misleading of the Victorian people to pretend that somehow the solution to problems in the health system is cancelling a very important piece of rail infrastructure and that the cause of the problems in the health system is solely down to the actions of one man. It is bollocks, and it will not stand up to scrutiny.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (17:12): It is wonderful to speak to this very eloquent motion that has been put forward today by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, Matthew Guy, which shines a true light on the health crisis that is facing all of Victoria.

Ms Addison: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I believe that we are required to use the correct names for members of this house, not anything else. Referring to 'Matthew Guy' I do not believe is how it is supposed to be.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Lowan, proceed using the correct titles.

Ms KEALY: Isn't it interesting that when you hear from members of the Andrews Labor government all they want to do is say, 'We can do it all. You can do both. We can do it all'. But let us go back to the facts. Let us go back to the budget that was handed down in May of this year. Was there more money for the health system? No, there was not. Was there at least the same amount of money going into the health system—a health system that is in crisis, a health system that has got a 70 per cent increase in the number of Victorians on the elective surgery waitlist? Is it looking at putting more money into making sure we can train more staff, we can build more hospitals and we can actually deliver the health services that every single Victorian needs and deserves? Is it about delivering enough ESTA staff to be able to know that when you call 000 when you have a loved one or somebody that you know who is in critical need to get to hospital for medical intervention and support, somebody is going to answer the call, someone is going to send an ambulance immediately to you and they are going to pick you up and take you to a hospital and not wait for hours ramped outside the front of the hospital or triage you in a tent during freezing cold Melbourne weather when you are an 83-year-old woman who has suffered a stroke? They want to make sure that they can actually go in and get treatment straightaway.

So we look at this statement: 'You can do both'. What a load of absolute bunkum. If you can do both, why did you cut \$2 billion out of the health budget this year? Why did you cut \$2 billion out of the health budget, and where did you put it? Did you put it into another business case, into another little consortium getting a bit of money for a consultation or something else that is taking money away from delivering the health services that Victorians desperately need? And they have never needed them more before than they do today because Victoria's health system—and we hear this from everybody in this place—is in crisis, but the Andrews Labor government simply do not have a plan to fix it.

The words that come out of their mouths when it comes to the health system in this state cannot be believed at all. Before the last election we heard a promise that there would be 10 regional hospitals built, but in fact if you look back over the last eight years of the Andrews Labor government, there are 11 fewer health services in regional Victoria. There are 11 fewer health services in regional Victoria than there were eight years ago. This is following a promise there would be 10 new hospitals built—just in 2018.

Ms Addison interjected.

Ms KEALY: I take up the interjection by the member for Wendouree, who says it is dodgy maths. Perhaps she should go back and look at the number of annual reports that were tabled in this place in

2014. If you count the list of public health services, there are 11 fewer health services in Victoria than there were eight years ago. The Andrews Labor government is behind those closures, and that is what the Andrews Labor government truly stands for. We can look at the promises from even this year: ‘We’re going to build the Geelong women’s and children’s hospital’ and ‘We’re going to build the Melton hospital’—promises made before the last election as well. But when you look at the budget papers, the Premier was absolutely humiliated by the member for Gippsland South asking, ‘What does “TBC” stand for, Premier?’. He was not happy to go through that, because he was called out on these announcements and all this glory and all this talk about building these very important pieces of infrastructure that would deliver more health services—and they are not actually even budgeted for. They are nothing more than a blank line item that sometime in the future they might provide money for. It is nothing more than a pipedream. The government is selling empty promises.

It is no different to the 4000 ICU beds that were promised back in March of 2020, when during this time all of us were stuck in lockdowns and restrictions. So many people suffered from mental ill health during that period because they could not go out and see their friends and family. They could not go out and have dinner together and celebrate important milestones. There were people who could not gather for funerals; they could not gather for any reason at all. They could not even go to school. We had mums who were suffering from enormous stress because they were working from home and supervising their kids’ homeschooling. Some of them also had babies during that period. There was an enormous amount of pressure. And what happened during that time? Did we have any improvement to the overall mental health of Victorians in this state? No, we did not. Did we see family violence rates go up because people were locked up with their perpetrators? Yes, we did. Did we see the impact of people who did not have their cancer screening done? They are now rolling out through the state, with cancers being diagnosed at a much later stage, needing more extensive treatment and with much, much worse outcomes. That is what we have seen from the Andrews Labor government, who say that they have got this under control. ‘Look at what we’re doing’, when in fact what they are doing is absolutely crucifying Victoria’s health system.

I take note of the member for Burwood, who has left the chamber now, who said, ‘We can’t blame it on this one man’. Well, do you know what? The Premier has been either the Premier or the Minister for Health in this state for 12 of the past 16 years. This has happened under his watch. The whole health system was in crisis before we got into COVID, but COVID has absolutely exacerbated it.

I would like to make special mention of every single health worker, because so often we hear, ‘You’re just criticising the health workers’. I am sorry; that is not correct. I have family who are health workers. I am a health worker. I have got friends who are health workers. I always stand by the health workers, but do you know what? There are more than just the health workers who are rewarded who work within the public health system. I got an email last week from a very, very distressed radiographer from my electorate. She works for a private pathology company which is contracted by our public hospital to deliver radiology services. She has not received a dollar of extra COVID funding, even though she has had to continue to work throughout the COVID lockdowns and restrictions. She has not received any support. She is not getting any of the trickles that are coming through from the government that are going to the public health system. I think by just focusing on one special segment we are actually really letting down a significant proportion of health workers in this state.

It does not matter who you are and who you work for. If you are delivering support and care for Victorians, you should be praised and thanked and supported, and it does not matter who you are or what classification you are. I do not mind if you are a nurse or if you are an admin worker or if you work in food services or if you are working to make sure that the bills are paid on time—you are helping to make sure that that hospital is working, and you are delivering services that support the overall treatment of the hospital.

Ms Addison interjected.

Ms KEALY: I note I have got another interjection by the member for Wendouree. The payment that the government is going to make does not go to anybody in the private health system. Even if they are subcontracted and deliver those services on site at a public hospital, there is no alternative to that and there are only those staff available. They are missing out.

Can I also point to this ridiculous thought bubble, an announcement that is nothing more than words, about these GP clinics that are being set up in Melbourne. I have got critical areas in my electorate that do not have doctors at this point in time. It is something I have written to the Victorian Minister for Health about because it is having a massive flow-on effect on our emergency departments. There has been no interest at all, and yet we saw the announcement earlier this week, which was around setting up more GP clinics in Melbourne. Why isn't the focus on helping to establish GP clinics in places like Casterton, Coleraine or even Mildura, which now has 15 000 patients that do not have a GP to go to? I note the comments from the Rural Doctors Association of Victoria that with opening hours similar to metro centres these would have to be open 6 or 7 hours a day, seven days a week—it is really not clear to me where we are going to find that workforce—and that:

The state government says new centres will be located in existing GP clinics and can be open for extended hours without needing to hire more doctors.

So no more doctors, no more GP clinics—it is actually nothing more than a media release. This is exactly what we expect from the Andrews Labor government—a range of false promises, a range of things that they have got absolutely no intention of delivering. All they intend to do is to continue to cut the health system—another \$2 billion cut that we felt this year. Only the Liberal-Nationals will fix Victoria's health crisis.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:22): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the opposition's matter of public importance this afternoon moved by the member for Bulleen—and goodness me, what is going on here? We have had the member for Bulleen roll in. He has done his MPI, and no-one is here anymore. They have given up. It is barely an hour and a half in, and they have tapped the mat. This is the election MPI. This is where you get revved up. There are 75 days to go to pre-poll, and they have gone home. There is no-one here because this is not a genuine policy position of course.

I thought, 'What's going on here? What's going on?'. This is a deeply popular policy, the Suburban Rail Loop. It absolutely slayed them in the east. It has led to significant deterioration in their vote and their margin. It polls through the roof. It is still smashing the focus groups. And you think, 'What's going on here? What are they doing? Why are they walking away from such a significant project?'. I mean, the Shadow Minister for Transport Infrastructure cannot work out if it is road or rail; the member in the other place Matt Bach does not know if you can drive on it with a car or a train. He is still trying to work that out, still trying to work it out from that train wreck—I did not say road wreck—of an interview with Virginia Trioli where he did not know whether he was coming or going on that. I thought, 'What's this all about? Why are they walking away from such a significantly popular policy?'. And I thought, 'What was the context, and what was going on that week?'. We had a donation scandal. We had staff haemorrhaging in the Leader of the Opposition's office, and they needed a quick win, a quick diversion off the news cycle, because it was eroding their primary and their base substantially. They were absolutely haemorrhaging, and they needed a diversion. They needed to get off this quick. Mitch Catlin had gone. A number of staff had gone. A number of people had given up on the opposition, and they needed to move quickly. This was high risk and high stakes, because when you are asking about a coalition who were the worst opposition in this nation when it came to the issues of the pandemic and following the health advice that underpinned the support for our health workers, you wonder why they would make that decision.

The game was given up this week when the Premier of New South Wales, Dominic Perrottet, in a show of significant bipartisanship and the work that is being done by the state and territory leaders at the national cabinet, came together with our Premier to announce a significant policy on these primary care facilities—25 in Victoria and 25 in New South Wales. Premier Perrottet was quite clear in his comments:

Asked whether he agreed with statements made by the Victorian opposition that pressures on Victoria's health system were unique to the state, Mr Perrottet said: "They are not unique to Victoria."

"Every state health system around the country and around the world is under pressure and that is only natural, particularly in circumstances where ...

we have a once-in-100-year pandemic. Maybe the Leader of the Opposition was not invited to the announcement or did not know Premier Perrottet was in the state. Maybe Premier Perrottet went to his phone and said, 'I went to call Matthew Guy but instead I called Matt Guy, Matty G'—what is he today? He is changing his name. He has got a brand change. We have no idea, because on any given day he is changing policy and changing position.

No-one in their right mind would trust an opposition that stands out on the front steps and undermines vaccines and undermines public health messages like those in the coalition did—undermining the scientific empirical evidence and advice. There is a really interesting feature of all their announcements on health so far. None of them have health workers or anyone in the health industry with them. It is just the Shadow Minister for Health and the Leader of the Opposition because health workers in Victoria know that when the going got tough during those years of the pandemic it was the Andrews Labor government and the national cabinet that stood strong with health workers.

Those opposite cannot come back two years later trying to emulate a South Australian-type election. The Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas, did not undermine health advice throughout that time. Chris Minns did not undermine health advice throughout that time. They have respected the health advice. They have had differences of views on issues, and that has played out, but they did not attack the very people on the front line. They did not undermine the health workers each and every day in their actions and pitch to a hardline far-right base.

That is where they find themselves at the moment. It played out federally in May 2022. It is playing out in Victoria right now. All the warning signs were there. The polling at the time that they chopped the member for Malvern was in the mid-30s, the mid to low 30s, and they have seen a substantial deterioration in their base and their primary as they run further to the far right and as they run away from the traditional Liberal values that they all supposedly espouse. So when they come in here and talk about investing in health, Victorians are not going to be fooled by those opposite. They are not going to be fooled by their actions when they had the opportunity in government. And one of the most disgraceful efforts in health policy—the cuts to health and the attacks on our paramedics that were played out by a member for Southern Metropolitan, David Davis, who has been shown up today and finally called out for his deplorable behaviour—was shown up during that time. The damage that was done during that time was astronomical. They do not forget, health workers. They do not forget the trauma, the impact and the hard work that was put on them. When they literally went to war with our paramedics—no-one forgets that. So when they do their health announcements on the side of the kerb with no-one around them and they put up a Liberal banner, people know that is because health workers do not trust them and do not trust the undermining of health advice.

It goes further in cutting such a substantial project. The Suburban Rail Loop is generation changing. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel would not have happened if it were not for the Andrews Labor government. The Andrews Labor government has funded every single element of that project while the state coalition back in 2010 shelved it and walked away from it. It was the leading project of Infrastructure Australia, and they abandoned Victorians. Why should our communities be condemned to hundreds of thousands of vehicles, the impacts on climate change, the emissions that come from the transport industry and more cars? Fifteen per cent of our emissions are from cars on our roads. Why would we walk away from such a significant project? But they cannot even bring themselves to fully oppose it, because they know how popular it is. They know how popular this is. There are going to shelve it for a period of time, undefined. They did not actually have the guts to scrap it and say they would not do it. They would shelve it. They would increase costs into the future. They have absolutely no credibility or coherence here. Victorians know this. Why should my community be condemned to hundreds of thousands of vehicles in the coming years because we do not have the Suburban Rail

Loop? That means more time away from family. That means more impact on our climate. It means less time at home with your family and your loved ones. One in eight in my community catch public transport, and we need to increase that even further. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel will be open in a couple of years time under an Andrews Labor government that has funded it itself. At least now at the commonwealth level we have a federal partner that is investing in infrastructure in Victoria. It is a substantial contribution that has been made by the Albanese Labor government, and it is futureproofing our communities.

Victorians do not want one trick; they do not want one policy. We are the best state in the nation. We are the most aspirational people, and we want the best outcomes for our people. We do not just want one policy area; we want it all, and Victorians deserve it all. They deserve the very best public transport system. They deserve the very best education. They deserve free kinder. They deserve the best kinder services, and they deserve the very best from our paramedics, our health services and our hospitals. And guess what? The Andrews Labor government delivers all those things and more. We got our paramedic response times to their best ever in 2019, and we will take them back there because of the effort and work of our communities and our amazing paramedics. I caught up with the Mordialloc branch only last week, and they are an extraordinary bunch of people doing incredible work in our community to keep our residents safe in their time of need. We are investing in hundreds more paramedics. We have seen 22 000 more health workers—7000 more on the way, and 5000 are going to be nurses. We are upgrading hospitals and health services all across this state, because we can do both.

That is what Victorians have now. Do they go with an opposition that has torn to pieces the public health advice, that would have put our communities at greater risk and would have put more stress on our health system in the absence of a vaccine all through the pandemic? We know how they were tearing down Victorians going through such significant challenges. We have come out the other side stronger and better, and we are building back better as a state and as a nation. Victoria is the engine room of the national economy, and nothing has changed. Victorians deserve the very best. Do they pick an opposition who have jumped on a health message, trying to divert from an absolute crisis in the member for Bulleen's office, or do they back an Andrews Labor government who has had bold, visionary policies and made investment in health, investment in education and investment in public transport that has changed the lives of Victorians for the future?

If you do not believe that, then look at the comments of the Premier of New South Wales, Dom Perrottet. Look at the comments of a member for Western Metropolitan Region Bernie Finn, who pleaded with the Leader of the Opposition to do the right thing and resign—consider his position. Maybe those opposite have still got a sitting week to go to call a partyroom meeting and do the right thing on behalf of Victorians. Or maybe there is the member for Kew, who apparently is not a liar even though his account is different to the member for Bulleen's. I do not know. Who is telling the truth then? Who was telling the truth in that moment? When the member for Kew is not a liar but has a different account to the member for Bulleen, more questions have to be answered. The credibility of the opposition leader is in absolute tatters, and one has to ask: why did you leave the member for Malvern? He was polling in the low 30s. You should have stuck with Mr 11 per cent.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:32): I also rise to speak on the matter of public importance as submitted by the member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party. The member for Bulleen in his matter of public importance raised some very serious issues that are affecting our state at the moment and some very serious choices that our state faces in the not-too-distant future. The choice that the Victorian people face at the November election this year could not be clearer. The choice is between a Labor government that is tired, that has been responsible for health in this state for the last eight years in government and for the majority of the last two decades, that has frankly stuffed the health system, or a Liberal government led by the member for Bulleen and his colleagues, people who have worked in the health system, people who understand the health system, people who stand up for their communities, who show empathy, who show understanding, who show

concern for their communities and who have fresh ideas, new ideas responding to the challenges of our time.

The option that the Victorian people face on 26 November is an opportunity to turn the page in this state's history, to turn the page from a focus on something that the independent Parliamentary Budget Office has already indicated is well over budget on the government's current estimates to fixing the greatest crisis that this state has faced since the Second World War, and that is the current health crisis. More than 87 000 of our fellow Victorians are on the surgery waiting list at the moment. Very often in politics, Deputy Speaker, as you would be aware and as other members would be aware as well, we refer to numbers, we refer to statistics, and it is quite easy I think to sometimes not think about how every single one of those more than 87 000 Victorians is a mother or a father, a brother or a sister, is a relative, is a friend, is a neighbour, is a small business owner, is a teacher—is a member of our community that deserves the very, very best that this state can offer, that their government can offer.

But their government has failed them. Labor has failed them and continues to fail them. Conversations that I have had with a number of medical professionals in this state, and certainly in my community, indicate that that headline number of 87 000 people on the hospital waiting list at the moment is not the real number. It is not an accurate number. A local surgeon only a couple of months ago said to me that he was running, in an outpatient clinic, a clinic in the general surgical space. He saw a patient who he thought in his medical professional opinion needed surgery, a category 1 surgery. He filled out the paperwork and admitted that patient onto the waiting list for urgent surgery. A couple of weeks later he had a surgical list, and this patient's name was not on the list. He was deeply concerned by this. He followed up with health administrators who said that the reason why that patient was not on the surgical list for that day for him to operate on was that in the hospital administrator's view that patient was not ready for care. That was the phrase used: 'Not ready for care'. So we have got people in this state who are not even considered as part of that 87 000 Victorians who are in need of medical attention, who do need medical care, and they are not getting it.

The member for Bendigo East, the Deputy Premier, quoted my words back at me in a ministers statement in question time just last sitting week. I gave an interview to Channel 10 following the release of the environment effects statement for the Suburban Rail Loop. When I said to the journalist at the time, 'No-one in my community has ever asked for the Suburban Rail Loop', the minister used that against me as a point of ridicule. But I will be frank, nobody in my community has ever asked for a train line from Cheltenham to Box Hill—no-one ever. Do you know what they have asked for? They have asked for investment in Sandringham Hospital. They ask for protection of open space. They ask for greater access to sporting grounds, to passive recreation areas, to set up our community in a way that prepares us for the next generation, for a greater population influx into our community. That is what they have asked me for.

I am not denying that there is a transport deficit when it comes to connecting my community to places like Monash University. There absolutely is, and more needs to be done about that. But spending the amount of money that the Andrews Labor government proposes to spend on the Suburban Rail Loop to fix that, maybe in 15 years time, is not the priority that we should be focusing on at the moment. The priority we should be focusing on at the moment is the health of Victorians. As the member for Bulleen said in his contribution, what could be more important than that?

The Suburban Rail Loop itself is not as straightforward as those opposite might assume or might assert that it is. In fact the environment effects statement identified a number of very serious contaminants in the land at the Sir William Fry Reserve based in my electorate at the intersection of Bay Road and Nepean Highway, Highett. Under the Suburban Rail Loop proposal by this government it is proposed that more than 40 per cent of that current open space is permanently removed to make way for the Suburban Rail Loop. But I assert that we have got, potentially, the West Gate tunnel project mark 2 on our hands here. Taken from the environment effects statement on the Suburban Rail Loop:

The construction of SRL East will disturb contaminated land and groundwater The project will generate large volumes of spoil of which nearly one third is predicted to be prescribed waste requiring careful management and disposal.

It goes on:

A 3.5 m thick layer of contaminated fill will be excavated for the station box at Cheltenham ... The management and disposal of contaminated spoil from the Cheltenham SRL station site needs to address: odours and contaminated dust and potential effects on local residents and users of the Southland Shopping Centre; and groundwater quality and contamination, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, metals, cyanide identified in fill.

This has the potential to be West Gate Tunnel mark 2. Which private operator would take on this risk? Which private operator would take on the risk to remove this contaminated soil with cyanide in it wafting over the back fences of those residents in Pennydale and those residents in Cheltenham—good, earnest, hardworking people in my community?

We have an opportunity at this point in history to draw a line in the sand and say: our priority is the health of our people. Our priority is the health of every Victorian. Our priority is to say to Victorians when they call 000 there is going to be someone who answers the phone and an ambulance that arrives to help them. It is our opportunity to say to those 87 000 people who are currently on the waiting list and those countless other people who are on the waiting list that hospital administrators are keeping secret to this point in time: we will help you. You will get the surgery you need when you need it. What could be more important than that? And this government says, 'We can walk and chew gum; we can do both at the same time'. My goodness—if they could do both at the same time, why are we currently experiencing a health crisis? They have got Victoria's Big Build underway, and they say that they are putting all of this investment into public health—and yet there are still 87 000 of our fellow Victorians on the waiting list; there are still people who call 000, and they do not get an answer and they do not get an ambulance. It is true—people are dying while they are waiting for health care.

We have a choice, and it is a clear choice. The shelving of the Suburban Rail Loop project would mean in my community that we get to preserve more than 40 per cent of the Sir William Fry Reserve for our community, preparing for future generations, preserving that land for future generations, and it would mean that we no longer need to follow the line of Labor, and that is to increase taxes—42 new taxes, increases to taxes or levies in this term of government—to pay for an urgent upgrade for the modernisation of our Sandringham Hospital. That is what my community will vote for.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:42): It is an absolute pleasure to get up and speak on this matter of public importance raised by this useless opposition. I am following on from the member for Sandringham, and I must confess I do like the member for Sandringham. I first met the member for Sandringham when we were both at school together at St Bede's. But I would say to the member for Sandringham that he does himself no favours in his ultra-marginal seat opposing the Suburban Rail Loop, because the people of his electorate are going to be the chief beneficiaries of the Suburban Rail Loop. I would hazard a guess that if you went anywhere in the Sandringham electorate and you asked them, 'Do you want a rail line from your local area to Monash University?', for instance, the biggest university in Australia, I reckon they would say yes. What do you think? I think they would say yes.

I suppose my concern on the member for Sandringham's behalf at this political tactic in that ultra-marginal seat is really related to my observation about this opposition. I think oppositions, as they go on further in opposition, usually get better; usually they get stronger. But there is something unusual happening in Victoria. We have an opposition that is actually getting worse by the day. They are getting weaker. After eight years in opposition you have got the member for Sandringham, the member for Brighton and the member for Caulfield in the fight of their lives. What a diabolical situation to be in. I mean, there is delicious poetry here this week that we have got pot plants in Queen's Hall. Well, we have got pot plants on display on the opposition benches week after week. This is a useless opposition, the worst opposition we have ever had, and here they are. They have come up with this doozy of a policy where they are going to shelve an infrastructure project that people voted for in

overwhelming numbers at the 2018 election because all of a sudden they care about public health, apparently. They care about public health. Well, this opposition is the same party—you know, the Liberal Party—that in the 1990s closed 17 hospitals, including the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital. They ripped 1400 beds out of the system and they sacked 3500 nurses. The last time they were in government, when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table, they tried to cut the number of nurses and midwives in Victoria and replace them with cheaper assistants in nursing. Imagine if they had succeeded in cutting the numbers of nurses and midwives at that time. Imagine the implications of that decision during the pandemic, including in this period when we are rebuilding from the pandemic and when our public hospitals are under enormous pressure. And of course that former government was at war with our paramedics.

Then in opposition they undermined the public health response to this pandemic. They are anti-maskers. At one stage they were even against testing. I mean, listen, after all of this we are led to believe that these people care about public health. I heard the member for South-West Coast, who every time she gets up here says she is a former nurse. Of course she is a former nurse. She said in her contribution today that she hears from nurses who are burnt out. Yes, nurses are burnt out because of people like you. The member for South-West Coast was one of those members of the opposite benches who last year was outside on the front steps of Parliament fraternising with anti-vax protesters waving nooses around in the air, and all of a sudden—

Mr R Smith: Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr STAIKOS: I tell you what, the pot plants of the opposition do not like hearing the truth. They do not like hearing the truth. But do you know what, member for South-West Coast? There is no point coming in here and saying, 'I'm a former nurse', if you have done nothing to assist our nurses during this pandemic. In fact what they have done is undermine our healthcare workers, and we will never forget that. We will never, ever forget that.

This is an opposition trying to now convince us after this track record that they care about the public health system. Give me an absolute break. It is just vaudevillian, frankly. It is just absolutely comical that they now have this policy: 'We didn't build anything when we were in government, but we're going to shelve a project that the people of Victoria voted for, because suddenly, after what has happened in the last few years and after what we did in government the last two times we were in government, we care about the health system'—absolutely ridiculous.

We are going to do both, and we are doing both. The Suburban Rail Loop is needed. It is needed because by 2030 Melbourne will be the size of Sydney. By 2050 Melbourne will be the size of London. Those of us on this side of the house believe that Melbourne is one of the great cities of the world and we need a transport system befitting a great city of the world, so we will build the Suburban Rail Loop. Those opposite have said very, very clearly that they oppose a rail line to the largest university in Australia, Monash University. They oppose a rail line to Monash hospital. In fact we had the Leader of the Opposition saying, 'Nobody takes a train to hospital', but in the same breath we heard him giving free public transport to nurses. I mean, they do not know what they are doing.

As I said at the outset, normally oppositions, the longer they are in opposition, get better. These guys get worse. Normally oppositions get stronger. These guys get weaker. And now they are in the diabolical position after eight years in opposition where they are sandbagging seats that they have never lost before. What a horrible situation to be in.

Ms Ward: Would one be Caulfield?

Mr STAIKOS: Caulfield is one of them. Caulfield, Brighton, Sandringham—those members are in the fights of their lives. Frankly if we go through those seats the Suburban Rail Loop line will go through, at the start you have got the seat of Sandringham and then you have got seats like Ashwood.

My old mate Asher Judah is the Liberal candidate in Ashwood. It is funny, I have not seen Asher mention this policy of shelving the Suburban Rail Loop. I have not seen him mention that on his socials. Then you have got the seat of Box Hill. They have written Box Hill off. They are not going to win that back. This is where they are. This is the worst opposition in living memory. I mean, we had the Leader of The Nationals talking about how it is going to take a statue for them to win government. It will take a miracle for you to win government. You people are useless.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:52): I rise to speak on a very important matter of importance, and that is the future of our health system in this state. I note that the government have spent a whole heap of time talking about themselves, talking about arrogance, talking about how they are going to romp through an election. Again, they are a government that have not cared about the people since they were elected in 2018 or for the last eight years, a government that cares about themselves and nobody else.

This matter of public importance is all about people. It is all about a health crisis that did not happen yesterday, that did not happen during the pandemic; it has happened for years. 87 000 people are on elective surgery waitlists waiting for serious surgeries. Each and every one of those people has a story, each and every one of those 87 000 people has a family and each and every one of those people has been let down by the Andrews government, which has done nothing to reduce the elective surgery waitlist—nothing. 87 000 people would fill the MCG. Think about the MCG during a Carlton-Collingwood football game: they are the people waiting for an operation under the Andrews Labor government and who have been let down by the Andrews Labor government, which is so arrogant that it cares solely about itself and not about fixing the healthcare crisis.

We are proud—and we are absolutely with the people—on the Liberal-Nationals side to be supporting what is right, fixing the healthcare crisis. That is what this matter of public importance does. That is what we will do, that is what we have done and that is what our policy is. This government and the Premier say, ‘We can do it all’. The Premier has had 12 of 16 years where he was the Premier or the health minister to fix the health system that is now in crisis. He has had the keys to the door to do that, and look at the state of affairs now.

You cannot do it all. Every single Victorian that is struggling with cost-of-living pressures at this current point in time knows that you have to balance a budget and manage money. They know that sometimes they have got to go without to be able to put food on the table. Well, this government thinks that there is a magic pudding. There is a magic pudding and they say, ‘You know what? We’ll build rail from Box Hill to Cheltenham’. Whether it is stage 1, stage 2 or stage 3, whether it is \$35 billion, \$50 billion, \$100 billion or \$200 billion, it does not matter, because according to the Andrews government, money grows on trees. You just go out, pick a little bit and away you go. The public know that that is not the case. The public have woken up and say, ‘What we want is a government that cares, a government that will fix the health crisis and a government where you will know that under a change and a focus on health you will be able to get a bed when you need one, you will be able to ring 000 and somebody will actually answer the phone, and you will not have to wait for an ambulance to come or to be ramped outside a hospital’.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK: A Caulfield North woman—and I say that to the member for Mordialloc, who is interjecting at the moment—died. She died, member for Mordialloc, in April 2021 after waiting 6½ hours for an ambulance. This is a quote from her brother:

This is the world we live in now. My sister was 32. She called 000 and was left there for nearly seven hours. No it’s not a third world country, not even an outer suburb. This is Caulfield.

That is the state of our health system now. That is the state, where it is a lucky dip for whether you get an ambulance, where it is a lucky dip when you ring 000 and where it is a lucky dip for whether you get a bed. That is simply not good enough. It is not good enough, and that is why our priority is health.

We are not hiding the fact. We know the election in November will be a referendum. Do you fix your health crisis or do you say, 'We're just going to have a bit of everything and just throw some money on the table for everything and do it half-heartedly'? We know that you cannot do both because the government have had eight years to do both and they have failed. The government might turn around and say, 'Well, you know what? It's a pandemic'. Well, the ramping issue, member for Mordialloc, did not happen yesterday. It did not just happen during—

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair. There is too much interjection here.

Mr SOUTHWICK: The ramping did not happen yesterday. Research that was published by the *Medical Journal of Australia* analysed more than 200 000 people taken to Victorian hospitals via ambulance for non-traumatic chest pain from 2015 to 2019. It found that ramping had been escalating even before COVID hit. This was not just a problem during COVID, this was a problem before COVID. The Andrews government said we all needed to be locked down for 263 days to get the health system in order. We all did our bit. What did the government do? It did nothing, nada, zero. We are in a worse situation now than we were even during lockdown.

The government that promised they would fix the health system failed. During COVID, when we were all in lockdown and we had the contact tracing and everything set up, what did the government do? They were using fax machines to actually do the contact tracing. In the end what did the government then do? They went to New South Wales. They sent a party over there to find out how to do it because they could not do it here. This is an archaic system, a system that has been broken for many, many years—not a system that was broken yesterday, a system that has been broken for a number of years under a Premier that was the health minister for 12 of 16 years. The government could have fixed it, should have fixed it, has not fixed it and has failed, and it does not deserve another term. When you hear of 21 cases of people that have died waiting for an ambulance, that is simply not good enough. This is not the Third World. You had Alisha Hussein, 14, a schoolgirl, who died after having an asthma attack. A 000 call did not connect for more than 15 minutes—no contact. Her mother had already driven her to hospital, and her daughter was pronounced dead an hour later after a cardiac arrest. There is issue after issue after issue—children, babies, parents, mums and dads not here today because of a failed system under the Andrews Labor government.

We make no excuses for what we are going to do under a Guy government going forward. We are going to fix the healthcare crisis because that is our commitment. It will be a referendum: do you want a rail from Cheltenham to Box Hill that is not costed, that is not supported by any business case whatsoever and not supported by Infrastructure Australia, that the Premier has failed to cost and that the Minister for Transport Infrastructure has failed to cost or tell us how much it is going to cost on the never-never, or are we going to say, 'We are going to take the money that is going to be set for 15 years?'. And the Minister for Health says, 'How much money?', because the government do not know how much money. The health minister does not know how much money. They have got no clue. What we are going to do is take every single dollar and we are going to put it into health.

As the Minister for Health, you should be very happy about that because your system has failed. The minister's health system has failed. The Minister for Health is the fourth Minister for Health in the job, and there have been four of them in four years—all failed. It is on rotation. Once they get their training wheels on, they learn a bit, they fail and they move out, and then the government bring another health minister in. It is absolutely *Fawltly Towers*. This government is the *Fawltly Towers* of the health system. They have fail after fail after fail—a health minister failure after failure after failure—and who knows what is going to be written of this government.

We are going to fix the health system. Caulfield Hospital will be built. It is a 100-year-plus hospital, built in the war days, and I invite the Minister for Health at the table to come down to Caulfield Hospital, look the people in the eyes and talk to my residents. We have a hydrotherapy pool that has been closed

for years—for years. A breezeway has been gone for years, and you blame someone else. The minister blames someone else. It is someone else's problem, someone else's failure. Minister, you should take responsibility. This health minister has failed. She has only been there 5 minutes, and she has failed. Every single one of them has failed. This government is a failure when it comes to health. Minister, you are a failure when it comes to health. We will fix it. We will get on with it, and we will make sure health will be a number one priority in Victoria. It will be fixed because it has to be fixed. Victorians have had enough—had enough of your lunacy.

Motions

BUDGET PAPERS 2022–23

Debate resumed.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (18:02): As I said before, almost \$1.3 million will deliver the Empower Youth program, connecting young people in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage with work or education and nurturing their health and wellbeing. And on this point I thank the Minister for Crime Prevention for coming out to my electorate earlier this year and delivering some of those exciting announcements and meetings. There really is a great deal here for young people and the multicultural community, which will help to continue to build a fairer Victoria and a stronger Victoria.

In closing, we know the effects cost of living are having on our families and that many Victorians are still paying too much for their energy bill. That is why we are stepping in to help families get the best deal. We are providing a once-off \$250 payment for all Victorian households that use the Victorian Energy Compare website, the Victorian government's independent price comparison website, to search for the cheapest electricity plan that suits their needs. I am sure that we all have been busy in terms of assisting our constituents in our respective electorates with that. This is a great initiative, one of so many in this amazing budget.

Talking about this amazing budget, people, especially businesspeople, know that Victoria is a great place for business. Just this morning I attended the sod turning and opening of Synnex, one of the largest IT businesses in my electorate. The budget for building the new headquarters is more than \$120 million. This shows that businesses know that Victoria is on for business and it is on for work and for jobs. With that, I would like to commend the motion to the house.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:05): I am rising this evening to make use of the time to talk about this year's budget through the budget take-note motion. This budget, the 2022–23 budget, is one that many thinking Victorians have real concerns about. We all know that we are gripped; we have been grabbed by the throat in Victoria at the moment by a health crisis. This health crisis is not sparing anybody—rich or poor, country or city, outer suburbs, small country towns, peri-urban areas. It does not matter where you live in Victoria at the moment; your health, your family's health, your community's health and the safety of many people have been called into question.

This budget—this government has trumpeted about it. The sad part about this budget is that there are lines in it everywhere that just do not make sense to a person that cares about the future of their state, that cares about prudent government and that cares about a well-managed government into the future that not only will provide for the needs of today but is cognisant of the ability of the state to look after people into the future and that will leave a legacy that taxpayers of the future will be proud of.

The most classic example really was in the south-west, west of Melbourne. Much has been made by this government that they are going to invest in the Geelong children's and women's hospital. Of course that line item is just devoid of accountability. The line item in this year's budget shows no money allocated at all. It just adds to a growing list of health promises that this government has just failed to address. My own electorate—or the new redistributed electorate—is Torquay. The government now for two elections has talked about building a community hospital at Torquay. They

have only just found a paddock to put it on in recent months. It is no further advanced now than it was two election cycles ago. That joins a long list of health promises that have not materialised.

The big one that so many people in the west of the state understand is the Melton hospital, which was promised, as it always is by this government, near election time and then progresses no further. Not only do the Melton people know but most Victorians now know it is yet another paddock of thistles, sitting there waiting to one day turn into a hospital. So this budget does not deliver that. It is still a distant and far dream of this government to provide that important health service to a municipality, interestingly, that is the same size as the eastern suburb municipality of Monash. They are both just a bit over 200 000 people. After eight years of Labor—and a Premier that has been the Premier the whole time and prior to that was health minister—they have still failed to build one hospital. One hospital has not been provided for 200 000 people, and yet if you go into the eastern suburbs, not far from where the Premier himself is, they have managed to have about five public hospitals available to the people out there. So the neglect of the west is palpable.

I look at my own electorate. I think my electorate possibly has the most hospitals, at 10, sprinkled in there in a variety of sizes, from a larger regional acute hospital to smaller hospitals, mainly specialising in aged care. They provide an important reassurance to those communities that the government cares about them and their health needs. They are often the bases where the local ambulance will be dispatched from. They all provide a backbone to primary care, to community care and other really important services that are vital in this day and age to make sure people feel connected.

If I look around my electorate, out of the 10 hospitals we had one with some promised funding into the future for upgraded aged care. That is of course in Camperdown. But when you look at the Colac hospital, for example, which was upgraded some time ago now, it has accident and emergency. The stress and the strain on the Geelong hospital system right throughout the region and the closing of GP services in Apollo Bay, in Camperdown, in Timboon and in Cobden is forcing more and more people to go to the Colac urgent care service. The Colac urgent care service is one that was built for 3000 or 4000 yearly presentations, and that figure is now well in excess of 12 000. It is doing so much more.

What so many people in the city do not realise is that so many of our urgent healthcare services in country and regional areas are not provided by employed doctors' services, although Colac has some, but so often rely on the willingness of local general practitioners to join in with the public health service—that shared public and private responsibility to provide good health care. The state gets a very good deal in country Victoria from its local medical professionals when it comes to providing urgent care services, and as a result the least the state could do is to make sure those services are well equipped, modern and capable of dealing with the huge demand that has been put on our health system in recent years.

I would refer to a recent commitment from our side of politics to support Cobden Health. The Cobden health service sits on the brink of losing accreditation because its facilities just are not up to modern standards. This government has been asked and asked, and I have certainly asked them to join in, but this budget, the 2022–23 budget, does nothing for a community like Cobden. A community like Cobden has to bear with the fact that it only has one GP to service that whole farming area. That GP just simply cannot work seven days a week, 365 days a year, and so once again it is an example of where the state has a responsibility to step up.

What concerns me in the construction of this budget is that on one hand we have got huge promises and commitments from this government, which they are so ashamed to even put a value to because, I guess, their experience on suburban rail link tunnels and West Gate tunnels and level crossing removals is that their budgeting is so far off, they are not even prepared to put a dollar figure on what their commitment to Geelong is. So it comes as no surprise when you have the example of the energy bonus. No-one will ever say no to free money, but the prudent people in the state are asking why—when we have a health crisis, when we have people that genuinely need help. Take, for example, the homelessness rate, the people waiting to have somewhere safe to live, which has ballooned under this

government from 9900 to in excess of 30 000 people, and our estimates are—because we do not actually record the amount of people; we only record the families—that that is a figure probably closer to 60 000 or 80 000 people who are not going home. When the sun sets at the end of the day they have nowhere safe or comfortable or reliable or warm to stay at night.

When you have got those types of pressures—huge waiting lists; 80 000 people waiting for elective surgery; 60 000 people potentially waiting every night for somewhere safe to live, and that includes small children that want to sleep in a bed and not on the back seat of a car—when you have that sort of crisis in the state, every man and his dog is issued with a \$250 cashback. That is great for pensioners or for easing the cost of living for people that need the assistance, but this government is incapable of fine-tuning that or of managing an assistance plan that is targeted and well budgeted for.

What then surprised me, and which is coming through my office now, is that the government provided this vote-buying exercise in the last budget, and people filled in the forms, but a bit like we experienced during COVID, this government's mechanisms—its operations as a government—are so incompetent that they did not have any of the files or the records or the capacity to accept someone they had given the money to last year to allow them to get the money again this year. I have had an enormous amount of people for whom the \$250 is actually a benefit—elderly pensioners, older people, people who are not tech savvy, people who are not necessarily capable of following instructions to get this cash back from the government—coming to my office. They got the money last year, and then this year the government says—tap, tap, tap on their computer—'Sorry, computer says no'. This is the level of incompetence, the level of financial mismanagement, that is writ large in this budget. We are now entering into a phase with this budget, the 2022–23 budget, where the people of Victoria will be saddled, burdened for decades, with a debt that is equivalent to the debts of Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania combined.

That is an extraordinary amount of money to owe, and the people of Victoria expect a responsible government to be cognisant of that and make prudent decisions. They understand the need to target assistance for cost of living to people that need it. They want to know that the money that we are spending on public infrastructure is prioritised in a way that the most urgent public infrastructure—pieces of infrastructure like a hospital in Melton, a hospital in Torquay, a hospital in Mildura, a hospital in Wodonga, hospitals that communities have been waiting years and decades for—actually gets built.

Instead this budget continues to deliver largesse and excess to out-of-control projects in Melbourne and big infrastructure projects in Melbourne—not out in the regions or outside of metro Melbourne—that are beholden to big unions and are beholden to big costs. Most tragically, there is no end in sight for what this will be costing the bottom line and the people of Victoria. Of course many of my constituents saw last week the independent Parliamentary Budget Office come out and say what this Andrews government has been telling people now for the last eight years quite frankly is misleading. We have been told that the Suburban Rail Loop, this grand vision of the Premier, is something that is going to magically link people across the metropolis of Melbourne in a modern, efficient way and that it would cost \$50 billion. That has been proven to be a lie. The Parliamentary Budget Office has come out and said this folly will take decades to build and cost up to and in excess of \$200 billion. As we have said, at a time when our health care in this city and in this state is in crisis, that just cannot be prioritised.

I also speak on behalf of country Victorians. I was briefed recently on the complete underspend on our country roads, and it was said to me by people in the industry that for the last 10 years this government has averaged just a little over \$540 million a year as a spend on all country roads, upgrades and maintenance. That is equivalent to one level crossing removal in Melbourne. This government proudly trumpets, I think, 50 or 60 level crossing removals in its time; that is as much spending in Melbourne on level crossing removals over eight years as the people of rural and regional Victoria could expect to see spent over 50 or 60 years. We would have to wait 50 to 60 years in country Victoria to see that level of investment in the safety of our roads. And while country Victorians are pleased that Melburnians can get to work 3 minutes quicker, I point out that the death toll on our roads and the cost to industry are borne largely by rural and regional Victorians. This government, instead of spending

just one level crossing removal's worth extra on roads in country Victoria, goes out onto our dangerous country roads, puts up 40-kilometre-an-hour speed signs and expects country Victorians to be happy with that as the level of maintenance in this state. Can I tell you that country Victorians are tiring of that. Road maintenance is not about slowing speeds down; road maintenance is about providing a safe, workable, well-maintained surface so not only can people expect and anticipate getting home safely at night but all of the amazing product that rural and regional Victoria produces can get quickly and efficiently to port, to the airports and of course to the markets here in Melbourne and business and commerce can provide the wonderful food and services that they do.

In conclusion, I just again bring to the house's attention that this budget is a sign of a government that just will not listen. It is a government that is happy to put a hard hat on, go underground with a TV crew and a TikTok team and sit there and talk about the big spend as if Victorians should be grateful. And can I say that I know the Victorians who live in my electorate would be grateful for just one level crossing removal's worth of road improvement, for hospitals that can service the people they need to and for a better focus of this government on what matters most to Victorians.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (18:20): I am pleased to speak on the take-note motion of the Victorian state budget 2022–23. This will be the last chance I get as a member in this place to speak on a budget, and I would say 16 out of the 20 budgets that have been delivered in the time that I have been in this place have been excellent budgets for the Yan Yean electorate. The only exceptions were the four years when I served on the opposition benches. I hope that my community will remember that.

I particularly was delighted on budget day to be able to nick out of this chamber and go and visit my friends at Doreen Primary School. Doreen Primary School, ably led by Glenn 'Simo' Simondson, who has been at that school for many decades, is a lovely little school in a rural setting, a lovely little country school, but it is on the edge of where there are now large suburban developments. When I was first elected there were only about 1300 people on the electoral roll in the postcode of Mernda and Doreen, and now there are about 50 000 people. We have six schools that serve the Mernda and Doreen postcode, and all of them are new schools except for Doreen. Doreen was the only school that was yet to be upgraded or totally rebuilt. I was delighted to go out there, and the principal, Glenn, I think nearly fainted. He expected a bit of maintenance money or something like that, but he certainly did not expect \$5.39 million to upgrade and modernise the school, including a new classroom and administration building. That means that all six schools in the Mernda and Doreen postcode will have no permanent buildings that are more than around 12 years old. It just epitomises the Education State, there writ large in Mernda and Doreen. To finish on that note as the local MP was a real delight, to be able to make that announcement to that school.

There is another great school just up the road from there, about four kilometres I think along Yan Yean Road. Doctors Gully Road is where Doreen Primary is, then Yarrambat Primary is on Yan Yean Road at the corner of Ironbark Road and it is getting \$444 100 to refurbish the existing student and staff toilets. The school was built—it is a fairly new school—in the late 1980s, early 90s, and it has had significant additions since that time, about 15 years ago. But with all the growth and the number of students that are there—there are about 650—the existing toilets for staff and students had really gone past their use-by date, so I was really pleased to be able to go and give the school that good news.

The budget also announced increased capacity for the Northern Hospital, and then of course we have seen since then the announcement of new urgent care centres. The increased capacity that was announced in the budget also included funding for the Werribee Mercy Hospital and the Casey Hospital, and that was an overall budget package of around \$55 million.

One of my favourite announcements in the budget was in the agriculture portfolio, that Victoria is set to have its first pet census. Everyone in this place knows that I am a dog lover, and Bailey, my fur baby, is very much part of our family and visits this place frequently. I think any of us with pets know just how important they were to us throughout the pandemic and throughout the lockdowns. But we realised that we need as a government to understand more about Victorians' relationship to their pet

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ownership, whether there are changes that need to be made with local government regulation and also what the economic value is of the Victorian industry and the impact of animal welfare and management policies. That is a fantastic initiative in the state budget.

Related to that, there is also \$150 000 set aside for Safe Steps, who support victim-survivors of family violence so that they can stay together with their pets when leaving a family violence setting. The funding will support Safe Steps to deliver veterinary care, transport and accommodation for pets as well as targeted support for foster care arrangements. We know that often victims of family violence stay in the home because they have nowhere to go with their pets, so not only is this great for pets but it is great for their owners.

The budget also provides a boost to paramedics and ambulance services. I have certainly been out to a number of regional areas, including Inglewood, to welcome the additional crew in there and a number of other locations. In emergency services there is additional funding for call-taking and dispatch capacity to ESTA, to the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority. Others have mentioned the \$250 power saving bonus, and I think that it has been overwhelmingly welcomed. The cost of living is just so difficult for people at the moment, while we are transitioning to changes in energy sources and also with what is happening internationally. I encourage anyone who has not yet applied for it to contact my office or particularly neighbourhood houses, such as the Whittlesea Community House, working on a daily basis assisting people to apply for this. There is also additional funding for solar homes, another way not only to support our environment and decrease greenhouse emissions but also to give people an opportunity to get a cheaper source of power into the future through the solar homes boost, and that is \$47.2 million.

With the announcement that we are getting the regional Commonwealth Games there is funding set aside for that, both for delivery and for legacy. I think that this will be an absolutely generational game changer for Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Gippsland and also beyond into many other regional areas which will have the opportunity to host. Even if they are not getting the main events, there will be many opportunities for major events prior, training venues and accommodation, plus there will be all the visitors. So it is just an amazing thing for our state.

The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund (RJIF)—there is another \$30 million for that fund. I see the minister at the table. She is now the Minister for Health, but she has the regions deep in her heart, having grown up in regional Victoria and having done a stint as the Minister for Regional Development. I had the great pleasure of working alongside her, and I know that she knows that the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund has supported amazing investment. Since the government came to office \$36 billion has been the total investment in regional Victoria by the Andrews Labor government. That is five times that of the Liberal-Nationals government. This year's budget provides \$5.7 billion in regional investments, including the \$2.6 billion for the Commonwealth Games.

The policy announcement by the National Party saying that they would guarantee 25 per cent spend in regional Victoria—well, in fact that is a cut, because our government has independently been shown to be spending 35 per cent.

Mr Riordan: You can't just make it up.

Ms GREEN: I have not made up a figure, member for Polwarth. The member for Polwarth before was trying to say that there was little spending happening in regional Victoria. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. We are helping deliver projects like \$4 million for the Portland foreshore development in the electorate of South-West Coast, \$5.5 million for the second stage of the Mildura riverfront development and \$4.2 million for the Parwan employment precinct. Just last week I was in The Gurdies in the Bass electorate, not far from Phillip Island. There is a small amount of money—\$250 000—for Ecoliv modular builders to do a new display home product, which will be a carbon-positive product. That will enable them to market those buildings. They are doing a great job, particularly building in regional Victoria, where there are tradie shortages, and particularly in areas

that have been impacted by the Black Summer fires in East Gippsland and in north-east Victoria. It is builders like Ecoliv that are able to deliver an absolutely quality product—Victorian made, 7-star rating. They are very skilled in understanding bushfire sites. Then there need to be some local tradies, just to connect them to power, sewerage and other services. That is just an example of some of the projects that get funded through our regional funds. Over time the RJIF has also supported a range of iconic projects, such as the revitalisation of the Maryborough railway station and Wodonga's magnificent \$12.8 million Hyphen, which I know that the minister at the table, the Minister for Health, is very familiar with.

I am proud to have served under three Premiers in my time in the Parliament. I would say that in the beginning, from the outset—and I know the member for Lara will agree with me—the first leader that we served under was Steve Bracks, and he said that we needed to serve for every part of the state. I think that that is what each of the leaders that I have served under has done. All of them have been rooted in regional Victoria, with Steve Bracks, John Brumby and the current Premier all having strong roots in regional Victoria and never having forgotten where they come from. Eighteen of our members—15 women and three men—currently represent regional electorates in this Parliament. I really hope that we are going to continue to do that, because I think the budget shows how we have driven investment.

The employment figures that have come out, particularly only today, have really shown that our investment in COVID recovery and support to business has really helped get Victoria back on track after the impact of the worldwide pandemic. But when you look at the unemployment figures, in particular the regional unemployment figures, I think the ones that were announced today for the South-West Coast area—Warrnambool—are between 1 and 2 per cent. We know that there is still more to be done in some areas of the state where there is high youth unemployment. But we are the Education State. We put money into TAFE, into training. The further announcements that we have made only this week are in addition to the budget—the support for nurses and midwives. It offers young people and people wanting to retrain alternate pathways, but also helps ease the skills gap in regional Victoria.

This is the final budget that I will have the privilege of speaking on. It is a great privilege to have been part of a government that has delivered for the suburbs and has delivered for the inner city and also our regional areas. I did not mention that the Growing Suburbs Fund has again been supported, and I really hope that the federal government takes up the opportunity to create one of those funds as well.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (18:35): I also rise to speak on the budget take-note motion. I would like to start by addressing some of the matters that the member for Yan Yean raised, just as a matter of the principles that she outlined in her contribution and the principle of governments in this state governing for all. I wish that was true, and I wish that was true for many reasons. The 46 100-odd members of the Sandringham district community so desperately want the Andrews Labor government to govern for all and to specifically govern for them, and during the course of this contribution I intend to articulate why and how the current government is failing the local residents of the Sandringham district.

This is my first term as a member of Parliament, and the way I have tried to operate is in a reasonably cooperative way with members of the government. They have been elected to government; they do have a mandate. But it is my job as the local member to represent the needs of my community—to fight for them, to advocate for them when members of our community are in need of various things. To that end it has been my consistent practice before a Victorian budget has been handed down in this place to write to the Treasurer and to present to the Treasurer a Sandringham district budget submission. In that budget submission on behalf of the residents of my community I outline for the Treasurer just some of the things that would make the Sandringham district community a better place—investment that is needed in the Sandringham district community in infrastructure and in services to make my community a better place for this generation and the next. I did so again this year when I wrote to the Treasurer in April outlining a number of things that my community needed.

In the area of health I requested major upgrades to the Sandringham Hospital to give it renewed purpose so that it may continue serving my community for this generation and the next. In the education space I asked for stage 1 urgent maintenance funding at the Mentone Girls Secondary College. The Mentone Girls Secondary College is at the intersection of Charman Road and Balcombe Road in Mentone. It is the only all-girls state secondary school in the southern region of Melbourne. It serves my community and neighbouring communities—Clarinda, Mordialloc and as far-flung as Carrum and further down the Frankston line—very, very well. What is more important is that it actually gives parents within those communities—my communities and the broader diaspora—the opportunity to choose for their girls, their young women, to go to a single-sex, girls-only state school. The trouble is that particular school has not received a brass razoo of state government funding or major capital funding in at least three decades. There is only so much paint that you can put on rotted wood to cover up the fact that the wood is rotted, and that is the circumstance at Mentone Girls Secondary College. It is not right—it is just not right. So, trying to be a community champion and a community advocate, I included that in my budget submission to the Treasurer and \$10 million for stage 2 of the redevelopment of Sandringham Secondary College, once again a fabulous educational institute within the Sandringham district.

I asked for money for the construction of a new school hall, a gymnasium, at not only Beaumaris Primary School but Beaumaris North Primary School as well. At Beaumaris Primary School the principal there, Mrs Skewes, is a wonderful principal. The parents and the teachers and the students there are wonderful, and they make up a fabulous community at Beaumaris Primary School. Once again, what they are asking for is not the world. They are not asking for the world; they are just asking for a bit of dignity, a bit of respect—a new school gymnasium so that they as a whole school community can gather within one place.

Similarly, at Beaumaris North Primary School on Reserve Road in Beaumaris, the terrific principal there, Mrs Duffy—an educational institution herself within the Sandringham district—has been advocating for some time for a gymnasium. In fact she tells me she was promised one by the Department of Education and Training a number of times if her student population reached a certain number. Well, it has reached that number and it has exceeded it, and still Beaumaris North Primary School has not received the school gymnasium that it not only needs but deserves.

I asked for \$100 000 to better protect our Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary. The Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary in Beaumaris is our area's greatest environmental and ecological asset. It is synonymous with our Bayside community. You think Beaumaris, you think Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary. I recall, as I have lived in the Bayside community all of my life, as a young boy, together with my twin brother, wandering down to the shallows of Ricketts Point, playing on the sand there in the shallow waters and going and discovering the rock pools as well. Now I have the opportunity to bring my own children to the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary so they can enjoy it. I feel a happy obligation to do everything I can to protect the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, not just for this generation and not just for my kids but for their kids as well. That is the opportunity that I have as the elected member for Sandringham.

I asked for a number of other things as well. I asked for investment in the Sandringham Football Club at the Trevor Barker Beach Oval on Beach Road. The Trevor Barker Beach Oval on Beach Road in Sandringham is home not only to the Sandringham Zebras VFL team but also to the Southern Saints VFLW team, and it also hosts and plays host to many other local competitions—the Victorian Amateur Football Association finals, for example. If you have ever been to the change rooms there, Acting Speaker Morris—I do not suppose you have, but I have—they are terrible. They are substandard. The blokes do not even feel comfortable or safe showering in them, let alone the VFLW teams. There are no dedicated, specific change facilities for the female umpires either. Once again the ask of the Treasurer in the Sandringham district budget submission was not for the world. It was not for gold plating or brass plating, it was for the basics, to offer those players, those VFLW players especially, at the Trevor Barker Beach Oval in Sandringham dignity and respect—a pretty basic request.

These were just some of the things that I asked for in the Sandringham district budget submission this year. I got a note back from the Treasurer, very courteously, in May. He outlined a number of statewide things that the Andrews Labor government were doing but failed to really address any of the specific items that I raised in my original correspondence with him. To me and to my community that was a great disappointment because it demonstrated to me and it demonstrated to the community organisations—those sporting clubs, those schools, those groups within my community—that the Andrews Labor government claims that it will govern for every Victorian but it does not govern for the people of the Sandringham district. They had an opportunity to demonstrate that in responding positively to some of the items that I raised in that Sandringham district budget submission and failed to do so.

Well, we are not waiting for the Andrews Labor government to recognise what is important for my community, we are just going on and doing it. On 26 November this year the people of Victoria have a choice. They have a choice between the Andrews Labor government, who claim they govern for all Victorians—but the experience of my residents is that they do not—and a local member who is a local community champion, who was born in the community, who has lived there all his life, who knows the area, who loves the area and who is a champion for local causes. These things I am not advocating for for myself; I am advocating for them for my community.

That is why I was very pleased to stand alongside the member for Bulleen, the leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Shadow Minister for Health, Ms Crozier from the other place, to announce that a future Liberal government would make a significant investment in the modernisation of our Sandringham Hospital. That commitment included—and this perhaps costs the least but is the most impactful commitment that we made—the establishment of a Sandringham Hospital community reference group, bringing together local health professionals, hospital fundraisers and community members who will undertake the important work of drafting the very first Sandringham Hospital community charter. Every bill that is introduced in this place has attached to it a statement of compliance with the Victorian charter of human rights. Similarly, any decision that government or Alfred Health would make about our Sandringham Hospital, our community hospital, the caring heart of our community, in the future would need to be in accordance with the very first Sandringham Hospital community charter. Sandringham Hospital is not just an outpost of the Alfred; it is our community hospital, and it must be preserved as such for the future.

I alluded to earlier the needs of the Sandringham Football Club—the Sandringham Zebras VFL team and the Southern Saints VFLW team—at the Trevor Barker Beach Oval. Just earlier this week I was there with the Shadow Minister for Sport, the member for Eildon, announcing that a future Liberal government would commit \$1.5 million to the full refurbishment of the north pavilion at the Trevor Barker Beach Oval. That would fully refurbish the north pavilion and would contribute to the commencement of the refurbishment of the south pavilion as well. That would mean dedicated change facilities not just for the blokes but for the women as well. It would mean a dedicated female change space for female umpires as well. Again, these people are not asking for the world; they are just asking for basic dignity and respect, and where the Andrews Labor government fails to recognise this, this side of the chamber does.

For those in the chamber who have heard me make contributions in this place before, I have since time immemorial been requesting of the Deputy Premier and others for the level crossings at Highett Road and Wickham Road to be removed, and time and time again the response has come back: no. Well, what we have done is committed to the removal of the Highett Road and the Wickham Road level crossings in my community. It is the number one issue that members of the Highett community raise with me. It would make a significant impact. Highett is a growing community. There is major development planned on Graham Road at the former CSIRO site; Bayside council has recently approved more than 1100 dwellings there. This is just a stone's throw from the Highett Road level crossing. The current Labor government have the former Gas and Fuel land at Nepean Highway in Highett under the auspices of Development Victoria at the moment with plans to develop that site as

well—more high-density high-rise in Highett—without a plan to remove the Highett Road and Wickham Road level crossings. This is not a luxury; we are not asking for a luxury. We are asking for necessary infrastructure upgrades in our community.

Where the Labor government has failed to recognise the significance and the importance of the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary in my community for my community, a future Liberal government will invest \$100 000 to better protect our Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, and I was thrilled at that announcement to have the member for Brighton, my colleague the Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change, there together with members of the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron, with members of the Bayside Climate Change Action Group and with members of other environmental groups—Marine Care Ricketts Point and others—to announce this plan. Where the Andrews Labor government has failed my community, my commitment is that a future Liberal government will deliver.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (18:50): I want to address the big-picture issues: how the Labor government takes care of grassroots communities and who you should vote for because the decision and the choice are clear. When it comes to addressing the catastrophes of our times and looking at what we need to do in the time of pandemic, the Victorian government has invested \$12 billion in health. I want to acknowledge the Minister for Health, who is at the table, and her predecessor, the member for Albert Park, for what they have been doing. You can see these initiatives building on a daily basis. I have just come from having meetings with AAMRI and the Victorian chapter of the Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes, and that is after we had a record investment from a Canadian philanthropist today in the elegant science that we have here in Victoria, so it all fits together—how we take care of the pandemic, how we address the network that needs to be taken care of and how we keep building a better proposition for health to address the times that we are in.

Going directly to what the Minister for Health has been doing, this investment of \$12 billion is to look after the care of people and ease pressure on the stretched workforce, and this is a critical thing. We know there is the fatigue and the fog of COVID, and the impact that has had right across the workforce has been tremendous and brutal in a lot of ways on these carers. We cannot thank them enough for all they have done and all it has taken in the time of pandemic. The new funding focuses on delivering the pandemic repair plan, so training and hiring up to 7000 healthcare workers, of which 5000 will be nurses—

Ms Thomas: Hear, hear!

Mr McGUIRE: The minister is saying ‘Hear, hear!’, and that is exactly right. This is a critical point. The minister knows as well as the member for Broadmeadows we have got a \$60 million investment. We are trying to build a centre of excellence for health care, and this is particularly relevant in the northern suburbs and in the areas which are, as I call Broadmeadows, virtually a United Nations in one neighbourhood, with people from 160 different nationalities. What we are looking to do is get the collaboration and coordination between the Broadmeadows Hospital and Kangan Institute to get the best education you can get, so in the clinic and in the classroom simultaneously. This will be really important in these communities, particularly in the northern area.

We know that the Northern Hospital had the highest number of people turning up at their emergency department and the highest rate of ambulance ramping. How do we actually take care of that? I know the minister and the Premier were recently out at the Northern Hospital. There is new technology, and great innovation is being done at the Northern Hospital. These are ideas I have pursued with them for a number of years to get done—‘How do we do the intervention through technology-driven leadership?’—and they have got a proof of that concept.

I want to bring these themes together, because this is what people will be voting for: who is going to give you the best chance in the future to be able to take care of these issues? As I look more into the detail of this \$12 billion investment, it will also deliver more paramedics, more support for paramedics themselves and increased capacity for 000 call takers and dispatchers; a package to recruit, train,

upskill and support healthcare workers across the sector; \$2.3 billion to upgrade and build new hospitals, including \$236 million to double emergency department capacity in Casey and Werribee, two key areas; and a record investment in surgical capacity across the state. It includes \$1.5 billion in the COVID catch-up plan to increase surgical activity beyond prepandemic levels through establishing rapid access hubs, supporting private hospitals to deliver more public surgeries and transforming Frankston Private Hospital into a public surgical centre with the capacity to perform up to 9000 public surgeries each year once operational.

Ms Thomas: Opposed by those on the other side.

Mr McGUIRE: As the Minister for Health says, opposed by those on the other side. Why would you oppose this initiative at this critical time? We had the New South Wales Premier in Victoria this week standing next to the Victorian Premier. We are getting unity tickets, and this is what the public want. They want to see how we could actually put together better deals to make this happen. So this is what is going on and this is what needs to happen.

I note that this is the tone that the Prime Minister has moved to as well. We need to be able to have a more cooperative federation and to make this work. He was recently of course in Melbourne at Monash University, where we had a world first: we had Moderna announcing that it would manufacture, for the first time on a campus anywhere in the world, mRNA vaccines. This is the next-generation breakthrough that we need to have for vaccines, and this then takes us to a higher level internationally.

I was delighted to represent the Victorian government at the Australian British Health Catalyst, and I explained it in these terms: if you think about medical research, think about three key cities. Think of Boston with Harvard and MIT, think of London with Oxbridge and the Imperial College and then think of Melbourne with the elegant institutes anchored around the University of Melbourne—that is in our boulevard of big dreams—and the great southern hub, which is Monash University—

A member: Postcodes of hope.

Mr McGUIRE: connected to the CSIRO by Innovation Walk, and that should be our billion-dollar boulevard. So this is how you put together these epicentres. Someone called out about postcodes of hope. Well, it was an initiative from *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope* that actually addressed CSL testimony to the Senate in 2014 that Australia was not a great place to commercialise your intellectual property and export it. So I took this up with great fervour and pursued this, that we need to take care of these sorts of things. So here is what we did: CSL has been manufacturing AstraZeneca vaccines from the UK. We are about to have the debate on the free trade agreement between Australia and Great Britain, and I have said to the British government officials, 'Let's lift the debate beyond a comparison between Vegemite and Marmite and let's talk about life-saving vaccines'. They agree with this proposition. This is what we should be talking about in the time of pandemic, because this is what people need. This is the exchange of the intellectual property, of commercialising it here and then exporting it in the Asia-Pacific region. This is what we are doing. The best diplomacy that you can have is saving lives, and that is what has happened. This is already happening.

Here is the other thing that happened. When we lost manufacturing mass because our once-proud automotive industry was closed, here is what happened. We were able to get \$1.8 billion in a new investment to manufacture vaccines.

Mr Riordan interjected.

Mr McGUIRE: Scott Morrison had to come to Broadmeadows, so do not denigrate Broadmeadows. He stood there at CSL. The \$1.8 billion investment is for a new lucrative export industry to manufacture vaccines against influenza nearby. That is through Seqirus, a subsidiary of CSL, and that is going to be in the Melbourne Airport precinct there. So here is how you pull it together, here is how you deliver the big picture and here is how you can actually have the new industries and jobs and you can have independent supply chains and national sovereignty.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.**Adjournment**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

EASTERN FREEWAY

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (19:00): (6516) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and it concerns the expansion of the Eastern Freeway. Much has been discussed in the chamber and indeed by the government about the North East Link Program and the impact the North East Link Program may or may not have on the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, but what is not discussed by the government is what is happening with the Eastern Freeway and the government's intentions around the expansion of the Eastern Freeway. Expansion of the Eastern Freeway as the government has been mooting it may have quite a detrimental impact upon many of my constituents—certainly around Estelle Street, Willow Bend and Park Avenue—and the concept of those residents facing 6-metre-high walls or more opposite their front driveways over the road from very narrow streets is something that they are not used to and certainly would not want them to be used to, and I would not want them to be used to, given the fact that at the moment they are over from the Koonung Creek Reserve. The government has not yet made any kind of detailed designs available to these residents as to what is going where, what it might look like and what might be the impacts on so many of these residents.

They also have not talked about many of the clubs, like Bulleen Cricket Club, Koonung reserve, Greythorn Bowling Club and Manningham Juventus, for instance—about the impact on those clubs. Manningham Juventus, for instance, have a number of trees to the south side of the soccer pitch, which are the only natural shelter from sun for the spectators. They do not have any other naturally shaded areas around the soccer pitch, and that will all go. That is what is being mooted at the moment, but there is nothing firm. What I am asking for from the minister tonight is to write to these residents who are directly affected, who abut the Eastern Freeway, and to be in contact with and write to those clubs and tell them openly what is going to happen and what it is going to look like. So what is going to happen to those clubs, how much vegetation is going to be lost, how close the freeway will be to those sporting reserves and whether they will lose any of their current land, because at the moment this is a huge point of conjecture for some of those clubs who require the land to the south side of some of those football grounds, which may disappear. That will thoroughly change the shape of some of those ovals obviously and make them unplayable.

I am asking the government to come clean and tell these residents and clubs what is going to be their future once and for all so that they can actually get on with their lives and start planning for the future and, more to the point, so the government can then compensate them for what damage is going to be done to their lives and to their club's future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before I call the next speaker can I welcome in the gallery Dr Jim Romas, Dr Claudio Baldi, Dr Hung Phu Tran and Dr Walid Ahmar, northern suburbs medical practitioners who contributed greatly during the COVID pandemic. Welcome to the gallery.

YUILLE PARK P-8 COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:03): (6517) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Yuille Park P-8 Community College in my electorate of Wendouree. The school is truly one of the greatest examples of staff and families working together to support students and provide them with opportunities to grow and thrive. Under the transformative leadership of principal Brett Shillito and deputy principal Daniel O'Kelly, the staff at Yuille Park are always willing to go the extra step to support their students and families. I would particularly like to acknowledge Shay McInerney and Bri Dredge for their work in the literacy

program at the school. I have spoken before in this place about Bri's leadership as a performing arts teacher, but it is worth mentioning again. The school choir at Yuille Park has 50 members—that is, a third of the students on the campus are in the choir. The choir recently performed at the opening of the Wathaurong co-op offices and was a part of the 1000-voice-strong choir to launch Patricia Piccinini's Skywhales as part of the City of Ballarat's winter festival. The school continues to provide opportunities for the students to experience new things like this once-in-a-lifetime outdoor art event. I understand that 16 of Bri's students will be off to perform at the State Schools Spectacular next weekend in Melbourne, and three of the students will be doing the welcome to country at the event. I wish them all the best.

At the beginning of each school year I always look forward to attending the smoking ceremony at Yuille Park. This year the school reached out to the local Aboriginal community, and there were a number of elders who attended the event. It was a wonderful experience for the Aboriginal students to spend time with and learn from the elders, and the elders I spoke to on that day found it incredible to see the way that students' education had changed since their days as students. At Yuille Park, Aboriginal culture is valued and celebrated, and the school community is proud of their Aboriginal families.

Throughout the pandemic I have missed doing the breakfast program at Yuille Park and missed my chats with parents and students. The school also has a fantastic cafe. I am told that after two years of disruption due to the pandemic the students are currently working hard to learn money handling and cooking and serving skills at the cafe, and I cannot wait for it to be open again to the public soon. I look forward to hearing from the minister, and I hope to welcome her to this very, very wonderful school in the heart of my electorate and introduce her to Brett and his team of inspirational teachers and staff.

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE PLANNING

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:05): (6518) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Planning, and the action I ask for from the minister is to look at providing appropriate development guidelines and laws for constituents throughout my electorate, particularly in the areas of Elsternwick, Caulfield East, Ormond and Glen Huntly. I have raised a number of times that 70 per cent of development in the state is going to areas such as mine—developed areas. We do not mind taking our fair share, but when you look at areas like Elsternwick we do not have the infrastructure to support the development that is happening there.

We have a Woolworths tower that is currently before VCAT. We have had a number of residents raise concerns about that overdevelopment. We have no problems with a supermarket, but when a supermarket becomes a property developer and we do not have the amenity to support that development, then of course it really does affect livability for many of those people that live around it. If you contrast that—and it is an ABC site—with the old ABC *Countdown* studios just up the road in Gordon Street, that is going through a comprehensive plan of development, and that developer has had extensive consultation with the community. They are looking at six storeys, which contrasts with the 12 storeys that the Woolworths development site is currently proposing.

We need to have consistency. I know the anxiety that this has caused many of the residents throughout Elsternwick—the overdevelopment that has taken place. I have raised this numerous times with a previous Minister for Planning. I thought tonight I would try again as we have a new Minister for Planning to see if we can get finally some action, some sensible laws going forward, some consistency and some certainty for many of those residents. We had in Seymour Road a beautiful heritage home that three years ago had a bulldozer through the front door. This heritage home was over 100 years old. It was bulldozed. We tried to stop it. Residents and I wrote to council to prevent it from happening. Council did not have the laws and the regulations to protect that beautiful home from being destroyed. That home stayed, completely. After the front door and the porch and everything was bulldozed, the rest of it stayed there for six months with nothing being done. It was deliberately done by the developer, to have this heritage home bulldozed. We need to ensure livability is protected in all neighbourhoods, especially when I see in my electorate of Caulfield that it has taken far more than its fair share if I

compare it to other parts of Glen Eira that have been protected. We want the same. We want the minister to act now to have height limits, to have apartment sizes and to have quality and livability in our neighbourhood.

METRO TUNNEL

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:09): (6519) My adjournment this evening is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Deputy Premier. The action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the benefits and progress of the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel for the Mordialloc constituency. It is hard to comprehend a Melbourne without the city loop. Conceived in 1929 and delivered with the opening of Flagstaff station in 1985, it really transformed Melbourne and brought it to being a modern, livable city.

In years to come it will be unconscionable to think of Melbourne without the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, a project delivered solely by the Andrews Labor government, fully funded by the state and transforming the way we get around our community. When we think about the growing population out in the south-eastern suburbs, and particularly among the communities along the Frankston line and along the Cranbourne-Pakenham line, we need to make sure that we are encouraging more people onto our public transport system. One in eight people in our communities catch public transport, and 15 per cent of emissions in our state are from cars, so we need to look not only at the livability in our state and more access to public transport but also climate action. That is why people want to see bold, ambitious policies where we invest in rail. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel—I have had the chance to tour a couple of stations. I joined some colleagues from the south-east to check out Arden station a little while ago and the progress there and recently Town Hall station, 28 metres below Flinders Street. To see that progress—all the thousands of workers and all the industries that have been supported—has been truly extraordinary.

When you think that the Suburban Rail Loop is just around the corner—construction is underway now; early works have begun. It will take something like 600 000 vehicles off metropolitan roads—a substantial environmental policy. It is a substantial policy that connects our cities, linking up education precincts and employment precincts. It is going to be hard to comprehend Melbourne without the Suburban Rail Loop and all the benefits it would deliver for the Frankston and Cranbourne-Pakenham lines, linking up those health settings and employment settings. We are really excited in the Mordialloc electorate by the progress of the Suburban Rail Loop and the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel.

To think when we came to government in 2014 it seemed a long way away, the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel. But you have got to make decisions not just in election cycles but for the future, and that is what the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel delivers. In just over two years time we will be opening up the brand new stations and the new train line, and it is just part of the delivery that we are providing to our local community. I am really pumped for the transport infrastructure minister and Deputy Premier to update my community on the benefits of the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel and the progress towards supporting my constituents on the Frankston and Cranbourne-Pakenham train lines.

KILMORE BYPASS

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (19:11): (6520) The matter that I wish to raise this evening is for the Treasurer, and it relates to the Kilmore bypass and the Andrews government's apparent abandonment of that project. I think it is fascinating to listen to those on the opposite side of the house talk about the Suburban Rail Loop and all of the benefits that it is apparently going to deliver—a project of some \$200 billion-plus that was dreamed up on the back of an envelope and that no-one actually asked for. My community has been asking, literally for decades now, for a bypass to solve horrendous traffic issues in Kilmore, and we cannot get the Andrews government to invest in that project. In 2018 the now Attorney-General, Ms Symes in the other house, told Kilmore locals, 'The funding for land acquisition progresses this project to the next stage, and we will be in a strong position for full project funding. This is something which is on track'. She said that in 2018, and still we have not had a dollar.

The 2016 population of Kilmore was almost 8000 people, and it is now probably over 10 000 with the growth that we are experiencing. There are 1600 trucks going through Kilmore every day. Last week I was there with our candidate for Euroa, Annabelle Cleeland, talking to traders about the impact that is having on their businesses, and it is killing Kilmore. There are shops right along the main street that have 'For lease' signs because of the volume of traffic that is passing through that town. Some people said to me that they no longer want to live in Kilmore. Their businesses are suffering so badly from a lack of investment and a lack of willingness from this government to do a project that makes sense on every level. While the government are spending billions of dollars in the city, we cannot get the few hundred million dollars that is required to build a vitally important piece of infrastructure. The main street in Kilmore is dangerous. It is like playing Russian roulette to cross the street.

I had hoped that during my time in Parliament this project would be built. To be perfectly honest, most people in Kilmore do not think that they will see it in their lifetimes, and there are people who are talking about moving away from the community because of that. The Nationals have given a very strong commitment at this election that if we are elected to government, we will invest 25 per cent of all new infrastructure funding in regional Victoria. That is double the current amount of funding that is being invested by the Labor Party. I think voters have a very, very clear choice at the coming election: they can vote for The Nationals, who in government will actually deliver projects like the Kilmore bypass, or they will get nothing from Labor.

WYNDHAM EARLY PARENTING CENTRE

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarnet) (19:14): (6521) My adjournment is for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action I seek is that the minister update me on our government's efforts in building the Wyndham early parenting centre. As the minister will know—after so many years of me being on my feet speaking in this place about the number of babies being born each and every single week in Wyndham—130 babies are now being born each and every week. That is an increase compared to the 2019 numbers which I have been speaking about over the past four years. It is an increase of 40 babies a week compared to the 2019 numbers when I first stood here and talked about how many kids were being born at local hospitals in our community.

I know from my own experience just how daunting being a new parent can be. You have so many questions, you are tired, you cannot believe you have given birth to this beautiful little thing and he or she will not stop crying and you are not quite sure what to do. I know this is something that a lot of families in my electorate experience when they adjust to life with a newborn child, particularly when their family is in another country across the world and they do not have grandparents here to help them. That is why centres like early parenting centres are just so important, and we are building seven of them right across Victoria.

Each of the centres is going to provide parents and carers with specialist support for their bubs as well as young kids as old as four, including support with, most importantly, sleep and settling, along with general health and wellbeing. The new facility, which will be run by Tweddle Australia, will include 10 residential units and four day-stay units to provide a range of support services in a safe and, most importantly, welcoming environment for all families. This is an initiative I was particularly excited to see grow over the years as the chair of the community advisory group for this project. With works expected to be completed by 2024, I look forward to receiving an update from the minister on where exactly we are at in delivering this life-saving service for so many families in Wyndham.

ANGLESEA RIVER WATER QUALITY

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (19:17): (6522) My adjournment debate this evening is directed to the minister for environment, natural resources and climate change. My request to her follows a very well attended meeting in Anglesea last week. Over 100 local people assembled at the fantastic Anglesea pub, and the sole topic of conversation was to bring to the government's attention, to the community's attention and to the shire's attention the lack of action on the state of the Anglesea River. I am calling on the minister to immediately, posthaste, without delay, properly resource the Corangamite

Catchment Management Authority and Southern Rural Water to follow up on the research that that community has undertaken. That research has not just been done by citizen scientists but by Professor Ralf Haese from Melbourne University.

The concerns are quite simple. The concerns of the Anglesea community are that the 50 years worth of aquifer pumping by the coalmine near Anglesea has led to some long-term damage, and that long-term damage has manifested itself in a high acid rate of water quality—very, very poor water quality. It has had detrimental effects on the fish, on the wildlife and on the estuary, and it no longer resembles the healthy waterway that the community has grown to love and use. It is vital for regional tourism; it is vital for Great Ocean Road tourism. There are simple solutions. There are solutions that the community is prepared to look at and work with the government to come to, but the community has been waiting two years now. It is seeing annual decline in the quality and the health of that waterway.

I shout out to the chairman of the Friends of Anglesea River, Keith Shipton, and his merry band of supporters, who have worked diligently and rationally with the local authorities and the community to raise this awareness. It is now at the point where they have done the hard yards. What the government needs to do is to back that local community, to do the research and the follow-up work that they have asked for and to come to a conclusion on how best the Anglesea community can go forward with a river that is healthy, with a river that will add value to that community and, most importantly, with a river that will be sustainable into the future for both the environment and the people that live and work around it. We cannot have a situation where we allow ongoing effects to go untreated and unremediated. This is a simple request; it is not a big ask. It is what the people of Anglesea expect the government to do for them.

NEPEAN ELECTORATE MEN'S SHEDS

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (19:20): (6523) My adjournment is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate of Nepean and the wonderful members of the many men's sheds right across my electorate, including the Rosebud and Districts Men's Shed, which is located at the Seawinds Community Hub in Capel Sound, the Safety Beach-Dromana Men's Shed, the Main Ridge Men's Shed and the Point Nepean Men's Shed.

The Victorian government knows that men's sheds play a huge role in improving the wellbeing of participants and the local community. Earlier this year the Victorian government announced a round of grants of up to \$80 000 each for the construction of new men's sheds and refurbishments or extensions of existing sheds. These grants will give communities an opportunity to better utilise men's sheds that already exist. These sheds give so much to the people that use their services, and I am lucky enough to have become close with many of the sheds on the Mornington Peninsula since I was elected in 2018.

I am aware that Rosebud men's shed has submitted an application for funding in this grant round, and I would like to take this opportunity to register my support for their application and the fantastic work that they and all of the southern peninsula men's sheds continue to do. Way back in 2019 I was fortunate enough to officially open the Rosebud men's shed. Alongside Rosebud I have been fortunate to have had many visits with all of the men's sheds, and the folks that attend these sheds—well, they are absolute characters. They really are, everyone that attends. Once again, I look forward to the minister's response and acceptance of my invitation to visit some of the sheds in the months ahead.

HEALESVILLE FREEWAY RESERVE

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (19:21): (6524) I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Environment and Climate Action. The action I seek is for the minister to provide directly to me a written update as to the latest detailed plans for the future use of the land in the Forest Hill district known as the Healesville freeway reserve (HFR). I have asked for this information numerous times in this place and I am yet to receive the information requested. This land, which is more than 30 hectares in size, runs east-west from Springvale Road, Forest Hill, in the west to Boronia Road,

Vermont, in the east. Again I note that I have repeatedly and unsuccessfully asked various ministers for this information on numerous occasions.

It is now over 8½ years since 24 February 2014, when the current Premier visited the HFR and stood on a tree stump to make the announcement that he would preserve the HFR as public open space. We now know that the government broke this promise and in fact sold off parcels of the HFR land, and they have done little else since. I continue to have constituents asking me about what is going on with this land. Sadly, I can only advise them that I am still awaiting formal advice from the government about what is happening. It is very obvious to my constituents that the much-promised walking and cycling path does not exist despite assurances many years ago that it would be constructed. It is also clear that land for additional grounds for Vermont Secondary College that are desperately needed by this terrific local school has not been set aside for this purpose.

This land has tremendous potential for the community, particularly as a place for recreation and exercise, as well as having important environmental aspects. Minister, can you please finally provide me with the detailed written plans and time lines that you have for the use and development of this very important local land so that I in turn can advise the Forest Hill community?

REGIONAL INVESTMENT

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (19:24): (6525) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Regional Development in the other place, and the action I seek is an update on investment in regional Victoria, particularly in my electorate of Bass. Our Andrews Labor government's 2022–23 budget provides an outstanding \$5.7 billion for regional initiatives, taking the government's total investment in regional Victoria to, would you believe, more than \$36 billion since 2015—five times more than the previous Liberal-National government. A myriad of funds were reinvested in, including the Growing Suburbs Fund, the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, the tourism fund, the country football and netball fund, the Regional Events Fund, a new Energy Innovation Fund to kickstart offshore wind in the Bass Strait, and the list goes on and on and on. I am keen to hear more about our \$300 million injection to upgrade regional hospitals and healthcare facilities across our state, including Bass Coast and South Gippsland. It is the largest regional health infrastructure boost since we created it.

The Big Housing Build has a minimum \$25 million for Bass Coast. Of the \$5.3 billion, 25 per cent is allocated for regional Victoria, and that totals up to \$1.25 billion. Our 2022–23 Victorian state budget was the second-largest investment in regional Victoria in our state's history and allocated 35 per cent of the new asset investment to regional Victoria. The Department of Treasury and Finance analysis confirms that regional Victoria will receive 35 per cent of new infrastructure investment in this budget—yes, 35 per cent, which totally usurps the Liberal-Nationals commitment of 25 per cent and totally counterargues their stating our government has only allocated 13 per cent. Their commitment of 25 per cent would be a cut to the current Labor investment. The 13 per cent claim of The Nationals has no basis in fact. Their analysis excludes smaller projects and contributions from the commonwealth, all to understate the level of investment that is occurring in regional Victoria. I really look forward to an update from the minister.

RESPONSES

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development) (19:26): The member for Bulleen raised a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, as did the member for Mordialloc; the member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Education; the member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Planning; the member for Euroa raised a matter for the Treasurer; the member for Tarneit raised a matter for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services; the member for Polwarth raised a matter for the Minister for Environment and Climate Action; as did the member for Forest Hill; the member for Nepean raised a

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matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers; and the member for Bass raised a very pertinent matter for the Minister for Regional Development, and I will refer them accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.27 pm.