

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2022

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

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

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

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

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

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

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

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

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

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

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

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

Privileges Committee

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

Standing Orders Committee

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

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

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

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

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowsell.

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

House Committee

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

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

Integrity and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Mr Grimley.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

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

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENTS	
Acknowledgement of country	3515
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion	3515
PETITIONS	
East Wimmera Health Service redevelopment.....	3515
COMMITTEES	
Privileges Committee	3515
Person Referred to in the Legislative Assembly: Professor David Lindenmayer AO	3515
Economy and Infrastructure Committee	3515
Inquiry into Victorian Universities' Investment in Skills.....	3515
DOCUMENTS	
Documents	3516
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Adjournment	3516
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Murray Plains electorate roads	3516
Essendon electorate schools	3516
Olga Kenny	3517
Caulfield electorate women leaders.....	3517
Energy policy	3517
Coolstore Road, Croydon, level crossing removal.....	3518
Lions Club	3518
Ivanhoe electorate early childhood education.....	3518
Rural and regional road safety.....	3518
Murrumbidgee Primary School	3519
Caulfield and District Netball Association.....	3519
Oakleigh Cannons Football Club.....	3519
Whitehorse United Soccer Club.....	3519
Glen Waverley Bowls Club.....	3519
Community Bank Pinewood	3520
Health system.....	3520
Aziz Aziz	3520
Rowville electorate roads.....	3520
Barwon Heads Arts and Community Hub	3521
Bellarine electorate schools	3521
Gambling harm.....	3521
Outdoor dining.....	3521
Mornington Peninsula metropolitan designation	3522
Cranbourne Bowling Club.....	3522
Cranbourne Secondary College	3522
Recreational fishing.....	3523
Teej celebrations.....	3523
Healthcare workers.....	3523
Cr Nathan Conroy	3523
Outdoor dining.....	3523
Legacy Week	3524
Pines Football Netball Club.....	3524
Artie Kendall.....	3524
Eltham Art Show	3524
Youth mental health	3524
BILLS	
Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022.....	3524
Second reading.....	3524
Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022	3538
Second reading.....	3538
MEMBERS	
Treasurer	3556
Minister for Corrections	3556
Absence	3556
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Health system.....	3556

Ministers statements: health infrastructure.....	3557
Health system.....	3557
Ministers statements: Jobs that Matter campaign.....	3558
Health system.....	3558
Ministers statements: manufacturing sector.....	3559
South Yarra public housing.....	3560
Ministers statements: Solar Homes program.....	3561
Health system.....	3562
Ministers statements: Suburban Rail Loop.....	3562
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Benambra electorate.....	3563
Broadmeadows electorate.....	3563
Gippsland South electorate.....	3564
Wendouree electorate.....	3564
Polwarth electorate.....	3564
Melton electorate.....	3564
Mildura electorate.....	3565
Thomastown electorate.....	3565
Brighton electorate.....	3565
Hawthorn electorate.....	3565
BILLS	
Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.....	3566
Second reading.....	3566
Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022.....	3574
Second reading.....	3574
Third reading.....	3590
Early Childhood Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.....	3590
Second reading.....	3590
Third reading.....	3590
Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022.....	3591
Second reading.....	3591
Third reading.....	3591
Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022.....	3591
Second reading.....	3591
Third reading.....	3591
ADJOURNMENT	
Regional government services.....	3591
TaskForce, Frankston.....	3592
Government integrity.....	3592
Bacchus Marsh Men's Shed.....	3593
Coniston Avenue–Princes Highway, Berwick.....	3593
St Albans seniors.....	3594
Rental support.....	3594
Cheltenham Secondary College.....	3594
Eildon electorate roads.....	3595
Camberwell Green.....	3596
Responses.....	3596

Thursday, 1 September 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.

Business of the house

NOTICES OF MOTION

The SPEAKER (09:33): General business, notices of motion 35 to 38, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matters to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 pm today.

Petitions

Following petition presented to house by Clerk:

EAST WIMMERA HEALTH SERVICE REDEVELOPMENT

We, the undersigned residents of Victoria ask the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to recommend to the State Government:

1. That the St Arnaud campus of East Wimmera Health Service is in need of substantial investment to make it fit for purpose to serve the community into the future.
2. That the government fund Stage 1 of the East Wimmera Health Service St Arnaud campus in the May Budget.

By Ms STALEY (Ripon) (751 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Ms STALEY (Ripon).

Committees

PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Person Referred to in the Legislative Assembly: Professor David Lindenmayer AO

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough) (09:34): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Privileges Committee: *Person Referred to in the Legislative Assembly: Professor David Lindenmayer AO*, together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Victorian Universities' Investment in Skills

Mr EREN (Lara) (09:34): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on the inquiry into Victorian universities' investment in skills, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

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

Auditor-General—The Effectiveness of Victoria Police’s Staff Allocation—Ordered to be published
Sentencing Act 1991—Sentencing of emergency worker harm offences—Review into the operation and effectiveness of the *Sentencing Amendment (Emergency Worker Harm) Act 2020*.

DOCUMENT TABLED UNDER A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSE—The Clerk tabled the following document:

Parliamentary Integrity Adviser—Report 2021–22.

Business of the house

ADJOURNMENT

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale—Leader of the House, Minister for Planning) (09:35): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 13 September 2022.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

MURRAY PLAINS ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:36): I want to raise the perilous condition of the road network in my electorate—large potholes that destroy car rims when drivers hit them and up to 20-centimetre drop-offs on the sides of narrow bitumen roads that make them dangerous when vehicles move over for oncoming traffic. These are major transport routes. They are not local government roads. They are actually VicRoads roads that are used by trucks, cars, caravans and everyone, and they are dangerous. The Andrews government has failed to invest enough in our road network for the last eight years. A speed reduction sign does not fix a dangerous pothole; proper road maintenance fixes a pothole. A speed reduction sign does not fix a dangerous drop-off on the side of a bitumen road; proper road maintenance fixes that. Maintaining the sides of our sealed roads to stop the run-off of water pooling and making the roads even worse is something that VicRoads seem to have forgotten how to do. They do not maintain the verges of our roads properly. It would appear that out of sight is out of mind. Just because Andrews government ministers live in Melbourne and do not travel on country roads does not mean that there should not be appropriate investment in those roads. They are dangerous. There are risks to lives because the Andrews government just does not invest enough money in country roads.

ESSENDON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (09:37): I was delighted to go to Flemington Primary School recently and inspect the new playground that is being built by the Andrews Labor government. A bit shout-out to Siraj, Alexa, Felix, Frankie and Alessio for showing me around with principal Amanda Williams. It is just such a great school.

I was pleased to head over to Ascot Vale West Primary School, where I was shown around the new building sites. A big-shout out to Elsie Phillips and Isaac West, who are the school captains, as well as Quincy Crow and Arissa Berryman, who are the SRC presidents. Ascot Vale West Primary School is a fantastic local school, and we are making sure that it has got the capacity to continue to provide a great learning environment for the students.

I then went over to Mount Alexander College. I am so pleased and proud of the developments that are happening at this great school. A big-shout to Jerry Ng, Inas Adil, Rea Tinoy, Brynn Valentine, Luke

Vella, Amelia Kenny, Blue Shaw, Lachlan Janetzki, Nabiha Mohamed, as well as Danni Angelico, the principal, for showing me around. This school is going to transform my community. I spoke with the architect to scope out lifting the horizon of students so they can gaze over the Melbourne city skyline and think about the future and their aspirations and see themselves in the future in Melbourne. This building and this investment are going to completely transform my community, and I want to thank the member for Monbulk, who throughout his tenure as the Minister for Education was a passionate supporter of this great school and this great school community.

OLGA KENNY

Mr PEARSON: Finally, I just want to give a shout-out to Olga Kenny. Olga is an icon in Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds. She is an outstanding small business person. She works incredibly hard, and we are grateful to have her in our community.

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE WOMEN LEADERS

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:39): We have some great women in leadership roles right in the heart of Caulfield, and I want to give a shout-out to some that I have had some interaction with in the last week. After 151 years one of our oldest synagogues, the St Kilda Hebrew congregation, has elected Janice Iloni-Furstenberg as the first female president of the shul. Janice has been in leadership roles for a number of years as treasurer, vice-president and now president. Congratulations to you, Janice. Also congratulations to the Sassoon Yehuda Sephardi shul. They had a Torah dedication, and again Joanne Levy is the president. Joanne has done an exceptional job in that shul. Congratulations to her on her great work. A big-shout out to Ronit Chrapot, the president of WIZO Victoria, for organising an annual gala, which featured Eve Barlow, a 35-year-old Scottish Jew who has been very proactive against antisemitism. Finally, I wanted to give a big shout-out to the National Council of Jewish Women Australia (Victoria) president, Helen Lewin, who had the AGM during the week, which unfortunately I could not attend, but my wife, Hayley, stepped in. She is the president of the United Israel Appeal—we have a lot of presidents in our community. She awarded a volunteer award to Sheryl Salcman for her years of community service. These are great role models doing some fantastic things in our community. We all need to do more to encourage more women in leadership roles, but I want to say thank you for the great work that all our women in leadership roles do in our community.

ENERGY POLICY

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action, Minister for Solar Homes) (09:40): I am delighted to update the house on the success of the power saving bonus and Solar Homes program in my electorate. Almost 16 000 homes in the Mill Park electorate have received the Andrews Labor government's bill-busting \$250 power saving bonus. This is almost \$4 million straight into the pockets of my constituents, who are struggling with the cost of living. More than 300 people have called my electorate office for assistance with their application. It has been heartening to hear the immediate difference this \$250 will make towards paying their bills as we come out of winter. Not only are the people of my electorate getting this bonus in droves, they are also able to get a better deal on their power bills through the Victorian Energy Compare website. Seven out of 10 households who use the Victorian Energy Compare website to compare retail offers save around \$300 off their power bills in the first year alone. Combine this with the power saving bonus and that is nearly \$600 back in the pockets of hardworking Victorians. The Solar Homes program is also delivering real cost-of-living relief and moving Victorians into clean, cheap renewable energy. More than 5000 families in my electorate have installed a power station on their roof through Solar Victoria's \$1400 rebate for solar panels, with an optional \$1400 interest-free loan, and that means that these households save an average of \$1073 each and every year off their power bills. Our government promised to put power back in the hands of Victorians and always put people over profits, and we are delivering for the people of my electorate and for all Victorians.

COOLSTORE ROAD, CROYDON, LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (09:42): I rise today to speak about the Coolstore Road, Croydon, level crossing removal project and the need for face-to-face community information sessions to be held. To date the information sessions that have been offered or delivered have been available online only. This automatically excludes approximately 75 per cent of the older constituents—those who do not have access to a computer or may lack the confidence when it comes to navigating technology. Many older constituents have contacted my office seeking more information regarding the proposed plans and have requested the opportunity to speak with someone about this project. Given the magnitude of the project and the fact that it will impact on many constituents within the electorate, it would be beneficial for in-person community information sessions to be held. I strongly encourage that all constituents' needs be considered when future information sessions are organised.

LIONS CLUB

Mr HODGETT: On another matter, I would like to speak on the wonderful achievement of Lions Club Australia, who on 29 September are celebrating 75 years of service within Australia. This year also marks the 70th anniversary of Lions service within Victoria. Each year Lions donate 2 million hours of community support, making communities more livable, and they invest millions of dollars towards environmental projects. Last year alone, through community fundraising, Lions Australia raised \$28 million that went towards funding medical research and health care, assisting adults and children with disabilities and emergency response and other purposes to help the community. Being a Lion myself I can speak for the fantastic work that the Lions clubs provide within my electorate, benefiting the whole community.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe—Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:43): I was pleased last week to host a visit from the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place, Ms Stitt, at the new \$4.4 million Rosanna Good Start Early Learning centre. Construction is likely to conclude in December and includes a \$1.5 million grant for the construction from the Andrews government. There are eight learning spaces, including three kindergarten rooms. In coming weeks we will open the new Bellfield Community Hub that includes a \$2 million Andrews government contribution for kinder rooms, adult education facilities, community rooms, a community garden and a social enterprise cafe. That is just near the corner of Banksia Street and Oriel Road in Bellfield. It will be a fantastic development. As a past member of the committee of management of the old Bellfield community centre, to see the new one, over a couple of storeys, coming out of the ground—it is about a \$12 million investment across our government and Banyule City Council—is fantastic for the locals. There is also a \$1 million grant for the new children's centre in Heidelberg, with KU Heidelberg childcare centre, kinder and long day care and allied health rooms. That planning work is underway and going very well.

Of course this is all in relation to why we are making kindergarten free for three- and four-year-olds and saving families some \$2500 per child every year, delivering immediate relief to household budgets. We will establish, as I just outlined there, some of those new 50 government-operated childcare centres in communities that need it most, because every family deserves access to affordable care close to home, and these works and these investments are changing lives and making families really perform and do so much better together.

RURAL AND REGIONAL ROAD SAFETY

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:45): When people speak to me about the condition of roads in South-West Coast, one quote will often come up: 'We must have roadworthy vehicles, so why don't we have vehicle-worthy roads?'. The appalling and dangerous condition of our roads has been a common theme under this government. The back patting and deflection on behalf of the ministers and others in this government about supposed upgrades and maintenance of our roads does

not reflect the reality drivers face, while the lack of proper investment to actually fix our roads has been a constant cause of frustration for my constituents. The dangerous condition of major roads from Terang to Warrnambool, Warrnambool to Port Fairy, Portland to Heywood, Heywood to Hamilton, Garvoc to Allansford—the list is almost endless and just keeps growing. Potholes that are massive both in size and number are patched up one by one only to return within days, there are crumbling narrow and dangerous shoulders—the list of problems just keeps growing.

And what is this government's go-to move? Just lower the speed limit. It is shameful. My message to the Premier and the current government is a simple one: our roads are not okay; fix them and fix them properly. Regional Victorians deserve a safe, well-maintained road network and they certainly are not getting it from this current Andrews Labor government.

MURRUMBEENA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh—Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (09:46): My congratulations to all the team at Murrumbeena Primary School for their carnival two weeks ago. Events like these have been on hold for a while, but it came back even better than ever. So much food and music, stalls, rides and more. Events like these are not just important in helping raise money for schools but in bringing the community together, making those personal connections we have missed because of the pandemic. Well done to the organising committee and all the students, staff and parents for your work. It was fantastic.

CAULFIELD AND DISTRICT NETBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr DIMOPOULOS: I would like to congratulate the Caulfield and District Netball Association for their 30th anniversary. On Saturday the courts were buzzing at Duncan Mackinnon Reserve, as they often are. Sports play such a vital role in the life of our community. It is about lifelong friendships, the memories, the connections and—most importantly—fun and exercise. None of this happens without the volunteers, parents and supporters. My thanks and praise to all the team at the Caulfield and District Netball Association who over the last 30 years have ensured that thousands of kids now and into the future have so many opportunities for them to play a sport that they love. Well done.

OAKLEIGH CANNONS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr DIMOPOULOS: It has been called a boilover or 'cupset', but us locals know the tenacity, passion and skill of the Oakleigh Cannons Football Club, who last night defeated Sydney Football Club 2 to 1 in the quarterfinals of the Australia Cup at Jack Edwards Reserve. Goals to Wade Decker in the sixth minute and Chris Lucas in the 31st minute set the Cannons up for the second half, when a determined Sydney could only manage one reply in the 74th minute. Huge congratulations to the Cannons, who are an incredible club, for the mighty effort, and our best wishes to them for the semifinals.

WHITEHORSE UNITED SOCCER CLUB

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (09:48): I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Whitehorse United Soccer Club and being given a tour of the new pavilion by longstanding club president Enrico Marrone. The new pavilion was built by the City of Whitehorse. It is a vast improvement on the previous facility and is welcomed by all the users, including soccer and cricket clubs as well as the local community.

GLEN WAVERLEY BOWLS CLUB

Mr ANGUS: Last Saturday I was delighted to attend the Glen Waverley Bowls Club's opening of the greens breakfast and ceremony. It was a pleasure to catch up with many people, including club president Frank Staebe, and also to receive a copy of the club's strategic planning document. I wish the club well with the implementation of its plans.

COMMUNITY BANK PINEWOOD

Mr ANGUS: My congratulations to the community bank in Pinewood on its recent 20th anniversary. I was pleased to attend some of the celebrations to commemorate this important milestone and wish the organisation well for its future as it continues to service the needs of local residents.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr ANGUS: The Victorian health system is still suffering from years of neglect and the incompetence of the Victorian Labor government. Many Victorians are still being let down through no fault of their own. Whether this is inordinate delays in being seen in a hospital emergency department, a delay in an ambulance responding, languishing on a seemingly never-ending elective surgery waiting list or a range of other failures, this government needs to stop making excuses and address these basic issues. Despite the best efforts and hard work of all the medical and ambulance personnel, there are daily examples of gross failures in the system, with patients being neglected and treatment delayed. The government needs to stop making excuses and fix this self-created mess. With Labor having been in power for 19 of the last 23 years it is clear who is responsible for these systemic failures. I recently had firsthand experience with an— *(Time expired)*

AZIZ AZIZ

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (09:49): I rise today to acknowledge the incredible life of Mr Aziz Aziz, who sadly passed away on Monday. One of the oldest residents in Sunshine, Aziz was a generous man who loved helping people. Aziz was one of the first Turkish Cypriots to migrate to Australia in 1951 and would frequently help other migrants settle into new jobs and homes, ensuring that they felt welcomed in Australia. He was selfless—from opening his home if people needed a place to stay to using his car to get other migrants where they needed to go. Aziz would also volunteer his time at the Sunshine mosque and other organisations with cleaning and general maintenance, and he fundraised so that the mosque could be built. A carpenter by trade, Aziz worked projects in the west, including the construction of Highpoint shopping centre and also the rail bridge at Sunshine Road. Aziz and his wife of 60 years, Rağibe, built a beautiful life in Australia. He is survived by his wife, children Janev, Sema, Coskun and Mehmet, and leaves behind 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Aziz gave so much to our local community, and he leaves a big legacy behind of volunteering and giving back to those who needed it most. I pass on my deepest condolences to his family and loved ones on their loss, and in particular for the loss to the community as well.

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (09:51): This members statement condemns the state Labor government's failure to fix dangerous conditions on major arterial roads in Rowville and Lysterfield. I have had a flood of emails from furious residents fed up with the hazardous potholes, dumped rubbish and unsafe conditions on Napoleon, Wellington and Lysterfield roads. Driver safety is being put at risk by Labor's cuts to the road maintenance budget—of \$24 million this year, on top of a \$191 million cut last year. The state government has not started construction on any of the permanent upgrades for these roads, despite the federal government providing funding in 2019. Napoleon Road is in such a terrible state that a 2-kilometre section needs resurfacing. Drivers are reporting damaged tyre rims from the deep holes. I emailed the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in April. He agrees the road needs fixing but will not say when it will be done. Wellington Road needs resurfacing in two sections due to the large potholes. VicRoads knows the work is needed but has not announced a start date. Fixing these roads is extremely urgent. Recently two men who stopped to change a tyre damaged by a pothole narrowly avoided injury when a third driver collided with their parked cars. I call on the minister to direct VicRoads to repair all three roads before someone is seriously hurt or dies. Driver safety is too important.

BARWON HEADS ARTS AND COMMUNITY HUB

Ms NEVILLE (Bellarine) (09:52): I had the pleasure of opening the Barwon Heads Arts and Community Hub on 10 June. This was a result of a million-dollar commitment we made at the 2018 election. Just over the weekend the centre held a community open day. The day was a great success, with many locals taking the opportunity to visit the facility and discover all it has to offer. Incorporated into the event was the hub's first art exhibition, featuring the work of more than 20 local artists. It is a great facility that is going to serve the Barwon Heads community, the wider Bellarine and local art as well for many years to come. I particularly want to acknowledge the committee, led by Vicki Strachan, for the work that they have done.

BELLARINE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms NEVILLE: On another matter, on Thursday, 26 July, I had the pleasure of opening the Bellarine Secondary College later years centre. This fantastic new centre will provide senior students—VCE and VCAL—completing their all-important final years of school with state-of-the-art facilities, including classrooms, seminar rooms, quiet study spaces, a communal meeting place and a student kitchen. Working in partnership with the school, the state provided \$8.9 million for the project, ensuring Bellarine secondary students will have the best facilities in which to learn and study.

On the same day, on another matter, I was pleased to turn the first sod on the Clifton Springs Primary School upgrade works. The \$15.6 million project will completely rebuild the school, making a great school even better. I thank both principals, Wayne Johannesen and Meg Parker, and their teams.

GAMBLING HARM

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (09:54): I wish to reference the *Gambling and Suicide Prevention: A Roadmap for Change* report, commissioned by Suicide Prevention Australia and Financial Counselling Australia, and Suicide Prevention Australia's Victorian election priorities document titled *Addressing Gambling Related Suicides*. Both these documents are compelling, and ahead of the upcoming election I encourage all members of this chamber to read and digest the recommendations whilst noting the heart-wrenching stories about shattered lives. Importantly these documents do offer solutions and reforms that I hope all political parties and candidates will take to the 2022 election. Why? Because once implemented the changes proposed in these documents will save lives, and surely this is something we must all aspire to. I recently met with the coroner, and we discussed the gaping holes in the system that lead people to self-harming, attempted suicide or dying as a result of gambling or gambling-related problems. We need to close these gaps urgently, and these are real and simple solutions at hand to make a positive difference if there is the will. I am not asking for a ban on gambling, but we need to desperately take the following actions: limit or ban gambling advertising, obtain more data to understand the breadth of gambling-related suicides, provide investment support where gambling-related self-harm incidents occur, have appropriate gambling rehabilitation treatment supports, improve coordination between service providers, have better referral pathways, enhance consumer protections for customers of banks and online betting companies, and implement therapeutic justice for those low-level crimes.

OUTDOOR DINING

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (09:55): In response to the pandemic, the Victorian government introduced outdoor dining to support our hospitality businesses during one of the most challenging periods in a generation. Born out of necessity in a time of crisis, outdoor dining and parklets have been embraced by Melburnians, including in my electorate of Northcote. The parklets have encouraged people to shop local and allowed businesses to expand their trading area. It has created jobs and a strong sense of community, with a beautiful European open-air vibe. There are 21 businesses across Darebin that have been approved for parklets, adding an additional 1500 seats to cafes and restaurants. It is not a huge number, but it has made a big difference. But while many councils are now engaging with their communities about long-term parklet options, Darebin council has just

told our traders that their parklets will end abruptly at the end of September—no discussion, no engagement. Council officers will be out to dismantle their parklets shortly. I cannot even describe the stress and anguish this has caused local businesses in my community who invested in these spaces and hired staff for them and who are still feeling the impact of the last two years. They are devastated. In some cases it means a third of their trade will now be wiped out. It means local jobs will get extinguished from our suburbs. We need those jobs. While so many other councils, including neighbouring Banyule, have engaged with their communities and are putting in place policies for parklets to continue, from Darebin council it is just a blanket, cold-hearted no. That is not the way to build community or economic prosperity. It is not the way to safeguard local jobs. It is a kick in the guts when we have been working towards promoting economic activity in Northcote.

MORNINGTON PENINSULA METROPOLITAN DESIGNATION

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (09:57): I have lost count of the number of times that I have either raised in this house or written to ministers, and particularly the Premier, regarding the failure of the government to change to regional status the Mornington Peninsula. In every response there has been absolutely no justification for the fact that Geelong has regional status but the peninsula does not. Now the Mornington Peninsula shire, who have previously been staunch supporters of moving to regional status, have decided they want a new classification: periregional status. The mayor says that that would allow the shire to access metropolitan funding as well as regional funding. It suggests it is a win-win. In fact it is not a win-win, it is double dipping. You are either regional or you are metropolitan, you cannot be both; you do not get two bites of the cherry. Unfortunately the mayor has also suggested that there is some credibility to Labor's claim that the green wedge is in danger should regional status be conferred. This is simply propaganda trotted out by Labor. We have now got the Greens chiming in as well, suggesting that the Liberals are all about subdividing the peninsula. That is simply a lie; it is an absolute lie. The fact is that the only people that have been trying to protect the peninsula—

The SPEAKER: The member will not use that language in Parliament.

Mr MORRIS: I am sorry, Speaker, it is a lie. It is absolutely—

The SPEAKER: The member for Mornington is using unparliamentary language.

Mr MORRIS: I am not accusing anyone in here of lying or being liars, I am talking about—

The SPEAKER: The use of the word is unparliamentary.

Mr MORRIS: Fine. I surrender.

CRANBOURNE BOWLING CLUB

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (09:58): Last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending the Cranbourne Bowling Club alongside Senator Raff Ciccone and the member for Holt, Cassandra Fernando, to present them with an Indigenous Australian and state flag and mark the beginning of their pennant season. I am extremely grateful to president Chris Birchall, secretary Karen Hickson and board member Steve Bakker for organising the event and keeping the Cranbourne Bowling Club up and running. The bowling club has a long history in Cranbourne. They were established in 1963 and have provided a venue for social activities and sport for generations of people. Cassie and I bowled the opening ends amongst much laughter and encouragement from the club participants. It is a pretty raucous and fun-loving mob at the Cranbourne bowls club and a place of inclusion.

CRANBOURNE SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms RICHARDS: On Tuesday this week I was honoured to have the students from Cranbourne Secondary College join us here in Parliament. With the guidance of the assistant principal, superstar George Massouris, I enjoyed the company of the sparkling wits Leanne, Bianca, Iman, Hashvinit, Fausier and Michaela. Their interests were diverse and included water policy, biology, revolutions,

psychology and history. I am always energised by visits from Cranbourne, and Tuesday was an absolute highlight of my week.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

Ms RICHARDS: Finally, last week I had the pleasure of releasing rainbow trout at Casey Fields in Cranbourne with my good friend the Minister for Fishing and Boating. Our government is releasing 1000 rainbow trout, so get on down to Casey Fields. School holidays are coming. It is going to be amazing to have the opportunity to share in the fun.

TEEJ CELEBRATIONS

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (10:00): On Sunday I spent the day in a whirl of colour and fun with the wonderful Nepalese community of Ballarat for a celebration of Teej. Teej is a series of festivals of celebration which sees the women in the community take the lead in organising and presenting the celebrations. The organisers on Sunday belong to the Ballarat chapter of Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria. The group Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria was formed in 2012 by a group of strong, active Nepalese women who were committed to lobbying for a better world for women in Nepal and Australia. The purpose of Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria is to advance, promote and empower women's rights to live with dignity and respect in a diverse cultural setting. The Nepalese community in Ballarat has grown in recent years from a single family to over 100 wonderful people. The Teej celebration was vibrant, filled with fun, music, dancing and delicious food. It was an absolute pleasure to share the day with the dynamic women of Didi Bahini Samaj and the Nepalese community. It was wonderful to be a special guest along with Graeme from Aussie Action Abroad, Joy Juma from Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council and Shiree Pilkington from the Centre for Multicultural Youth. Our dancing may have been average, but the fun was absolutely first class, and I congratulate the women involved.

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (10:02): Over the weekend I had the pleasure to be out doorknocking in the Mount Duneed growth corridor within my seat. I managed to, through that doorknocking, strike up a number of conversations through the afternoon with some of our fantastic healthcare workers who are living in that growth corridor and working at the University Hospital in Geelong. I had the pleasure of having a long conversation with them with regard to the work that they perform in the hospital setting in Geelong, and I was able to share with them all of the investments that the Andrews Labor government is making in our Victorian healthcare system. We very much respect and admire their hard work, particularly reflecting on all of the challenges that they have faced in their workplace in keeping their hospital safe and COVID free over the last few years. I very much respect and appreciate our nurses, who work hard every single day for the Victorian community, and I am very pleased with the historic investments that we are making.

CR NATHAN CONROY

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:03): Can I begin by extending a huge congratulations to Frankston City Council mayor Nathan Conroy and his wife, Steffie, on the arrival of baby Callan. I just want to congratulate them on behalf of the community of Frankston. Callan looks beautiful in the photos. I personally cannot wait to meet him and have a cuddle. Nathan informs me that Steffie and Callan are in good health and that there is even some sleep being had in the house. I know they are going to be absolutely amazing parents.

OUTDOOR DINING

Mr EDBROOKE: Speaking of Frankston council, I have just heard that Darebin council are packing up some parklets. Well, you would not see that down in Frankston. Our outdoor dining is absolutely amazing, and council in conjunction with the state government have been working hard together as a team to ensure that our community continues to benefit from the parklet program and outdoor dining.

LEGACY WEEK

Mr EDBROOKE: Can I just also talk about Legacy for one moment. I know that some people have already spoken about Legacy Week, but it runs from 28 August to 3 September. I ran into a warrant officer on Spring Street this morning and was proud to buy a badge. We know that Legacy Week has been running as an appeal since the 1940s, and it is a time for all Australians to show support for widows and children whose loved ones have died overseas representing our country.

PINES FOOTBALL NETBALL CLUB

Mr EDBROOKE: Can I just give a big shout-out to the Pines Football Netball Club, who are knocking down their clubrooms and starting their rebuild.

ARTIE KENDALL

Ms WARD (Eltham) (10:05): Artie's neighbours love him skipping down the street with his mum and dad, and sometimes his nan, going from house to house talking non-stop, laughing and so happy to help everyone with their bins. Of course the presents at Christmas from neighbours and the other gifts, such as specially designed T-shirts and a personalised high-vis vest, are great incentives, but really Artie just loves making bins neat and tidy and helping people. Thank you, Artie, for being such a wonderful person and already reflecting the decades-long history of volunteering by your family.

ELTHAM ART SHOW

Ms WARD: Tonight is the gala opening of the inaugural Rotary Eltham Art Show. Hundreds of artists will be exhibited, so many of them local, showcasing their amazing talent. Thank you to Brenda Innes, assisted by Camberwell Art Show's Lyn, for such an incredible body of work and for helping to bring this all together but especially for the daunting task of curating every piece which will be exhibited. After three years of planning, this important event is finally underway. Eltham Rotary are to be congratulated and thanked for their desire to see local artists showcased in our community. I know this weekend is the start of an annual event that will be marked in our calendars for years to come. I encourage everyone to come along and have a look at this wonderful display, starting tomorrow at Eltham Community and Reception Centre, 801 Main Road, Eltham.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Ms WARD: Thank you to the incredible young people who came to meet with me and the Minister for Mental Health recently at Diamond Valley College. Thank you to Eltham College's Xavier Norton and Amelia Trinh; Eltham High School's Shahla Paynter and Mary Schofield; Catholic Ladies College's Kai Biviano and Aayushi Panchal; and Diamond Valley College's Bailey Boh and Guy Broaden.

Bills**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 MAAS (Narre Warren South) (10:06): It gives me great pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The bill of course does introduce nation-leading reforms to tackle gambling-related harm and address money-laundering risks at Crown in Melbourne in response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence.

It is the matter of harm minimisation that I would like to spend a little bit of time on in my contribution today, but indeed before I do it would be remiss of me not to respond to the amendment which was

moved by the member for Gippsland South. The opposition here is proposing an amendment that would require the tabling of the special manager's full reports to government. The opposition should already be aware—indeed they would be pleased to know—that the special manager already publishes a report every six months and that this is available via a very simple Google search, with the most recent report published on 7 July. The government will therefore oppose the amendment, just as it did when it was moved with the first tranche of royal commission legislation. It indeed would not be appropriate to table a special manager's full report to the government before the regulator has made a decision on Crown's suitability to hold the licence, and this will occur after the special manager's term of appointment. Any public report that provides a running evaluation of Crown's suitability gives rise to legal challenges due to information that is commercially sensitive and subject to legal professional privilege. The public release of the full report would fundamentally undermine the important work of the regulator to determine whether Crown has returned to suitability.

Transparency of course is important, but we know that with transparency there has to be some proper management that is put in place because the stakes, as we have seen, are really very, very high. The publicly available report provides adequate disclosure before the end of the special manager's term, and we think that that is appropriate. We are doing so much on this side when it comes to our casino in Melbourne. While those opposite seek to undermine the royal commission at every step they possibly can, we are getting on with this very historic and nation-leading reform to restore Victorians' trust in that casino licence. Indeed a privilege it is to be able to hold that licence.

I did mention at the beginning harm minimisation. The Andrews Labor government has done much in terms of tackling gambling-related harm, more so than any other government, and I am very proud that this bill builds on that track record. We have already established a tough new regulator with a legislated focus on harm minimisation to guide every decision that it makes. As recommended by the royal commission, the bill will introduce a nation-leading mandatory precommitment system on all pokies at the casino. This means that all residents at the casino must fix a maximum limit on how much they are prepared to lose before gambling on pokies. It is the first scheme of its kind in Australia. I am very happy that the government has done that, but of course there will be more work to be done in this space in future.

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation recently reported that Victorians lose some \$2.237 billion on pokies. That was just in the last financial year, and that is an extraordinary amount. I am very, very grateful—indeed I give them a shout-out every time I step up here; incredibly grateful—to the Alliance for Gambling Reform, who do such great work in terms of public education and in terms of the public health aspects that go with the addiction that is inherent in gambling. Again I thank them publicly for the tremendous work that they do, particularly in this public education role.

If you go to the City of Casey, which my great electorate of Narre Warren South sits within, over 2021–22 there was \$114 million of player losses across the pokies alone—\$114 million, which is just outrageous. In terms of LGAs they are the second-highest losses in the state. I think there are about 360 000 people in the City of Casey, and what that means is that each person in that LGA is incurring losses of \$40 per head every financial year; every person is flicking 40 bucks away. In the very civil society that is Victoria, that is just not on. There is a venue in the electorate—a repeat offender, I call it—that again had the second-highest revenue in terms of its takings, with losses of \$14 million in the last financial year. It is just not on, as I said, in a civil society, and particularly when you consider the socio-economics of the great City of Casey and indeed the electorate of Narre Warren South. But I am very confident that the measures that the Andrews Labor government is putting in place and the work that we are doing will get to addressing these types of concerns. As I said in my inaugural speech, this is a Labor issue. It affects Labor people, and I have great confidence that we will keep doing the work to address this issue.

The implementation of this bill will require the casino operator to fully implement mandatory precommitment and the compulsory use of carded play and cashless gaming by December 2025 at the latest, and the time frame reflects technical advice on what is possible. Of course we need to be realistic

that these are world-first reforms and require development of world-first technology. The mandatory precommitment system will need to be implemented by Crown by the end of next year. To allow for the development of technologies that do not currently exist, the full suite of harm minimisation and anti-money-laundering reforms will have a legislated start date of no later than December 2025. To complement this the government will work with Crown and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to set earlier implementation dates on the remaining reforms, with the VGCCC to issue a binding implementation plan. The plan will set out key milestones for implementation of the full suite of harm minimisation and anti-money-laundering reforms. If Crown fails to comply with these milestones this will become grounds for disciplinary action for which penalties include licence cancellation and fines up to \$100 million.

The legislation is the next step in this nation-leading reform to ensure that this disgraceful conduct uncovered by the royal commission will never happen again. The reforms build on the many priority measures that the Labor government has already implemented since the royal commission, including establishing the office of special manager to oversee Crown's operations. It is a great bill. I commend the work of the minister, and indeed I commend the bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:16): I rise to speak on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Following the release of the report of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence on 26 October 2021, the government acted immediately and put in train a process to deliver nine priority recommendations through the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021. This included establishing both the special manager and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission that we just heard about from the previous speaker. It also provided the new regulator with strengthened and expanded powers to hold the casino operator to account.

The Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Act 2022 was passed by Parliament in June of this year and delivered a further two royal commission recommendations to strengthen the powers and functions of the inspectors. The act also embedded a focus on harm minimisation, ensuring this shapes every single decision the regulator makes, which I think is a core underpinning philosophy and principle that should be adhered to. I am sure it is a commonsense approach. I am sure many people would say, 'Well, why wouldn't they be operating to that principle in the first place and historically?'. We have also expanded the grounds for disciplinary action against the casino operator and completed the transition to a new regulator, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission.

As we have also previously heard, in the financial year ending 2022 Victorians put \$2.237 billion into pokies. Now, I guess it depends on where you stand on the issue as to whether this is a donation or this is a game or this is harm—and I am sure we could argue all three—but from a local member's perspective I understand that this is a revenue-raising function. A revenue-raising sector, you could call it, but as a local member I only see in reality the harm of gambling. That might be because I am a local member and the door is always open and people come to me for help, to get referrals and to talk; it might be the case that I might be a little bit biased. I might not be objective, but I certainly, as I have said in this house before, do not see people screaming from the rafters in Frankston that they have changed their life by playing the pokies. So I think any sort of regulation—and the implementation of these world-first harm minimisation and anti-money-laundering reforms—is a great step in the right direction. Like many people I was absolutely shocked with what the royal commission found and the recommendations that had come out and been made by that royal commission to ensure that this sector was cleaned up—and the company in question, Crown.

The royal commission recommendation to establish a single-patron bank account was delivered by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission on 29 June 2022, and a direction was issued to Crown Melbourne. I think this is, again, another commonsense approach, a practical approach, to bring tangible benefits to make sure that we are actually minimising harm. This is something that many people do not have an issue with. Many people might go to their local RSL, they might have a beautiful feed, especially if they are at the Frankton RSL—again, I might be biased, but they are a great bunch

of people—and they might put \$5 into the pokies, and to them it is like getting a scratchie for your birthday, I guess, or something like that. But people do have significant problems with these machines. We have seen in Frankston the very high-profile case of a VFL football club, an independent VFL football club which is now going great guns, the VFL Dolphins. They are a magic organisation but went through a really bad time. Part of their economic woes were caused by pokie licences and the fact that I think there was an idea that these machines are designed, through algorithms, to make money, not to give money out en masse. But there is another level to that, and that is the licensing of them as well. I do not think that was taken into account as it should have been, and times changed and the licences changed as well.

The government supports the remaining 21 recommendations, of course, and is acting to deliver the key reforms across five areas. They are: preventing money laundering and other criminal activity at the casino; minimising the impact of gambling harm; enabling the ongoing operation of a casino in the event the operator's licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered; regulating the ownership and governance of the casino and its holding companies; and strengthening casino tax arrangements. This bill is very important in the way that it is adapting to the problems and overcoming those problems so we can create a safe environment, or as safe as we possibly can—there is more work to do in that, but it is an evolution—for people to enjoy this pastime, if that is what you would like to call it. It is legal and many people enjoy it, but they are just ignoring the figures. And hearing the previous member talk about the money that was invested, or thrown away, in pokies in his LGA was just astounding.

There are some other really interesting parts of this bill. I could stand here and talk for many, many hours about this bill and how good it is, but there are a couple of really interesting parts to it. I think that in addition to implementing the royal commission recommendations, the establishment of an action to overhaul the state's precommitment system, YourPlay, is a well-founded idea and is welcomed by every member in this place. It basically enables mandatory precommitment. The bill will require any person who plays a gaming machine under a loyalty scheme at a casino to use YourPlay to track their play, and that is really important, that people can actually see how much money they are putting into a machine. They can measure the outcomes and they can see for themselves—it is there in black and white. It might be in a room with no clocks, it might be dark and there might be flashing lights and all those psychological stimuli that are used to keep people in those rooms, but they can see a black and white disclosure of their information. It also enables the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to publish information about individual venue compliance with the YourPlay obligations, which has obviously been an issue. It is also an offence for a casino operator to not disclose information about their loyalty scheme when requested by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission or the minister as well.

Further to that, the bill will impose stricter obligations on the casino operator in relation to excluded persons. This is very important. We are making it an offence for the operator to have an excluded person on their premises, to enter the premises or to remain in the premises. The days of 'Oops, we didn't realise there was an excluded person who belongs to an outlaw motorcycle gang in here being treated as a high roller' are gone. There are now restrictions on that, and there are, even more importantly, consequences.

The bill also enables the ongoing operation of a casino where the operator's licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered. The bill basically ensures a smooth transition to a new casino operator, and that is the aim of that particular clause. But it also includes provisions that authorise a manager to act as an agent of the former casino operator, require the former casino operator to support a manager and prevent third parties from taking possession of property such as gambling equipment while being used by the manager as well.

All in all, as many people on this side of the house have spoken about this bill, I do not want to be treading over ground that has been spoken about at length, but I will say that I am fully in support of this bill. It is in line with community expectations about health and safety, including the right of Victorians to be in a safe workplace and actually not have people smoking around them. The bill will

remove Crown Casino's exemption under the Tobacco Act 1987 so that smoking is banned from all areas of the casino. As Commissioner Finkelstein made very clear in his report, holding Victoria's casino licence is a privilege, not a right, and the Victorian people are entitled to a casino operator that acts with integrity and transparency at all times. There are no exceptions there. They are also entitled to a casino operator that works proactively to stamp out money laundering and other illegal activities, and this bill is a vital step to get there. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (10:26): It is with some pleasure that I rise this morning to make my contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I must say, I do so having had at the commencement of this week the view that I would not make a contribution on this particular matter, but as the week unfolded I reassessed that position and decided that I would indeed make a contribution to this debate.

Like many Victorians I have had the opportunity over the last 20 years or so to enjoy the opportunity from time to time of heading along to the casino for various functions or indeed for a night out with some friends. I have historically never been a large bettor. I have never taken a particular interest really in horseracing, and I have not been someone who has really played the pokies that much at all. I cannot say that I have not, because indeed I have, but it is not a normal part of my week's activity to have a wager or a bet. But what I do recognise is that the Crown Casino here in Victoria, I think, is Victoria's largest private sector employer. It has indeed been a fixture of the Victorian economy now for more than 25 years. It was established in the early 1990s, if my memory serves me correctly.

I think the regulations and legislation that underpinned the operation of Victoria's only casino in some ways really did not keep up with the creeping management practice that had over many years been introduced into that casino, where we saw a whole lot of behaviours of individuals introduced into that environment, which saw money laundering and other practices that really were not in keeping with the operator having effectively Victoria's only casino licence. Indeed we saw a very brave decision made by this government to put in place a royal commission to get to the bottom of those behaviours. Indeed we saw through the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence some 33 recommendations being made to the Victorian government about a new way forward to ensure that we have a set of legislative arrangements that will see the community maintain a level of confidence in the operator of the casino and their being able to continue to operate, but with new legislation in place that is in keeping with what the Victorian community expects, and that is an environment that is safe for workers, safe for people to go to and where criminal enterprise is prohibited, is banned and is excluded from that particular environment for very good reason. That is a very good thing.

I certainly know in my community—and I am pleased to see the member for Lara here—across the City of Greater Geelong we see of course regular reporting of the amounts of losses made at pokie venues. It is a staggering amount of money. I certainly know in hearing many other contributions made on this bill but also in other public policy debates how worried many members of Parliament are with respect to pokie machine losses. As I say, I am not someone who particularly enjoys it. I do not get any particular enjoyment out of it really at all, but I do know that the industry does put in place in their venues certain psychological clues that can, I think, lead to, in many instances, people putting more money into those pokie machines than what they otherwise would like to do. As I say, we see staggering losses in many Labor constituencies across the state, and certainly in Geelong that is the case.

Often we see a heavier concentration of pokie machines in what I would describe as working-class areas and communities that can least afford to see those losses. I would hope that in the years to come there is an opportunity to reflect on the harm that the pokies do to the Victorian community and we can continue to find ways to protect Victorians from that to make sure that we do not see excessive losses made by those that least can afford it.

I am not someone who is opposed to these things, and I am not someone who regularly goes to pokie venues or the casino. I certainly will have a wager on the Melbourne Cup. I generally do not do particularly well because I do not wager through the course of the year and do not have a practised eye

for it. I recognise these industries as legitimate industries in the Victorian economy and recognise that they employ thousands of people, but in making sure that these industries can flourish, prosper and can do well here, we need to make sure that there is not exploitation and there is not a circumstance where people are losing more than they can afford to do, and I think we need to continue to strive and work hard to make sure that we do that.

I will continue to look for opportunities to contribute to these types of debates. I think they are important. I certainly know that down in my part of the world people have historically gone along to the Geelong Cup and some of the other country race meetings and people do enjoy going to some of our pubs that have pokie venues. I recognise and support the employment and opportunities that people have around those venues, but we just need to have a mind and be careful that we do make sure that people do not get addicted to these things and that we support people, we support the community, to ensure that we have on the one hand a viable and functioning industry that can continue to employ thousands of people, where people can participate in a safe way and where we minimise the opportunity for people to get addicted.

This bill is indeed important in terms of the Victorian casino. As I said earlier, it is Victoria's largest private sector employer. We want to see it prosper. We want to see it do well. But we do need to make sure that criminal enterprises particularly do not again get a foothold in our casino to launder money and do the other things that they may have been involved with. That is important so that our casino has a strong social licence with strong legislation in place to help support it, because we do want to see the Crown Casino for many years to come playing an important role in the Victorian economy.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (10:36): It is of course my absolute delight to be making a contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Like everyone in this chamber, I cannot wait to find out what I am about to say. This is clearly a package of reforms that have been brought about by a particularly egregious set of behaviours—frankly you would have to say an almost wilfully blind set of behaviours—from the management of Crown, who turned their back on a whole range of standards required of them and a range of behaviours required of them as well. I think it is a great shame that we find ourselves in this position, but nonetheless, having conducted the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence and having established a whole bunch of regulations out of that royal commission, I look forward to all of those recommendations being picked up. In fact we have delivered on a bunch of them already, and this bill delivers the second tranche of recommendations out of that royal commission. It is important work. I thank the commissioner. It is work that the government, in responding to it, is absolutely picking up, ensuring the integrity of the casino and the integrity of the casino regulator and that Victorians can have confidence in the system.

I think one of the most ambitious reforms in this bill is the eventual move to cashless gambling as well as needing to set precommitment levels and gamble with a card. We are now saying: gone are the days of anonymous transactions inside the casino. Gone are the days of being able to move vast amounts of cash across casino tables. We are limiting cash to \$1000. This is all in time, I should hasten to add. We are talking about an implementation date of 2025. We are saying: no more vast amounts of cash coming through the casino. No more anonymous transactions. If you want to go to the casino, it is a perfectly legitimate and legal activity, but you need to know that there will be an audit trail. I am in favour of audit trails. I am in favour of payments being made by traceable means. I think that is an entirely appropriate response to some of the challenges we have seen here and in other parts of the universe.

I want to take the house briefly through a bit more detail around the money laundering. In particular we are establishing this framework to have carded play—that is, identified players—for all gaming machines and table games. So we are setting a framework here. This is a framework only at this point. We are not saying that as of tomorrow you are going to have to swipe a card in order to play a table game. We are giving the operator plenty of time to get their ducks in a row around this. The framework obviously gives a time frame and establishes the de minimis point now in terms of what is required, but it also allows that to be fleshed out with regulations over time. I am sure there will be plenty of

work and plenty of discussions between the operator, the regulator and the government on a range of these matters over the course of the next few years, but it is absolutely a statement of intent that this government is delivering a phase-out of cash in the casino. Effectively we are going to make a cashless gaming environment other than for the limit—the entirely reasonable limit—of \$1000. If you are moving vast amounts of money over gaming tables in the casino environment, that is absolutely fine as long as you do it in a traceable way—that you are identified at the point at which you sit down and that if you do want to gamble more than \$1000 you conduct an electronic transaction in support of it. You cannot just launder cash from other sources using the casino as the laundry.

On the new identity verification rules, patrons will be required to have their identity verified, and that is in order to receive a player card and ultimately to play these games. They will need to have their identity verified in order to swipe that card. This stops of course cards being handed around and people moonlighting under different identities. If you have got winnings of more than \$1000, you need to have your identity verified at that point too. Some may argue that this is intrusive in some way, but the reality is that having transactions that are traceable improves the integrity of the system, improves confidence in the system and limits the ability of criminals and criminal organisations to use the casino for a purpose other than for which it was established. The purpose for which it was established was to allow people to gamble in a safe and perfectly legitimate way within the confines of the law. What we are seeking to outlaw here is not that ordinary gambling activity—not the sort of mum-and-dad activity—but activities that sit well beyond the ordinary operation of the casino.

December 2025 is plenty of time—over three years. It is plenty of time for the operator, the regulator, the government and other stakeholders to get their ducks in a row. Yes, there will be a cost to these reforms to the operator, and there will be some development costs attached to those technologies. But, frankly, by being a global first mover we are probably ultimately handing to Crown something of a competitive advantage. They will be able to use these technologies in other jurisdictions. They will probably be able to sell these technologies that they develop in other jurisdictions, as many jurisdictions around the world are dealing with exactly these issues.

The other thing the bill does is ensure that in the event the operator's licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered, a statutory manager appointed by the government has the full set of powers required in order to run the casino. One would think that this architecture might well have been in place when the casino was established. That is not the case, and so the licence revocation rules were drafted as a pretty blunt instrument and I think, in truth, drafted because they were needed to be seen to be in there but it was not really thought they would ever actually be enacted against an operator. Well, we have seen through some of the appalling conduct identified by the royal commission that we do need to have real teeth around this ability to pull a licence. But if we are going to cancel or suspend a licence, we need to make sure that the 10 000 workers—many of them members of the United Workers Union, of which I am a member—are able to continue working without disruption to their lives, because ultimately a whole bunch of these behaviours and the things that were allowed to go on were not the fault of the gaming table attendants, the cleaners or the cooks, they were the fault of decisions by senior management.

So we need to protect that workforce, and the way you do that is by enabling the ongoing operation of the casino and a smooth transition to a new operator if in fact the licence is cancelled. It is a prospective penalty, but it is now a prospective penalty with real teeth. It is moving out of the realm of the hypothetical and into the realm of the actually enactable response to any future misbehaviour, or an assessment that is ongoing by the regulator that Crown is unable to fulfil its broader public obligations in operating what is of course currently a privately held business.

One of the other amendments which I think is interesting is picking up the recommendation of the royal commission that approval will be required from the regulator if more than 5 per cent of the shares of the casino operator or its holding companies are to be acquired. This is an important check on the concentration of power of ownership of the operator in the hands of someone who may not be a fit and proper person or entity to run the casino. That is an important check on that, and not dissimilar to

a range of other ownership caps that operate in other domains. I thank the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, who is at the table, for bringing these reforms to the house, and I wish this bill a speedy passage.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (10:46): It is a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022, which is a bill that amends various acts of Parliament to strengthen anti-money-laundering measures; implement mandatory precommitment and other gambling harm minimisation measures at the casino; enable the ongoing operation of the casino in the event that the operator's licence is cancelled, suspended or surrendered; reform existing ownership and governance arrangements; and deliver additional reforms, including removing smoking from the casino.

I think we were all horrified by the revelations in last year's royal commission into Crown Casino, the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. The report made 33 recommendations. This government is implementing those recommendations and in some areas going above and beyond what the royal commission recommended, because the conduct that was revealed in that report is simply unacceptable—completely unacceptable. This government has been very strong in its response, not only to ensure we are upholding the law—we are addressing issues like money laundering—but also seeking to minimise gambling harm.

I have never been a fan of electronic gaming machines. I think people have a right to go out and have a bit of a punt, have a bit of a flutter. Like alcohol, for instance, or other forms of entertainment, it is about self-control, but of course there are people in our community who struggle to exercise appropriate control when it comes to gambling, and we have a duty as a society to protect them. I am really supportive of some of the measures, both in this bill and in the last bill related to the royal commission, where we are seeking to minimise gambling harm. For instance, just looking in my own local community, I think electronic gaming machines are probably dying a slow death. In the last couple of years two clubs in my electorate have shut down—the South Oakleigh Club, which was actually in East Bentleigh, and also more recently the Bentleigh Club. I know of many clubs around the state, including some AFL clubs, who are really, really keen to get out of electronic gaming machines. The reality is that the scourge of problem gambling is just transferring to other modes of gambling. Gambling in many ways has never been more accessible—it is accessible just on your smartphone—so as a country perhaps the federal government needs to look at ways in which we can address problem gambling where it is conducted remotely via smartphones. That is probably the next step as a country in addressing problem gambling.

But going to what is in this bill, the first thing I would like to say is that in many ways the Liberal Party had their fingers all over what was happening at Crown. Helen Coonan of course was chair when all of this was taking place. But also we found out recently that Peter Costello never declared that he was a lobbyist for Crown when the member for Malvern was the Minister for Gaming. Then we also had that sweetheart deal, which was dismantled by the last bill relating to the royal commission, which was put in place by the previous Liberal government and basically made Crown untouchable. This arrangement meant that Crown would be entitled to compensation for any changes to the rules governing its organisation. This was all under the watch of the Liberal Party. So it has taken this government to just clean up what has been happening at Crown, and proudly so. The royal commission made 33 recommendations. We are implementing each and every one of those recommendations, and as I said, in some cases we are even going far beyond what was recommended. For example, the royal commission recommended that the maximum penalty Crown could face be \$1 million, and our last legislation increased that maximum penalty to \$100 million, so far above and beyond what the royal commission recommended.

This bill in many ways is very innovative. For example, the carded play technology is a world first, I believe—never before seen anywhere in the world. But also the mandatory precommitment that is in this bill for Crown will go a long way to minimising the harm that gambling can inflict on people. I know that these are very important issues. I have been in this place for eight years, and when I am out

on the street, even at the supermarket, it is one of the things that does come up, and it comes up because it really has impacted many, many people's lives over long periods of time. We are finally seeing a lot of actions being taken in this place and in other parts of Australia to try and minimise the harm that gambling can cause.

In terms of money laundering, these reforms will address the increased risk and occurrence of financial crime that occurs when people can access the casino and make large, anonymous financial transactions. As I said earlier, the bill will establish the framework to make carded play compulsory for all gaming machines and table games, with future regulations and technical standards to prescribe how carded play will operate in practice. The bill will introduce cashless gaming through the phasing out of cash at the casino by prohibiting a casino operator from accepting more than \$1000 in cash from patrons in a 24-hour period. Under the new identity verification rules patrons will be required to have their identity verified to receive a player card and to swipe that card before playing any game at the casino or being paid winnings of more than \$1000.

As I was talking about earlier in the contribution, this government has done more to tackle gambling-related harm than any other government, and this bill is building on that track record. We established the tough new regulator, the special manager, with a legislative focus on harm minimisation to guide every decision that it makes. As recommended by the royal commission, this bill will introduce a nation-leading mandatory precommitment system on all pokies at the casino. This means that all Australian residents at the casino must fix a maximum limit on how much they are prepared to lose before gambling on pokies—the first scheme of its kind in Australia and something that has been talked about for a very long time being implemented by this government at Crown Casino.

The bill will require the casino operator to fully implement mandatory precommitment, the compulsory use of carded play and cashless gaming by December 2025 at the very latest. This time frame reflects technical advice on what is possible. We need to be realistic; these are world-first reforms and require development of world-first technology. The mandatory precommitment system will need to be implemented by Crown by the end of next year to allow for the development of technologies that do not currently exist. The full suite of harm minimisation and anti-money-laundering reforms will have a legislated start date, as I said, of no later than December 2025. To complement this, government will work with Crown and the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to set earlier implementation dates on the remaining reforms, with the VGCCC to issue a binding implementation plan. The implementation plan will set out key milestones for implementation of the full suite of harm minimisation and anti-money-laundering reforms.

The bill will ensure that in the event of licence cancellation, suspension or surrender a statutory manager appointed by the state will have the full set of powers to run the casino. The bill will also ensure that the area on which Crown Melbourne is licensed to operate the casino is the area that would be subleased to any new casino operator. There are many other parts of the bill that go a long way to implementing the recommendations of the royal commission. I just reiterate that there will be more work to do as a nation to minimise new forms and new technologies of gambling-related harm. There is a lot more work to do, but certainly I think this government is up for the challenge. This is an important step in solving the issues at Crown, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (10:56): I am delighted to rise today to join my neighbouring colleague the member for Bentleigh to speak on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. This is another important bill, and I thank the minister at the table, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, for bringing this forward. Over the last 12 months we have seen a host of legislation in this space being delivered. That shows the commitment of the minister and this government to delivering on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence and also to gambling harm minimisation, which is extremely important to many of my constituents.

It is exciting that this legislation will implement most of the remaining recommendations of the royal commission, with a focus on harm minimisation and improved governance. One of the remaining recommendations will be brought in via separate standalone legislation, whilst others will be delivered through directions issued by ministers or the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC) in an administrative arrangement, but again it is exciting that most of the remaining recommendations are being delivered here today. The focus on harm minimisation is welcomed by many of my constituents.

I have spoken on gambling-related harm in the Clarinda district many times before in this place, and it continues to be an issue for many. Last Thursday I visited Make a Difference Dingley Village, an amazing non-profit that has been delivering food relief for over 30 years to residents in Kingston and Greater Dandenong. On Thursday they provided meals and food boxes and food and utility vouchers. They also do a great deal of work with financial counselling and debt forgiveness. Firstly, a thankyou to the CEO, Marion Harriden, and her team of volunteers for the amazing work that they do in support of the community. It was a humbling experience last Thursday. Around 100 people have been showing up weekly for food relief, with many affected by homelessness and family violence but also many families affected by gambling.

I was also reading during the week about the work the City of Kingston is doing to combat problem gambling, and I am looking forward to supporting that work whenever and wherever I can. Kingston loses more than \$80 million to poker machines in an average year, and the City of Greater Dandenong is similar if not worse—often upwards of \$87 million per year. The cruel reality in Greater Dandenong, as one of the most socially disadvantaged local government areas in the state, is that these residents can least afford it. We know it is about so much more than what that money can do. Gambling has real social, emotional, financial and health impacts. The connections with alcoholism, family breakdown and family violence are stark.

I am glad to see this bill here today, particularly the measures relating to minimising gambling-related harm, and I will expand on this here. The bill acquits recommendation 10 of the royal commission, which recommended that the Victorian gaming machine precommitment system, YourPlay, which allows players to track their play and set limits on time and money spent on gambling, be made compulsory for players of gaming machines at the casino. YourPlay is an important harm minimisation and consumer protection measure that provides a player with the ability to set limits on the amount of time and money they want to spend on gaming machines and keep track of the time and losses as they play, to assist them to make informed decisions and stay in control of their gambling.

Further, the royal commission recommended that players take a mandatory 15-minute break after 3 hours of continuous play, preventing patrons from gambling for long periods of time with little or no staff intervention. To support the recommendations, the bill amends the Casino Control Act 1991 to provide for short-term exclusion orders to be made by both the casino staff and the VGCCC, allowing them to give a verbal direction to patrons to take a break and leave the gaming area. This break can be between 15 minutes and 24 hours at the discretion of the person making the direction. These are important changes that I am happy to support here today, and I am happy to see the consultation that went into the changes.

During the drafting of the bill the Department of Justice and Community Safety undertook targeted consultations with industry, researchers and harm minimisation stakeholders to seek their views. These included the Alliance for Gambling Reform, the Australian Gambling Research Centre, the interchurch alliance on gambling harm, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation—including their lived experience advisory group—and Crown. This consultation was particularly focused on the recommendations on harm minimisation as well as money laundering, which I will touch on in the remaining time, and to inform the technical aspects of the bill.

As I just mentioned, there are also some very important amendments in this bill to strengthen anti-money-laundering measures. The royal commission exposed systemic money laundering and other

financial crimes at the casino and attributed its increased risk and occurrence largely due to the anonymity with which people could access the casino and make large financial transactions. So the bill will address this issue and consequently minimise the risk of money laundering and other criminal activity by implementing recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the royal commission—namely, requiring players to have their identity verified before playing any games at the casino and before receiving winnings over \$1000, requiring carded play for all gambling so that all gamblers are required to swipe or insert a card prior to commencing gaming on gaming machines and table games; and prohibiting the payment or acceptance of cash over \$1000 per day.

These are important changes that will much improve transparency and accountability, which is important for my constituents for several reasons. Unfortunately the links between labour hire and money laundering are quite well documented. We have worked hard with the Labour Hire Authority and made major reforms to the industry to better protect workers, particularly farm workers in my electorate. Investigations and work are ongoing with the labour hire authorities regarding illegal phoenix activity, shadow directors' money laundering and breaches of tax law, and I look forward to supporting that work wherever and whenever I can. These are important reforms for my constituents which add to the existing measures that have been implemented to address money laundering and criminal activity. Again, thank you to the minister for bringing this bill before us today. It is positive to see many of the remaining recommendations of the royal commission being delivered here today. I look forward to working with the minister, our councils, our community groups and others to deliver gambling harm minimisation measures as well as anti-money-laundering measures. These are important changes for our community, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (11:06): It is important to rise and speak on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022 and follow the member for Clarinda and his contribution. This is an important step in regulation of an industry and particularly Crown after substantial findings of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence—33 recommendations. This is the next stage in important reform that strengthens the oversight and integrity of Victoria's casino.

At the time of the royal commission these were the words used: 'disgraceful', 'callous'—deplorable conduct. For many years Crown Melbourne had engaged in conduct that could be described in one word: disgraceful. Some was so callous that it is hard to imagine it could have been engaged in by such a well-known corporation, a corporation underpinned by a board which should have had the highest principles of corporate governance in such a vulnerable and risky industry. Commissioner Finkelstein went on to say:

When these facts came to light, it was inevitable that Crown Melbourne would be found unsuitable to hold its casino licence.

But in those recommendations there was a two-year window because Crown had started to engage on a significant pathway of reform, and Crown itself underpins the jobs of more than 11 000 Victorians. So the Premier, at the time, could not have been clearer: Crown was not just on notice, it was on far more than notice, and they would lose their licence if there was not substantial reform underway. This is what the bill goes towards and what we will speak about today, but it is important to reflect also on the legislation that came before, at the end of 2021—nine important recommendations that were prioritised and responded to in record time. This set the framework, including the appointment of Commissioner O'Bryan, who was the first IBAC Commissioner and was appointed to oversee every single aspect of the casino operations. He is a substantial figure in Victoria's integrity system, having been the first IBAC Commissioner, providing a significant service in leading Victoria through this phase as well as really important work into the future. This bill adds to some of those important recommendations that were so critical and urgent to secure the future of Crown, if it is going to continue, or some iteration of employment through there as well.

I wanted to particularly highlight some of the changes around preventing money laundering and highlight all the dedicated work of the more than 18 000 Victoria Police members each and every day

who put themselves on the line to address crime, corruption and some of the horrors that we see in the quite salacious practice of money laundering and what that underpins in criminality. Crown for so long were asleep at the wheel and negligent in their duty, undermining the good work and hard work of our law enforcement agencies, who were doing all they could to protect and serve our community but were being failed time and time again without these basic checks and basic supports that should have been in place throughout this time. These changes in legislation will, again, be a significant hamstring to criminal practices and will make sure that money-laundering practices that have been there in the past are stopped into the future, making criminality even harder in Victoria. So this is a really important reform around protecting Victorians, stopping those money-laundering practices and making sure that we are supporting our Victoria Police members, who do an incredible job to protect our communities each and every day.

These reforms will address the increased risk and occurrence of financial crime that occurs when people are moving large sums of money through financial transactions at casinos. We have seen a substantial amount of coverage on that, and it is worth giving a shout-out to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age* and *60 Minutes* for the report that they did exposing some of these very troubling practices, not just in Victoria, that we see across some of those governance issues and some of the huge failures in accountability, wilful ignorance and oversight. This is where we find ourselves today with these important recommendations. The bill will introduce this cashless gaming system by the phasing out of cash at the casino, prohibiting casino operators from accepting more than \$1000 in cash from patrons in a 24-hour period. Under the new identity verification rules patrons will be required to have their identity verified to be able to play and receive a playing card or be paid winnings of more than \$1000.

Another important element to these reforms is harm minimisation. A lot of members have talked about the impacts on their communities. It also interplays with the responsibilities I have in supporting the Minister for Mental Health in mental health and social inclusion. The harm of debilitating gambling addiction is a health issue. It is a mental health and wellbeing issue, and we have to treat the support of people who are stricken by the addiction of gambling in such a way, supporting them in their communities and reducing the harm wherever we can. The Andrews Labor government has done a substantial amount of work to tackle gambling-related harm, more than any other government before it. This bill builds on that track record. We have already established a new, tougher regulator with a legislated focus on harm minimisation to guide every decision that it makes.

As was a key recommendation of the royal commission, the bill will introduce a nation-leading mandatory precommitment system on all pokies at the casinos. Importantly, this means all Australian residents at the casino must fix a maximum limit on how much they are prepared to lose before gambling on pokies, the first scheme of its kind in Australia. This is really important in terms of how we are supporting vulnerable people. We have seen examples where people literally take their pay packet out and then they lose it all in one day. We are making sure that we have got mandatory precommitment. This has been a battle. I remember there being a significant discussion battle in previous federal governments in the Rudd-Gillard era around mandatory precommitment. There has been a lot of politicisation of issues here, and it makes perfect policy sense to protect vulnerable Victorians, indeed Australians, who might face the substantial impacts of gambling harm. So I really welcome this part of the recommendations so that vulnerable Victorians are not exploited. Then also on top of that we need to make sure that we do all we can in supporting Victorians in their mental health and wellbeing journey if they are facing gambling addiction and all the elements that that brings, and the impact that that has on their loved ones, on their communities and on themselves into the future.

Some of these reforms, particularly around mandatory precommitment, are going to take some time to implement—by 2025. That will be at the latest—December 2025. This time frame reflects some of the technical challenges in bringing this about. But make no mistake, we are focused on this in our policy setting. We want to deliver these reforms and make sure that we protect vulnerable Victorians.

Another key element of this bill is the ongoing operations of the casino. We are well into the first year of determining whether Crown are a suitable licence holder in Victoria. If we do not see substantial

improvement, they are out—that is it. But we need to make sure that we are protecting the more than 11 500 thousand workers who are underpinned by their business. That is why the bill will ensure that in the event of a licence cancellation, suspension or surrender a statutory manager appointed by the state of Victoria has the full set of powers needed to run the casino. That gives important certainty to those people whose livelihoods are underpinned by the work of our Crown Casino. But make no mistake: if Crown are not cleaning up their act, they are out, they are gone. The Premier could not have been clearer on this. They got so close to the edge of it. Reflecting on some of those recommendations and given that window, if they had not gone down a pathway of reform, if the board had not substantially changed over that period of time and we had not seen some of those gains—and there was not such a drastic impact to the employment and livelihoods of so many Victorians—I think there could have been a different journey taken.

We remain committed to making sure that these reforms are implemented in full. The more than 650 pages of the royal commission's report are harrowing reading, and when you look at the royal commission recommendations of other jurisdictions as well and the investigations that have been had, this has been a deeply concerning phase in the casino industry and the gaming sector. The time for reform was long ago, but we are not wasting the moment as we critically change these outcomes and make sure that we are strengthening that integrity into the future. These are just another part of the Andrews Labor government's strong reforms of Crown, ensuring the accountability of this sector into the future.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (11:16): Thank you, Acting Speaker Connolly, and it is wonderful to see you in the chair this fine spring morning. First day of spring—spring has sprung. I know the member for Malvern is very excited by the fact that it is spring and the sun is shining. It is good to be up and about. I am delighted to make a contribution on the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I think that this bill is very important, and my good friend the always eloquent member for Mordialloc has talked about the implications of the failure to act in relation to these matters.

In preparing for this bill I was just reflecting on the journey that we have gone on as a society and community and how the world is changing rapidly. It is changing so incredibly quickly that there is a need to make sure that the statute books reflect the values of society today, but it is also important that business reflects the aspirations of the community. The member for Malvern probably is a similar age to me—I think he is a little bit older than me—and would recall some of the discussions about the Hamer government converting the Windsor into a casino, which was something that Kennett was keen on. Hamer was somewhat attracted to it but decided not to do so. There was a bit of talk and discussion, and then obviously Cain was opposed to having gaming machines or a casino. It was the Kirner government that started that process to establish a casino, which was fulfilled by the Kennett government. I think that to some extent there were arguments at the time. Those of us of a certain age would recall that people would get into a bus and go to Moama for a weekend away playing the pokies, and that was something that was done because you could not do it in Victoria.

I think that the journey we have been on as a community has changed over the course of that time. When you look at the way in which people are consuming gambling products now, it is very different to what it was five years ago, 10 years ago—and unheard of 30 years ago. It is important that the regulatory environment reflects some of those changes. The reality is that poker machines overwhelmingly would be defined as a mature or declining asset class in the sense that a lot of younger people now will not play the pokies. I was at my local on a Saturday afternoon recently. I popped in and there were half a dozen guys having a bet on the races, and they were betting on their phones. That would not have been something we would have contemplated 10 years ago, would be my guess, certainly not 20 years ago. There is a need to make sure that there is an appropriate regulatory environment in place. As the member for Mordialloc has indicated, what we have seen over recent

times is systemic market failure in the sense that we have seen a business model predicated upon turning a blind eye to illicit activity and money laundering.

I think that something like 2 per cent of the population are problem gamblers. The question would be: what do we think is a fair proportion that that 2 per cent should contribute to a business like Crown Casino? You would probably say, 'Well, it should be 0 per cent', because in a perfect world you would have no problem gamblers at all making any contribution whatsoever to the casino. The reality is, though, that problem gambling takes many forms, and people are on a journey. People do not set out to become problem gamblers, but they can probably get drawn into quicksand and it becomes apparent over the course of time. The question probably is: what do we think a fair percentage is? What do we think a fair percentage should be, a contribution? Now, I think that probably in days gone by there would be a view that we will let the market determine it, have a laissez faire approach, that the best form of regulation is the lightest form of regulation, and we will let the market take its course. I do not think that is where the community is these days. That might have been the case back in the 1990s and the 2000s, but where the community is now is we do not believe that should be what occurs in an asset like this, that we need to make sure we have got an appropriate level of regulation to protect people who are vulnerable and, as the member for Mordialloc said, we need to make sure that proceeds of crime are not being laundered through the casino as well.

Blackstone is the company that is behind the private equity push to purchase Crown casinos, and I note from preparing for this debate—I did not know this—that Blackstone was founded in 1985 by Peter G Peterson and Stephen A Schwarzman. Peterson and Schwarzman put in \$400 000 worth of seed funding. They had previously worked at Lehman Brothers. Blackstone is actually a cryptogram derived from their names, because 'schwarz' is German for black and Peter, or 'petros' or 'petra'—the masculine and feminine renderings of the word respectively—in Greek means rock or stone. I am quoting *Wikipedia* on this. So there you go; you learn something every day. *Wikipedia*—it is so rich, and I would encourage all members, in preparing for any debate, to dive into *Wikipedia*—

A member interjected.

Mr PEARSON: It is a bit rich and it is different. These days, as the member for Malvern knows only too well, we are, if nothing else, frustrated thespians in this great chamber.

Peterson and Schwarzman led to that. If you look at Blackstone now, they are a big real estate player, they are a big commercial property player; they have got about US\$800 billion in funds under management, and they have made this decision to make this investment. Now, with private equity I think over the journey they have shown that they are very good at running businesses. They are very good at turning businesses around. The people I have met who have worked in private equity are highly numerate and very intelligent, and they know how to place a bet, as it were. I would have every confidence that they would recognise the environment that they are operating under, that they would not be placing this bid if they thought that they were going to lose. They have got every hope and confidence that they will, through good, efficient management, make sure that they can turn this around.

Indeed if you look at the way in which investors are viewing the world, what was previously corporate social responsibility, which was a buzzword 20 years ago—it had some meaning and relevance then, but I am not really sure the way in which it was manifested then necessarily did justice to that concept—and is now environmental, social and governance, it is something that is starting to become more prevalent and more prominent. I think that when companies make these sorts of investments they are looking very carefully at the broader impact that investing in these businesses has on a community or a society or globally.

Yes, in this particular case it is a private equity investment, and one thing I know about private equity is they go in, they make an investment, they turn it around and they flip it, because that is where they make their money, and then they move onto the next thing. They do not tend to hold them for long; they tend to come in, turn it around—buy low, turn it around, sell high—pocket their money and move onto the

next transaction, which is fine. There is nothing wrong with that, but I think that they would recognise that they have got an asset class in poker machines which are starting to decline in terms of their usage, they have got a highly regulated environment, a high level of scrutiny. If they do not get this right, if they fail to turn this around, it not only means they will potentially forfeit their equity investment—that notion that ‘The billions that we paid out to own this business could be taken away from us if we fail to act, if we fail to be seen as being appropriate and responsible people to operate a business like this’—but it also means that there is no payday, there is no ability for them to turn this around.

So that is why I have got confidence—and I may well be proven wrong on this point—that when you have got organisations like Blackstone making this sort of investment, they tend to be very smart people, they tend to appraise risk. They would know what needs to be done and they would recognise that if they fail to act, then there is a consequence that would be dire for them and their investment. That is why I think that the world has changed, the world has moved on; the hopes and expectations of the community are different now from what they were 10 years ago, 20 years ago and 30 years ago, and the onus and the expectation on Blackstone as the operator will be very high. I am a glass half full person; I am hopeful and confident that they will do the right thing. But it is about making sure that this asset can continue to operate. It is about making sure that people can still be employed down at the casino, because it is not just the people on the gaming floor, it is everything behind the scenes and it is the other ancillary activity that occurs. We need to make sure we get this right, because if we do not then we are going to have effectively a stranded asset with workers that will lose their jobs. I do not think anyone—apart from the Greens political party, who I never hear on these matters—would want to see that. I think that on this side of the house and on the other side of the house we would want to see a viable casino continuing to employ thousands of hardworking Victorians, because it is the right thing to do.

Mr FREGON (Mount Waverley) (11:26): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

**MAJOR CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
2022**

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms KILKENNY:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:27): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, a bill where I have to say the title is much more impressive than the content of the legislation. When I heard the government trumpet that it would be introducing a major crime and community safety legislation amendment bill just in the shadows of the election, I thought, ‘Right, the government has finally woken up from its slumber when it comes to some of these issues and it’s going to deal with the scourge of outlaw motorcycle gangs. It’s going to deal with the fact that we have outlaws, drug dealers parading around as social media influencers, seemingly completely unconcerned about raising their profile, completely unconcerned about drawing the attention of police’, because in Victoria we seem to be the haven state when it comes to outlaw motorcycle clubs. I will return to this during my contribution because this is such a missed opportunity. This is the mark in the goal square and the government has managed to miss it and kick a point.

Members interjecting.

Mr M O'BRIEN: And I know a little bit about that, member for Mordialloc, as a long-suffering Carlton supporter. Disappointment is with me. It is like my suit; it is always with me.

But this is a missed opportunity. Having said that, the issues in this bill themselves are inoffensive, and the opposition will not be opposing this bill. Let me just go to the purposes of the bill:

to amend the **Confiscation Act 1997** in relation to—

digital assets ...

search warrants and seizure warrants ...

exclusion applications ...

the partial forfeiture of tainted property ...

the enforcement of pecuniary penalty orders against real property ...

...

information gathering powers and examinations ...

...

restraining orders; and ...

miscellaneous matters. Another purpose is:

to amend the **Crimes Act 1958** in relation to—

search warrant powers under that Act ...

the lodgement of search warrant reports with the Magistrates' Court; and

the retention, destruction, disclosure and use of fingerprints taken from persons under that Act ...

There are also some relatively minor amendments to the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004. There is amendment to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 in relation to the quantity of 1 4-Butanediol that will trigger automatic forfeiture provisions in the Confiscation Act. I understand that 1 4-Butanediol is better known on the street as GHB or liquid fantasy, so I think measures there to make it easier to confiscate the assets of those who traffic in such deadly drugs is a worthy amendment. Finally, it is to make a consequential amendment to the Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022.

In terms of the Confiscation Act 1997 amendments, I think one of the major things this bill does do and which is welcome is in relation to updating definitions to provide for the fact that we now have these things called digital currencies. We know that people who act in an illicit way, particularly in the drug trade—there is a lot of money to be made in the illicit drug trade—often need to find ways to store those ill-gotten gains, that illicit wealth. They try to store it in such a way that they put it beyond the reach of authorities, so you see different money-laundering schemes, different attempts to hide this illicit wealth.

Of course we have seen the advent of digital currency. We have got our bitcoins; we have got our Ethereum; we have got our Dogecoin, which Elon Musk is a big fan of; and we have got stablecoins, which turned out to be not so stable—they were supposed to be pegged to the US dollar, and that link came away and we saw some significant disruption to the market. Now, I do not pretend to be an expert in digital currencies. In fact what I know about digital currencies you could probably fit into a matchbox without taking the matches out first. But what I do know is that criminals will find a way to try and hide their illicit wealth and they will try and find a way to put that illicit wealth beyond the reach of authorities. So it is important that we do update the terminology used in the Confiscation Act 1997 in order to be able to take account of the fact that this is a new opportunity for money to be held in different forms.

We have also seen the advent of the non-fungible token, the NFT. I am looking forward to perhaps the member for Broadmeadows talking about the Bored Ape Yacht Club and the NFTs that have been sold through that. In fact our own Melbourne street artist Lushsux has been a very big pioneer locally of the NFT. I think certainly, according to some of his social media posts, he seems to have made quite a reasonable amount of money out of selling non-fungible tokens of his original art. Again, I do not pretend to be an expert on how these operate, but I do understand that these are assets and they can be

sold for millions of dollars. On that basis we need to make sure that they are brought within the scope of the Confiscation Act 1997. We need to ensure, as I said, that police and authorities can get access to those assets wherever they are hidden, so updating the terminology used in the act is something that is to the government's credit, and we support those measures.

In relation to search warrants and seizure warrants, I think the government is now attempting to update some of the provisions relating to changing definitions relating to accessing data held on computers and data storage devices. Perhaps government speakers can clarify this, but warrants can effectively require a person to assist the police through providing access to data storage devices; I am assuming that a mobile phone would be regarded as a data storage device, and what I am interested in is: would these provisions enable a court to require somebody to therefore provide their password to the police if the mobile phone is subject to a search warrant? You can get a mobile device, but if it is password encrypted, how do the police actually get access to the data that is stored on the phone? At the moment they cannot. We know that there have been a number of issues with mobile phone manufacturers, including Apple, where they have refused to cooperate with authorities in some circumstances, saying, 'Well, it's not our job to provide you with the ability to crack the encryption on these phones'. Obviously that is an issue, because sometimes, particularly if we are talking about heinous crimes such as child pornography, getting access to digital devices is going to be critical in order to be able to determine whether the crime has been committed, to provide evidence against those who are guilty of engaging in such practices and also hopefully to rescue any children who might be affected by it. So I would be interested in whether the government proposes that these changes will actually enable a court to require somebody who has a password to a mobile phone to provide it. Would it require somebody to place their thumb on the reader if in fact it is a biometric-accessible device? This is where technology is today. I do not disagree at all that legislation needs to be updated to take account of new technology, but I am interested in how this would operate in practice and whether that is in fact the intention of these amendments in relation to search warrants and seizure warrants.

The bill also amends provisions relating to who can apply for a seizure warrant in respect of tainted property in a public place—that will just be a police officer—and provisions relating to who can apply in respect of forfeited property which is in a public place, and that can be either a police officer, a person who holds a prescribed office or a person belonging to a prescribed class. It also provides that certain seizure warrants are extended in their scope of operation in that they will only cease to have effect six months after issue, unless they have been recalled and cancelled by the court or unless, of course, they have been executed.

New sections are inserted. A warrant may authorise the giving of a direction by a police officer requiring assistance from a person with certain knowledge—that is new section 80A. As I indicated before, I would be interested as to whether the direction encompasses the provision of a password or in fact a requirement for somebody to use their fingerprint to provide access to a mobile phone where in fact the device is encrypted with a biometric gateway. Interestingly self-incrimination is not a reasonable excuse for failing to comply with such a direction. This bill also creates the offence of a person failing to comply with such a direction without reasonable excuse, which can send you to jail for a maximum of two years.

There is new section 80B, which enables a court—and it could be the Magistrates Court, the County Court or the Supreme Court—on application by a police officer to make an order requiring a specified person to provide any information or assistance that is reasonable and necessary to allow a police officer to do certain things, including accessing data held on a computer or data storage device at a warrant premises or that has been seized from a warrant premises. Failure to comply without a reasonable excuse in such a matter is actually an indictable offence under new section 80C, punishable by up to five years imprisonment. And again, self-incrimination is not a reasonable excuse. I suppose at some point you may then get criminals weighing up the matrix: 'If I provide access to this information, how long am I likely to go to jail for and is it more or less than five years?'. I would

appreciate some clarity in terms of the scope of the directions that the government envisages by these measures in new sections 80A and 80B.

Exclusion orders are important in relation to the way in which the Confiscation Act works. Clause 15 of the bill reforms the terms upon which a court may make an order excluding the applicant's interest in property from the operation of a serious drug offence restraining order made in relation to a serious drug offence. In particular clause 21 has the effect that where a person applies under section 53 to exclude their interest in property from automatic forfeiture the court may make an exclusion order if satisfied of a number of things: first of all, that the property is not tainted property or derived property—so it cannot be derived from the proceeds of crime; that the applicant was not involved in the commission of the serious drug offence; or that the applicant's interest in the property was not subject to the effective control of the accused at the time the accused was charged with the serious drug offence or the date when the restraining order was made, whichever is earlier. We do not want people being effectively used as patsies by serious drug operators and claiming, 'I need to have access to this property'. If they are really being used to simply facilitate the continuing control of a serious drug offender, then clearly that is not grounds for an exclusion order being made. Also applicable is that where the applicant acquired their interest from the accused it was acquired for sufficient consideration. In other words, it must be a proper transaction. It must be a transaction that reflects to some extent market value or is at least not unreasonable and indicates that, again, it is not just a subterfuge in order to be able to put assets beyond the reach of the authorities. I could go into considerable detail about the various changes that are made here, but I will just say that on the face of them they seem to be fairly reasonable changes.

Clause 34 makes it clear that a charge on property created because of the making of a restraining order or a pecuniary penalty order ceases to have effect if the restraining order is set aside or ceases to be in force. I am actually surprised that needs to be in there, because you would think that would be a fairly self-evident proposition, but sometimes we need to put these things in clear black and white to put them beyond any doubt.

There are some changes to examination orders and information-gathering powers. These provisions enhance the capacity to require somebody ordered to undergo an examination to also produce information or documents that are specified in that notice, and there is a provision in clause 46 that authorises a credit reporting body to provide relevantly held information about a person who is subject to a proceeding or enforcement action.

In terms of the Confiscation Act changes, they do appear to be sensible. They do appear to be proportionate. The only thing I would seek some clarification from the government on is in terms of the directions that can be made by a police officer to a person who is on the premises and may be reasonably able to assist. Is this aimed at getting access to passwords and/or biometric data to be able to access devices? Trying to enforce that may be tricky, particularly when it comes to biometric devices.

Part 3 of the bill amends the Crimes Act 1958 and expands the powers that police may exercise when executing warrants issued by a magistrate under section 465 of that act. It also provides for the lodgement of search warrant reports to the Magistrates Court. Also there are some amendments to police powers to retain, destroy, disclose and use fingerprints taken from persons under certain provisions.

We know that the Confiscation Act is important when it comes to trying to ensure that, where people have committed crimes and have done so for material gain, for personal profit, we confiscate those proceeds so that the person cannot benefit from their criminal act. We also want to send a broader message to others who may think about participating in significant criminal activity that, even if you think you can get away with it for a while, ultimately as a society we will come after your assets that you have achieved through breaking the law. It is important to send those messages to serious criminal figures, to organised criminal figures.

That is why I do note that what I was expecting when this bill was first tabled were measures in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs. We know that OMCGs are very active in the drug trade. In fact I think the motorcycles are really just the front for what is increasingly hardcore drug manufacturing and trafficking. I refer to an article in the *Age* newspaper of 27 June this year entitled, “‘Trigger point’: warning on bikie laws after Fawcner shooting”. I will put some of this into the record because, number one, I think it warrants it and, number two, it does indicate where this government has missed an opportunity in this bill to strengthen laws that could really assist with tackling organised crime:

A senior policeman behind Queensland’s successful crackdown on organised motorcycle gangs has warned that Victoria needs additional legal powers to stop organised crime-linked offenders or risk becoming a haven for bikies.

Former Gold Coast superintendent Jim Keogh urged the Victorian government to strengthen its laws against motorcycle gangs, saying a shooting on Melbourne’s streets on Saturday was a “trigger point” for legislative change.

The move would bring Victoria into line with Queensland and NSW, which have both introduced tough anti-association laws to crack down on organised motorcycle crime gangs.

“When members of the public are drawn into the frame, that is the trigger point for legislative change,” Keogh said. “If that trigger point from Saturday ... doesn’t spark legislative change, nothing will.”

The article goes on:

Former Mongols bikie and professional boxer Suleiman ‘Sam’ Abdulrahim was targeted in a failed execution as he left a funeral at Fawcner cemetery on Saturday.

Abdulrahim, a 30-year-old known in boxing circles as ‘The Punisher’ drove himself to a nearby police station after being shot in the chest on Box Forest Road.

Those responsible then carjacked a woman and her young son, fleeing in their Ford Territory, which was later found torched in Epping.

There is more in this article I could put on the record, which I will not at the moment. What I would say is that when we have organised crime figures trying to take each other out on Melbourne streets and when we have a mum and her son carjacked in the getaway attempt, we have got a problem. When we have experienced police officers saying that our laws in Victoria are not up to the job and that we have anti-association laws that are too weak to prevent this state becoming effectively a haven for outlaw motorcycle gangs, where is the government action? As I said, I was genuinely surprised when I saw that the government had introduced a bill entitled the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 which completely fails to deal with one of the most pressing matters that confront Victorian community safety today. We have drug dealers acting as social media influencers with huge Instagram followings, we have attempted assassinations in broad daylight and we have the carjacking of a young mum and her young son. Where is the government’s legislative agenda to deal with this? Why won’t the government listen to the experts, such as former superintendent Jim Keogh, who is saying that our laws are too weak? Mr Keogh said the consideration for where a member of an organised motorcycle gang would trade was simple:

Where it’s easiest, where they’re not going to be the subject of harsh legislation.

If you haven’t got a united front [across states] ... that’s what will happen.

Sadly, that seems to be what is happening in Victoria.

While the measures in this bill are fine as far as they go, they have missed the obvious problem. We do not have time now to deal with this before the election. This government has had four years for its legislative agenda. It has had a very strong majority in this chamber. It has had an effective working majority in the other place between the government’s own numbers and its reliable friends on the crossbench. In fact the government could look to the opposition and seek our support for any serious attempts to deal with strengthening anti-association laws, because I can tell you that that support would be forthcoming. There is no need for this to be a political fight. We all want to see a safer community, and I just cannot understand why this government seems so unwilling to grasp the nettle—to do what Queensland has done and to do what New South Wales has done—and bring our laws up to speed. I

am all for competitive federalism but not when it means Victoria is exposed and vulnerable when it comes to organised crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs, because that is what we seem to be seeing at the moment.

This bill also has a couple of relatively minor amendments. One is to the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004. It amends requirements relating to Victoria Police employees—not sworn officers, but Victoria Police employees—relating to making and determining applications for an authority to use assumed identities.

I appreciate that I am allocated 30 minutes to speak on this bill. The measures here are fine such as they are. I am not quite sure why it has taken four years to update definitions relating to digital currency and digital assets. I am not complaining about that; I just genuinely do not understand why this government seems so unwilling to tackle what is the most pressing issue in this state when it comes to organised crime. Just this week we heard the police say—it was reported in the media—that the two gunmen who were responsible for the attempt on the life of Mr Abdulrahim have fled overseas. Apparently they had fake passports and were off within 48 hours. So there have been no arrests of the gunmen concerned.

It is so important that we step on this before it becomes a problem. I have been in this place for, what, 16 years now, and I remember what happened during—I am not quite sure what the preferred terminology is—the underworld wars, the underbelly wars or whatever you want to call it. It all occurred because not enough was done early on to prevent these violent attacks. Too much money was at stake. These organisations had built themselves up and had become very powerful. That is why, yes, we will be supporting the measures relating to strengthening the Confiscation Act, because we do want to attack the assets and the financial power of organised crime.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs, as I said, are not, you know, just bikies driving around town doing the occasional toy drive for PR purposes; we know they are basically drug organisations. It is not a surprise to anybody. We know what the problem is, we know that Victoria has become a haven for outlaw motorcycle gangs, we know that they are brazen in their showboating on social media, we know that they are brazen increasingly in their attacks on each other in the public and are involving innocent members of the public in these matters and we know that our laws are deficient, so I do not understand why the government is not willing to make the changes that are necessary. I am not suggesting that we slavishly copy what every other state does. I think the Queensland government at one stage in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs made a decision that OMCG members who were convicted would have to wear pink uniforms in jail. They felt that that would be something that they would not enjoy wearing. I am not necessarily suggesting that that is the path we need to go down, but we do need to strengthen our anti-association laws.

It is one thing to say ‘We’re going to have tough confiscation laws once you’ve already committed crimes’ and ‘Once you’ve already made your money, we’ll try and take it off you’, but how about we actually strengthen the laws to stop them committing the crimes in the first place? Wouldn’t that be a better outcome? Wouldn’t that be putting the horse before the cart? Let us strengthen the laws and give our police the tools they need to stop these gangs committing the crimes in the first place. The Premier has been a big one for his mantra of ‘Whatever the police need—whatever the resources, whatever laws—they’ll get it’. Well, we have police officers now frustrated to the point that they are speaking out publicly about the fact that we need stronger anti-association laws in this state if we are to tackle outlaw motorcycle gangs, and yet for reasons that are beyond me the government is unwilling to act.

I should put on record some of the comments made by acting commander Peter Brigham from Victoria Police, who is from the anti-gangs division. It was reported:

He said investigators were confident of making an arrest for the shooting—
of Abdulrahim—

in due course.

As we know, that has not happened, because the alleged suspects have fled overseas. Here is what acting commander Peter Brigham said:

Understandably, incidents such as the Fawknor shooting create concern across the community. Apprehending those responsible and holding them to account is our highest priority at this time.

There is always tension and sometimes this tension can escalate into violence on our streets. But to be very clear, this type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

Well, yes, I do not think anyone would disagree with that. Further:

Brigham said legislation introduced in other states had been effective in combatting gang issues—

let me say that again, ‘Brigham said legislation introduced in other states had been effective in combatting gang issues’—

but believed police were already making an impact here in reducing gun violence.

Well, clearly it is not enough of an impact. That is not a knock on Victoria Police; that is a knock on the government, which has not been providing Victoria Police with the legislative tools they need to get on top of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

We do not want to see a repeat of what happened here in the 1990s and the 2000s. We do not want to see a repeat of the gangland wars. You have got police from outside Victoria saying Victoria is a problem. You have got police from inside Victoria saying other states have introduced effective legislation to combat these outlaw motorcycle gangs. Why is the government silent? Why doesn’t the government have an agenda to give the police the tools they need to keep us safe? This should not be a matter of politics. As I said, it is not as though you are going to have difficulty in getting such legislation through the Parliament. We would work with the government—next week? Next sitting week? There is still an opportunity. We would work with the government to provide those additional powers, because keeping communities safe is something that every one of us here, every one of the 88 members here, should have as a priority.

This government does need to explain why it is ignoring what the police are saying. It is ignoring the obvious holes in legislation. While the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 will make minor improvements at the edges in relation to the Confiscation Act, the missing piece of this puzzle, the huge hole in the middle of this bill, is the lack of any anti-association laws. That is the missed opportunity, that is what Victorians need to keep us safe. That is what Victoria Police wants. It is what other states have got. This government needs to step up its game and, in the last sitting week that is available, give the police the tools they need to keep Victorians safe.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (11:56): Put simply, this bill extends provisions in place for banks and financial institutions to the digital world and digital assets. This is the critical understanding. The relevance is to make sure our laws are in line with new and emerging technologies in the fight against criminals and organised crime. This is why this legislation is important. Here is the context: organised crime has long been using digital currencies to partake in illegal transactions and make the tracing and identifying of digital currencies and assets difficult. This bill includes Australian-first reforms to bring digital currency exchanges within the definition of ‘financial institution’ for the purposes of confiscation powers. There is the direct linkage. These exchanges hold records of cryptocurrencies and other digital assets in private wallets and provide exchange services where cryptocurrencies can be transferred to other currencies, including traditional currencies. Under these reforms law enforcement can require exchanges to provide account information as well as monitor and freeze digital assets in the same way they already can with banks and bank accounts.

This bill will go a long way to clamping down on the criminals and make it much harder for them to skirt around these laws through opaque digital exchanges and anonymous accounts—because that is what they are doing. These amendments also provide powers for digital assets to be monitored and frozen to prevent them from being dissipated by a criminal target. This bill will also clarify and

strengthen investigation and enforcement powers, including those regarding serious drug offenders, information gathering by law enforcement, restraining orders and the enforcement of confiscation.

The bill extends offences that trigger the automatic forfeiture of assets upon conviction to include: the possession of a trafficable quantity of firearms—that is incredibly important—and trafficking amounts greater than 60 grams of the drug known as a surrogate for GHB. Again, this is how we can actually keep tracking and tracing. The bill also allows law enforcement to issue multiple individual information notices to seek updated account information during ongoing litigation so the pursuit can continue. It also expands the circumstances in which the production of documents can be compelled. So these are strong laws. There is a compelling proposition in here as well. The reason is that it is essential that law enforcement has the power needed to effectively identify and locate possible proceeds of crime.

The Confiscation Act 1997 already has strong information-gathering powers, and this bill makes improvements to expand them. For example, law enforcement will be able to demand documents, in addition to their current powers to ask questions when examining suspects about their assets. These amendments will ensure our confiscation laws are fit for purpose and give police the powers they need to investigate, identify and confiscate the illicit profits from crime. The amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 clarify and streamline Victoria Police's powers for fingerprinting and search warrants, enabling better use of police time.

The bill empowers Victoria Police to personally take copies of electronic data from computers and storage devices. I just want to emphasise this in response to questions from the lead speaker from the opposition. The bill will empower Victoria Police when executing a warrant under the Crimes Act to, first critical point, seek assistance from people with specialised skills or technical knowledge. The examples cited are locksmiths or forensic accountants—so how you get in, get to the data and are able to scrutinise it, analyse it and then see whether it complies, without those assistants being named in advance in the warrant. The next point is it will secure electronic equipment for operation by experts. It will take a copy of data stored on a computer or data storage device. It can break open a safe or other storage receptacle or transport it to a different location to safely search it. So these are the mechanisms in place. I am trying to provide a step-by-step explanation so that people understand the depth, the range and the reach of this legislation.

Additional safeguards will be included in this bill with respect to the expanded search warrant powers. Police will be required to lodge a detailed report with the court following the execution of the warrant, and people with an interest in the warrant can then expect the report. So here is the balancing safeguard. In addition, the Magistrates Court will be able to require a police officer to give evidence on the matters in the report and also to direct that a seized item be returned to its owner, consistent with existing laws. So that is the safeguard there. The bill ensures this power will only be exercised where the expert skills are necessary to execute the search warrant. Provisions are included to clarify that, where reasonably necessary, Victoria Police may break open a safe or other storage receptacle on warrant premises or transport it to another location to be searched safely. So that is that key proposition.

The bill also modernises processes for Victoria Police to authorise specially trained public servant employees to operate assumed identities under the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004. These amendments extend the duration of assumed identities for Victoria Police public servant employees from three months to 12 months, giving them critical extra time, and where an assumed identity application for a Victoria Police public servant employee is being considered, it will remove the requirement that it is impossible or impractical for a law enforcement officer to acquire or use the assumed identity. What this bill does is modernise the mechanisms required to track and trace to be able to help undercover work which is predominantly done through online profiles. The vast majority of current assumed identities are dedicated to this task. These tasks are best undertaken by highly trained employees of Victoria Police and not necessarily sworn officers. This would allow a more efficient use of resources and allow investigators more easily to undertake this work.

So in bringing these themes together, police will be given stronger powers to investigate organised crime, seize ill-gotten gains and target cybercriminals under these laws. It will help in response to the growing issue of cybercrime. Specialist Victoria Police staff will have more power to investigate online child grooming, using assumed identities under the supervision of a police officer. We know from the *Betrayal of Trust* report, conducted by and supported unanimously across this Parliament, how devious this can be, how the grooming of children can be done, and this is a really important evolution in our ability to crack down on paedophiles and to bring them to account because it is incredible, the deviousness that occurs. And if this is being done increasingly in the digital world, this level of entrapment must be pursued with absolute vigour for the protection of our children. The bill will allow for intelligence officers to more easily acquire or use an assumed identity by removing the requirement for the Chief Commissioner of Police to be satisfied that it would be impossible or impractical for a sworn officer to do so. This is important legislation. It is groundbreaking in Australia. It can give our law enforcement people the best tools available to track and trace crime that is increasingly occurring in the digital world. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (12:06): I rise to also make a contribution on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I guess, like our lead speaker, when I saw this bill come into the chamber, I thought finally we have some legislation coming forth that will deal with some of the major and more significant problems that we have in this state. As our lead speaker pointed out, the issues that we have around outlaw motorcycle gangs and their criminal activities I would have thought would have perhaps been at the forefront of this amendment bill, but they did not get a mention. The reason I would have thought that outlaw motorcycle gangs would have been at the forefront of this legislation is that it is a topic and an issue that our police—they have got to be careful what they say, of course, to be non-political—have made pretty clear in a lot of their media commentary that they are seeking more support on and seeking changes in legislation to better deal with the problems of outlaw motorcycle gangs in this state. As was pointed out by our lead speaker, there is legislation in other states that has given more powers to police to be able to deal with these very issues, so why not here in Victoria? If we have legislation that has been introduced to other jurisdictions that has assisted police to uphold law and order, particularly in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs—and through the test of time, that legislation having been rolled out, it has proved successful, it has proved effective and it has been indeed welcomed by police—one must ask the question: why not here in Victoria?

I also note that whilst it probably is getting a little bit late in the term, our lead speaker did point out that we would be very happy to work with the government on legislation. We might be pushing it to get legislation through both houses in the final week, but it is something that we should not have waited four years to be dealing with, and now it looks like we are possibly not going to deal with this issue at all in this term of government. While this bill does address some matters that will certainly help and assist police—and I will cover off on them shortly—one must ask why we have this bill coming in in the second-last sitting week of the year to have these changes made. There is barely enough time to get this through the upper house next week, and with all the valedictories to occur in the upper house next week—and I believe there will be a few—it will be interesting to see if this government indeed brings it on in the upper house next week in an effort to push it through.

So, what does this bill do? It amends the Confiscation Act 1997 in relation to digital assets, search warrants, seizure warrants, exclusion applications, partial forfeiture of tainted properties and the enforcement of pecuniary penalty orders against property, and it improves the processes for information-gathering powers and obtaining restraining orders—all areas that will assist police in going about their job.

It amends the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to search warrant powers and the lodgement of search warrant reports with the Magistrates Court. This is a positive move, one of the reasons we will not be opposing the bill. It will streamline the processes and make things easier in the rolling out of search warrants, which will be of assistance to police. This bill also amends the Crimes (Assumed Identities)

Act 2004 in relation to the circumstances in which authorised civilians, and those civilians who are VicPol employees no doubt, can be authorised to assume identities under the act, which will be beneficial to investigative processes. Once again, this is another area that will assist police in upholding the law. Some of the great investigations and subsequent arrests that have been made over the years have been as a result of Victoria Police people assuming identities and infiltrating those groups or organisations that are not upholding the law, not doing the right thing by society. This relatively minor amendment, I must concede, will assist police in streamlining even that process so that they can undertake that very important work that they are also doing. The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and the Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022.

Many of the changes in this bill relate to definition changes, but there are certainly some areas and new sections of interest. In some cases these relate to warrants. Self-incrimination will no longer be an excuse for failing to comply with a warrant. One of the great frustrations I think that society has generally is that when investigations are taking place and police are homing in on unravelling complex situations to hold people to account for the actions they have taken, we hear this term that people are 'not going to cooperate' or are 'not going to make a comment' because of fear of self-incrimination. I think any steps we can take to remove or make it more difficult to use this as an excuse to impede investigations is something that should occur and is no doubt welcomed by members on both sides of the chamber.

There will also be new powers to enable a court to make an order requiring a specified person to provide any information or assistance that is reasonable and necessary to allow police officers to do certain things. This can include the example that is given in the second-reading speech of accessing data held in a computer or data storage device on a warrant premises or that has been seized from a warrant premises. This component of this amendment is about removing the ability for potential offenders or alleged offenders to be able to hide information that may incriminate them or allow police to undertake the investigations required in heading towards making an arrest. This makes it more difficult to hide data, particularly digital data, on storage devices where a warrant has been executed. This is something that the police, I am sure, would have been calling for for quite some time, and here we are, in this penultimate week of the Parliament's sitting term, putting this through. I hope that it is brought on next week and that we can get this through the upper house.

Another area of change is failure to comply without reasonable excuse. It is an indictable offence punishable by up to five years imprisonment. And again, importantly, self-incrimination will not be deemed to be a reasonable excuse. People who are under investigation, who have clearly got something to hide, should be held to account for failing to comply with an investigation. Again, that is another element of this legislation, this bill, that we would indeed support.

There are also changes around exclusion orders and the forfeiture of property for drug offenders. There are changes that are being made around restraining orders and more generally toughening up information-gathering powers. A lot of these issues were covered off by our lead speaker, so I will not go into repeating his commentary in any level of detail. We will call them relatively minor amendments, and they are, but we on this side of the house recognise that they will assist police in going about their investigative roles and in holding offenders, potential offenders and alleged offenders to account for their actions. That is obviously the reason that we will not be opposing this bill, because we support police being able to go about their roles and undertake their duties. Those who are facing the law should not be able to hide important information that is relative to cases and investigations. This does take some small steps in not only providing the police with stronger powers but also introducing some harsher penalties for those who are not prepared to cooperate with police and who are not prepared to do the right thing.

In summary, there is a level of disappointment that this did not tackle some of the big issues that are facing police. They have called for stronger laws in relation to outlaw motorcycle gangs and being able to hold them to account, and it is disappointing that is not included in this bill. There are some

changes that will make some improvements to investigative powers, and that is the reason that we are not opposing.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (12:16): I too rise to speak on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This bill makes a number of important changes to how our government can tackle criminal activity. Before I begin my contribution today, because we are coming to the end of this term of Parliament, I do really want to give a huge shout-out to all the wonderful Victoria Police officers that operate right across our great state but also give a particularly big shout-out to those working in Wyndham. It can be really hard in Melbourne's western suburbs. It is a very, very big place, and I have come across many fantastic, wonderful, dedicated and committed local police officers of families that I have gotten to know quite well. Also those that are new to the area, who start learning the ropes and come in as graduates, learn about being a great police officer from some of those that have been around a long time in the western suburbs, and they do a truly marvellous job.

I want to give a really big shout-out—after four years of developing a great relationship with him; I think I am going to get this right—to Senior Sergeant Steven Hayes. Steven was at Wyndham North police station. He is no longer there. I think he has moved up the ropes and moved on, but he is still in the western suburbs. Senior Sergeant Hayes is an incredibly lovely young man, and he was tasked with the really big job of communicating what Victoria Police do and addressing some of the really critical issues affecting folks and families in Melbourne's outer west when it comes to crime, community safety and CALD communities, where English is quite often not the first language. He was able to take on the job of, I think it was initially, community liaison officer. When I think back to when I was a kid, a community liaison officer might have been the local cop coming down to school and talking about all the things you needed to do to not engage with the criminal justice system—I remember those talks very well, even starting in primary school. But Senior Sergeant Hayes took it upon himself to speak with me and reach out to me and encourage me when I had issues raised with my office from concerned constituents within our community about community safety to pass them on to him, and he would be able to give them a call and deal with them directly, which I thought was a really great way to collaborate with the local member and take on issues that maybe did not necessarily come across his desk in his normal, day-to-day operations. But certainly for those particular families and the many, many issues he dealt with he was able to take them on board and give people a call and let them know where their case was at.

On one particular occasion I was at the Hoppers Crossing Gurudwara and Senior Sergeant Hayes and a number of other police officers came along to give a really great talk about domestic violence to the local Sikh community there in Hoppers Crossing and what they needed to do and who they should contact. It was such a great session, and it made me really reflect on new and emerging communities. Sometimes in the countries they come from police are not always as fabulous as our local Victorian police officers, so having that connection in a place like the Hoppers Crossing Gurudwara is a really good start for so many families in our community to get to know and understand the outstanding job that Victorian police officers do day in, day out. So to Senior Sergeant Steven Hayes, wherever you are, and I am sure you are not going to be reading this in *Hansard*, thank you for your friendship and hard work over the past four years. I wish you well in your future endeavours in whatever station you end up in.

We heard, when I was lucky enough to be Acting Speaker in the previous hour, in relation to the casino bill debate—I think it was the Minister for Housing talking to the member for Malvern—about how the way in which the community engaged with gambling over previous decades had changed. Certainly it is very much relevant to this bill, because we know that as technology advances, crime develops a new way to hide itself. It sort of becomes more advanced, and this makes it really difficult for conventional police activity to appropriately uncover these activities as well as appropriately seize evidence of these activities. As someone who started off in the criminal justice system and wanted to be a criminal law barrister—I spent a bit of time in court as a judge's associate—I know evidence is so, so, so important.

It is clear now that we need to update and modernise powers to continue to give our police the tools that they need to keep our communities safe, and it is something that I know our government wholeheartedly supports and is committed to doing. In the last eight years since coming to government we have heavily invested in this space, in growing and expanding our police force right across Victoria, and growing a police force, to put it bluntly, is really important in growth areas. Everything needs to grow, everything needs to expand, including our police force and including police stations.

I am very, very happy to say that in the outer west we have seen a fair bit of investment, particularly lately around our police facilities, with Wyndham North being built under our Andrews Labor government in Tarneit. In 2018 I was very lucky to get in there and have a look at it very early on as it was established. Anyone who is heading down the highway to Werribee cannot miss on the left-hand side a massive, brand new complex that I think was opened earlier this year by the then Minister for Police, the member for Bellarine, and the member for Werribee. Unfortunately I was unable to attend. It opened and a tour was able to take place, and a couple of months later I popped in and had a tour myself. This facility is huge. It is absolutely massive. It is catering for so many local Victorian police working in the heart of Wyndham in tandem with Wyndham North police station there in the heart of Tarneit. This is an incredible complex. What struck me was that it is not just for tackling crime and community safety, it is also a really fantastic workspace and place to do the office administration and everything else behind the scenes that police need to do to tackle crime in an office environment. It is a first-class facility. It is what our local police need and deserve, and I am very, very proud that we have been able to upgrade that facility. It is just brilliant.

I also understand Point Cook is going to get a new police station to help improve police coverage in that part of the outer west, and we will also have our justice precinct underway very soon. I am very much looking forward to having the Attorney-General out there in a couple of weeks with the member for Werribee to check that out.

Very quickly in the time I have got left—one of the things that this bill is going to do, very importantly, is tackle the emerging cryptocurrencies that have popped up over the last decade. Like I said, 10 to 15 years ago probably none of us would have known what bitcoin was or indeed how it could be used, but we have seen the technology evolve and know there has been an increase in the use of cryptocurrencies and digital assets, which if not properly regulated can be, very sadly, abused. Indeed this bill foresees the use of cryptocurrencies to hide the proceeds of crime, with money laundering and the like, by tying them up in digital assets that are very tricky to seize or even sometimes locate. We have seen legislation bring this into line at the federal level, with amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 requiring these currencies to be registered with the digital currency exchange register. Quite often state legislation does need to work in tandem with commonwealth legislation in order to reduce crime but also to catch criminals.

This is a great bill. It is keeping us up to date with new and emerging technologies, which is always very important. It builds upon our commitment to keeping Victorians safe, most importantly while tackling and reducing crime. It is going to make sure that people who commit crimes cannot tie up their assets in digital currencies and mix them with other assets, which is really all about disincentivising people from engaging in these types of practices, because let us be frank, people who are guilty of criminal offences will not look into cryptocurrencies to seek to mix their assets if they know that law enforcement can get their hands on them. This is why I commend the bill to the house.

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:27): I too rise to speak today in support of the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I am very pleased to follow the contribution of my good friend the member for Tarneit, and I think that was an excellent contribution. This bill is important because it delivers on commitments this government made to keep our community safe. I would really like to thank the Attorney-General, her ministerial office and the Department of Justice and Community Safety for the hard work they do every day as well as for working on this bill to bring it into the house. So thank you very much to you.

Before I begin to speak on this bill I want to say how pleased I am that we now have affirmative consent laws in Victoria. Our new affirmative consent laws are about respect and autonomy and will make our state safer and better. These have just passed the upper house, and this is brand new and so important. With explicit, informed and voluntary agreement now enshrined in law we have shifted the focus from the victim and towards the accused and what actions they took to confirm consent. This law is another example of our government's commitment to stopping all forms of violence against women and is legislation that I am incredibly proud of.

Also, as the sun sets on the 59th Parliament, I want to acknowledge the former Attorney-General, the member for Altona, for the contribution she has made to law reform in Victoria, including on industrial manslaughter, the decriminalisation of public drunkenness, wage theft and the banning of gay conversion therapy. Further, as health minister the member for Altona led landmark reforms, including the introduction of safe access zones for abortion clinics, assisted dying laws and nurse-to-patient ratios. Our state is indebted to her contributions, and we thank her for her courageous and compassionate work.

But back to the bill, prior to the introduction of this bill to the house, work was done to consult with a variety of stakeholders and organisations involved in policing, financial services and the justice system. As always consultation is key in shaping any proposed legislation, and I thank those people from the department and the ministerial office who were involved in the consultation and really allowed these stakeholders to have meaningful input and feedback on this bill. We know that that is important, and it is something that is very important to me.

As we recognise this important bill regarding major crime and community safety, I want to recognise the day-to-day work of all those involved in keeping our communities safe and in particular to thank my local police in the electorate of Wendouree and throughout Ballarat. It is tough and challenging work that takes a toll on members and their families. I thank you for the job you do every day to keep Ballarat safe, and I would really like to give a shout-out to two of my favourite Victoria Police members, Caroline Johnson and Amy Underwood, who are very, very good officers and exceptional people.

Further, it is my first opportunity to congratulate the member for Ivanhoe on his appointment as Minister for Police, and I look forward to welcoming him to Ballarat to visit the police assistance line and the Ballarat regional forensic hub, which I am very pleased was opened by the member for Frankston earlier during this term. It was great to have him in Ballarat. I cannot wait to show the new Minister for Police the great forensic work that is being done right in my electorate, in Winter Valley, and have him meet our hardworking and dedicated VicPol members.

It is integral that the work of VicPol is supported by a modern, thorough and continually improving legislative framework. This is why this government is delivering on our commitments made in the *Community Safety Statement 2018–19* to strengthen Victoria's asset confiscation scheme and improve search warrant and crime scene processes. What will this bill do? This bill will deliver on these commitments. It makes a range of improvements to how proceeds of crime are confiscated in Victoria, including dealing with digital assets and improving procedural efficiencies, as well as updating and streamlining search warrant processes. It also reforms how fingerprint information is kept and used, as well as how assumed identities are utilised online in criminal investigations. In doing so, this bill amends several bills, primarily the Confiscation Act 1997, the Crimes Act 1958 and the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004.

Under existing powers, digital assets are often difficult to confiscate as proceeds of crime, a fact that is increasingly being taken advantage of by organised crime groups. These amendments will disrupt the criminal activity by modernising the Confiscation Act to allow law enforcement to identify, to seize and to secure these assets. It also specifies, as the member for Tarneit explained, that digital currency exchanges are to be considered as financial institutions under the act, so they can be required to provide information and freeze cryptocurrency assets in the same way that banks are. Amendments to the

Confiscation Act will also provide information gathering through creating examination notices, which will compel documents for use in an examination process by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The bill additionally removes limitations that can prevent police from obtaining information notices for some properties used in criminal offending. This is balanced by robust safeguards ensuring that information notices may only be issued to senior police officers, who must justify in writing their belief that a property is related to criminal offending. Annual reports on the use of information notices by VicPol will have to be tabled in this Parliament.

Several further amendments will improve the application of enforcement and the finalisation procedures for confiscating the proceeds of crime. Officers within the Department of Justice and Community Safety will be able to apply for warrants for the seizure of forfeited property on behalf of police, although executing these warrants will remain a police responsibility. The warrant period will also be lengthened from one month to six, better reflecting the time it can take to intercept vehicles on the road. Police will also be better empowered to access and secure seized digital assets, such as cryptocurrency wallets.

Additional legislative inconsistencies are also addressed to ensure that property effectively controlled by offenders, as well as property involved in serious drug offences, is liable for forfeiture. Improvements are also made to the process of enforcing restraining orders which are put in place to facilitate payment orders made against an offender. This includes that restraining orders will no longer be required when using forfeited property to compensate victims. These amendments and more will together ensure that confiscation procedures are fit for purpose and reflect the realities of modern policing.

The next area that I want to talk about is the search warrant reforms. This bill further delivers on search warrant reforms, enacting another commitment from the *Community Safety Statement 2018–19*. Search warrants are critical policing procedures regulated under the Crimes Act 1958, and the practical application of these regulations must keep up with the times. This bill allows for experts, such as IT or firearms specialists, to assist in seizing evidence when required without these assistants needing to be named in advance. Police will also be permitted to break open locked safes when reasonably necessary. And, bringing Victoria into line with other Australian jurisdictions, police will be required to lodge a comprehensive report of seized assets instead of bringing those items back to court, and they will be able to display these items to the media where appropriate to publicise the outcome of investigations into serious crimes. Under these procedural improvements, search warrants will be safer, more efficient and more effective.

We are also going to look at issues regarding fingerprints, and the amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 also reform how police fingerprint information is kept and used by Victoria Police. They reduce undue administrative burdens on police concerning when fingerprint retention periods overlap and end, and they also facilitate the retention of fingerprint information for people who have passed away for use as evidence in solving and closing cases. Police will be empowered to identify seriously injured and deceased people based on fingerprints to then disclose their identity to medical practitioners and coroners. These are commonsense amendments that will streamline police processes and provide benefits to our community.

Finally, this bill also makes regulatory changes to how assumed identities can be used in criminal investigations. These acknowledge the changing reality of where and how these investigations take place, and the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004 was introduced at a time when assumed identities were primarily used in person by undercover operatives. We are making sure that some robust safeguards that are within the current act remain and that they are applied. Taken as a whole, the important amendments in this bill will modernise regulations that would otherwise delay or compromise essential policing work. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (12:37): I am pleased to rise to contribute on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Could I begin by thanking the Attorney-

General and the Minister for Police for this important bill and what it means for our community in terms of safety. I also do want to acknowledge the previous Minister for Police and the work that she did leading up to this as well.

I also want to follow on from the member for Tarneit and the member for Wendouree in thanking our local police force for the work that they do—Victoria Police, and in particular the police force in Geelong, who provide such a great service in our community. The last couple of years have obviously been pretty tough for our police and first responders. I do want to acknowledge the work they do in keeping our community safe and just how important this bill is for them in terms of delivering community safety in all of our communities across Victoria.

This bill is about giving stronger powers to investigate organised crime, seize ill-gotten gains and target cybercriminals. Our investment into specialised police has been really important for our state, and particularly in addressing cybercrime and new and emerging technologies. Trying to stay on top of those emerging technologies is particularly challenging. I think our law enforcement have done a great job in doing that, and we will continue to support them as a government to do that, given its importance. The bill will strengthen the assets confiscation laws and give more power to investigate and seize proceeds of crime and disrupt organised crime on the black market.

It is important that we also respond to the growing issue of cybercrime with more powers given to specialist police staff to investigate online child grooming using assumed identities. Child grooming is a serious issue. Many parents fear their child will innocently become a target. I know when I talk to many parents in my community there is always that real fear that perpetrators will access their children online. I know there is technology to help prevent those things from happening, but children being children, they can often get into sites that are not necessarily the safest place for them to be. With perpetrators out there—and we know they are out there—we do not want children to be able to be accessed by those perpetrators and become targets. This bill is about catching the perpetrators and protecting our children in our communities, which is really, really important.

The bill will allow for intelligence officers to more easily acquire or use assumed identities by removing the requirement for the Chief Commissioner of Police to be satisfied that it would be impossible or impracticable for a sworn officer to do so. This bill allows for more victim compensation that will be able to be paid from forfeited properties.

We know the impact on victims. We have heard in this chamber many times stories from local members of Parliament, from their communities, and the impact of crime on their constituents and the importance of making sure that victims of crime are given every possible support. This government has certainly done that. There have been many changes to legislation, so we have done a lot in that space, but what this actually means is that there will be more compensation available to be paid through forfeited property. This is a really important component of this bill, and I think for my community that means a lot. We know, as I said, the impact of crime against people has been really significant on them. As I mentioned, we have put many resources and policy changes into victims of crime policy direction, which is protecting those people to some degree.

This bill makes important amendments that acquit commitments in the *Community Safety Statement 2018–19* to strengthen Victoria's laws targeting proceeds of crime and improve Victoria Police search warrant powers, crime scene powers and ability to effectively gather and manage evidence. The bill also addresses the need to improve police investigations and reduce administrative burdens on Victoria Police by streamlining and modernising the legislative powers related to the execution of search warrants, the use and destruction of fingerprints and the use of assumed identities in criminal investigations. In streamlining these powers the bill maintains appropriate safeguards for their exercise, such as court oversight over the execution of warrants.

The bill addresses the growing use of digital currencies and other digital assets by criminal groups, expanding law enforcement powers to effectively identify and seize digital assets. The bill extends the

obligation of financial institutions under the Confiscation Act 1997 to digital currency exchanges to allow law enforcement to obtain account information from them in the same way that information may be obtained from banks. The bill also makes changes to the Confiscation Act to update provisions to ensure they are applicable to digital assets.

The bill inserts new powers for law enforcement to require the assistance of people with knowledge of computers, data storage devices or other means of accessing digital assets to gain access to these assets when executing search warrants. The bill addresses operational limitations on the existing information-gathering powers provided to law enforcement in the Confiscation Act by expanding the use of the powers and the types of information that can be accessed to support investigative and enforcement efforts. The bill strengthens the state's ability to enforce and finalise confiscation outcomes. Specifically, the bill provides a clear statutory pathway to enforce pecuniary penalty orders against real property and a mechanism for a court to order a sale of land. The reforms are intended to reduce the complexity of the litigation that can currently occur in these cases while maintaining safeguards and judicial oversight of the process.

The bill addresses gaps in law enforcement's ability to investigate and seize property that is tainted by criminal offending. The bill resolves an inconsistency in the Confiscation Act that currently allows tainted or derived property to be excluded from forfeiture in relation to serious drug offences when it cannot be excluded for less serious offending. It also gives courts discretion to order the partial forfeiture of tainted property in circumstances where there is a sole owner of the property, mitigating disproportionate impacts and undue hardship when an entire property is forfeited, especially when it is the family home. We are making provisions in this bill to ensure that people who are living in a family home are protected.

But I think the bill is very much around protecting our community and providing safety, particularly in relation to emerging technology and what is happening in the cyber world. This is very new technology. Even a lot of us in this chamber today do not necessarily get our heads around what it all means, but we know that we have specialist law enforcement officers out there making sure that they are covering those things and catching the perpetrators, particularly those in cybercrime and predators on children that they target online. These are really important matters that need to be dealt with every single day. We know that our law enforcement officers are out there doing that. We need as a government to provide them with the ability to do their job, and to do it thoroughly, with the resources and expertise that they need.

This is a really important bill. It is about protecting our entire community. It is about making sure the resources that are required and the expertise that is required are in place when they are needed. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (12:47): I am pleased to rise this afternoon to make a contribution in relation to the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. We can see in clause 1 of the bill that the purposes of the bill are to amend the Confiscation Act 1997, to amend the Crimes Act 1958, to amend the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004, to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and to make consequential amendment to the Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022.

Before I get into the details of that, I just want to make some more general comments in relation to policing. I particularly think back to our local situation out in the City of Whitehorse and the City of Monash, where the Forest Hill district is. I particularly think about the Forest Hill police station, which is an outstanding police station. Indeed it was a 2010 election commitment that I made in the run-up to the state election in November 2010. That police station was subsequently built and opened some years later, and it has ended up being one of the stand-out facilities for Victoria Police (VicPol), not only in the east but throughout the state, in terms of its design. The design that the architects came up with actually won awards. It has gone down well and truly on the public record as being one of the best facilities for local police in the metropolitan area and probably more broadly. I remember clearly the words of one of

the senior sergeants who had been in the job for over 30-something years and was about to retire. He said he had worked in many, many stations all around Victoria and that the Forest Hill police station was the best one that he had ever been in. That is a great asset for not only the local police but also the broader community out in Melbourne's east. That reflected the commitment that the government at the time had and the now Liberal-Nationals opposition continues to have towards policing and to making sure that it is properly resourced and has the assets and the resources that it needs.

Certainly locally the police are doing an outstanding job. I have various interactions with them from time to time on different matters and get updates and whatnot. They do a great job to protect and to serve our local community. Even this morning as I was listening to the radio very early I heard that the Box Hill criminal investigation unit are investigating a very substantial burglary up in Blackburn, which is just adjacent to the boundaries of Forest Hill district. They are looking at a \$250 000 burglary from a home up there, which is a very substantial crime in our area. That just happened to be reflected on the news this morning. Obviously the police are doing work, constantly dealing with all kinds of matters and offenders that we do not know anything about. They are out there day and night, 24 hours a day, protecting our community, and they are to be highly commended and thanked for that.

In terms of some of the major crimes that we are seeing here in the state of Victoria, there has been an alarming run of them I think in recent times where we have seen some very public shootings and very public other serious offences that really do strike at the heart of law and order in the city here. My comment in relation to that is that it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that Victoria Police has the necessary resources to get on top of that sort of crime. We saw recently that shooting—we have had numbers of shootings of course, but this was a very serious shooting—where someone with alleged bikie connections was shot in broad daylight, and then the offenders crashed the car that they had left that scene in and one of them proceeded to do a carjacking. That is a dreadful situation on every level but certainly for the victims of that carjacking. My recollection is that there was a mother and a child in that vehicle, and they will be probably forever traumatised by that very significant impact on their lives.

When we are seeing brazen crimes like that throughout the streets of Melbourne, we know that we have got a serious problem. I just hope and trust that the government are doing all that they need to and ensuring that the police are properly resourced to deal with these very serious matters. Very often, as we know, those sorts of crimes are linked inextricably to drugs and to other general illegal activity. I would urge the government to ensure that they are doing all they can to send a clear message to the underworld and to the bikie community that that sort of behaviour and those activities are not welcome here in Victoria, because they, as we know, erode the very fabric of society that we are trying to work to improve.

On top of that we have continued to see a rash of home invasions. I remember numbers of years ago when the first one of those became apparent. That was just extraordinary because it was a crime that effectively we had not seen in Victoria, or if we had it was extremely infrequent. Sadly now for all Victorians it is basically a regular situation where there are home invasions, and there is no discrimination as to where they might occur. Again, I think this reflects some of the lawless attitude that has crept into our community, and again I would urge the government to ensure that they are doing all they can to protect the community from these sorts of offences.

It is ironic that whilst we have had these sorts of high-end crimes where significant resources are tied up and going into prosecuting these matters, which is very appropriate and very important for the protection of the community, we have had a series of situations where people in the last few years have been arrested for basically meaningless alleged offences. We saw, I think it was earlier this week, that one of those people, who for an alleged incitement in relation to putting a particular matter on social media in regard to a public event was subsequently arrested in her own home, turned up to court to deal with that matter some years later, and the matter was just dropped by Victoria Police. That particular person had done effectively no harm in the community yet had to live with that hanging over her head for those subsequent years. Quite frankly, I think that that is not good enough. That

person has gone through incredible stress and anxiety as a result of that, and the publicity that she received when she had committed no offence is appalling. I would encourage the government to ensure that there is no politically motivated police action in relation to matters that it disagrees with for whatever reason, because I think that that has been quite apparent. There are other examples which I could cite—but I will not; I have not got time to go into them today—where it seems that the government has been politically interfering in what VicPol has been doing.

It is interesting too that today the Auditor-General has tabled a report in this place: *The Effectiveness of Victoria Police's Staff Allocation*. It is interesting to see the conclusion that the Auditor-General has reached in relation to that. He talks about why the audit is important and who and what he examined, but the important aspect for members here and for the broader community, I think, is the fact that we can see what the Auditor-General concluded:

Victoria Police's staffing needs are not clear because it does not have a strategic workforce plan.

The report goes on:

Without knowing its future staffing needs, Victoria Police continues to rely on what it receives from the government, rather than providing evidence-based advice.

Victoria Police also cannot assure itself or the community that the 2,729 additional police officers it received as part of the \$2 billion Community Safety Statement ... program delivered community safety outcomes.

The Auditor-General goes on and makes six recommendations, and I commend the Auditor-General for his work and his team's work in relation to this particular matter. It is interesting to note the chief commissioner's reply, which is on page 25 of the report. He says:

It is an ongoing challenge to assign resources in a manner that is effective, sustainable, and fair across all facets of an obligation that is constantly evolving in its ability to respond to ever changing needs and demands.

He goes on:

... The system was not designed as a tool to inform Government how many additional resources Victoria Police require.

In relation to that report I trust that the government and VicPol have agreed to most of those recommendations—certainly in principle to two and in full to the other four. But I trust the government heeds the recommendations of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office and implements those improvements in their own system so that we can ensure that the community gets that increased level of police action and assistance when they need it.

In conclusion, I note the opposition is not opposing the bill.

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (12:57): I rise today to also contribute to the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The bill will deliver *Community Safety Statement 2018–19* commitments to strengthen Victoria's asset confiscation scheme and improve search warrant and crime scene processes. I should say up front that I know very little about cryptocurrency and I have not got my head around cybercrime either, but I am pretty pleased that this bill will be delivering the laws that will deal with this sort of crime. But, as I say, as an elderly gentleman, I have no idea about cryptocurrency. There you go. I do not think I will be investing in it.

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

Mr McGHIE: Yes, I know. I do not think I will be investing in it.

This bill has been developed in consultation with key government and legal stakeholders, and I am pleased to see that those opposite are not opposing this bill. The bill will improve Victoria Police's response to serious and organised crime, and it will streamline, clarify and modernise fingerprint and search-warrant powers and the use of assumed identities in criminal investigations and create operational efficiencies for the police and for our courts. The bill specifically will amend the Confiscation Act 1997 to improve Victoria's asset confiscation scheme by strengthening investigation

and enforcement powers, updating offences that result in the automatic forfeiture of assets and modernising the scheme to account for technological developments—for example, just by extending provisions to digital assets like, as I said, cryptocurrency. The important point is that increasingly criminals are choosing to use new, modern technologies to hide their gains. Clearly in the criminal world they will continue to do that to try and manipulate and, as I say, hide their gains through their criminal acts.

The bill also amends the Crimes Act 1958 to modernise Victoria Police's search warrant powers and fingerprinting framework and the Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004 to streamline and modernise processes for Victoria Police to authorise and use assumed identities in the online environment. I know we have not got much more time left. Organised crime has long been using digital currencies to partake in illegal transactions, which makes the tracing and identifying of digital currencies and assets difficult.

Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Members

TREASURER

MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONS

Absence

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:01): I rise to inform the house that for today the Assistant Treasurer will answer questions for the Treasurer and the portfolios of economic development, industrial relations and trade, and the Minister for Police will answer questions for the portfolios of corrections, youth justice, victim support and fishing and boating.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Minister for Health. Deborah from the Yarra Valley has been waiting for a hysterectomy since April 2021. She suffers from postmenopausal bleeding that can be so intense and serious that she needs to be hospitalised. She has had to attend hospital emergency departments over two dozen times. As a category 2 patient she has been waiting on the emergency surgery waiting list for 16 months. Can the minister please tell Deborah and the many thousands of Victorians like her why the health system in Victoria is so broken that a woman in need of such vital surgery has had to wait 16 months and visit emergency departments over two dozen times and still cannot get the help she needs at the time she needs it?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Of course my regards go to Deborah. This must be a difficult time for her, and I hope she is getting the care that she needs through her general practitioner to support her during this time. Can I make the point again that our health system here in Victoria, just like every health system around the nation and indeed across the world, has been significantly impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Now, our government has a \$1.5 billion pandemic catch-up plan in place in order to face into the planned surgery list and to deliver the care that Victorians need. Our aim is to be back delivering 240 000 planned surgeries every year here in Victoria by the middle of 2024. Indeed in the last quarter we were able to treat 41 468 patients, and that was a 48 per cent increase on the previous quarter. We have a range of initiatives in place, including I might say initiatives that have been constantly derided and talked down by those on the other side. That of course includes the purchase of the Bellbird Private Hospital and the Frankston Private Hospital to be able to deliver an additional 15 000 surgeries every year.

So once again I will make this point: with Deborah's permission, if you get in touch with me and you provide the permission that will enable the health service to release her information to me, I am very happy to follow up.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): Deborah is in the Parliament today. She is desperate for surgery and desperate for help. The matter was raised here two months ago and she is still not getting the full care that she requires. The lack of surgery is preventing her ability to work and is causing intense pain. I ask: what is it going to take for someone like Deborah, so obviously in need of surgery, to get the help she needs at the time she needs it from a government that seemingly could not care less?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:05): Our government is about putting patients first. We are making the investments, we have a plan to increase the planned surgeries, and again, if the member wants to write to me and provide me with details, I can follow it up.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:05): Today I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's job-creating investments in world-class health infrastructure. Victorians know that while the Liberal Party closes hospitals, a Labor government builds them. In fact we have invested more than \$12 billion in health infrastructure since 2014. We have invested in new hospitals such as the \$1.5 billion Footscray Hospital, the largest state health investment infrastructure project that Victoria has ever seen and a project that is creating 2000 jobs. The new Melton hospital is creating 700 direct jobs and 1700 indirect jobs. You can add to that 300 jobs at Maryborough hospital, 600 jobs at Latrobe Regional Hospital, 800 jobs at Warrnambool hospital and 1000 jobs created by our expansion of emergency departments at Casey and Werribee Mercy. Our massive health infrastructure investments are creating thousands of jobs for Victorian construction workers, but of course, as you know, Speaker, new hospitals do not treat patients—nurses, midwives and doctors do. That is why the Andrews Labor government is also investing in our healthcare workforce. Our \$270 million nursing and midwifery package will recruit and train an extra 17 000 nurses and midwives. We are also delivering record recruitment of paramedics, with an additional 2200 recruited since our government came to power. We all remember how the Liberals, those on the other side, went to war with our paramedics, how they disrespected our nurses. Only an Andrews Labor government will support and grow the Victorian healthcare workforce.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:07): My question is to the Minister for Ambulance Services. Minister, could you explain why 15 ambulances yesterday were ramped at Monash hospital? Fifteen ambulances yesterday afternoon—why were they ramped at Monash hospital?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:08): I welcome the question. I want to take this opportunity to thank our paramedics for the extraordinary effort that they have made over the very difficult period of 2½ years while we lived through—and indeed continue to experience—the impacts of the pandemic. Of course what we have seen throughout the paramedic has been an increase in the number of ambulance call-outs, and indeed the very last quarter was the busiest quarter ever experienced by Ambulance Victoria in this state. As a consequence of that, we have seen real pressure on our emergency departments. But it is actually at the back end of the hospital where the real pressure is. What we have is a consequence of inaction by the previous federal Liberal government on NDIS and the fact that they oversaw the complete failure of private aged care in this nation. Private aged care is a disgrace, and it is because of the previous federal Liberal government's failure to invest that we have a bed block issue in our hospitals. Thankfully we now have a federal Labor government that is willing to face into some of these challenges and address the challenges that are being felt in our hospital and healthcare system. This is how we will ensure that ambulances can off-load their patients and get back on the road.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:10): With reports just two months ago from the *Medical Journal of Australia* that patients ramped for more than 17 minutes sustain an increase in the chances of their condition worsening or losing their life, I ask: how many patients now have an increased risk of more serious illness or even death due to being ramped in an ambulance?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:10): I want to make this point for the benefit of the member for Caulfield: the most urgent patients continue to be seen on arrival at emergency departments, with 100 per cent of category 1 patients being treated immediately. These are the sickest patients who will always get priority care through our health system. Again I take this opportunity to thank the paramedics and thank the emergency department teams that are doing all this work. Once again, here in Victoria our government listens to our healthcare workforce. We take on board their great ideas, like the Victorian virtual emergency department, which was born out at Northern Hospital and is now being expanded around the state, ensuring once again that more paramedics are available on the road to respond to those 000 calls. Similarly, our ambulance off-load— *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: JOBS THAT MATTER CAMPAIGN

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (14:12): The Andrews Labor government is delivering more jobs to more Victorians in the sectors that matter most. We know that there are thousands of Victorians out there who have what it takes in the social services sector, and that is why we have launched the Jobs that Matter recruitment campaign and a nation-first jobs guarantee aimed at helping thousands of Victorians kickstart their careers through study and a guaranteed job.

Jobs that Matter aims to address the fact that right now in Victoria there are thousands of jobs available in the social services sector. There are jobs for trainees and new workers, jobs for skilled and experienced practitioners and jobs for people from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures. These are all the kinds of jobs that make a huge difference in people's lives. We know that the demand is there, and that is why the Andrews Labor government is investing \$39 million in the jobs guarantee program—that is \$39 million. That is right: only the Andrews Labor government will make sure there is a guaranteed job in social services for every single person who completes a diploma of community services between September 2022 and August 2024. Our government will create a ready, available pool of qualified candidates that employers can draw from, adding to the over 600 000 jobs that have been created since we came to office. This is in stark contrast to those opposite when they were last in government because they could barely create a fifth of that. If you are thinking about starting a career in social services, if you have a real passion for children and family services, for disability services or for homelessness services, this is your moment. We want you. Get out there, get skilled up with our free TAFE diploma of community services, and when you graduate the Andrews Labor government will back you every step of the way with a guaranteed job.

Ms Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, Deborah would love to have a job in social services, but she is too scared to take one because she cannot—

The SPEAKER: The member for Evelyn will resume her seat. I ask members not to raise frivolous points of order.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:14): My question is to the Minister for Ambulance Services. Max Perry of Kilmore was recently taken by his daughter to his local hospital with signs of a heart attack. The hospital had no available beds for Mr Perry. He was told he would have to get an ambulance to Melbourne. He then had to wait two hours for an ambulance from Woodend, nearly 50 kilometres away, because there were no ambulances available in Wallan, Kilmore, Broadford or anywhere closer to Kilmore. How is it acceptable to the minister that a Victorian suffering from a heart attack has to wait 2 hours for an ambulance to arrive because resources are so stretched?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:15): I thank the member for Euroa for her question. I send my best wishes to Max Perry, the constituent whose issue she has raised here today. I do need to make the point that in the case of a person like Mr Perry he will be prioritised through Ambulance Victoria services, and every decision that is taken will be in the best interests of Mr Perry and trying to get him the service that he needs as quickly as possible. As I always do, if the member for Euroa wishes to share the details with me, I am happy to follow this issue up for her.

Members interjecting.

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

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (14:16): Once Mr Perry was finally in an ambulance to Melbourne it was discovered that there were no beds available in any public hospital until Parkville. In fact Mr Perry had to use his private health insurance to get a bed at Melbourne Private Hospital in the city centre. How has it got to this, where there are no public hospital beds available for a Victorian suffering a heart attack?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:16): I thank the member for her question. I will make this point again: our health system has been under unprecedented pressure, and this is being experienced not just here in Victoria but right around the nation and indeed around the world. Every day our healthcare workers, our paramedics, our emergency doctors, our intensive care nurses and our cardiologists are working to deliver the best and most timely care that they can, and indeed they would have been working always with the best interests of Mr Perry in mind at all times, to get him the health care that he needed. I would make this point: our government are implementing a pandemic repair plan, \$12 billion of investment, and we have also— *(Time expired)*

Mr Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Gembrook is warned. I call for a ministers statement the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Business Precincts) (14:17): Thank you, Speaker. I am also speaking in my capacity as the roads and road safety and public transport minister, because on this side of the house we can do a few things at once, can't we? I do want to update the house on how well the Andrews Labor—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Order! I want to hear the ministers statement.

Mr CARROLL: I want to give it, Speaker, too, because I want to update the house on the record job the Andrews Labor government is doing in creating jobs and supporting the manufacturing system right across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. We know it is a cornerstone of the Victorian economy—260 000 jobs. 84 000 jobs in manufacturing are full-time. It is a \$30 billion a year industry. When we came to government the unemployment rate was 6.7 per cent. Now it is 3.1 per cent. Also when we came to government the Victorian auto industry was on the way out. Many people said that Victoria would go backwards, we would go into recession. What did the Andrews Labor government do? We put \$120 million into investing in the auto transition, and we saved TAFE—again, two things at once. So that is what we do on this side of the house. But whether it is saving the auto industry and continuing to invest in manufacturing, whether it is building a world-class public transport system, building the Education State, transforming our healthcare system or putting us on a path to net zero emissions, we will make sure that we continue to support industry.

Only last month, when they decided to shelve the Suburban Rail Loop, the opposition leader went on radio and said, ‘We’re being ignored by a government in high-vis vests and hard hats’. We know Scott Morrison would not hold a hose. Now the opposition leader is saying he will not wear a hard hat or a high-vis vest. We will always be the government of jobs, hard hats and high-vis vests, investing in the future, keeping the unemployment rate under 4 per cent, not walking away from the auto industry when it is on its knees—saving it—putting Victorians at the front and jobs everywhere we go. *(Time expired)*

SOUTH YARRA PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:20): My question is for the Minister for Housing. Minister, Azra has lived in South Yarra’s public housing towers for 17 years. In that time her home has never been upgraded. She is forced to stuff old newspapers to fill gaps in the windows to keep the cold out, mould and rising damp are spread throughout the unit and the kitchen and stove are old, outdated and in poor condition. Minister, when can Azra and other residents of the South Yarra public housing towers expect their homes to be brought up to a standard we would all expect?

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (14:20): If the member for Prahran would like to provide me with details, I am very happy to follow that up. But I do want to make the point that the member for Prahran and the Greens political party have opposed every single investment in social housing pursued by this government since 2014. Every single one, they have opposed. You have not delivered a single piece of housing infrastructure.

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair, Minister.

Dr Read: On a point of order, Speaker, we welcome all friendly advice, but that could not be relevant at all.

Mr PEARSON: On the point of order, Speaker, it is entirely relevant because we cannot be lectured by those opposite on these questions, given the fact that they have consistently opposed every single investment.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the minister to come back to the question.

Mr PEARSON: As I said, I am very happy to get the details and follow it up. But it is important that we make sure that we continue to invest in our housing stock. I am delighted that my predecessor, the member for Richmond, made such a huge contribution to this state—\$5.3 billion with the Big Housing Build, the single biggest investment in social housing in the nation’s history. The reality is that we have been opposed by those opposite, and those of us on this side of the house do remember Markham and do remember when the Greens political party and the Liberal Party used, in the other place, a disallowance motion to prevent that redevelopment from occurring.

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, the minister is defying your ruling, Speaker. It is a very specific question about a specific public housing tower being upgraded, and he is defying your ruling and straying from the relevance of the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister is to come back to the question.

Mr PEARSON: Well, I am not going to cop crocodile tears from a class traitor from Chapel Street. On this side of the house, we are investing—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the house to come to order when I am on my feet. I will not tolerate this kind of disruption in the house.

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, I ask the minister to withdraw that offensive statement.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, withdraw.

Mr PEARSON: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: Has the minister concluded his answer?

Mr PEARSON: I am so proud to be a member of a government that is getting on with providing energy-efficient, accessible, affordable 21st-century housing to the people who need it most. We will not cop lectures from those who have barely delivered a television to a social housing tenant in this state when we are getting on with the job of providing the biggest housing build in the nation's history.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:24): Supplementary question: Minister, residents in the South Yarra towers were promised in 2013 that units in South Yarra would be upgraded and all windows replaced whilst plans were developed. That was nine years ago. Labor has been in government for eight of those years. Minister, instead of excuses, instead of personal attacks and instead of blaming the Greens, why don't you just fix people's public housing in South Yarra?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Polwarth is warned.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (14:25): I think the member needs to maybe dust off the abacus and subtract nine from eight and realise that in 2013 we were not in government. We have got on with the job of making the necessary investments, and we have been opposed every step of the way by those opposite. Every single time we have tried we have been opposed. We will not be distracted, we will not be diverted. It is only the Labor government that is making this sort of record investment. We are proud and we are committed to providing, again, accessible, energy-efficient, affordable housing to the people who need it most. I want to have more public housing and more social housing in my community, and I know for a fact, despite whatever he might say here, he is actively subverting our attempts to do that because he does not want social housing tenants in his community at all.

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is misleading the house and impugning my character to suggest that I do not want social housing residents in my—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Pahran, that is not a point of order.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SOLAR HOMES PROGRAM

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:26): I rise to update the house on how our renewables revolution is leading the country, creating jobs, cutting power bills and cutting emissions at a record pace. Last year we saw the greatest annual increase in renewables in the country, and we are charging ahead with our targets to cut emissions by 50 per cent by 2030. Our ambitious targets will create more than 24 000 jobs along the way. We are not only creating jobs through our nation-leading projects like our offshore wind targets and our big batteries but also powering ahead with the biggest household solar program in the country.

Solar Victoria has already delivered 4500 new jobs since 2018, closing in on our target of 5500 by 2028. I reckon we will more than beat that, but it does not stop there. The local solar industry is thriving, with retailers across the state installing systems supported by our Solar Homes program. That means more local jobs and income—money straight back into the pockets of hardworking Victorians right across our state. The member for Albert Park will be thrilled that one of the most popular retailers in our program is based in his electorate, with UNified Energy Services in Southbank installing more than 3000 systems, not to mention HP Energy in Footscray with more than 2300 installs, DoDo Solar in Glen Waverley with more than 1800 installs and Amazing Solar Solutions in Dandenong with 2782 installs. And of course the Deputy Premier will be very delighted to hear about Cola Solar in Bendigo East with more than 2500 installs. These and other businesses come with thousands and

thousands of jobs for hardworking Victorians. There are those opposite who pretend they want to play the catch-up game, but at the same time they continue to preselect candidates who oppose the very things that they say they have changed on. Only our government will deliver record investment in renewables— *(Time expired)*

HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Health. Seventy-four-year-old Bernice Snell from Mirboo North attended Latrobe Regional Hospital on Saturday with leg swelling and pain from a suspected deep vein thrombosis. Bernice had recently had a change of medication and was told to attend the ED immediately if she experienced any pain. After arriving at around 10.00 am with her daughter, due to stretched resources it was more than 6 hours before Bernice was seen by a doctor and blood tests were taken. She was eventually admitted 2 hours later. In the early hours of Sunday morning Bernice had a heart attack and, tragically, died. How is a 74-year-old woman in pain being forced to wait 6 hours for treatment and then tragically losing her life acceptable in this state?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:29): I thank the member for his question, and can I express my sadness and condolences to Bernice's family at what must be a very, very difficult time. Once again, our hospitals and our healthcare system are full of people who have made an exceptional effort over the last 2½ years to deliver the very best health care in the most difficult of circumstances. At every step of the way a person under the care of our health system is being assessed at every point. People are treated when they present to our healthcare services based on their urgency, their acuity and their complexity. These are clinical decisions that are made in the health service in terms of the timeliness of care. Once again, if Bernice's family want me to look into this further for them, I am very happy to do so.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:31): Bernice was a stalwart of Mirboo North, and her community is devastated by her sudden death. Her family just wants to ensure that a death like Bernice's does not happen again due to delays in getting treatment at overworked emergency departments. How many more people have to die before the crisis in our health system is acknowledged and finally fixed?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:31): Once again I extend my sympathies to Bernice's family and indeed the community of Mirboo North at what must be a very difficult time. Of course any incident like this is a tragic one, and once again I extend my support to the member. I am happy to look into this further and get more answers if indeed the family feel that that is what they would like to do. I will finally make the point that—

A member interjected.

Ms THOMAS: I need to make this point: people in our health system do not always have good outcomes.

Members interjecting.

Ms THOMAS: No. Our healthcare workers make— *(Time expired)*

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:32): The Andrews Labor government is getting on and delivering the Suburban Rail Loop and the 24 000 jobs it will create. Indeed right now in Canberra at the jobs summit industry representatives like Jon Davies from the Australian Constructors Association and Adrian Dwyer from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia will be outlining just how important jobs in the rail industry are to this country. Wasn't it terrific today to see federal Labor Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, announce those free TAFE places? Of course this builds on the Andrews Labor government's free TAFE program. It is all about Labor governments at

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Thursday, 1 September 2022

Legislative Assembly

3563

a federal level and a state level investing in skills and apprenticeships to support this job-creating industry. Plus, the rail industry has a massive supply chain made up of hundreds of thousands of businesses and tens of thousands of rail industry workers.

Now, we have seen that not everyone in this place values rail, the public transport connections it provides and the jobs it supports. Just yesterday in this place the Leader of the Opposition said railway lines are ‘nice to have’. The thousands of rail industry workers in this state would think that their jobs are more than nice to have. It is pay packets; it is pay packets going home each and every week to support them and their families. People in regional Victoria also know pretty well that when the Liberal Party say railway lines are ‘nice to have’, they know that they and their mates in the National Party will team up and shut them down altogether. The contrast is so stark. We are upgrading every regional passenger line because we know that they are more than a nice-to-have; they are a vital connection for communities and vitally important to supporting jobs in this state. That is why we will keep on supporting those jobs in the rail industry. That is why we will keep on supporting the rail industry more broadly because it is more than nice to have; it is vital.

Mr Tilley: On a point of order, Speaker, just in relation to unanswered question 6352 regarding an immediate need for action on waiting lists at Albury Wodonga Health, the question was asked 112 days ago. The question database simply says no answer available. Could you please find out whether I am going to get an answer to that question.

The SPEAKER: It will be followed up, member for Benambra.

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, I have a number of matters to be chased up. I would appreciate your assistance on two questions to the Minister for Emergency Services—6705 and 6698—which are both overdue by about five weeks. I have all but given up on the one to the Minister for Education, 4718, which was due in November 2020, and to the Minister for Health, 4735, which was due in October 2020. I have given up on those, but I have not given up on the more recent ones.

The SPEAKER: Questions will be followed through.

Constituency questions

BENAMBRA ELECTORATE

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (14:36): (6516) My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment and Climate Action. It is good to see her in the house at the moment. The question is: how many brumbies have been rehomed under your current program of controlling brumby numbers in comparison to the number that have been slaughtered by snipers in the current kill fest? I have been contacted by several constituents who were approved to rehome horses, but despite promises the program was deferred and then cancelled. Almost at the same time, Parks Victoria released the expression of interest for snipers to slaughter brumbies. In the past week we have seen the horrendous crime scenes on the high plains, with mobs of horses clearly shot from the air and foals left orphaned and torn apart by wild dogs and pigs. You said this was going to be humane, but it has been anything but that. Considering the Parliament supported a motion to cease the slaughter, have you directed your department to cease this senseless method of control immediately?

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:37): (6517) My question is to the Minister for Health. How will improvements to Ambulance Victoria’s operations at Northern Hospital benefit residents in the state district of Broadmeadows? This is even more timely and relevant given the contributions during question time. I am referring to the Victorian virtual emergency departments. This is a great initiative, and it has the capacity to ensure that up to 500 patients per day have access to a video consultation with an emergency doctor or nurse, from their own home. These include paramedics connecting suitable patients to the program on scene for virtual assessment, management and referral. I was delighted years ago to help develop this strategy. We were targeting it for the extension of the

Broadmeadows Hospital. It has been fast-forwarded and implemented in the Northern Hospital, where the demand is the greatest, and we want to just see how we can drive this further, as the minister was saying in her answers in question time.

GIPPSLAND SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:38): (6518) My question is to the Minister for Energy, and I seek from the minister an explanation of what role VicGrid is playing in the changes to or the rollout of additional transmission and other electricity infrastructure across the state, particularly in respect of the renewable energy zones announced in 2020. In my electorate of Gippsland South we currently have AusNet proposing a new 500-kilovolt overhead powerline to connect up potentially with the proposed offshore wind farms and other renewable energy being developed. It is very unclear to me and my community what role VicGrid will play and whether it will actually be able to assist any of those residents who are directly affected by the proposals for overhead transmission lines across their properties and what role, ultimately, VicGrid and the government will play if those residents refuse permission. So I seek some clarity on VicGrid's role and how it will manage the impacts on my community from this proposed transmission line.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:39): (6519) Will the Minister for Health please advise how making university and specialist training free for thousands of nurses and midwives will benefit future nursing and midwife students, Grampians Health and patients in Ballarat? Our government's announcement making it free to study nursing and midwifery has been welcomed by Federation University and ACU Ballarat, which both offer highly respected bachelor of nursing courses. Throughout the pandemic our hardworking and dedicated local nurses and midwives have supported our community during the most challenging of circumstances and conditions. I sincerely thank our nurses, midwives and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation. I agree with the Premier that the best thing we can do to support our hardworking nurses is give them support on the ground. Well done on this innovative announcement, and I look forward to hearing more about the benefits free nursing and midwifery degrees will bring to the Ballarat community now and well into the future.

POLWARTH ELECTORATE

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:40): (6520) My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place, and my question is quite simple. This week 1100 names were put to two petitions to this Parliament from the people of Apollo Bay for this government to get behind the rebuild of the Apollo Bay Surf Life Saving Club. My question, Minister, is quite simple: will this government back the Apollo Bay community for the rebuilding of Apollo Bay Surf Life Saving Club in phase 1 of a funding request that will see Australia's and Victoria's first blue water ocean rescue facility in Apollo Bay? It is a fantastic initiative by that community combining the resources of the local P-12 school and the surf lifesaving club on the foreshore. It has enormous support, with 1100 people in that community prepared to put their names to it. Minister, will you commit this government to the level of support that this community needs, our coast needs and our tourism industry along the Great Ocean Road needs?

MELTON ELECTORATE

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (14:41): (6521) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. The Andrews Labor government has made a commitment to open up 100 new schools between 2019 and 2026. In this year's budget, funding was included for a new primary school in Brookfield, opening in 2024. This education investment into Melton from this year's budget also included funding for land at Cobblebank for a secondary school, funding for acquiring land in the Weir Views area for a new Toolern Waters primary school, \$10.68 million to upgrade and modernise the existing facilities at Darley Primary School and the massive \$31.77 million to practically rebuild Staughton College in Melton South. The residents of Brookfield are excited for this investment into their community and

elsewhere in Melton. Residents are looking forward to benefits, such as reduced traffic congestion. Minister, could you provide my constituents an update on these sensational educational investments for the Melton electorate as the Andrews Labor government continues to deliver for Melton.

MILDURA ELECTORATE

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (14:42): (6522) My constituency question is for the Minister for Housing, and the information I seek is in relation to the government's Big Housing Build. The rising cost of living is a big problem in the Mallee. One major issue for home owners is the high cost of rates, and a major issue for everyone else is being able to afford or even find a home in the first place. Across our electorate there is a chronic shortage of private rentals, affordable and public housing, and worker accommodation. We have been working collaboratively with the government on solutions to the crisis. Among various initiatives across our whole electorate, two of our LGAs were selected for the government's Big Housing Build. The Mildura rural city LGA received \$40 million and Swan Hill rural city LGA received \$15 million. The information I seek is: how many houses from this fund have been built or commenced, and has Swan Hill Rural City Council been given the opportunity to make a submission about how the money should be divided between Robinvale and Swan Hill?

THOMASTOWN ELECTORATE

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:43): (6523) My constituency question is to the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place. Last week I visited the Barrawang Primary School site, the seventh brand new primary school to be built in the electorate in the last eight years. It includes two kindergarten rooms for three- and four-year-olds. I ask: will the minister provide an update on the progress of that school and how it will contribute to our free kinder program and 30 hours of kindergarten in the next decade?

BRIGHTON ELECTORATE

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:44): (6524) My constituency question is to the Minister for Community Sport, and I ask: is the state Labor government considering committing financial support towards the upgrade of the pavilion facilities at Wattie Watson Oval in Elwood? The oval is heavily utilised but neither the state nor council has addressed the needs at the pavilion. The pavilion change rooms are not female friendly. The facilities are comprised of a central change room and adjacent shower space. This space is not adequate for the number of overlapping teams changing. On Friday a local sporting club contacted me to advise that over the previous weekend a 12-year-old girl walked in on a middle-aged man naked in the change rooms at the pavilion—very, very upsetting for the community. Despite continuing advocacy to Port Phillip council, council's position is that the change room facilities were built to unisex design principles. In fact council staff bizarrely advised me that boys and girls could use the space and showers at the same time and somehow coordinate usage. Quite frankly Elwood has had enough. Labor cannot keep ignoring my community.

HAWTHORN ELECTORATE

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (14:45): (6525) My question is for the Minister for Education. How will the Victorian senior secondary schooling pathway reforms affect Hawthorn schools? This innovative set of reforms will replace the intermediate and senior levels of VCAL with the VCE vocational major, and the foundation level of VCAL will be replaced by the Victorian pathways certificate. In my electorate of Hawthorn you will find no shortage of schools, including many of the premier secondary schools in our state. Indeed I myself chaired a reference group responsible for reviewing VCAL. These changes will allow students in many of these schools to develop both academic and practical skills under a fully integrated VCE framework. I am eagerly anticipating Hawthorn students gaining important vocational skills under this new system, and I am looking forward to the minister's response.

Bills

**MAJOR CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
2022***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (14:46): Just resuming on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, the bill extends the obligations of financial institutions under the Confiscation Act 1997 to digital currency exchanges to allow law enforcement to obtain account information from them in the same way that information may be obtained from the banks. These amendments also provide clear powers for digital assets to be monitored and frozen to prevent them from being dissipated by a criminal target.

Digital currency exchanges host wallets for digital assets like cryptocurrencies—and as I said before, I have no idea about cryptocurrency; I am way past that; I am too old for that caper, so I have no idea; I am lucky to handle money, let alone cryptocurrency—on behalf of customers and provide facilities to exchange assets into money. Digital currency exchanges have information and capabilities that are equivalent to the banks for the purpose of asset confiscation investigations, so very similar processes. They can advise on account information, they can advise on the balances and they have the capacity to monitor and freeze accounts, exactly the same as the banks do. The types of digital currency exchanges included in the bill are also subject to the commonwealth's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006. The banks and other financial institutions use that act to prosecute. This means that they need to know who their customers are and must report suspicious transactions to the Australian Transaction Reports & Analysis Centre.

These digital exchange services are required to have registered offices in Australia, so failure of digital currency exchanges to comply with requirements to provide account information or monitor or freeze digital assets will be subject to the same offences that already apply to financial institutions and will be punishable by a maximum fine of over \$221 000. The laws will not apply to international digital currency exchanges that are not registered to provide services in Australia in the same way that laws currently do not apply to international banks not regulated under the commonwealth Banking Act 1959. The commonwealth Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 makes it an offence to provide this type of digital currency exchange service without being registered.

Australian legislation does not currently define a digital asset or crypto asset. The definition in the bill is broadly consistent with the definitions adopted by commonwealth bodies such as the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and with new regulatory frameworks being considered by the commonwealth and in the European Union. Digital assets are stored using digital wallets, which can be kept on a computer or data storage device or accessed via digital keys. Remote access by a person under investigation or their associates would frustrate the purpose of the seizure. The bill enables our police to secure digital assets against remote interference, including by transferring the assets to a police-controlled wallet. The powers can be likened to changing a padlock on a storage container to secure a physical asset or removing a physical asset from a location and storing it at a police-controlled storage location.

Police may seize data-storage devices, computers or other items, but depending on the type of item and how the wallet has been set up, an accused person or their associates may be able to access the seized device or wallet. The new powers permit police to take steps only to secure seized digital assets, not to interfere with the integrity of those assets. Stored data cannot be changed under the new powers except to enable a digital asset to be secured to prevent remote dissipation. An example of this could be that the police could use the new powers to access the global blockchain and change a digital asset's encryption key to a police-controlled wallet.

Ms Green: You know so much about this.

Mr McGHIE: I know. I am just learning so much as I speak about it. It is really interesting, isn't it? This would not change the asset itself but changes the padlock that secures the asset.

Mr Edbrooke: Tell us about that.

Mr McGHIE: Well, you know what it is like when you change a padlock. You put the key in, turn it and all of a sudden you throw it away and put another one in. Apparently that is how it works. But anyway, I am right over this, I can tell you. I love this cryptocurrency stuff.

The bill is an obvious response to address those who wish to use these digital assets for the wrong reasons, and we know there are plenty of people out there that want to use it for the wrong reasons. We know that it is a market that is growing rapidly and sometimes for the wrong purposes by the wrong people, unfortunately. In future, legislation to help protect consumers and users experimenting and using this new technology will continue to be pursued.

This bill will also clarify and strengthen investigation and enforcement powers, including those regarding serious drug offenders, information gathering by law enforcement, restraining orders and the enforcement of confiscation outcomes. An example of this is that the bill allows law enforcement to issue multiple individual information notices to seek updated account information during ongoing litigation. This bill ensures the powers will only be exercised where the expert's skills are necessary to execute the search warrant. Provisions are included to clarify that, where reasonably necessary, Victoria Police may break open a safe or other storage receptacle on warrants at premises or transport them into another location to be searched safely.

With the little time that I have left I just want to extend my gratitude and thanks to our local police in Melton and Bacchus Marsh for the great work that they do, and in particular over the last 2½ years through the pandemic. They do a wonderful job in keeping us safe. They work really well with our youth. I know that there are issues, and this law will assist our police out there in dealing with some of the issues in my electorate. I extend my gratitude to them. These are important laws to pass here. We support our police, and we resource them really well and will continue to resource them well so they can do their job. Again, I thank them, I support these amendments and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (14:53): I rise today to make a contribution to the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I echo the sentiments made by the member for Melton and many speakers on this side of the house in relation to this bill. This bill once again demonstrates our government's commitment to the safety of our state and in particular to our local communities across Victoria. We have left no stone unturned when it comes to making sure that Victoria Police, its stakeholders and its partners have the tools that they need to succeed in keeping every Victorian community safe. In fact we have turned around police investment, with the policing budget 52 per cent higher than what it was when we came into office. We have invested almost \$4 billion into funding for Victoria Police, and we have also released several community safety statements, which make a real and lasting impact to our communities. We have also outlined a range of strategies and approaches that keep communities safe but also take preventative action as well.

This bill delivers on the *Community Safety Statement 2018–19*, which is committed to strengthening Victoria's assets scheme and improving search warrants and crime scene processes. This legislation is about improving Victoria Police's response to serious and organised crime—in recent times we have seen some of those stories play out in the public—and importantly streamlining, clarifying and modernising fingerprinting and search warrants and the use of assumed identities in criminal investigations, and creating operational efficiencies for our police and courts. This bill is just another example of the work that this government is doing to provide critical investment in police and emergency services and to build safety and crime prevention efforts, which are absolutely integral within our communities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many police officers in the electorate of St Albans, and in particular the police officers in the Keilor Downs station and the Sunshine station.

They do an enormous and incredible job day in, day out. I know how challenging it is, and sometimes—at most times—they put their lives at risk, but they are always putting the safety and the wellbeing of our community first. I especially want to thank the north-west metro region superintendent David Jones. David Jones has been absolutely tremendous in our community when it comes to community safety and coordination throughout the north-west. I have the opportunity to see the superintendent at the Lunar New Year festival in St Albans each year and to see how the police officers locally at that festival are able to work really well with the organisers and also the people visiting from across Melbourne. We saw at the last Lunar New Year festival close to 70 000 people attend without any events and without any issues on the day or night. So I really want to thank our local police from Keilor Downs and Sunshine.

There is also their recent program Coffee with a Cop, which is hosted across the main shopping centres in Brimbank, including at the Keilor Downs shopping centre in the past, where my office is located. This really has been a program that has had a real impact. Recently there was an article in relation to this, and Senior Sergeant Lauren Williams commented on how the program was making a real difference in the community. As I said, it is challenging work, but the communication and being able to talk to local residents at shopping centres is really effective. This program has had a real impact on the local community.

What has also been an outstanding commitment is the close to 3100 new police officers who have been recruited during our time in government. It is fantastic to see new recruits, particularly when they are walking through Alfrieda Street in St Albans and getting to know the local businesses and stakeholders in St Albans and across Sunshine. It is fantastic to see so many PSOs and the mobile patrols when I do my walks across St Albans.

As of September 2021 we have seen more than 3200 police officers in stations and in special units. Since we have been in government, that is a 25 per cent increase. So there is no doubt when it comes to investing in police, recruiting police officers, building new stations and making sure our police stations have the appropriate investment and staff, we have not wasted a moment. We have seen more police on the beat, and we know that that is something that needs to be consistently improved and invested in. It is not just a one-off, it is a consistent investment and program throughout the term of the government.

As mentioned before, this bill makes a number of important changes, in particular to improve Victoria's asset scheme by strengthening investigation and enforcement powers. We have heard today about the new technology and in particular digital assets, and all these changes go a long way in clamping down on untraceable illegal transactions. They make it much harder for criminals to skirt these laws through the crypto exchange and other anonymous accounts. Who would have thought, some 20-odd years ago, that this would be the technology, that we would not be dealing with money but with all sorts of ways to deal online. That has become in itself a challenge.

Of course I cannot talk about this bill without mentioning our commitment and our investment to the Sunshine law courts redevelopment. We have seen substantial investment in this area. In particular we have made a close to \$27 million investment to make sure that we are able to deliver a Specialist Family Violence Court at Sunshine, to establish and improve our family violence court, and this is a really important investment not only for my electorate of St Albans but across the west, where we really need this form of investment. These expansion works will enhance access to justice in Melbourne's west. It will be safer, it will be centralised. The technology will be updated. It is sustainable, and most importantly it is in the centre of the west. There are many programs that I could talk about and make reference to, but I think—

Mr Edbrooke: You're running out of time.

Ms SULEYMAN: You are right, member for Frankston; I am running out of time. But this is a bill that really does make the right amendments at the right time. I need to also congratulate the new

Minister for Police, my very good friend, and commend him for this work he has put forward. We know that our government will always ensure that Victoria Police and its stakeholders are appropriately resourced and funded, and this bill does just that. It makes sure that community safety and crime prevention measures are front and centre in our investment and our decision-making processes. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:03): It is my absolute pleasure to rise and speak on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I do understand that members, prior to me getting on my feet, have gone over in great depth some parts of the bill, including cryptocurrency. I am reluctant to give anyone a lesson in that. I do understand the member for Melton has probably still got the abacus out. He might have the variation voucher book out with the three copies of carbon print in the book. This bill is, as the member for Melton highlighted so eloquently, giving our executive and judiciary arms the power to deal with contemporary crime issues that are well upon our community now and that some people may never have heard of—they could be new. Certainly cryptocurrency and the issues that arise from that might be strange concepts to many people in the house, but nevertheless they are contemporary concepts. There will be other people in the house and our community that actually invest, successfully or not, in cryptocurrency, and there seem to be massive advertising campaigns on that with the rise of that sector, so it is important that we legislate effectively.

As the member for St Albans said, we have extended powers for PSOs. We have employed more PSOs. We have employed more than 3135 new Victoria Police sworn members, the most police this state has ever had. We have equipped those people with the best training, body-worn cameras and tasers—the best tools that they need to do their job. That is one way of saying thank you to our police force. That is, instead of just saying thank you, we can show we mean it by actually legislating and as a government providing what they need to do their job effectively and safely, because as has been said quite a few times in this house already by government members, these people do their best work to make sure that we are safe. At times that includes risks, and we need to give them the tools and the laws to make sure that those risks are mitigated as much as possible and they are as safe as possible in their duty. We have seen over the journey, over the two terms of this Andrews Labor government, a government that does stand right beside its police and make sure that they have the very best equipment. This of course is part of arming them with those tools, in a legislative sense, making sure that they have what they need to bring offenders or potential offenders to court to face the allegations that they might have committed certain crimes that are now contemporary, things we would not have thought of 20 years ago.

I will get onto cryptocurrency soon. The essence of this bill, I guess, is split up into a number of clauses and acts that it changes but I will just speak to a couple of them now. We have got the Confiscation Act 1997 reforms, which are about effective asset confiscation laws being used as a powerful tactic against profit-motivated crime. This bill implements a commitment from our community safety statement, which many people in the house would be aware of, where we committed to strengthen the investigative and enforcement powers of our Confiscation Act 1997, and this bill goes a long way to doing that.

Now onto cryptocurrencies, this bill addresses that increasing use of digital currencies and other digital assets by criminal groups, expanding law enforcement powers to effectively identify and seize digital assets. Effectively, what we are talking about here is a new way of hiding assets, of laundering money, of making sure you can hide ill-gotten gains. The bill extends the obligations of financial institutions under the Confiscation Act to digital currency exchanges to allow law enforcement to obtain account information from them in the same way that information may be obtained from banks. This is really important, and it is quite a complex area, because as is usually the case, our world is evolving. Technology is evolving at a huge rate, and we need to legislate to keep up with that. This bill is keeping in front of that cryptocurrency, and again, as I said, it is a very complicated issue because it is an international issue as well as one that the state and the nation must legislate for.

The digital currency exchanges affected by the reforms that we are talking about today are already required to be registered on the digital currency exchange register under part 6A of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006, so no-one should be a stranger to these reforms and there are no surprises. The bill also makes changes to the Confiscation Act to update provisions to ensure that they are applicable to digital assets as well. We have heard reports of the difficulties of tracking down assets, and we want to make it as easy as possible for our police to do their investigative work and make sure that they are holding people to account when they break the law.

We have also got reforms that refer to information-gathering powers. This bill addresses operational limitations on existing information-gathering powers provided by law enforcement in the Confiscation Act. It also strengthens the state's ability to enforce and finalise confiscation outcomes, and specifically the bill provides a clear statutory pathway to enforce pecuniary penalty orders against real property and a mechanism for a court to order a sale of land as well.

The bill also addresses gaps in the law in regard to partial forfeiture. At the moment, in our ability to investigate and seize property that is tainted by criminal offending there are gaps, and this bill resolves any inconsistency in the Confiscation Act that currently allows tainted or derived property to be excluded from forfeiture in relation to serious drug offences when it cannot be excluded for less serious offending. This is really important again. A huge part of our police resources is used investigating these crimes, so why shouldn't we be in turn making sure that when those investigations are finished, the courts have the laws to make sure that they can support any investigation and bring the criminals to justice?

The bill also clarifies aspects of the serious drug offender provisions to maximise the potential for asset forfeiture and reduce the risk of offenders being able to dissipate their assets. An example of this might be where the bill clarifies that property may be forfeited if it meets the value threshold at the time of restraint, regardless of any depreciation that occurs later. You can see that when we are talking about asset forfeiture things become very complicated very, very quickly, and this legislation is all about making sure that there are less gaps in the legal system for people to slip through.

The bill also expands on the victims of crime compensation. In reality the range of forfeited property that may be used to pay victim compensation or restitution orders is made simpler by removing a requirement that forfeited property must have previously been subject to a restraining order, which of course is not always the case, and the need for property to have been forfeited in relation to the particular offence that impacted the victim where an offender has been prosecuted separately for related crimes. The bill also raises the monetary threshold for restraining orders for compensation or restitution purposes from \$10 000 to \$20 000. The bill also clarifies and streamlines the operation of restraining orders under the Confiscation Act 1997, which is very, very important. For example, it prohibits a third party from lodging restrictions like caveats on real property that is subject to a restraining order. This amendment makes it clearer for third parties that the application pathways contained in the Confiscation Act need to be used to protect property interests while avoiding the unnecessary time and cost of removing caveats and other restrictions on property through the courts. This could be seen as very complicated and very time consuming. We want to make sure that victims of crime can be remunerated as quickly as possible and as efficiently as possible.

Many members of the house have talked about their local police today, and I want to share that I very much appreciate the local police on the peninsula but also Frankston. I had the opportunity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police to travel around the state and meet so many of our police colleagues, every one of them a hero, and also to work closely with the Police Association Victoria. I cannot say enough good things about our police force. They really are the best of us—we say that nurses are too, and they are probably right up there together, hand in hand. Certainly in my time as a firefighter as well the police were just angels when they arrived on scene. This legislation is designed with the purpose of making their job easier, and I think anyone in the community or in this house would agree that that certainly is a good thing. Keeping us safe, making their job easier—we are delivering. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:13): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and follow some of the contributions from the government. It seems like we are still talking about this bill all the way through. The supposed tough-on-law-and-order party from the 2018 election campaign has tapped the mat and gone home. There are no opposition speakers beyond the lead speaker, the member for Malvern, who gave it a good go. But literally, again, by 3.15 in the afternoon there is no-one here from the opposition. There is no-one having a crack. This is the second-last sitting week of this term of Parliament, and we see none of them bothering to even speak on such a significant bit of legislation. We have got the former Minister for Police in this house, who has done an extraordinary job supporting Victoria Police members and who did an outstanding job on the community safety statement. Rather than all the partisan rhetoric, the attacks on various communities and the demonising of various segments of our community, the community safety statement gives a blueprint for the future on resources, on reduced harm and on increases in technology.

And that is what this bill is all about—it builds on a legacy of work by the Andrews Labor government in supporting the members of our Victoria Police family. They are an extraordinary group of people. In Victoria we have the most resources we have ever had—more than 18 000 members and PSOs at every station and some of our public facilities as well doing an extraordinary job. They have got the certainty of a government now that does not just politicise their work but actually goes after the evidence on resourcing, allocation and support and bases that on all the operational advice required to give the resources necessary. It saw more than 3100 additional Victoria Police members delivered over this time, and in this budget we have a further 500 sworn officers and a further 50 PSOs on the way as well. Resourcing Victoria Police in the fantastic work that they do and making sure that they have the most modern and sophisticated technology to fight crime, support our communities and protect life and property—this is why this bill is so important.

The *Community Safety Statement 2018–19* had some key focuses: reducing harm; increasing connection to community, which is incredible work done by Victoria Police; putting victims first, and I will talk a little bit about the increased threshold on seized confiscated property and what that means to people who have been impacted by crime; holding offenders to account; and particularly point 5, which has been carried through in the most recent community safety statement as well, which is improving Victoria Police's capability, culture and technology. The work that they are doing is not just isolated to Victoria. It is multijurisdictional. It is also international. There are a range of Australian agencies. We have the Australian Federal Police, and then we work with a range of different law enforcement agencies to make sure that we have got the best approach to tackling crime.

We need to make sure that the legislative framework is not a restriction on the work that they do but that we actually empower their work and their service of our community. We have seen an evolution in cryptocurrency—I mean, some people now are just paid a wage out of cryptocurrency. We have seen that in sporting events, we have seen that across jurisdictions. We have seen just the evolution of digital technology. We need to keep pace with that, so we are making sure that our financial institutions are doing everything they can in that support as well. We did have some stark reminders through various reviews in the past of the lack of governance and oversight by financial institutions, leading to poor outcomes and the funding of various terrible and illicit activities internationally. So we need to make sure that our financial institutions are always at the forefront of that support and that effort and, if there are cryptocurrencies or other digital assets that are subject to some of those orders, that we are all working hand in glove to make sure that those assets are not lost, that the proceeds of crime do not go towards other illicit activities and that, given the evolution in digital technology, we make it as hard as possible for some of these criminal entities and organisations to take Victorians and Australians for granted.

These changes are really important. They build on that great work of the Andrews Labor government in delivering more police, with more resources to support victims in their time of need, and also giving them the very best technology and advancements as well. The Andrews Labor government has done that, rolling out a series of technological upgrades across our metropolitan, regional and rural police

stations to make sure that Victoria Police has the most modern technology available. Some of the systems of the past have been really archaic, and we need to make sure all of their resourcing, all of their vehicles and all of their technology are up to speed as well.

I want to focus on some of the changes, particularly around the compensation orders. There has been a lot of work done in the victim support space by the member for Carrum, the Minister for Victim Support, and by the member for Niddrie and the member for Sydenham as well. They have done a range of work in supporting victims of crime. On the proceeds of crime that go towards compensation or restitution, I really welcome on behalf of my community the increase in the threshold from \$10 000 to \$20 000. It might not alleviate the trauma or the impact that victims of crime experience in some of these moments, but we should be making sure wherever possible that we are supporting them to get back on track with either compensation or restitution. So the change to that threshold is really welcome and really important. It has not been updated since the Confiscation Act commenced in 1998, and so this is a really important change that we see in this bill as well.

I have talked a little bit about some of the law enforcement changes as well, but the information-gathering powers are really interesting in this bill. We see a range of different groups, whether it is criminal organisations or organised crime; we see outlaw motorcycle gangs as well. And then there is counterterrorism. It is such a complex policing environment like we have never seen before, and so information gathering can be the difference between a tragic event occurring and something being prevented from occurring in the future. We have seen some disasters, with a range of different impacts on Victoria Police's work, whether working with interstate jurisdictions or international jurisdictions, in their fight against crime. Some of the efforts have been truly extraordinary. We have seen some of the encryption work that they did through, I think, the Telegram service recently across Australian jurisdictions, where the work that was done by various public servants and members of the police force led to a huge amount of drug seizures and was a huge hit to those activities. We have seen that over the last few months play out with some of the work that Victoria Police has done. But where we have those operational limitations that we are experiencing at the moment in information-gathering powers, we need to make sure that we are not hamstringing Victoria Police in that. I know they want to wind me up, but I have still got a couple of minutes to surge through. This is some of the really important work that we need to do in making sure that we can access that information where possible and not hamstring some of the work of Victoria Police.

This bill is another example of the Andrews Labor government backing our law enforcement agencies. Rather than politicising them and rocking up a few weeks before an election and demonising communities, we have a community safety statement that underpins the work of Victoria Police and that gives certainty into the future of the priorities. They are based on science, not based on rhetoric; based on population growth and resourcing; and based on the technological needs, not cheap political points and rocking up a few weeks beforehand to move the dial on primary votes—no, no. That is why those opposite find themselves where they are. They cannot even bother to be here at a quarter past 3—we finish at 5.30 pm; we have got working hours on Thursday afternoons. Literally it is just the member for Evelyn and no-one else. I do not know where they are. This was the tough-on-crime, law-and-order side that said African gangs were 'menacing'. Do you remember those comments by those opposite?

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think that this bill is quite a specific bill, and it is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. I would ask that you ask the member to come back to speaking on the contents of this bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Richards): It has been a wideranging debate, but I will ask the member to stick to the bill in front of us.

Mr RICHARDSON: We got some interest; we finally got some interest. Goodness me—they are awake! This bill is about building on the legacy of the Andrews Labor government's work with Victoria Police. I give a shout-out to the former Minister for Police for all the work that she has done in resourcing Victoria Police. This adds to their work, and we commend the bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:23): It gives me great pleasure to join the debate on the Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and to follow my friend and fellow Bombers supporter the member for Mordialloc. I am really pleased to see that the member for Bellarine, the former Minister for Police, is here in the house. She was the architect of the community safety statement. I really want to commend her for her body of work as the Minister for Police and for really working so hard and collaboratively with Victoria Police, as the member for Mordialloc said, to actually have a data and research approach—not rhetoric, not emotion—to ensuring that Victoria Police have what they need to do their job and the numbers of police to do their job. We have never seen the police academy so full—bursting at the seams. Unlike with the stop-start approach of the past government, there are constantly police graduates coming out to support growing populations, indeed like those in the former minister’s electorate of Bellarine and like those in my electorate of Yan Yean, but also those in the far-flung areas of the state—the small communities that really rely on VicPol.

I am going to take a leaf out of the book of the Deputy Speaker, who spoke earlier and mentioned her local police, with your indulgence. I had the sad duty of attending the funeral of Mary Simpson this morning, who was just a wonderful, wonderful friend—80 years old. It was at Saint Mary’s church in Greensborough. The minister at the table, the member for Bundoora, knows it well; that is his parish. Mary’s widower, Val Simpson, was a decorated police officer, and his brother in the eulogy certainly referred to how much Mary did when Val worked in Echuca and particularly—and this is some decades ago—with those local Indigenous communities and how she supported her family when Val was doing his policing duties. Really they are the unsung heroes, the families, of our sworn police officers. So I want to, in Mary’s memory but also in gratitude to Val and his service, just acknowledge that.

There is a very funny anecdote that I will repeat. Val was an undercover police officer with long hair and a beard. He was at the Sunbury music festival in 1971 just looking for illicit drugs, and Mary was there with long hair down to her waist fitting in with all the other flower children. A rather unpleasant fellow who was not wearing any clothes shook himself in front of Mary and said ‘How do you like this, baby?’, and Mary kicked him down the hill. Val was a bit worried Mary might not be able to hold her own, but Mary kicked him down the hill and he ended up in a thistle patch. Apparently St John Ambulance was still pulling out little prickles the next today, so Mary could definitely hold her own.

There is another police officer who I really want to acknowledge who gave great service to my community and who we lost—I am losing track of time here—I think it was four years ago, Paul Tysoe. I first met him when he was the officer in charge, the commander, of the Nillumbik police service area. He was in that role during Black Saturday. His leadership was absolutely outstanding at that time in supporting his troops, in supporting the other emergency services and also in working with local council in that terrible time, both in managing the event and in the recovery. I then worked with Paul at the Whittlesea police service area. I have got to say, we are talking a lot about the use of IT in this bill, but Paul was sort of ahead of the game there. I have never seen a policeman use social media so well to effect. He joined all the local Facebook pages. His approach to young people was not to condemn them and say they were all crooks and badly behaved or whatever. When someone raised a social issue, like antisocial use of trail bikes and things like that around the community—these social media pages can be like the town square and wanting to put someone in stocks—Paul would pose intelligent questions that in the end got intelligent answers. Paul would just put the question out there and ask the community what they thought was a good idea, and they would come up with a modest solution that stopped the behaviour but did not denigrate all young people and actually raised them up and encouraged them to be members of the community.

I know that Luke Tysoe, his son, and family may think that I have forgotten about my commitment to ensure that we have something in the Mernda community in Paul’s memory. I have not forgotten that, and I certainly have discussed it with the CEO of the City of Whittlesea, Craig Lloyd. There are some buildings being built that will especially support young people in the coming years, so there will be an opportunity either for one of those to be in Paul’s name, or even an ongoing community award, but I am certainly committed to having that conversation. I commit to Luke Tysoe and the Tysoe family

that I will be back in touch very soon to ensure that happens. When Paul was the commander for the Whittlesea police service area, that was the time when government had funded a police headquarters for Mernda. It was Mernda's first police station, and Paul had the foresight to ensure that a much larger parcel of land that was actually needed was secured, so that would futureproof that police headquarters but also offer the opportunity to have youth support services, victim support services or other services co-located with that police station. So I really want to acknowledge Paul's memory.

Haydn Schobel was another lovely former police officer that I saw this morning at Mary's funeral. I also thank him for his service. Former commissioner Graham Ashton once said to me that Doreen and Mernda were known as 'Copland' because there are so many police officers living in the area, and that has certainly been my experience. They are just embedded in the community, many of them involved in local football clubs—playing with my husband in the Plenty Valley football club—and I think it is a way that police officers do look after their physical and emotional wellbeing, being involved in sport. It is where they show their community leadership, as they do through the Blue Light disco in Whittlesea—and in Diamond Creek, which has been and is still the largest Blue Light disco in the state and is still operating after many, many decades.

I want to acknowledge the support of various police ministers over the last 20 years that I have been in the Parliament for their support in ensuring that we had new police buildings and headquarters in Diamond Creek. The police and emergency services complex is there. There is also a new police station in Hurstbridge, a first-time-ever police station in Kinglake and a new police station in Wallan. I mentioned the new police station in Mernda. There is also one in Warrandyte that serves the North Warrandyte community and that has also supported my community. In my colleague the member for Eltham's electorate there is a new police station that also does support my community. Whether it has been new officers and officer numbers that are in line with the population growth or whether it has been the building of new assets, I am proud to have been part of a government that has delivered. The Whittlesea police station is still a job that needs to be done. It has had an upgrade, but I know that my successor will push that.

Finally, I want to acknowledge senior sergeant Joy Murphy for her work in family violence over many, many decades. Joy is the longest serving female police officer not just in Victoria and not just in Australia but in the whole of Australasia. Hurstbridge resident Joy has really been a champion in the space of family violence, and I really want to thank her. She was a worthy awardee of Yan Yean woman of the year in the past. Congratulations to the new minister and his office and those who have been responsible for the bill, and I commend its speedy passage.

Ms HUTCHINS (Sydenham—Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (15:33): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

MONITORING OF PLACES OF DETENTION BY THE UNITED NATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON PREVENTION OF TORTURE (OPCAT) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms KILKENNY:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern) (15:34): I rise to speak on the Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022. This bill is to facilitate visits by the United Nations subcommittee, which will be visiting Australia and particularly visiting Victoria, I believe, in about six weeks time. I am advised by the Attorney-General's office that between 16 and 27 October this year this United Nations subcommittee will be landing and they will

be wanting to have access to Victoria's places of detention, so this bill is to facilitate and to set out the strategic framework for how that visit takes place.

Perhaps a little bit of history: in 2017 Australia signed the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, known as OPCAT for short. That optional protocol has been signed by some nations and not by others. A quick look at the United Nations website will give us an indication of the membership of the subcommittee, and my assumption is that the subcommittee is made up of people from countries that are actually parties to the protocol—in fact that is confirmed by the website. It says the subcommittee on prevention of torture (SPT):

... is composed of 25 independent and impartial members drawn from countries which are parties to the Protocol. Members serve in their personal capacity and are drawn from a variety of different backgrounds relevant to its work, including lawyers, medical professionals and detention and inspection experts. Members do not work for any Government and do not receive any instructions from state authorities ...

and that is probably a good thing given they are supposed to be independent.

I note that a variety of countries are represented by the members of that subcommittee. They include Lebanon, Tunisia, Senegal, France, Morocco, the Maldives, Germany, Panama, Norway, Peru, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Poland, Spain, Argentina and Denmark, amongst others, so we have a wide variety—a veritable United Nations—of countries represented by the membership of the subcommittee on the prevention of torture. Of course those countries have got differing human rights records themselves. It would be fair to say that not all of those countries could be held up as shining examples of the protection of human rights. But I think Australia has always regarded itself—or we would like to regard ourselves—as being one of the stronger, if not one of the strongest, countries when it comes to protecting human rights, so with that in mind, the then federal coalition government signed Australia up to the optional protocol in 2017.

Signing up to the optional protocol comes with obligations, and one of those obligations is to facilitate visits to our places of detention by this United Nations subcommittee so they can see for themselves what we are doing and they can make reports. So the purpose of this bill is to facilitate visits to places of detention by this UN subcommittee, to provide for the subcommittee to be given access to information for the purposes of the subcommittee's functions under the optional protocol and to provide for necessary safeguards to enable detaining authorities to preserve privacy, security, good order, welfare and safety in places of detention during visits by the subcommittee.

In researching this bill and preparing to speak on it, I looked for some articles about how other jurisdictions have dealt with visits by the subcommittee, and I was drawn to an article in the *Australian* newspaper published on 4 June 2020. It notes that:

Authorities in New Zealand, a signatory to the treaty, were sanctioned some years ago for not providing enough butter to inmates for their toast each morning. A minimum security prison in Britain was told by inspectors it should not have been surrounded by razor wire.

Well, I would hope that the members of the subcommittee will concern themselves with things that actually matter, with things that actually go to whether prisoners are being kept in appropriate and humane conditions, not measuring the amount of butter they get with their toast every morning. That is the sort of thing that, frankly, gives the United Nations a bad name. That is the sort of thing which gives many people in the community pause for querying Australia's participation in multilateral bodies when we see the obvious and outrageous and egregious abuses of human rights that are happening right across the world, and if we get UN inspectors focusing on measuring amounts of butter accompanying toast in the morning, that is not what this should be about. I think this is obviously a test for Australia in terms of our compliance with the requirements of the optional protocol, but it is also, I believe, a test for the United Nations. Are they a serious body looking at serious issues or are they going to concentrate on frivolities, are they going to concentrate on trivia, are they going to concentrate on things that, frankly, most reasonable people would regard as being as far removed as

can be from torture and cruel and inhumane treatment? Having said that, there is some serious work to be done, and this article also goes on to note that:

In NSW, prisons have already been upgraded to remove choke points and other hazards, though the UN recommendations are likely to argue for privacy screens to be installed for inmates and to limit some search powers.

Reasonable people of goodwill can differ over the extent to which conditions in a prison are appropriate, but I do hope that with this bill receiving passage through the Parliament—and I am sure it will, and the opposition will not be opposing it—we see the United Nations focus on real issues. One death in custody is a tragedy, but we have seen too many deaths in custody and a number of deaths in custody in Victoria in recent weeks, months and years. We know we have an over-representation of Indigenous deaths in custody as well, which is of grave concern. So I think we do need to examine how we can do things better, and to the extent that the United Nations subcommittee will be providing sensible advice and undertaking proper and rational examinations, their contribution will be welcomed. Again I say, if they are going to be taking out the measuring jar and checking the amount of butter on the toast, then their contribution will be devalued. It remains to be seen which direction the subcommittee will go.

The bill defines a place of detention as including a prison, a police gaol, a remand centre, a youth justice centre, a designated mental health service at which a patient is detained or a residential treatment facility. It gives other examples. It does not include a courtroom. Interestingly it does not include a place at which somebody is quarantined pursuant to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. It is very interesting that the government has chosen to exclude that type of residence, that type of place of detention, from the definition under the bill, because—and it is timely that I raise this, because it is in the newspapers today—the actions of the Andrews Labor government in effectively locking up hundreds and hundreds of people in North Melbourne public housing towers without any notice was appalling and was found to be so by the Victorian Ombudsman. It was so appalling that the Ombudsman recommended that the government apologise to those residents who had had their human rights violated by the actions of this government, and it is very much to this government's discredit that the Premier and the government have refused to do so. When the independent umpire calls you out and says you got it wrong and says you hurt people and recommends you apologise, a decent government would cop it sweet and apologise, but this government does not do that. This government ignores those recommendations. This government rides roughshod over people and refuses to apologise, and that is very much to its discredit.

Ms Vallence interjected.

Mr M O'BRIEN: I am grateful to my friend the member for Evelyn. More than 3000 residents in nine high-rise towers were affected by those lockdowns, and we saw the very unedifying sight, reported in the newspapers today, of the former Minister for Health, the member for Albert Park, intervening or having consternation—

Mr Walsh: He was being abusive.

Mr M O'BRIEN: or being abusive, as the member for Murray Plains said, to the Ombudsman for her daring to raise this and daring to raise this in a public forum. Well, the Ombudsman has reported it to Parliament. I mean, her views are hardly a secret. They are in a report that has been tabled in this Parliament, but this government believes that anybody who disagrees with it should be shut up, should be silenced, and if the Ombudsman dares to repeat her views in another public forum, then the member for Albert Park thinks he can have a go at her. Well, that is wrong. This government did the wrong thing. I remember when I heard on the news that the state government was moving in to lock down these towers with no notice—no notice, locking them down—the government did not even have the appropriate food. It was giving pork products to Muslim families. There were not enough sanitation supplies for women. There was not enough milk formula for families with babies.

This government just blithely ignores all the concerns, all the human rights abuses, and the government is condemned for that. I will tell you who else is condemned for that: the usual suspects—the usual human rights lawyers, the usual legal services—who often cannot wait to get out there and condemn outrageous conduct by governments. They all lost their voice when this happened. They all went deathly silent. Where were the great defenders of human rights? Where were those who fight for fair? They went very, very quiet, didn't they? The great human rights warriors from Slater and Gordon and Maurice Blackburn—where were they when 3000 people had their human rights abused? Nowhere to be seen. Too interested in lining up for preselection, I guess—well, to their eternal discredit. The community legal centres—where were they? Silent—to their eternal discredit. Many people turned their backs on their jobs and on their values to suck up to this government during lockdowns, and those people should never be forgotten, or forgiven, for turning their backs on vulnerable people who needed them to speak up. Those 3000 people were locked up in their homes with no notice, not given appropriate food, not given access to exercise and not given appropriate time to be able to make arrangements. And what happened? They were left to fend for themselves. I went out there and spoke to some of the community organisations, particularly the Islamic community, and they did a fantastic job. They did the job the government should have done. A competent government would have made sure that there was culturally appropriate food available from day one for those families. The government did not. The community groups did, and it is to their credit that they stepped up and they stepped in where this Labor government failed. It is very interesting that in this bill the government has specifically excluded places at which a person is detained under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. It says in clause 4(2):

For the purposes of subsection (1)(n), a person is not detained under an order, direction or power referred to in that subsection merely because the person is required or directed to isolate or quarantine under that order, direction or power (as the case requires).

I wonder what the United Nations subcommittee would have thought of what this government did to those 3000 Victorians in the North Melbourne and Kensington housing commission flats. I do not think it would have featured very well. I do not think it would have.

Returning to the other aspects of the bill, under the bill the minister and the detaining authority must ensure that the subcommittee and any accompanying experts or interpreters are permitted to enter and visit a place of detention and have unrestricted access to any part. The minister may object to the subcommittee visiting on a particular day or days if the minister reasonably believes there is an urgent and compelling reason to temporarily prevent the visit. This can only be on certain grounds: grounds of national defence, grounds of public safety, grounds of natural disaster or serious disorder in the place of detention. Given this government's track record of disorder, particularly in youth justice facilities, it would be a real toss of the coin whether on any given day the subcommittee would be able to access any of our youth justice facilities. It seems to be every other day you have got a disturbance, or in some cases full-blown riots. Who will ever forget the spectre of inmates up on the roofs of the facilities, only being prepared to come down when they got pizza and access to PlayStations? What an absolute mess this government has made of youth detention. One of the things the former coalition government—in which I was proud to be a minister—did was actually introduce access to learning and education for young people in youth detention, because we do think youth detention should be an opportunity for rehabilitation. We do not want people to go to schools of crime.

If they have done something serious enough to warrant detention in a youth detention facility, we want them to come out better people. Let us give them the opportunity. Let us give them the skills, tools and knowledge to be able to make the right choices in their lives when they leave. That is something that I was very proud of that we did as a government, and I just query what this government's legacy is when it comes to youth detention. What can this government point to after eight years and say, 'Things are better in youth detention, our young people have got better opportunities and we are seeing less recidivism'? We are not seeing less recidivism. Victoria runs the most expensive corrections facilities in the country with the worst recidivism rates. That is a pretty good daily double—the most expensive correctional facilities in the country with the worst recidivism rates.

Ms Hutchins: I don't think that's true.

Mr M O'BRIEN: Well, the Productivity Commission would beg to differ, Minister. I do not know what this government's legacy is when it comes to youth detention apart from more disturbances. Of course there was the great Cherry Creek facility that was going to be built, and then the Treasurer backflipped when he started feeling some heat in his local area and found a new place for it.

I will be fascinated to see whether the United Nations subcommittee is able to attend our youth justice facilities and see how they are actually operating. If one of the grounds for excluding them from them is that there is 'serious disorder in the place of detention', they are really going to have their luck in, because there seems to be a lot of serious disorder on many, many days at our youth justice facilities. The minister may object to the subcommittee visiting. The detaining authority may prohibit or restrict access to a place of detention if it reasonably believes that doing so may prevent the maintenance of security, good order and management of the place of detention or the maintenance of health and safety of any person in the place of detention, including the subcommittee, or the conduct of essential operations by the detaining authority. The bill goes on to say that any prohibition or restriction must be for the shortest time possible.

There has been some concern expressed by some groups that I have consulted with, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Law Institute of Victoria. They have expressed a few views. One is that the government has been too restrictive in defining places of detention and there should be a more open-ended definition used. I note that for the record, and I suppose it is up to the government to really respond and explain why the government has drafted the legislation the way it has and why it has got specific definitions rather than a more open definition as sought by both the LIV and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. In terms of restricting access to places of detention, both VALS and the LIV have flagged that they believe that it should not be the place of detention's option to restrict the subcommittee and it should really only be the minister—that the minister is really the only appropriate person who should be able to make the call to prevent the subcommittee from visiting any place of detention at a given time. Again, I note those concerns that have been expressed by those organisations, and I leave it to the government to respond as to why it believes that those concerns should not be dealt with through amendments to the bill, either here or in the other place.

Under the bill the subcommittee can interview any person who consents to an interview at a place of detention or who it believes can provide information relating to the treatment of a detainee or the conditions. An interpreter may be used, and the interview may be done in person or by means of electronic communication. If the subcommittee agrees, the interviewed person may nominate a support person to be present, and the interviews are to occur in private. I did ask what would prevent a person who wanted to be interviewed from nominating their partner—their spouse—as a support person, and there was not really an answer as to why that would not occur, other than that the government, I believe, would just hope that the subcommittee would not allow that facility to be abused by a person they wanted to interview. I would have thought it might need something a bit stronger than just hoping for the subcommittee to understand when they are having the wool pulled over their eyes.

In terms of interviews occurring in private, this has been an issue that has been raised by both the law institute and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. VALS says there is a need to strengthen provisions relating to privacy, as does the LIV. Notwithstanding the references to privacy, VALS says that privacy should require no-one being present or within earshot or surveilling in real time by electronic means or later on through recordings. The LIV recommends that the provision be amended to provide that the detaining authority must allow the SPT, the subcommittee, to privately interview any person with appropriate safeguards in place to ensure confidentiality. I would expect that the government would understand the intention in relation to privacy, and I think that any detaining authority which felt that they could find a loophole in it to remotely surveil conversations would understand that this would be completely contrary to the intention and the spirit, and arguably the law,

that this bill will represent, but I place those concerns that have been provided to me on the record, for what that is worth.

Under part 3 of the bill the subcommittee may request information relevant to the subcommittee other than excluded information, and the minister and the detaining authority must provide it. Again I think that that all seems fair enough. If the subcommittee is to have the access to the information to be able to do its job, then it is only right that the minister and the place of detention provide that information so they can make the appropriate assessments.

In terms of preventing retribution against people who cooperate with the subcommittee or provide information to the subcommittee, the government has put in place measures in this bill. Under part 4 it is an offence for a person to take detrimental action, which is broadly defined, against another person because that person has given or disclosed information to the subcommittee or is believed to have done so, and there is a maximum penalty of 120 penalty units or one year imprisonment in place for breaching that. The Law Institute of Victoria says it supports the intention of the bill to protect detainees and other persons who give information to the SPT from reprisals. The LIV suggests strengthening protections for detainees and improving the clarity of the provision, particularly regarding the definition of what constitutes a detrimental action, by removing the word 'onerous' from section 15(2)(b). The LIV suggests the word 'onerous' is unclear and facilitates potential for minor changes to the conditions of someone's detention on the basis that they have spoken with the subcommittee. Again, I would hope and I would expect that places of detention would understand that the measures against reprisals for those who conduct interviews with the subcommittee are there for a reason, and I think Victorians would look very, very dimly on any action which was seen to be taking reprisals or punishing somebody because they have cooperated with the subcommittee. But I, again, place those suggestions from the LIV and from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service on the record.

With those comments I again reiterate that the opposition will not be opposing this bill, but when we consider this government's failure in relation to 3000 public housing commission residents who were detained, who were locked down in their own homes with no notice and being innocent of any crime, the government's refusal to apologise to those people and in fact the government's—through the member for Albert Park—decision to intervene with the Ombudsman for daring to repeat her views, I think that this government has a lot to learn when it comes to the appropriate way to treat people. If the UN subcommittee was able to examine those issues, I suspect the government would have a lot of sleepless nights, and it is no coincidence that the government has deliberately excluded those measures from this bill.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (16:00): I also rise to join in the debate on the Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022. As was raised by the lead speaker for the opposition, it is a bill to facilitate the visits to places of detention and the access to information by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in accordance with the subcommittee's mandate under the optional protocol. I would just like to note at the outset that I was somewhat surprised at the lead speaker's comments. Suddenly in today's chamber we had both the opposition and the Greens during question time being the champions for social housing communities, whereas I think on this side of the house we all know how the Labor government is supporting social housing residents and those communities, not just on the floor of Parliament but every single day. The actions that were taken at that time were taken for a very deliberate and specific health purpose. The people who were out there—including the local Labor government members who were out there helping in conjunction with the government services and in conjunction with community services and in conjunction as well with, if I recall correctly, many of our friends in the union movement—were very supportive of the objective of what was trying to be achieved.

In terms of the bill itself, as has been mentioned, the bill will facilitate the visits by the United Nations subcommittee on the prevention of torture in late October, and it will do so by removing the legislative barriers to the UN accessing Victorian places of detention, accessing information and providing clarity

to detaining authorities on their obligations to and necessary protections of vulnerable detained persons. I also want to reflect a little bit on the history of the optional protocol. My understanding is that it was adopted initially by the United Nations—that is, enough parties ratified it to come into force—in December 2002. It was signed in Australia in May 2009. It was not ratified until December 2017. My understanding from doing a little bit of research is that that ratification came really in response to the well-publicised incidents in the Northern Territory. I think it was at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. Some terrible incidents occurred at that facility that led, if I am correct, to a royal commission, and that ultimately was one of the triggers for the ratification by the federal government at the time.

The bill, as I said, does provide a whole-of-government framework to facilitate the inspections of places of detention and removes the legislative barrier. It will formalise our obligations. It will formalise the obligations that have already been made by some of the other state governments and it will allow these visits to occur, enabling these periodic visits and establishing and designating or maintaining a national preventive mechanism to coordinate and conduct visits to places of detention and monitor the treatment of persons in detention.

The bill is quite broad in terms of the places of detention that the committee can visit. It includes prisons, youth justice facilities, secure care facilities, police and court cells, designated mental health services areas, parts of residential facilities, residential services accommodation, specialist disability accommodation, quarantine facilities and vehicles that transport detainees. I would also like to just draw attention to the definition in clause 4(1)(n) of the bill, which is:

any place (other than a private residence) at which a person is detained under ...

the various orders that are made under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. Such elements will be included. It is not intended for when you are in perhaps the normal quarantine process—if it is isolation because you are required to isolate for your seven days or your five days. But other orders, like emergency orders that applied back in 2020, may well fall under the remit of the bill.

One other element that I do want to touch on which will also, I am sure, be the focus of the committee in their attendance is immigration detention. The committee was due to come to Australia in 2020, and that obviously was postponed as a result of COVID. Since that time there have been numerous exposés of what has happened in our immigration detention facilities—not just the offshore immigration detention facilities but immigration detention facilities in Australia, including in Melbourne. I was just having a look at some of the data and statistics in preparation for my contribution today. As of March 2022 the average length of immigration detention was 700 days—that is two years just as an average length—and 35 per cent of people who were in immigration detention had been there for more than two years. These are people who, by and large, had already gone through the process, had already been identified as refugees, could not be sent back to their original homelands from where they had come and could not be placed in or relocated to a safe location. 129 people had been in immigration detention for more than five years.

In looking specifically at the Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation, as it is called, as of March 2022 that facility had 258 people, 252 of whom were men. The main issue of concern in relation to the facility relates to health care, especially for people with a disability. In that environment a high-security compound was added to the centre, and it was effectively a harsh, prison-like environment. These are people who have not committed a crime, they have just not been accepted under the immigration laws of the country to stay in this country but who are being treated like criminals.

For others in the detention system—I think this was highlighted in January when Novak Djokovic came into the country and was detained in a hotel which was also housing at the time immigration detainees who had been there for many years. Many people were not even aware that they had been in those facilities until the media was camped outside waiting to try and get a glimpse of Novak Djokovic. These alternative places of detention accommodate some of the most vulnerable groups of detainees. Many of them had been medically transferred from offshore facilities, having been

originally transferred to the offshore detention facilities to start with. People who were in those hotel rooms have reported they were often sharing rooms and had very little access to fresh air, and many of them suffered chronic illnesses that were— *(Time expired)*

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:10): I rise to make a contribution on the Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022. In starting off can I just take up one of the points that the member for Box Hill made in his contribution around the fact that somehow it is the Labor Party that is the champion of public housing, and it is the Liberals, The Nationals and the Greens that do not care about public housing.

Mr Fowles interjected.

Mr WALSH: I actually find his comments offensive. In my office in—

Mr Fowles interjected.

Mr WALSH: If the member for Burwood would mind keeping quiet, I could actually make a contribution on this. The things we get in our office in Echuca are very much about public housing. They are about Aboriginal housing. They are about those people in society that are not dealt a fair deal, and particularly when it comes to young women, single mums, fleeing domestic violence. It is very much about how we help those people get a house, whether it be in the public system or in some cases we have worked very hard and got them houses in the private sector and actually helped them get set up in that home, which they are very grateful for. The member for Box Hill might think his side of politics is the only champion for public housing. Can I inform him that is not the case. In the words of the member for Essendon in question time, I would hope that the member for Box Hill is not a Box Hill class traitor to the people that he represents out there, because I take exception to what he said. I think it is absolutely wrong.

A member interjected.

Mr WALSH: The member for Burwood can scoff and do what he likes. He is an absolute tosser and should just keep quiet.

Mr Fowles: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker—

Mr WALSH: Well, if you keep scoffing—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Leader of The Nationals, please be seated.

Mr Fowles: I take personal offence at that slight, and I ask the member to withdraw.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of The Nationals, please withdraw.

Mr WALSH: And I take personal offence at his interjections before.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, no, no—

Mr WALSH: I withdraw, and then I ask the member for Burwood to withdraw his comments.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of The Nationals, you know better. There is a point of order. I am dealing with that at the moment, and I have asked you to withdraw.

Mr WALSH: All right, I withdraw, Deputy Speaker. And now I take a point of order asking the member for Burwood to withdraw his rude comments while I was making my contribution.

Ms Williams: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Leader of The Nationals resorted to name-calling, which is a very different proposition to the interjection that he took up from the member for Burwood, which was a statement of fact. We can be offended, sure, by statements of fact, but they are not in the same vein as a term that is abusive in nature and without doubt unparliamentary.

Mr Battin: On the point of order, the member for Burwood continued to slight directly the member for Murray Plains, basically implying he does not care about the Indigenous community in his electorate, about single mums who are looking for a home and the people he had cared for and done work with to get into public housing. It is only fair and right that the member for Burwood withdraws his remarks, which were offensive directly to the member for Murray Plains.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: At this point in time there is no point of order. The remarks were not directed directly at the Leader of The Nationals, so I have made that ruling. The Leader of The Nationals can continue with his contribution.

Mr WALSH: I will just reinforce that the Liberal and National parties are very supportive of the people that live in their communities that need public housing. We will continue to do that, despite what the member for Burwood may say or what the member for Box Hill may say as well.

A member interjected.

Mr WALSH: And may I say that those people that live in public housing—I actually encourage them not to kick the doors in on the establishments that they have, not to trash the buildings that they stay in, as some other people might.

Ms Williams: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think the member is straying from the subject of the bill and this debate is descending into something quite unbecoming.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: At this point it has been a wideranging debate, but I am going to caution the Leader of The Nationals to refrain and stick with his contribution on the bill before the house.

Mr WALSH: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. I would expect that anyone that stays in a rental property, public housing or any other building would actually respect that building they stay in and would not deliberately vandalise the building they live in.

On the bill, as the member for Malvern said in his contribution, this legislation is supported by the Victorian opposition, and they support the principles of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. What I find intriguing with this bill is that it actually excludes any relationship to the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. We have had a number of examples. When the subcommittee comes to Victoria—I think it is in October—I would hope that they would get a copy of the Ombudsman's report *Investigation into the Detention and Treatment of Public Housing Residents Arising from a COVID-19 'Hard Lockdown' in July 2020*. They would find that report very interesting to read. It is a pity that act is excluded under this legislation specifically by the Andrews Labor government so they are not held to account about that, because the Ombudsman was very, very damning in her assessment of how those people in the housing towers of North Melbourne were treated, the fact that they were locked down at such short notice, that effectively the deputy chief health officer was blindsided by a decision of the crisis cabinet that did it much faster than anyone in the bureaucracy had actually anticipated, that they were locked down without necessarily having enough food supply or the appropriate food supply, that they were locked down without access to fresh air or exercise and that there were effectively no alternatives looked at other than that hard lockdown, which was very much an impingement of the rights of those people that lived in those towers.

One of the recommendations, as the member for Malvern mentioned, that the Ombudsman made was that the Victorian government actually apologise to those residents of those towers. As is the case with so many things that the Andrews government does wrong, there has been no apology at all coming from the Andrews government. They seem to believe that they can just walk all over people's rights in this state, that they do not have to be accountable for anything they do. We saw that with the towers, and we saw that with the way that hotel quarantine was managed in this state, with the employment of private contractors to manage hotel quarantine and the tragic case that over 800 people lost their lives because of the decisions that were made around hotel quarantine. So when the subcommittee does

visit here, I would hope that they actually do avail themselves of the Ombudsman's report and have a read of it, even though the act is specifically excluded under this legislation. What I also found interesting when I read the Ombudsman's report was—

Ms Williams interjected.

Mr WALSH: I could not quite hear the interjection. I am happy for you to repeat it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Nationals, can you make your contribution through the Chair?

Mr WALSH: Also when the Ombudsman asked the government for a response and she asked the government for a copy of the minutes of the crisis cabinet meeting that actually made that decision, they refused to provide that information to the Ombudsman. Again, that just shows the arrogance of the government and how they just treat everyone in Victoria, including the Ombudsman, with absolute disrespect. We have seen that in the last couple of days when the Ombudsman helped launch a book about the lockdown, and the former Minister for Health, the member for Albert Park, went out of his way to take exception to the Ombudsman and the very good work that she has done to try and hold this government to account. I think it reflects very poorly on the member for Albert Park that in a public setting he would take the Ombudsman to task as he did there. If you look at her report, Victoria Police also declined to comment on the issues that were raised around how those lockdowns were implemented in this state.

Ms Williams interjected.

Mr WALSH: I have been talking about the bill, and what has been excluded from it very deliberately because the Andrews government does not want to be held to account in this state. As the member for Malvern, our lead speaker, said, the opposition will not be opposing this legislation.

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (16:20): I am delighted to make a contribution on the bill before us. I am very pleased to be able to have the opportunity to speak on the Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022. This is an opportunity to acknowledge the very important work that is going into our relationship with the commonwealth and the reason why we have this bill here today, and I will be unpacking a little bit of that as part of my contribution. This bill helps the United Nations subcommittee to facilitate inspections. We are going to make sure that the United Nations, a very important organisation that those on this side of the house do not diminish for sport, can access information and places of detention without legislative barriers. This will ensure that these authorities have clarity on their obligations and the necessary protections for vulnerable, detained persons.

This bill keeps Victoria in line with the rest of Australia. This ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is what is before us. By enabling these periodic visits, the bill ensures that Australia's obligations under the OPCAT no longer conflict with Victoria's existing legislation. This is a bill that harmonises, in many ways, our relationship with other jurisdictions and makes sure that, for other jurisdictions that are already taking action, we are harmonising with them. That facilitates the United Nations' very important work in protecting the human rights of citizens and non-citizens. It ensures that there is a clear legislative framework in place to facilitate inspection visits and it replaces the current legislation, which I think could be considered to be nebulous and complex to navigate. It would otherwise be difficult for the United Nations subcommittee to access places of detention and to speak to detainees in a consistent way. It is important to recognise that there is a necessity to have some consistency in the way that these tasks are undertaken and some consistency in the way that Australia fulfils its obligations as a signatory to this important United Nations body.

The bill provides a whole-of-government framework to facilitate inspections of places of detention by the UN subcommittee. It streamlines the process to make sure that the investigators are not hindered

by the complexity that exists currently. It will cover places of detention, including prisons, youth justice facilities, secure care facilities, police and court cells, designated mental health service areas, parts of residential facilities, residential service accommodation, specialist disability accommodation, quarantine facilities and vehicles that transport detainees. Throughout the stakeholder engagement, there were questions about some of these very specific visits. I think it is important for us to take a commonsense approach in the way that we respond to perhaps sometimes slightly silly propositions. There can be crazy reasons for people to demand that the United Nations step in. The bill gives access to relevant information concerning the treatment of detained persons, their condition of detention, the number of people in detention and the number of places of detention and their location.

We are getting rid of the red tape and the legislative framework. That means that our jurisdiction will not get in the way of human rights. It makes sure that Victorians can be confident that there are accountability and proper standards for people who are being detained. This is essential for addressing the unwieldy complexity of the current legislative system.

In reflecting on the legislation that we have, and in preparation for today, I was reminded of a long, long time ago when I was at university and having lectures about the Zimbardo Stanford University study that looked at and considered—I think this goes back to 1971—how people would behave in what was to be a mock prison where people were chosen randomly and allocated tasks as prisoners or prison officers. Very famously it is often now considered to be one of the more unethical pieces of research that has been undertaken. It had to be shut down after six days because the effect of what was considered to be an experiment where people were assigned as either prisoners or prison officers was so extraordinary and so damaging that it has now become a lesson in how to make sure that people are treated ethically in research. But it still does have some important lessons for all of us to consider in the way that people are treated. Our government takes that treatment of people in detention very seriously. Also, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that our workforce in the corrections system does an extraordinary job. It is not an easy task. I have had the opportunity to sit down with constituents who work in the sector to thank them for the work they do and particularly reflect that their aspiration is that people leave the system perhaps with extra skills and certainly with a therapeutic approach to whatever it was that sent them there.

We know poverty and inequality and other social determinants are key drivers of people ending up in the prison system. This legislation is also an opportunity for me to thank Jesuit Social Services. I was reading some of their research and their reflections on the Armytage-Ogloff review. I know that important work was done by this government—the Andrews Labor government—in the previous term to look at the youth justice system and make sure we are undertaking a deep and scientific review of how people, young people specifically who have additional vulnerabilities, respond to time in the corrections system. It is an important role for our corrections system to have this really precious care of people who do need to be detained because we do need to protect the community. In the Labor government we come at crime from really reflecting on the causes of crime. Things like free TAFE and making sure that we intervene early with mental health practitioners in government schools—these are the ways that a Labor government responds to people who find themselves committing crimes. That is at the heart of a scientific analysis of what can be done to reduce recidivism, reduce the number of people getting themselves on the wrong side, with a focus of course on the victims of crime as well and what the consequences are for the victims of crime. This legislation will make sure that we can allow the inspectors to do the work that they need to do.

It has been really interesting and of course heartening for so many of us to reflect on the way that our new commonwealth government is working so collaboratively now with the Victorian government where there is an alignment and a concern for human rights, whether that is as reflected in this legislation and the way that we will be going forward and making sure that we align ourselves with what needs to be done in the commonwealth jurisdiction or if it is our response to the way we treat some of our most vulnerable, including asylum seekers and refugees, and being concerned about their ability to find work and go through the processes that are necessary.

This is really important legislation. I commend this bill. I am grateful to the Attorney-General for her work and to the minister's office. I look forward to further contributions.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (16:30): The Greens are very pleased to support this bill. We are further pleased that the OPCAT, the UN's Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, is at last being raised in this Parliament, although I note that today the government has not left a lot of time to get this bill through before the visit of the relevant UN subcommittee in October, and it is a shame that some of the other requirements of the OPCAT have not been met by this government, such as the national preventative mechanism. The bill is necessitated by the fact that on 21 December 2017 the Australian government ratified OPCAT, and in order to comply with obligations under that protocol the Victorian government, along with all other Australian jurisdictions, must give a UN subcommittee on prevention of torture, known as SPT, unfettered access to:

... any place under its jurisdiction and control where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty ...

We do not know where the SPT will look for evidence of conduct and conditions that amount to torture under international law. It could be a prison, a detention centre, an immigration hotel or a secure health facility. We do not know that they will even come to Victoria. But we do know that the SPT will visit Australia in October, so we need to pass this legislation before then.

The SPT itself comprises 25 independent and impartial experts from different backgrounds and various regions of the world, and this independence and separation from the local community and state is really important, because even our own independent oversight and integrity agencies, which do valuable work, are still themselves part of the society and the community over which they have oversight. All of us in this community are somewhat subject to the same self-serving bias—the image of ourselves as Victorians as always being a progressive, fair, equal society that respects human rights and the rule of law.

We also perhaps become so accustomed to problems, no matter how substantial and shocking, that we subconsciously accept them as being almost insurmountable and unavoidable, meaning that they are effectively ignored, and here I talk of course about the issue of First Nations incarceration. I confess, when I took on the justice portfolio for the Greens, I was shocked by my own ignorance of what is going on with First Nations incarceration under this state government. Aboriginal people are now 14 times more likely to be imprisoned than the overall Victorian population, compared to 10.7 times more likely back in 2015. Whatever this government is doing, the problem is getting worse, not better. Why does the response to the Bourke Street tragedy mean we need to hold more women, children and First Nations Victorians in jail without sentence for non-serious offences when most of these notorious crimes are being committed by white men? Where is the outrage and shame in our community and the government impetus to address this issue as a first-line priority?

I am personally hopeful that the SPT will visit Victoria and report on our prisons and places of detention, because I welcome the unique independent insight that they can provide on many issues. For example, I really hope that they inspect the conditions on remand, said to be the poorest and most criminogenic, where Aboriginal deaths in custody continue to occur every year in Victoria. I hope that they look at the reasons why First Nations women and children are over-represented on remand for alleged offences that do not warrant custodial sentences and the long-term effects on them of this unnecessary imprisonment. I hope that they will look at those who continue to find themselves in custody for health issues relating to addiction, alcohol and drug use or mental health and disability, because of the lack of alternative therapeutic treatment services to imprisonment.

The Ombudsman has raised the case of a woman known as Rebecca. Rebecca was a woman with a significant developmental disorder who found herself in prison for 18 months and in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day simply because there was not any other place to look after her. The public advocate says hers is not an isolated case, so I hope we can find out the extent of this use of detention and the increasing use of our prison system as a place to shelve people with complex needs.

I hope they look at the issue of solitary confinement, particularly in youth justice centres, following on from the Ombudsman's report that found it was in breach of UN rules and was disproportionately being used towards First Nations children and had punitive aspects.

I hope that the SPT look at the thousands of lockdowns and isolation episodes that occur in youth detention centres every quarter simply because of the lack of corrections staff. I hope that they look at the continued imprisonment of children under the age of 14 that really only occurs in a remand environment currently in Victoria but nonetheless results in permanent long-term health and developmental damage to these children. I hope they look at the incidents of self-harm of First Nations prisoners, which have increased during the pandemic. I hope that they look at strip-searching in places of detention, which is being overused and is apparently often used for general discipline and order in Victorian prisons. Of course I hope they look further at the corruption and misconduct among Corrections Victoria officers, including sexual harassment, use of excessive force and failure to maintain professional boundaries, outlined in a 2021 IBAC report and now subject to an internal review. I hope they look at the adequacy of the police and corrections monitoring complaint and oversight systems that are at best described as opaque and largely self-regulating. Just this year IBAC found that Victoria Police's response to complaints by Aboriginal Victorians contained indications of bias or a lack of impartiality. I hope they can shed light on the performance and standards in both our public and our private prison systems as we all learn from the aggregate measures reported in the budget papers. Year on year Victoria's prisons are never even close to meeting the targeted standards. And I hope they look at access to and the standard of health care that is required under international rules to be equivalent to that in the community but in reality falls far short. I have had multiple people raise concerns to me about the performance and suitability of private health contractors used in prisons. So I hope that the SPT might also look into that.

In short, I hope that the SPT does visit Victoria, because there is so much work that we need to do here that we can no longer simply ignore. The Greens support this bill.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:37): I also rise to make a contribution on the Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022. As previous speakers have said, the bill defines places of detention in Victoria which can be inspected by United Nations representatives—for example, youth justice facilities, police cells and privately operated prisons. It also enables access to places of detention and people detained there and authorises detaining authorities to provide the subcommittee with access to relevant information to inform their inspections—for example, information around the actual treatment of people that have been detained as well as their conditions of detention.

The reason that the Victorian Andrews Labor government is introducing this legislation is that we are actually supporting the role of the United Nations in monitoring and having some oversight of places of detention, because we do have a belief in human rights and that all people have a right to certain basic standards of dignity and all those sorts of things—and shelter and certain treatments. The previous speaker from the Greens just mentioned a whole list of things—well, we are not just complaining about what is going on, we are actually doing something about it by introducing this legislation to ensure that there is the oversight, because I think we all know that these places of detention are not ideal. That is why we are looking at signing up to this system, and we look forward to, I am sure, any comments or revelations or proposals that the United Nations subcommittee representatives may wish to provide to the Victorian government following any of their inspections.

OPCAT is the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which is a United Nations human rights treaty. The Commonwealth of Australia ratified OPCAT in December 2017, and it will become operational in Australia on 20 January 2023. OPCAT seeks to assist nations to meet their obligations under the convention and protect people in detention against torture and mistreatment through a regime of regular, independent, prevention-focused inspections.

Australia's obligations under OPCAT are a two-part inspection system. First of all, there is enabling periodic visits by the United Nations subcommittee on prevention of torture, and then there is also establishing, designating and maintaining a domestic national preventative mechanism to coordinate and conduct visits to places of detention and monitor the treatment of persons in detention. They are the two parts of the ratification of this monitoring in detention. They currently conflict with and create uncertainty about Victoria's existing laws, which detaining authorities must comply with, so this legislation is to ensure that the treaty that we signed up to regarding the United Nations subcommittee on prevention of torture is in line with and will work in conjunction with Victorian legislation and ensure that detaining authorities, whilst they must comply with Victorian laws, also can comply with this treaty but in a way that does not conflict or cause major difficulties.

The bill provides for a whole-of-Victorian-government framework rather than just in one area. It will also facilitate United Nations visits, which is why we are particularly required to debate this bill now of course. There are going to be visits between 16 and 27 October 2022, and we want to make sure that those visits are genuine ones where the representatives of the United Nations subcommittee can go about their business freely and with all support and cooperation. We do not want to have legislative barriers to the United Nations accessing Victorian places of detention, accessing information and providing clarity to detaining authorities on their obligations and necessary protections to vulnerable and detained persons.

Currently in Victoria there are programs that have a legislative mandate to conduct regular monitoring visits at places of detention. There is the independent prison visitor program, and the Office of the Public Advocate has community visitor programs as well. Also the Victorian Ombudsman and the Commission for Children and Young People conduct semiregular monitoring visits to prisons and youth justice centres. That means that Victoria already has some oversight. However, we welcome opportunities to improve the oversight system, and we welcome further transparency. We also welcome increased accountability at places of detention and accept that this will help to safeguard the integrity and the transparency of our system.

It is not very hard to see that this treaty is very important, because no matter how much you believe in ensuring detention centres are humane and follow certain codes of human rights, we do hear some terrible stories. There have been recent allegations made in respect to some detention centres in Tasmania. We have also in recent years had some horrific revelations come out in the Northern Territory, about mistreatment of individual prisoners. I think that was in the youth justice system. I do not think anyone on this side of the house condones that or believes that that ought to be happening, so really for us we want to cooperate, work and collaborate with and support the United Nations subcommittee in making sure that our system is as good as it can be while acknowledging of course they are detention centres, so not particularly nice environments.

One issue that was raised by the Greens political party representative was around the implementation of Victoria's national preventative mechanism. As we said, there are two parts to this, the monitoring of places of detention by the United Nations subcommittee on prevention of torture. One is the inspection system by international representatives, and the other is the section on having an internal or an in-country preventative mechanism and system. Of course it is that part that the Victorian government, while supporting it, is concerned about, because it really does need an ongoing and sustained commitment to funding. This additional part of the bureaucracy, if you like, or statutory authority does require money to support it to employ people in order to do the job, and there has been as yet no agreement on that sort of funding. Now, of course we could not get it out of the Morrison federal government. They had no interest in human rights whatsoever, and we welcome that we now have a federal Labor government. Since the election in May, when I have got around to people in the Thomastown electorate, all I can say is there has really been a collective sigh of relief that we have got rid of the Morrison Liberal government and we can now look to the future and have more of a positive vision and hope—a hopeful future that things will get better and we have got things to look forward to. This I guess is another example where the Morrison government dragged its feet. It was not

interested in human rights in places of detention. It was not prepared to make a commitment in terms of funding, and so therefore the Victorian government had been unable to really look at this part until there was some sort of arrangement and an agreement on how it is going to be funded and when it will be able to operate.

In all, this is a treaty, with the Victorian government ensuring that Victorian laws and our state fully and wholly support and endorse the monitoring of places of detention by the United Nations subcommittee, and this is the first step in making sure that it can be realised and that we can welcome representatives in October.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (16:47): I am very pleased to make a contribution to this bill, which will facilitate United Nations visits through removing the legislative barriers to the UN accessing Victorian places of detention, accessing information and providing clarity to detaining authorities on their obligations and necessary protections to vulnerable detained persons.

Australia's obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) conflict with and create uncertainty about Victoria's existing laws, which is why we are taking this necessary step today. The bill addresses these issues by establishing a clear legislative framework for inspection visits and provides clarity for the UN subcommittee on the prevention of torture and the operators of places of detention. Currently Victoria's facilities are governed by a series of legislation that would be otherwise too complex to navigate. Without this legislation it would be difficult for the UN subcommittee to access places of detention in a consistent way as well as to speak to detainees. It would also make uncertain for administrators of places of detention their obligations regarding the provision of information and access.

The background to this issue and I suppose the reason for and the purpose of this bill is that in 2017 the former coalition federal government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which is the OPCAT acronym, and this will become operational in January 2023. So this is a very important thing for us to be proceeding with as we get closer to the end of the 59th Parliament.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment seeks to assist nations to meet their obligations under the convention and protect people in detention against torture and mistreatment through a regime of regular, independent and prevention-focused inspections. The ratification created obligations for Australian states and territories, including enabling periodic visits by the UN subcommittee on prevention of torture and establishing, designating or maintaining a domestic national preventive mechanism (NPM) to coordinate and conduct visits to places of detention and monitor the treatment of persons in detention. The UN has announced that it will visit Australia between 16 and 27 October 2022, and Victoria awaits confirmation of the exact dates the UN intends to visit Victoria. Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have a legislative framework already in place to facilitate visits by the UN subcommittee on prevention of torture.

It is important to note that the bill does not fulfil all requirements of OPCAT, and in particular there is no single agency that undertakes the preventative monitoring function of an NPM. The commonwealth's ratification imposes the additional obligation on states and territories to create one. Victoria has been consistent in its position that a sufficient and ongoing funding commitment from the commonwealth is essential to establish and maintain this. The absence of proper funding to date has significantly hampered Victoria's ability to progress the necessary preparations and consultation required to designate an NPM. Victoria is working constructively with the new commonwealth government to facilitate the full implementation of OPCAT in Australia in a way that is effective and sustainable.

The Monitoring of Places of Detention by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (OPCAT) Bill 2022 provides a whole-of-government framework to facilitate inspections of places of detention by the UN subcommittee. It also removes legislative barriers to access information on places

of detention and detainees while clarifying obligations for authorities. It defines places of detention in Victoria that can be inspected. It enables access to places of detention and people detained there and authorises detaining authorities to provide the subcommittee with access to relevant information to inform their inspections. Places of detention include prisons, youth justice facilities, secure care facilities, police and court cells, designated mental health service areas, parts of residential facilities, residential service accommodation, specialist disability accommodation, quarantine facilities and vehicles that transport detainees. The bill does not provide resourcing for or designate a body for the national preventative mechanism to undertake domestic reporting.

The preamble of OPCAT explicitly recognises the link between proactive inspections of places of detention and improving the situation of those detained, stating that:

... the protection of persons deprived of their liberty ... can be strengthened by non-judicial means of a preventive nature, based on regular visits to places of detention ...

Really what this bill is about is ensuring there is increased accountability and consistency in the inspection of places of detention to help safeguard the integrity and the transparency of our system. There are programs in Victoria that currently have a legislative mandate to conduct regular monitoring visits of places of detention—the independent prison visitor scheme and the Office of the Public Advocate’s community visitors program. The Victorian Ombudsman and the Commission for Children and Young People also conduct semiregular monitoring visits to prisons and youth justice centres. This means that Victoria already has a robust oversight system; however, we welcome opportunities for improvement and further transparency. The implementation of OPCAT in Victoria will provide a specific formalised transparent monitoring program of places of detention. In terms of the consultation and details of the bill, we have included of course safeguards to protect detainees’ right to privacy. During a UN visit their officers will have an obligation not to jeopardise the life, physical and psychological safety and wellbeing of detainees. The bill also provides for access to be denied to the subcommittee due to a major emergency as well as for visits to be temporarily paused if that is required to maintain functions of the detention facility.

The bill has been developed in consultation with the interdepartmental working group comprising representatives from the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the Department of Health, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Education and Training, Victoria Police and Court Services Victoria. External stakeholders have similarly been engaged in the development of the bill, including the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, the office of the Mental Health Complaints Commissioner, the office of the Disability Services Commissioner and the office of the Health Complaints Commissioner. Civil society organisations, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Human Rights Law Centre and Youthlaw have also been consulted on the bill.

Victoria has been consistent in our position that sufficient and ongoing funding from the commonwealth is going to be essential to deliver the obligations under OPCAT, and now that we have a Labor government in Canberra I am sure that support will be forthcoming. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (16:57): It is fantastic to rise and speak on this bill. As others have been able to very eloquently describe, essentially it was envisaged in the 1970s that there would be an inspection program based on places of detention which later took the form of an optional protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. That became what it is now in 1984, but in 1987 the Council of Europe realised that the original idea on a regional level, with its European convention for the prevention of torture, was going to be a bit of an issue. On this basis the European committee for the prevention of torture demonstrated that with regular visits, reports and recommendations to governments, as well as publication of these reports and the governments’ reactions, there was a viable model that they could go ahead with. This in turn led to a bit of a breakthrough within the United Nations, with the optional protocol to the convention against torture created and open for signatures on 18 December 2002 by the UN General Assembly.

After ratification by 20 states, OPCAT was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 18 December 2002.

Essentially what this bill in this house does is ensure that the OPCAT subcommittee can do their job in this jurisdiction. We are very pleased today to bring this framework to the house to ensure that inspections will be carried out by the subcommittee when it conducts its inaugural visit to Australia. As we heard from the member for Footscray, there was a planned visit in March 2020. However, COVID got in the way of that visit, and the subcommittee has further confirmed its upcoming visit to Australia in the second half of this year. Of course we look forward to confirmation of that subcommittee's visit.

The bill provides the framework to ensure the subcommittee visits may proceed in Victoria in accordance with OPCAT in particular places of detention in the scope for inspection by the subcommittee across corrections, youth justice, secure welfare services, mental health and disability sectors, noting that in accordance with article 4 of OPCAT a place of detention requires a person to be detained

... by virtue of ... a public authority or at its instigation or with its consent or acquiescence ...

It also specifies that a state's obligation is to facilitate, for the purpose of the subcommittee's visit or inspection, subcommittee access to a place of detention and relevant information. It creates assistance to support the subcommittee's access to places, information and people and provides the necessary safeguards to protect the privacy of detained persons and ensures detained and other persons who provide information to the subcommittee are protected from reprisal.

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms HUTCHINS:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

**CASINO 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.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

**MAJOR CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
2022**

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ms KILKENNY:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:01): (6526) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Government Services. I ask that the minister put in place the actions that are needed to reopen state government departments in regional towns. I am constantly getting calls from constituents who try to contact their local Victorian government offices and are told they have to either send an email or send a message through that particular office's website. These constituents do not want to deal by email or by website, because that may never be responded to. They want to talk to a human, either in person at the department offices or at least by phone.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning in Swan Hill is an example of an office that is not open; it is only open for 4 hours per week on a Wednesday. To check whether that was the only office that was not being opened, we did a ring around from my office to just see what was happening. From the Tatura office we got actually no response at all; it was closed. The Seymour office we rang; technically it is open—it is just not open to the public, or at least not until 10 October.

The Heathcote office was closed. The Colac office was closed. There was great excitement when we rang the Bacchus Marsh office because it is actually open 4 hours a day—so the people of Bacchus Marsh are better served than most areas. The Heywood office was closed. The Warrnambool office—where there are 33 000 residents—was closed. The Hamilton office is open 3 hours a day.

Many are saying to me, ‘Where is the word “public” in public service here in Victoria?’, because with all those offices closed and not taking phone calls there is obviously no public service in those particular communities. The question I ask the minister is: how can Victoria start recovering from the longest lockdowns in this country? How can they start recovering from the effects of those lockdowns if they cannot actually get a response from the local departments in their town? I ask the minister to make sure that these offices are open in the future and we put the ‘public’ back into public service.

TASKFORCE, FRANKSTON

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (17:03): (6527) My adjournment is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and I ask that the minister to attend the official opening of the TaskForce office in Frankston on 18 October. TaskForce offer a range of services across the south-east of Victoria. Their focus is providing support to local communities, particularly those most in need, to improve quality of life, economic participation and connection to community. They have been running programs in my local community successfully for the last 10 years and offering services such as alcohol and other drug treatment services; the Living Free project, which assists young women in our community; the Frankston North bike project, which is an absolute belter of a little project; and the behaviour change program for licence restoration, supporting drink and drug drivers to do the right thing. These programs are vital to my community, and now TaskForce will have a permanent home in Frankston, and I know that we would welcome the minister at the opening of their new office.

GOVERNMENT INTEGRITY

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (17:04): (6528) My adjournment is for the Premier. The action I seek is that the Premier responds to the 48 questions about integrity I asked in the media on 10 August. One of those questions was: what factional deals did the Premier agree to in appointing the Minister for Planning, given her brother John-Paul Blandthorn is the director of major Labor-linked lobbying firm Hawker Britton? John-Paul Blandthorn, the planning minister’s brother, sent me a lawyer’s letter—a pathetic, weak lawyer’s letter based on nothing. It is just a media stunt. The letter has been written for the media rather than to begin proceedings against me. I am amused that John-Paul Blandthorn is complaining about being identified as a factional operative of the Labor Party when his law firm, Holding Redlich, are the Labor Party’s lawyers. Last time I got a letter from Holding Redlich it was to tell me they were taking me to the Court of Disputed Returns over my election to the seat of Ripon in 2018.

During the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption, John-Paul Blandthorn admitted he was corrupt, claiming there were annual payments of \$25 000 by a cleaning company to the AWU in return for below-award wages for already low-paid workers. John-Paul Blandthorn alleged Cesar Melhem of the other place offered to pay his legal fees using a fund in the Victorian state Attorney-General’s office. John-Paul Blandthorn moved on from being a corrupt union official to the Premier’s private office as an adviser. Continuing the exploits of John-Paul Blandthorn and his political activities, in 2018 he was referred to the police for making death threats against an independent candidate and the candidate’s wife in the seat where John-Paul Blandthorn’s sister was the Labor candidate.

John-Paul Blandthorn has been a factional Labor operative for the right faction for decades, just as his sister is also a member of the right and holds her seat in Parliament and her place in the cabinet courtesy of the support she receives from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association. There is no denying the appointment of the current planning minister has raised numerous red flags because of John-Paul Blandthorn’s role as a lobbyist for property developers as a director of Labor-linked lobbying firm Hawker Britton, so much so that the planning minister has had to have an alternative

minister appointed to deal with all the planning matters where she is conflicted because of John-Paul Blandthorn.

In summary, John-Paul Blandthorn is a former corrupt union official and former staffer for the Premier, has made death threats against a candidate running against his sister and runs a Labor-linked lobbying firm. If that is not the CV of a factional hack of the Labor Party, I do not know what is.

BACCHUS MARSH MEN'S SHED

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (17:07): (6529) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate of Melton to see the activities of the Laurels Bacchus Marsh Men's Shed. We know that men's sheds play an important role in improving the wellbeing of participants and their community. Earlier this year the Andrews Labor government announced a funding round of \$870 000 in grants of up to \$80 000 each for the construction of new men's sheds or the refurbishment or extension of existing sheds. These grants give the local community an opportunity to establish a men's shed or undertake refurbishments that will ensure an existing men's shed is fit for purpose so that safe, productive and accessible meeting places are available to our diverse men's sheds groups.

The COVID pandemic has affected all Victorians in different ways, and these grants will support the mental wellbeing of men's shed participants across the state. I am aware that the Laurels men's shed has submitted an application for funding, and I would like to take this opportunity to voice my support for their work. Previously the men's shed funding program provided grants to 29 men's sheds across Victoria throughout the 2021–22 financial year. The Victorian government will continue to provide \$1 million to support men's sheds each year. This funding includes \$130 000 to the Victorian Men's Shed Association to provide capacity building and support to men's sheds.

CONISTON AVENUE–PRINCES HIGHWAY, BERWICK

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (17:08): (6530) My adjournment is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask the minister to attend my electorate at the intersection of Coniston Avenue and Princes Highway opposite the Berwick botanical gardens. One of the local residents, Shaun, approached our office in relation to the dangers of crossing that road. There are school bus stops on both sides of the highway, where we have seen some issues and near accidents in the past. Tragically in 2017 Mick Moreland, who was a known councillor—many knew him from this place—was killed at that intersection when he was crossing the road. Since then I know his wife has been very active in trying to get a set of lights at that intersection. Kay, who I still speak to, is probably one of the most amazing people in the world. After that accident, which was no fault at all of the young 19-year-old driver of the car who hit Mick, Kay went out of her way 12 months later to go out for coffee with him to let him know that there was nothing that he could have done in those circumstances. However, it does not take away the issue with that dangerous intersection.

During COVID—I know it sounds a bit different—it actually became more dangerous, not for the fact that COVID affected the intersection, but it did become a very public spot, the botanical gardens in Berwick. It was somewhere that a lot of people had been as aware of as much. They would travel outside of the area to go to local parks, but with the 5-kilometre radius this became a central spot for families to go out to a lot. There is a fair bit of parking, but on major event days now they have to park across the road, and it is becoming a bigger issue. It has highlighted some of these issues of people crossing the road there. You cannot park on the highway. The council and VicRoads rightfully stopped people parking along the highway because it was causing too many dangers, which included someone losing their door when they opened it. Families ended up walking along the highway with prams and children, which obviously is very dangerous and not something any of us want to encourage. We have to find a way now that people can cross safely.

The final part of that, which Shaun has seen firsthand, is watching students getting dropped off or picked up by the bus on the other side of the highway from the residential side. To cross that road, it

is on a ridge. Sight-wise it is not that great, so this is something that I think needs to be addressed fairly quickly. We would like the minister to come out, meet with Shaun, have a chat to some of the locals out there and look at options for what we can do to improve that intersection for the future of the community.

ST ALBANS SENIORS

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (17:11): (6531) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The action that I seek is for the minister to join me in visiting the St Albans seniors group in my electorate of St Albans to mark the Victorian Seniors Festival. We know the incredible contribution that older Victorians make, in particular in my electorate. Whether it is through their working life, volunteering efforts or caring for grandchildren, our older Victorians deserve to be recognised and celebrated. The seniors festival is a chance to do that. This year the seniors festival, in its 40th year, will build on the success of previous festivals, hosting events including online radio programs, First Nations performances and entertainment by local artists from across Melbourne.

Past festivals have been a massive hit, and I know in my electorate there are a lot of festivities and events. In St Albans our seniors groups do a great job. They provide opportunities to reduce social isolation, be active and celebrate cultures and traditions. Most of all, this is an opportunity for older Victorians to meet up, engage, communicate, participate in annual dinner dances and other festivities and really get to know each other and different cultures and nationalities. This creates a very strong community, and I am extremely proud of the contribution my seniors make in St Albans.

In particular I look forward to the minister joining me, not only to see firsthand the contribution of our senior citizens but also to acknowledge and thank these organisations for their tireless work—work that they do each and every day, volunteering. I have to say that most of my seniors volunteer during the week and often seven days a week—weekend work as well. Some are getting used to the transition to being online and getting used to computer systems. These organisations do their very best to make sure that the members of their clubs are well informed on issues that are important, such as health and wellbeing and how to be active, and some of the programs and supports that are available to senior citizens. I commend all of my seniors groups and the contribution that they make each and every day in the St Albans community. We could not be the St Albans we are without our seniors, and in particular our multicultural seniors groups across St Albans, who have contributed immensely to the tapestry of my electorate.

RENTAL SUPPORT

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (17:14): (6532) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and the action I seek is for the minister to protect renters with controls on rents, improved standards and more secure leases. Around 60 per cent of people in Prahran are renters, and renters need a fair go. Renters in Prahran are telling me that rents are going up too high, that their homes are in poor condition and that landlords are not fixing faults. There is poor heating, poor cooling and poor ventilation. We are in a housing crisis. Rents are rising four times faster than wages. Victoria urgently needs caps on excessive rent increases, higher standards for energy efficiency, heating and cooling for rental dwellings and more secure leases, with real options for long-term tenancy. Our housing system must be about people, and it needs to put people first. Just like we have public health care and public education, it is the government's job to ensure that everyone has a safe, affordable, secure place to call home.

CHELTENHAM SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:15): (6533) My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Education and concerns Cheltenham Secondary College. The action that I seek from the minister is that she accompanies me on a visit to Cheltenham Secondary and discusses with the school community some future capital works needs at the school. I have gotten to know the

Cheltenham Secondary College community over the last few months. It is a school which services the families of the Bentleigh electorate and has done so for a long time. It is one of those schools that is coming into the Bentleigh electorate as a result of the redistribution. It is a school that has in the past received a lot of support from the Andrews government. In 2019 the government completed a \$7 million upgrade of Cheltenham Secondary College. It is a school of around 900 students, and there is a lot of potential for more at Cheltenham Secondary College.

I have spent a lot of my time as the member for Bentleigh ensuring that McKinnon Secondary College and Bentleigh Secondary College have everything they need. At McKinnon we built the senior school centre. We also built that state-of-the-art second campus, the east campus. At Bentleigh Secondary College we built the STEAM centre, we added two indoor courts to the college and we are about to start construction on a performing arts centre. There are so many possibilities at Cheltenham Secondary College, and I really do hope that the minister will join me on a visit to Cheltenham Secondary College to discuss what those opportunities could be.

EILDON ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (17:17): (6534) My matter again is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to ensure serious roadworks, such as resurfacing, take place on the Melba Highway to repair recurring potholes and crumbling surfaces. The communities who travel from Yarra Glen to Yea and then on to Mansfield want repairs that last more than a couple of years. I am contacted on a daily basis through Facebook, through emails and through people ringing the office or speaking to me on the street about the deplorable condition of the Melba Highway. I am sure that the current condition of the highway does not comply with the Road Management Act 2004 and the Department of Transport's *Road Management Plan*. The necessary action has not been taken to warn the public of the risk to road users of excessive bitumen failures and ongoing surface issues.

I want to just mention a few of the comments and things that have been brought to my attention. Wally from Yea called my office to say he damaged his car after hitting a large pothole near Devlins Bridge, blowing out his tyre and requiring repairs costing \$2000.

Peta said:

My son's girlfriend who is a P player got her tyre destroyed on Wednesday night going over one of the many ...

potholes.

Everyone is driving ... dangerously trying to dodge the pot holes including myself.

Jennifer said:

I hit a pot hole coming to Yea on Melba July 14th ... No car for 9 days \$4100 later all fixed

Ashleigh said they had a truck behind them, and the truck swerved to dodge potholes. They saw:

... a car ditched on the side of the road with a flat ... one can guess what happened to that.

Erin said:

I grew up in Dixon's Creek and have travelled that road soooo many times. I've never seen it so bad. Very very dangerous! I can't believe the state of it.

Other comments include:

Very scary road to drive. The signs should read "Bloody big potholes ahead"

Another said:

The Melba Highway between Yarra Glen and Yea is now so bad it must be close to being closed.

Another one said:

My husband and I travelled on the roads over the weekend, and we were stunned ... cars swerving to the wrong side of the road to avoid potholes.

Someone else said:

I counted 68 bad spots from Yea to Glenburn

Also Hwy from Yea to Yarek is a shocker

They must have run out of signs to put up.

I drive that road myself very regularly; it has to be one of the worst in the state. The government has neglected it time and time again. The repairs that are made do not last. We have had sections that have fallen to bits immediately. If there is water under the roads and it needs to be fixed at that level, that needs to be done. You cannot just keep stuffing gravel in potholes and thinking that is going to have a long-lasting effect, because it is not. It is dangerous. We have had a number of fatalities on that road—one only a couple of weeks ago in an area of 40 kilometres, which is in a 100-kilometre zone area. They have had to go to 40 kilometres in several spots.

CAMBERWELL GREEN

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (17:20): (6535) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to join me and visit the site which will become a new green and play space for the students at Camberwell Primary School and the local community. Over the last couple of years we have all come to value the benefit of locally available green and open spaces. In inner-city seats like mine we have to make the most of the green and open spaces available to us. That means ensuring open and green spaces can be utilised by different groups in the community, and that is exactly what we plan to do in Camberwell.

The local community around Camberwell Junction and the Camberwell Primary School were delighted to receive \$1.76 million in the 2020–21 state budget to turn a car park into a green and play space for the community. The students at Camberwell Primary need the additional play space during school hours, and the community stand to benefit from it after hours. The project is referred to as Camberwell Green by many in the community. As is so often the case, there have been many in the community who have advocated for this outcome. My thanks go to the principal of Camberwell Primary, Janet Gale; the school community; the Camberwell Green steering committee; and the Camberwell Junction Residents Association for their advocacy. However, I have been disappointed with Boroondara council's reluctance to cooperate with us on a project that clearly has such strong community support. Nonetheless we have pushed on, and we will make sure this project gets done. Planning is already underway, and the conversion of the car park to the green and play space will begin in February 2023.

This is one of many initiatives in Victoria that this government has funded to make the most of shared spaces. In my electorate we have a similar project, where the sporting facilities at Swinburne Senior Secondary College will be upgraded at Fritsch Holzer Park. Again, students will benefit from it during school hours and the community will benefit after hours. I look forward to showing the minister the Camberwell Green site and the plans for this green and play space conversion.

RESPONSES

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale—Leader of the House, Minister for Planning) (17:22): The member for Murray Plains raised a matter for the Minister for Government Services regarding the opening hours of government departments in regional towns. I know it is an issue he takes very seriously, and I am sure he will be pleased to follow it up and make sure that they are open and accessible in an appropriate way for the community.

The member for Frankston raised a matter for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence regarding the task force office opening in Frankston. This is an important service that has a number of

offices, and I know he is particularly looking forward to it opening in his community and providing the alcohol and drug treatment services, the drink and drug driving services and many others.

The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Premier regarding 48 questions. I note that she has not got the good grace to stay in the chamber for my response to that. She did raise some questions regarding both me and my brother, and I would just like to say at the outset that I take very seriously the oath I took on my own Bible in this place and that matters of integrity are of the upmost importance to me. And I know that my brother is a person of absolute integrity as well. The continual assertions by others that I as a female minister am incapable of managing my professional obligations, as I think was said in another context today, is deeply regressive, offensive and completely incorrect, and I do note that she did not stay for the response.

The member for Melton raised a matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers and asked that he visit the Bacchus Marsh Men's Shed, and I am sure he would be pleased to do so. These are great facilities across many of our communities, and I know that the minister would be pleased to attend.

The member for Gembrook raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the intersection of Coniston Avenue and the Princes Highway in Berwick, and in particular he raised some serious road safety issues that have happened there that have led to the loss of life. On behalf of the government I pass condolences on to anyone in that terrible and tragic situation, and I am sure the minister would be happy to engage with you regarding those road safety issues.

The member for St Albans, who is a great advocate for her community, raised a matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers regarding the St Albans senior citizens group and her desire for the minister to attend there with her. I know personally that the member for St Albans is a great advocate for not only seniors groups within her community but multicultural groups within her community, and I am sure the minister would be pleased to attend.

The member for Prahran raised a matter for the minister for community services in regard to protecting renters. As he said, and I know he is a great advocate for—

The SPEAKER: Minister, I think it was consumer affairs.

Ms BLANDTHORN: Sorry, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation; you are right. It was regarding the protections for renters and that everybody has the right to a place to call home. I know he is a great advocate, and I certainly know through his work on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee he is very interested in pursuing housing matters. I am sure the minister will be happy to work with him on that.

The member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding a visit to the Cheltenham Secondary College regarding their capital works. I noted that the member for Bentleigh is welcoming this school into his redistributed boundaries. If his work with the McKinnon Secondary College is anything to go by, I think they will be very lucky to find themselves in that electorate.

The member for Eildon raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety also, regarding the Melba Highway and in particular the condition of the road around Yarra Glen to Yea and beyond. In my fitter days I could run that stretch of road in the various runs that they did, and I can attest that there are some parts that are smoother than others, but I am sure the minister would be happy to work with you on those issues.

The member for Hawthorn also raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding converting green play space at the Camberwell Primary School and improving opportunities for students and young people alike, as well as the community, to make the most of those spaces within the community; I am sure the Minister for Education would be happy to attend with the member for Hawthorn.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.27 pm until Tuesday, 13 September.