

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY, 17 AUGUST 2022

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable JAMES ANGUS AO

The ministry

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

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

Speaker

The Hon. JM EDWARDS

Deputy Speaker

Ms N SULEYMAN

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. JM ALLAN

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. MJ GUY

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party

Mr DJ SOUTHWICK

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms E KEALY

Leader of the House

Ms EA BLANDTHORN

Manager of Opposition Business

Ms LE STALEY

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly: Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms B Noonan

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

Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Ms T Burrows

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

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

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee

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

Environment and Planning Standing Committee

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

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee

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

Privileges Committee

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

Standing Orders Committee

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

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee

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

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

Electoral Matters Committee

Assembly: Ms Hall, Dr Read and Mr Rowsell.

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

House Committee

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

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

Integrity and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Mr Grimley.

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee

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

Council: Ms Crozier and Mr Erdogan.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

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

Council: Mrs McArthur and Ms Taylor.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Mr Morris.

Council: Ms Patten and Ms Watt.

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Wednesday, 17 August 2022

The SPEAKER (Ms JM Edwards) took the chair at 9.32 am and read the prayer.

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (09:32): We acknowledge the traditional 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 AND ORDERS OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER (09:33): General business, notices of motion 18 and 19 and orders of the day 1 and 2, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 pm today.

Documents

DOCUMENTS

Incorporated list as follows:

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

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994—Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 67.

Bills

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

TREATY AUTHORITY AND OTHER TREATY ELEMENTS BILL 2022

VICTORIAN ENERGY EFFICIENCY TARGET AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Council's agreement

The SPEAKER (09:33): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Education Legislation Amendment (Adult and Community Education and Other Matters) Bill 2022, the Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022 and the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Amendment Bill 2022.

Members statements

GLEN PARK

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (09:34): I rise today to speak about the need for an upgrade of the sports field and the ground lighting at the Glen Park oval in Bayswater North. This oval is the second playing ground for the East Ringwood Junior Football Club, a family club that strives to develop young players, both individually and in a team environment. The club aims to instil the core values of respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, persistence, enthusiasm and spirit. The current condition of the Glen Park oval needs an upgrade as it is used as a training and playing oval for the junior football club and has seen better days. Maroondah City Council would like the opportunity to reconstruct the field and to upgrade the lighting. Presently the lighting at the oval does not meet the current Australian standards, which are set to ensure the ball is always adequately illuminated while in play, providing safer conditions for the players and better viewing conditions for spectators.

Glen Park reserve is a wonderful asset in Bayswater North with plenty on offer, and further investment in the sports field and lighting upgrade will continue to enhance the area. Glen Park has a community centre with a cafe open Monday to Friday, publicly accessible toilets, plenty of car parking, walking paths, a sportsground oval, barbecues, playgrounds, shared pathways, a men's shed and a fabulous community garden. The Glen Park community play space offers enjoyment for the entire family and a wide range of innovative play equipment designed to cater for all ages and physical abilities. The park also has free tennis and basketball courts and is connected to the Dandenong Creek Trail, where people enjoy walking and cycling. The South Croydon Cricket Club also use the Glen Park oval and would benefit from an upgrade to the field. I am a huge supporter of local sport and will continue to advocate for upgrades and investment in our local sporting and community facilities.

RAY HORSBURGH

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:35): Today I rise with a heavy heart to pay tribute to one of the giants of Williamstown, Ray Horsburgh. He lived a life dedicated to helping others, investing in and coaching those around him, and was devoted to his family and sporting clubs. Growing up in Williamstown, Ray lost his father when he was 11 years old, spurring him into helping to support his family. Starting out as a paperboy, he then took a job at the ACI glass factory in Spotswood, and thus began his career in manufacturing and industry. From chief executive at ACI to then CEO of Smorgon Steel, Ray had a proven track record of mentoring and coaching staff and younger executives.

But while his successful career, from Smorgon being appointed to the board of CSR, the chair of Toll and then to the board of the Liberty Steel Group, will be remembered, it is his contribution to investing in the community that certainly made Ray an iconic figure and much loved throughout the western suburbs. He was an ardent supporter of the Williamstown Seagulls Football Integration Development Association, supporting so many players with intellectual disabilities. He remained actively involved in his old school, Westbourne Grammar, helping the school expand and incorporate another campus at Truganina. He was actively involved in Essendon Football Club. Tragically Ray's life was cut short, and he leaves a gaping hole in his wife, children and grandchildren's lives. However, he leaves a gaping hole in the west. He will be remembered.

TAVERNER STREET, RAINBOW

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:37): Residents of Rainbow continue to raise their concern and frustration with me at the lack of response from and attention by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety about reducing the speed limit and installing flashing lights in front of the school along Taverner Street. Locals have made the effort to time the difference in travelling at a lower speed along Taverner Street in front of the school and childcare centre. It is only an additional 55 seconds. This section of road carries an enormous amount of heavy traffic. It is the road that goes to the local gypsum pits. It also carries increased freight over the harvest period. We are coming into harvest time, so I do ask the minister for roads to respond to the local community. He said he would review the request and investigate installing flashing lights along that section of road. I ask him to immediately release that report and provide funding for this important upgrade for the Rainbow community.

DUNKELD BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Ms KEALY: I raise a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services. In June of this year I wrote to the minister asking for a meeting with Peter Flinn and Simon Armytage. They are CFA volunteers from the Dunkeld region. Between them they have around a hundred years experience. It is amazing what these guys have contributed to CFA and fire control over the local area. They want to emphasise how important it is that our local CFA volunteers, who have got experience in local fires, are front and centre when it comes to incident control, planning local burns and making decisions about the CFA. I urge the minister to meet with them.

MICHAŁ KOŁODZIEJSKI

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (09:38): I rise today to acknowledge the incredible contribution and work of the outgoing ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Australia, Michał Kołodziejcki. The ambassador's work has had a real impact in Victoria and in particular within the Polish community, helping to strengthen the strong ties between Australia and Victoria and Poland. In my electorate of St Albans we are home to a very proud Polish community, and we have such hardworking volunteers across the electorate and in particular at the Albion Polish club. We are so proud of our Victorian Polish community, and they continue to go from strength to strength, ensuring that the Polish culture, traditions and language are handed down from one generation to the next. It has been a pleasure to have a great friendship with the ambassador throughout the five-year posting in Australia. I wish him and his family all the very best in his future endeavours as he makes his way back to Poland. It has truly been an honour for me to work with the outgoing ambassador and to really foster great friendship between Victoria and Poland in our many activities that we have been able to deliver in the last five years. Our ambassador, Michał Kołodziejcki, has been an absolute pleasure. All the very best.

HAMPTON LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:40): Every summer something magical happens when the Starfish Nippers members arrive on Hampton beach. Congratulations to Zoe Murdoch and the Hampton Life Saving Club on winning Life Saving Victoria's inaugural inclusion award for the Nippers program. The inclusive program is designed for young people of all abilities. The club are community leaders in all-abilities and women's participation, environmentalism and mental health.

SACRED HEART MISSION

Mr NEWBURY: Sacred Heart Mission recently reopened their breakfast service, where I rolled up my sleeves to help. The mission, who are at the heart of the community, already serve meals to over 300 people each day. Chief executive Cathy Humphrey is retiring after being part of the mission family for 20 years. We wish her well for her next step in life, but she will be very much missed.

YALUKIT WILLAM NATURE RESERVE

Mr NEWBURY: After a journey of over five years, the community was heartwarmed to attend the official opening of the Elsternwick Park nature reserve. The 13-hectare environmental space, which includes a chain of ponds, has been converted from a golf course. At the opening Bayside council officially renamed the reserve the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve. The clan are the river people of Port Phillip.

HAMPTON ROVERS AMATEUR FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr NEWBURY: Congratulations to the Hampton Rovers football club's senior women's team on their historic win. The team recently won the club's first senior women's premiership, an incredible achievement for the club but also the broader Hampton family. The win by two points followed a blistering 24-game winning streak. What a win for the Rovers!

ALTONA COLLEGE

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (09:41): I rise today to mark a wonderful celebration that occurred last week with the opening of new facilities at Altona College in my electorate. Altona College was a P-9 school and has, through a whole range of community activism, school leadership and support from our government, become a P-12 school. As they have made that journey to lift their enrolments—it is a school that punches above its weight—it has needed the investment for more capital to be able to offer those year 12 subjects. I was delighted to join my erstwhile friend and colleague the member for Williamstown to celebrate the opening last week. The opening started with a magnificent welcome to country by the grade 2s, a welcome to country they do each and every single day. It is beautifully integrated into how they see the value of their school but also acknowledging the proud Indigenous history of Melbourne's western suburbs. I want to also acknowledge principal Julie Krause. She has

been a wonderful partner and a fantastic leader as we have made this change. It has not been without challenges. She has been ably supported by Nathan Guthridge and Mathew Kelly. I want to also call out Sarah Brooker, who is the school council president. She brings a lot of verve and energy to the future of the school, and I know she is going to keep doing so—and Kade Dillon. Congratulations to all the students. It was a great day.

V/LINE SERVICES

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:43): In late July about a hundred passengers were stranded on board a V/Line train from Warrnambool to Melbourne, some of them for up to 8 hours. A damaged boom gate at North Shore affected 55 services, but a further breakdown in communication between V/Line's operations centre and staff on the ground led to extended delays for the Warrnambool passengers. V/Line's CEO apologised, calling the delay 'embarrassing and not good enough'. Impacted travellers were offered compensation. While mistakes can happen, the reliability of V/Line services over the recent months has been terrible. In late June a communications fault was blamed for a shutdown of the entire V/Line network that cancelled dozens of services during the morning peak and left thousands of passengers from across Victoria stranded at platforms. In late May every line in the V/Line network was brought to a standstill due to rail faults, train breakdowns and scheduled works. Regional Victorians deserve a quality reliable public transport service to Melbourne, but that is not what this government is providing. We have learned that the VLocity trains we have long been promised will have less seats and no catering service, and track upgrades will mean new rolling stock will only be able to travel at the same speed as the current diesel trains, 115 kilometres an hour. Regional Victorians are again being short-changed by a government whose commitment to quality rail services is completely off the rails.

GEEELONG ELECTORATE EARLY PARENTING SERVICES

Mr EREN (Lara) (09:44): The fantastic member for Geelong and I hosted the Premier in my electorate last Friday to officially turn the sod on Barwon Health's new early parenting centre at the McKellar Centre in North Geelong. New mums and dads will soon have better access to early parenting support in a purpose-built facility, with construction now underway for this centre. The new centre will have 10 residential units, four day-stay places, a kitchen, a dining area, play rooms and outdoor play areas. It is designed to help families with children up to four years of age develop their relationships and achieve their parenting goals. It will also provide parents and carers with the advice and care they need, including support with sleep and settling, feeding and extra care for babies and toddlers with additional needs. The facilities, exteriors, kitchen and dining area and residential family units have been carefully considered to create a safe and serene environment where families can feel at home. The centre is being delivered by the Victorian Health Building Authority in partnership with Barwon Health and Tweddle Child and Family Health Service. Construction is expected to be complete at the end of 2023, hopefully, and it will be delivered as a part of the Andrews Labor government's \$148 million investment into expanding and upgrading the early parenting services network. This is about helping local families get the support they need to give their children the best start in life. I am very proud that it is being built in my electorate to ensure services are accessible for those in the community that need them the most.

EILDON ELECTORATE SCOUTS

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (09:46): Congratulations to Rory Jenkins from 1st Mansfield Scouts for achieving the prestigious Queen's Scout Award, Mansfield's first in 19 years. Rory had to complete 300 hours of community service and outdoor activities and reach personal goals to gain 13 badges in the Venturer Award section and four in the Queen's Scout section. Rory's quests included assisting as a youth helper with Cub Scouts, learning about local government with the Mansfield Shire Council, fine-tuning his piano skills for a musical production and undertaking major hikes, canoeing and bushcraft. This is an admirable and major achievement. Well done, Rory.

Well done also to Ella McNair from 1st Healesville Scout Group Venturers for achieving her Queen's Scout Award. It has been almost 40 years since a member of the Healesville Scouts has received this admirable award. Ella started out for the badge when she was 15 years old after joining Scouts in grade 3. Completing 300 hours of adventurous activities, community involvement, leadership development and personal growth tasks has seen Ella receive the highest award possible in the Venturer section and one that is recognised worldwide. This award can help students gain admission into university courses and help future career paths. I wish Ella all the best for her future studies to get into midwifery.

HELEN PARCELL

Ms McLEISH: Helen Parcell from Deer Park has been knitting up a storm. Her daughter, Kim Wyllie, delivered two very large bags of children's jumpers, vests and beanies to my office to donate to people in need. I took great pride in handing them to Dawn and Nicole at Benwerren in Yarra Junction.

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (09:47): I would like to take the opportunity to send the many people in the community and across Victoria my best wishes on the auspicious occasion of the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The Premier likes to remind people that Victoria is home to not just the largest Indian diaspora but also the best, and I will take that a step further and say that Melbourne's south-east is in fact also home to the best. With over 270 000 Indian community members in Victoria and over 15 000 in Cranbourne, we benefit from the generosity, altruism, aspiration and focus on education of our Indian Victorians. We have seen that in so many ways in the past years. With floods and fires and the food relief provided by many, I could not be prouder to represent our wonderful community.

Last night I attended a terrific reception with the member for Footscray in her capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs at the invitation of the Consul General, and last weekend I was fortunate to be in the company of the Premier and colleagues at Federation Square for the flag-raising ceremony at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. To be in the company of Kapil Dev and superstar Abhishek Bachchan was a great honour and left me buzzing, with thanks to the powerhouse Mitu for all the work that she does in bringing that off.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Ms RICHARDS: The 18th of August is Vietnam Veterans Day, which commemorates the 60 000 Australians who served in Vietnam and the 30 000 who were wounded and remembers the 521 who died in the conflict. I would like to thank the Dandenong-Cranbourne RSL sub-branch for their continuous service and contribution and as always the young veterans for their work. I would also like to thank TaskForce for the work that they do and the hospitality they have shown me.

NARRACAN ELECTORATE HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (09:49): I would like to bring the attention of the house to the launch of a very important program supporting homeless senior single women in Baw Baw shire. Fairview Village is a not-for-profit community organisation that has provided world-class facilities for senior residents of the community since 1956. On Monday the Liberal candidate for Narracan, Wayne Farnham, launched a project that will see the redevelopment of four unused independent living units that will be offered to senior single women who through no fault of their own find themselves homeless. The units will be refurbished, and Wayne, a builder, has taken on the task of coordinating the work as a volunteer, already securing the support of a number of tradesmen, building suppliers, and equipment and furniture suppliers on a pro bono basis. Quantum have entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Fairview Village board of management and are best placed to assist in identifying those most in need. This is a fantastic initiative developed by the new CEO of Fairview Village, Di Wallace, and supported by the Liberal candidate for Narracan.

Across Gippsland on any given night there are around 500 people of all ages without a home. At a recent meeting with Chris McNamara from Gippsland Homeless Network and Cindy Pullar from Quantum it was very disappointing to hear of the crisis situation that housing availability had reached. In 2020 the Andrews government announced \$120 million to support the Victorian big build, and the Baw Baw shire was earmarked to receive a percentage of that funding. Our community is sick of waiting for this program to be rolled out. Fairview Village, Quantum and the Liberal candidate for Narracan, Wayne Farnham, are not prepared to wait any longer. They will do something about this situation right now.

TORQUAY ROAD, GROVEDALE

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (09:50): It was with some pleasure that we this week announced that we will, as a government, start a detailed consultation process with the community, particularly of Grovedale, on the future of Torquay Road. The southern suburbs of Geelong are growing rapidly. We have seen many, many thousands of people move into the Armstrong Creek and Mount Duneed areas over the last decade. All of these additional people are using Torquay Road, Grovedale, along with the Grovedale community. We have started a detailed community engagement process, which will be open until 30 September, asking those communities how they use the road and how they would like to see future investments prioritised along that road. Torquay Road through Grovedale is an important arterial road, and I very much look forward to engaging with my communities about how they use that road and about how future investment might be prioritised to ensure that that road can safely and adequately carry many additional car movements over the coming decades.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (09:52): This is the critical decade for climate action. Members of the Pahran community know we are in a climate emergency, and we want to be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. In fact with fires, floods and extreme weather here in Australian and across the world, we are already experiencing the devastating effects of climate change, and governments need to go further and faster with climate action. Here in Victoria coal is our state's biggest source of climate pollution, yet we still get two-thirds of our electricity from burning the world's most polluting coal, brown coal, at our power stations here in Victoria.

The Greens have introduced a bill to end coal burning in Victoria by 2030 and to increase Victoria's renewable energy target to 100 per cent by 2030. We have also released a comprehensive plan that outlines how Victoria can transition from coal to renewables within this decade. It means more rooftop solar and more solar and wind across the state. The huge potential of offshore wind means battery storage of all shapes and sizes—big batteries, community batteries, household batteries, pumped hydro and electric vehicles as batteries as well. It means upgrading our grid so that it is fit for the 21st century—with new transmission lines, virtual power plants, microgrids—and large industrial energy users, balancing out our grid, as well as a plan to ensure coal workers and the Latrobe Valley community are supported through this transition, with a jobs guarantee for coal workers to ensure no-one is worse off, and to secure long-term funding for an independent Latrobe Valley Authority.

IAIN RITCHIE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:53): I stand to honour the much-loved, respected, all grace, all heart Iain Ritchie, who left this world suddenly at the young age of 61. With an elongated list of service and achievements, most recently as manager of Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House, he would help anyone and everyone at every turn. Whether you were a refugee, new to country, homeless or just in need of a safe space, Iain was there, contacting a service, finding a local support group, helping fill out a form and making sure you had coffee or a hot meal.

He positively steered projects, events, gatherings, programs and groups. 'Needed help?', 'Certainly, you're welcome' were words that would repeatedly flow in his dulcet tones. He 'encouraged ideas, provided practical assistance', was 'indispensable in getting the Fixit Cafe off the ground' and rarely

missed set-up Sunday—another opportunity to chat with people, making sure they felt connected and supported. He was ‘a passionate social justice warrior’. These are just a smattering of character descriptors.

His passing leaves so many with a space hard to fill. Community his focus, compassion his essence, inclusion and opportunity his driver, family his adoration. Over 200 friends, family and colleagues came together to celebrate his extraordinary life, testament to the many he walked beside and wrapped his arms around. My heartfelt condolences to them; his partner, Andrew; his children, Peter, Ryan and Lucy; his granddaughter, Pippa; and all who cherished him. Your hummingbird recipe will now delight many and be cause to smile, licence for a further tear. Vale, Iain.

ROY MCINTOSH

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:55): My community, especially the Beaumaris RSL community, mourns the recent passing of distinguished World War II veteran Roy McIntosh, whose funeral was yesterday. Roy spent a major part of his service on the destroyer *HMAS Napier* and had the privilege of being part of a flotilla present at the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. Roy married Beaumaris RSL women’s auxiliary president Mairi Macneil, and they moved to Black Rock in 1996. I remember Roy fondly. He will be greatly missed. My assurance of prayers and heartfelt condolences to his widow, Mairi.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE MOORABBIN UNIT

Mr ROWSWELL: The Moorabbin SES was founded in August 1981 with 23 volunteer members and last Saturday celebrated 40 years of community service and contribution. In that time they have responded to more than 12 000 requests for assistance, have had more than 350 volunteer members and have contributed more than 120 000 volunteer hours. Together with the Liberal candidate for Bentleigh, Debbie Taylor-Haines, I was honoured to attend and speak at their birthday celebration and commend their controller, Andrew Litwinow, and his SES volunteer team for the work that they continue to do in our community.

SANDRINGHAM HOSPITAL

Mr ROWSWELL: Next Friday I look forward to attending Lunch by the Bay at the Sandringham Yacht Club, which will raise much-needed funds for our Sandringham Hospital. I acknowledge and thank the organising committee for their work to coordinate the event: Joan van den Dungen, Philippa Quigley, Jodie McDonald, Cathy Howard and Kerry Stratford. We must continue always to do everything we can to support our Sandringham Hospital.

NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (09:56): I recently had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Mental Health for her visit to the Narre Warren health and wellbeing hub. We announced \$13.3 million towards 20 pop-up mental health and wellbeing hubs in 2021 and then delivered 30 as services have responded to demand and increased locations across the state. These hubs act as welcoming front doors to the mental health system with no eligibility criteria—people can simply walk in to ask for help or more information. As we understand more about the impacts of mental health issues on individuals and society, we know of the importance of early intervention and accessibility. The hub in Narre Warren assists my constituents on a range of issues, including lowered mood, anxiety and distress, and dealing with stressors such as homelessness, financial difficulties and social isolation. Our local hub is being delivered by EACH, who have a long history of delivering a comprehensive range of services to address physical, mental and psychological needs at a primary care level. In just nine months over 2200 people have utilised the mental health and wellbeing hub in Narre Warren. I would like to thank the Minister for Mental Health for her recent visit and all the hard work that is going into providing easily accessible services for those in need.

PROJECT READY

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (09:58): I would like to share with the house the extraordinary work of some local students in my region, the wonderful kids from Project Ready at Mount Clear College. Project Ready is a great program facilitated by the Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network which gives students a VET certificate II in active volunteering and is designed to get them ready for work. Led by the wonderful Jenny, the students design and implement a community project to develop teamwork, planning and communication skills. The students came up with a fabulous idea to run a fashion parade using op shop items and onselling them—Project Ready Runway. This fantastic event raised \$500, which was donated back to the participating op shops. The event was a huge success, and I was delighted to see that the event and the group were finalists in the City of Ballarat Youth Awards—well deserved.

CITY OF BALLARAT YOUTH AWARDS

Ms SETTLE: I would also like to congratulate the winners of the 2022 City of Ballarat Youth Awards recipients—so the Compassion and Care Award, Millie Collins; Creative Arts Award, Zara Jarvis; Equity, Diversion and Inclusion Award, Meghan Lee; the Group Project Award for Green Fest, by the Ballarat Action Climate Co-op; Innovators Award, Indya Hayes; Leadership in Sport and Recreation Award, Rohan McMaster; Personal Growth Award, Ruby Lloyd-Vendy; Positive Leader Award, Dhuvarrishlanth Veerabahu; and Youth Volunteer Award, Liam Ryan. From this list it is clear to see that Ballarat is in good hands.

GEELONG YOUTH HUB

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:00): Victoria's young people have taken up the opportunity to tell the Andrews Labor government about what is important to them through the Victorian youth strategy, *Our Promise, Your Future*, launched last week. I want to acknowledge and thank the Minister for Youth and the past Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, the member for Sunbury, for their important work. To all of the young people who contributed, along with many youth organisations, a huge thankyou, particularly to the many Geelong young people who participated.

Young people in Geelong told us that they wanted a central youth hub. They talked about wanting a place to spend time with other young people they do not usually get to meet to learn about the many different cultural groups who live in our community and to have a conversation with Aboriginal young people and understand the past and the need for treaty. Young people with a disability talked about wanting a place to meet other young people with a disability. Young people talked about having a place to go to share jamming sessions or creative arts, with more recreational facilities, or to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Young people expressed their passion for a fairer and more equitable world. They want to have a voice, to be listened to and to see action. Well, in Geelong young people have been heard and listened to loud and clear. Geelong will be one of the first youth hub locations coming out of the strategy, exactly what young people asked for, along with the basketball court on the waterfront, recently announced. Young people are really excited about this new facility, and we are looking forward to progressing this.

GREEN WEDGE PLANNING

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (10:01): I want to take this opportunity to thank the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council for their assistance in spreading the word that if we become regional Victoria we lose the green wedge. I cannot be more clear than that. The council's comments came in the most recent edition of their newsletter, *Peninsula Wide*, and followed the council's own work which showed that:

... the proposition to reclassify the Mornington Peninsula as regional will threaten the strong protection of our cherished Green Wedge and result in significant planning issues and uncertainties.

The green wedge has been the best defence for the protection of the Mornington Peninsula and has kept us from being truly overdeveloped for the last 40 years. The livability of our peninsula, the green

space on our peninsula, the biolinks on the Mornington Peninsula and our wildlife on the peninsula would all be put at risk if we saw the loss of our green wedge.

This does not need to be a political issue. Let us work together to protect the Mornington Peninsula's green wedge for the long term so that our kids and grandkids can live on a peninsula similar to the one we grew up on. And let us fight for actual metropolitan services. We deserve better public transport, better schools and better roads. That is what I have spent the last four years fighting for and actually delivering.

HARVEST HOME PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:03): On Wednesday, 10 August, I had the great pleasure to visit Harvest Home Primary School, a school, like most, that has had many challenges during the pandemic supporting students, families and staff. Harvest Home Primary School rose to the challenge and has become an essential part of the local community, going well beyond the role of educating students that attend the school. I met with the school captains, in Inshirah, Amelia, Arush and Haydar, and also the incredibly dynamic school leadership team led by principal Anthony Simone. I also met with Andrew, Kaylene and Stacey. I met with their leadership teams to talk about the Respectful Relationships program. Students and staff explained to me how successful the program has been. It has vastly improved the school environment and has made positive change within and outside the school. It is now a lead school and has paved the way for others. We also went to the gym, which is decorated in the 50 or more national flags representing the ancestry of students and families, and I was told how even this simple act makes families and people feel much more included. I also met Harper, the therapy dog— *(Time expired)*

Statements on parliamentary committee reports

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (10:04): It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the *Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards*, a report that was done in August 2022. This was done by the Environment and Planning Committee. First of all I want to thank a number of members that were on the committee: the member for Tarneit, the chair, and I know the member for Eildon was also on that committee—fantastic. Largely this report's importance and relevance to my electorate is that we are seeing a huge increase in growth in apartments. It is important to have that to accommodate the growing population in Victoria and in Melbourne.

However, particularly in areas of my electorate—and I cite areas like Elsternwick—we are seeing an absolute densification, and a lot of the designs for these apartments are effectively for shoeboxes. You walk into some of these apartments and you are literally in the bedroom—there is no hallway; there is no walkway. I am told by many of the developers that are building these apartments that it is effectively communal outside living. You sleep in these apartments; you do everything else outside of these apartments. There is a communal kitchen to book if you want to book it, communal theatres, communal libraries and a whole range of other things, which might sound great. However, particularly with what we have experienced over the last four years in terms of having people locked in their homes and locked in their apartments, we know you need space.

I think what we are doing particularly to the mental health of families and of young people by building these shoeboxes simply for commercial purposes without looking at the amenity and livability is a real concern, so much so that the report talks about standards. It talks about what other states, like New South Wales, have done, particularly in terms of having some design standards, and it also covers things like affordability, importantly. It looks at futureproofing some of the apartments with transport needs, such as electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It looks at how these apartments can be built, keeping in mind lower emissions and reductions. It also looks particularly at, as I said, New South Wales and Western Australia mandating things like minimum daylight access, because we do know

some are built with very few windows, very little daylight and huge carbon footprints, doing nothing for anybody—other than a commercial outcome.

I think this is a very important report. It certainly highlights the fact that livability needs to be a priority. I know that, as I say, for many of the constituents in Elsternwick, Caulfield East and actually right through Caulfield—if you look around the Caulfield Racecourse, where we are now up to about 2000 residents just living around the racecourse itself in very, very small, tiny apartments—we need to ensure going into the future that we have design standards, that we have height limits and that we have infrastructure that supports those height limits and design standards so there is livability and accessibility for all. It is something that I have certainly been very strong on in this Parliament, talking about that livability piece. It is certainly what I will be advocating for in the lead-up to the election.

Glen Eira has had its fair share—some would say too much of a share—in terms of overdevelopment. We need to curb that. We need some planning height restrictions in some of these areas so we ensure that the accessibility and the livability are maintained. That is what I will be focusing on to ensure that in suburbs like Elsternwick, Caulfield East, Glen Huntly, Ormond and Ripponlea—all of these areas—livability is protected for our neighbourhoods and that while welcoming development we do it sensibly, we certainly do not entertain overdevelopment and we have the kind of apartment living that people like you and I and everyone else would expect, nothing less.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Apartment Design Standards

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (10:09): I rise to talk about the committee report on the inquiry into apartment design standards. As the previous chair of the Environment and Planning Committee, it is wonderful to be able to stand here this morning and talk about the really great policy recommendations and outcomes that resulted as part of this inquiry.

What we know is that according to the recent census data over 1.4 million occupied dwellings in Australia are currently some form of flat or apartment. We know that more and more Victorians are opting to live in apartments, and that is for many different reasons, including lifestyle. With Victoria set to reach a population of 11.2 million by 2056 it is safe to say that high-density living is going to be a growing fixture of our housing mix going forward. Today you will see in inner-suburban areas like South Yarra or even Footscray in the western suburbs high-rise apartments that just did not exist 15 to 20 years ago. Indeed what this tells us is that our city is changing, our state is changing, and we must change with it.

What we learned from the pandemic is that the design of apartment buildings has had a profound impact on people's health and wellbeing. Even things like how much space a room has or a bedroom has or whether there is sufficient ventilation and daylight have become questions that residents and folks living in these apartments have started to ask themselves. I think all of us here in this chamber can point to someone that we know or talk about a story that we have heard or even point to media articles talking about some of the apartments in the past that have been designed that you would struggle to even swing a cat in. We often refer to them as dog boxes.

One of the great things this government has done—and I have to pay tribute to the former planning minister, the member for Richmond—is gone ahead and reviewed apartment design standards and worked out what we can do better. What we actually did was roll out the *Better Apartments Design Standards*, the BADS. There is a huge pipeline of apartments currently under construction. Some have come onto the market and some will soon come onto the market that have been built under these BADS. We know that those apartments are likely to be built in a much better way than previous ones that were built before the BADS existed. This inquiry heard from many, many stakeholders right across the state that came to talk to the committee about apartment design standards and how we can do it better that the BADS will make a difference and what else we can do in going that step further to

improve apartments and the quality of living and the standard of living that people either renting or buying into apartment living are experiencing.

The report does acknowledge—and it is really important to state this—that not enough time has actually passed to fully assess the impact of the BADS. We know from this inquiry that, yes, they have made a positive impact on designs of apartments, but the inquiry also highlighted what we need to look at now to ensure that new apartments are going to continue to be more livable for their tenants. So we looked at things like a minimum size for apartments, ensuring they get enough sunlight, making sure the apartment has sufficient ventilation and accessibility for people with disabilities—making sure that doorways are wide enough for people that may in fact be in a wheelchair or on a walker. There were a whole host of other standards that, whilst we tend not to think about them even when we go to buy an apartment, are actually so important for residents living in apartment spaces. The report also looks at sustainability and how future designs can factor in sustainable, environmentally friendly standards.

As a previous chair of the committee I do want to give a huge shout-out to the members for Mornington, Yan Yean, Box Hill, Burwood, Eildon and Ovens Valley for their contribution to this inquiry. I also want to thank Igor Dosen and the rest of the secretariat for their hard work in preparing the report. These reports could not be prepared without the hard work of staff. That is why it is really important that we continue to make sure that the standards that are going to regulate our apartments continue to keep up with the living standards and expectations that Victorians have around modern living.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Report on the 2020–21 Budget Estimates

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:14): I am delighted to rise and make some comments on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's report on the 2020–21 budget estimates. I particularly want to highlight some of the education areas in that report. We know in this place that there is pork-barrelling in terms of education and that the notion that this government governs for all Victorians is a complete fabrication, because in terms of investment in education in the Ovens Valley and other regional areas it really is just well and truly well behind what other electorates have been receiving. I note in the report, on page 92, there is \$3.1 billion in the school capital program over the forward estimates:

The Minister described the level of investment to-date as 'unprecedented' noting the Government had now invested more than \$9 billion over the past five years to deliver more than 1,600 school upgrades.

I ask: where does Yarrawonga fit in this? Yarrawonga has been neglected. It is the fastest growing town in regional Victoria. People are moving to Yarrawonga in their droves, and that is not just retirees, that is families with kids. With kids comes the need for education, and where is Labor when it comes to educating our kids in Ovens Valley? They really are missing in action.

As part of the maintenance blitz of 2019 Yarrawonga got \$314 000. Well, whoopee-do. The fact is with \$314 000 now they can stop some of the leaks that are coming in through the roof and they can actually turn their heating on in the wintertime, so we should be grateful for that \$314 000 investment. But we are not a Third World country in regional Victoria, so you have got to do more than just a regional maintenance blitz. We need real investment.

Yarrawonga education operates in a very competitive environment. We know that. We have got Sacred Heart in the same town, a great school with great facilities. We have got Galen College and Cathedral College just a bus ride down the road at Wangaratta. So we need to keep the investment in public schooling, in Yarrawonga P–12, to make sure that that investment stays strong and provides great facilities for students in that public sector. I am certainly a staunch advocate for keeping public education strong. That is why back in 2014 we committed \$7.6 million to complete stage 2 for that school community, and that community was over the moon. Then the government for Melbourne came to power, and all of a sudden we saw that they had to rescope their building because they pulled money out of that. We had committed—the money was in the budget, \$7.6 million—and that money was not

all used. All of a sudden the scoping had to be changed, and they did not get delivered what was promised in the first place. So that is why more investment needs to be done. On page 93 of this report:

The Committee queried the Minister about whether the Government was building enough classrooms for future growth. The Minister highlighted the Government's latest investment provides for various initiatives including new schools, school expansions, land for future schools, and relocatable classrooms ...

and it just goes on and on. But again, where is Yarrawonga when it comes to all this investment that is going on? You drive around Yarrawonga—in fact I will take the minister for a drive around Yarrawonga, if I can get the Minister for Education to come to Yarrawonga, to see what is at the school. I encourage her to come. In fact I will ask her and invite the Shadow Minister for Education as well, and let us see who is interested in seeing that communities like Yarrawonga can get looked after. I strongly encourage the Minister for Education and the shadow minister to come and visit. I will take them around the school. I will let them see the phenomenal growth that is going on in a town like Yarrawonga to make sure that we can get that investment, because we are falling behind greatly. It seems like the only investment that goes into education in Yarrawonga is from a coalition government. We have even been trying to get a school bus, a town bus to get kids to school, and we cannot even get that. So when we talk about neglect, we cannot go spruiking about how much investment—billions and billions of dollars—is being spent on education and at the same time not even get a school bus, a town bus, to help us deliver the kids to school. So it is really important that we get the Minister for Education up and have a look. As I said, I offer the same to the shadow minister, and let us see who is really keen, who is fair dinkum, about wanting to know what improvements are needed at Yarrawonga P-12, because the lack of investment that has come from this government is really disappointing, particularly when they spruik that education is one of their major mantras that they want to talk about. That is why I encourage the minister to come to Yarrawonga.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the 2021–22 Budget Estimates

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (10:19): I refer to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's inquiry into the budget estimates for 2021–22 and the contribution from the Minister for Economic Development on how Victoria is trying to strengthen economic performance through a range of mechanisms. I want to continue my contribution on how we reach globally, lead nationally and deliver for Victoria.

In this contribution I want to look at research and development that delivers innovation for new industries and jobs and highlight how I am driving the strategy creating life-saving opportunities. As Victoria's first Parliamentary Secretary for Medical Research I represented the Victorian government at the Australian British Health Catalyst recently on the future of health care in the UK and Australia, digital and people. It proved vital and urgent in the time of pandemic and highly valuable for the opportunities I uncovered and have pursued. 'Creating opportunity from adversity' was the title of my presentation on establishing the health precincts of the future in built and virtual forms—sharing intellectual property, leveraging value, cutting costs and accelerating results.

I have also identified more valuable investment opportunities through the European Australian Business Council's (EABC) missions in London and Italy. These feature multibillion-euro opportunities for life-saving and life-changing collaborations; access to breakthrough technologies against cancer, including the so-called Australian disease, melanoma, which the Victorian government is driving; lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; and new digital technologies to reduce hospital waiting lists. Now, this is crucial in the time of pandemic and what the Victorian government is also trying to take care of right now. Such leads were followed up on the spot and continue to be pursued. Projects remain confidential, but the leader of Italy's biomedical sector publicly acknowledged the potential value. This is incredibly significant as the next evolution for Monash University, who have a competitive advantage with a campus in Italy. It follows the world-first announcement this week of mRNA manufacturing on a university campus at Monash with Moderna.

To put Melbourne in a global context, we are, like Boston and London, a world leader in life-changing and life-saving medical research, which emanates from our internationally acclaimed academies, especially the universities of Melbourne and Monash. mRNA manufacturing provides next-generation vaccines against the pandemic and is crucial for breakthroughs against cancers and other diseases. So I was delighted to join Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the Premier and federal and state ministers this week for the important announcement for health, science and national security. Creating opportunity, leveraging assets, building collaborations and delivering results are the themes that I will continue to beat like a drum. It has proved successful internationally through the Cancer Moonshot with the White House, and we will continue to try and expand that connection through the Catalyst and the EABC mission.

The free trade agreement between Australia and the UK and the AUKUS alliance provide mechanisms to expand collaborations and deliver a brain gain instead of a brain drain. I drew these themes together to create an international vision to deliver results at home and abroad, to avoid cultural blind spots and place-based disadvantage that have proved devastating during globalisation and the pandemic.

My other critical aim is to avoid Einstein's definition of insanity—when the fatigue and fog of the pandemic clears we must not return to doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, because the focus of contemporary politics can shift in the blink of a tweet. All we must defeat is the silo mentality, turf wars, institutional ego, bureaucratic inertia, the political cycle and the fog and fatigue of the pandemic. Add to this list the triumph of politics too often over rational decision-making and Einstein's definition of insanity—repeating cultural, generational and systemic failures. International ecosystems must continue to expand. Think of data as infrastructure. Collaborate across organisations and do not abandon postcodes of disadvantage like an orphan. This is where we must go back and leverage the connection. It is what I addressed in *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope* in 2016 about manufacturing. We can do a new city deal from Melbourne's north and take care of Broadmeadows as part of that, because we are changing it from a rust belt to a green belt and a brain belt and delivering vaccine manufacturing there as well.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (10:24): I am pleased to rise this morning to make a contribution on the committee report entitled *Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds*, which was tabled earlier this month by the Legal and Social Issues Committee. You are well familiar with that of course, Deputy Speaker, because you were the chair of that committee and did a great job in that capacity. I was pleased to join as a member of that committee from 14 October last year and to participate in that particular inquiry.

I just wanted to touch on a few matters from that report, and it contains 61 findings and 76 recommendations, so it is a very comprehensive document. The inquiry received 73 submissions and held five public hearings, with some of those being online as well as at the locations of Coburg, Geelong and Ballarat.

In terms of the contents of the report, the headings of the various chapters I think say it all. Chapter 2 talks about improving services, and there are 21 recommendations linked with that. Chapter 3 talks about leveraging the value of bicultural workers. Chapter 5 addresses social isolation and loneliness, and that contains five findings and six recommendations. Chapter 8, which is the one I want to focus on this morning, talks about enhancing responses to elder abuse, and that contains 11 findings and 14 recommendations. I will come back to that in just a moment. But overall the report acknowledges that certainly more can be done to increase multicultural older people's awareness of available support, to build their trust in government services, to reduce the stigma associated with accessing care and to provide services that meet their cultural and spiritual needs. It was certainly very informative, as we received a wide range of submissions and had various hearings with organisations and individuals that

had experience in this area, to hear their stories and to receive their information about their experiences in relation to dealing with government and so on.

We know that culturally diverse older people can certainly find it difficult to access services due to all sorts of barriers. They are matters that we often take for granted, but they can include language, transport, housing, finances and visa status. The committee looked at many of the challenges in that area, including, as I said, social isolation, barriers to economic and civic participation, digital exclusion, elder abuse and cultural inclusiveness of aged care. Amongst the recommendations there were various initiatives to increase the financial health and digital literacy of culturally diverse older people and to support the expansion of activities to reduce the social isolation of older people and facilitate their civic and economic participation. One of the recurring themes in the evidence that the committee heard was the fact that for many people where perhaps English is not their first language in particular it is extraordinarily difficult just to do many of what we would call ordinary, mundane, day-to-day things—and certainly as one gets older. It was very obvious to the committee members that for the cohort of like-minded individuals or individuals with the same multicultural background in many cases it became quite isolating once their inability perhaps to get out became apparent as well. So there are a number of very specific issues that particular cohort faces.

As I said, I want to quickly touch on some of the recommendations regarding elder abuse, because I think this is a very important issue in our community generally. But certainly it is a very, very important issue for older and multicultural Victorians, migrants and so on, as I said, where perhaps English is not their first language, and they can be very, very vulnerable to this sort of activity. It is important that the government reads, responds to and takes on board these important recommendations that have been made. Recommendation 56 talks about the government developing a strategy to prevent and respond to elder abuse in Victoria, which should include specific actions for culturally diverse communities, be built on past research and reviews and also refer back to the guiding principles that the committee included in chapter 2 of the report.

There are a number of other recommendations, which I will not have time to go into in great detail, but I just ask for the government to ensure that there are elder abuse awareness raising campaigns and education campaigns for all older community members.

LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Support for Older Victorians from Migrant and Refugee Backgrounds

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:29): As a member of the Legal and Social Issues Committee, I am pleased to rise to speak on the inquiry into support for older Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds. I want to acknowledge and thank the secretariat, who as always did an outstanding job. I also thank the chair, the member for St Albans, who is currently in the chair, and my parliamentary colleagues on the committee. I also want to thank the many organisations and individuals who contributed by submission and at hearings.

The report was tabled on 2 August 2022 and explores how the Victorian government, councils, service providers and community organisations can better support culturally diverse older Victorians to access services, participate fully in the community and be healthy. More than one in four Victorians were born overseas according to the 2016 ABS census. That is 28.4 per cent of the Victorian population who were born overseas in over 200 countries. The report acknowledges that more can be done to increase multicultural older people's awareness of available support, build their trust in government services, reduce the stigma associated with accessing care and provide services that meet their cultural and spiritual needs. The committee received 73 submissions and held five public hearings in Coburg, Geelong, Ballarat and online. With this evidence the committee was able to produce this report with 61 findings and 76 recommendations.

Culturally diverse older people can find it difficult to access services due to barriers relating to language, transport, housing, finances and visa status. The committee discusses many challenges in

the report, including social isolation, barriers to economic and civic participation, digital exclusion, elder abuse and the cultural inclusiveness of aged care. The report aims to address these challenges to ensure that older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds can age with dignity and respect. To achieve this some of the committee's recommendations include increasing funding for ethnospecific and multicultural organisations to provide essential services, trialling care finders or community connectors to help culturally diverse older people find and access services close to where they live, more specifically addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on culturally diverse older people, supporting professional development and career pathways for bicultural and bilingual workers, supporting various initiatives to increase the financial health and digital literacy of culturally diverse older people, supporting the expansion of activities to reduce the social isolation of older people and facilitate their civic and economic participation, developing an elder abuse prevention and response strategy and encouraging mainstream aged care providers to partner with ethnospecific organisations to improve their capability to deliver culturally inclusive services.

Victoria really is a great multicultural state that we are proud of, but there is always more to do. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet with many multicultural communities right across the state, hear their stories and hear their experiences of what it means to them to have to deal with services, how they access them and often the difficulties that they have. It was great to hear from the many organisations who gave evidence during the inquiry. It was mostly on Zoom because of the pandemic issues, but it was really great to hear from them and listen to the issues that they had in providing that support to multicultural communities, particularly people who have language difficulties and refugees who have come into the country and who struggle with language and struggle to understand how to access the supports that they need. We did hear from many organisations and those in communities who were providing some amazing services and were really committed to ensuring that their communities have the services that they need and to ensuring that the services were provided in the most appropriate way, so it was fantastic to hear from those organisations. We did hear from quite a number of those in Geelong, which was fantastic for me, and I encouraged them to put forward their views on what was happening in the Geelong community. This is a great report. I encourage all members to take the opportunity to read it, and I commend the report.

Bills

HUMAN SOURCE MANAGEMENT BILL 2022

Statement of compatibility

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (10:36): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Human Source Management Bill 2022.

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, **(the Charter)**, I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Human Source Management Bill 2022 **(the Bill)**.

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

Overview

The Bill establishes a legislative framework to regulate the registration, use and management of human sources by Victoria Police, conferring relevant duties, functions and powers on Victoria Police personnel. Victoria Police will be required to register a person as a human source if their identity is known to Victoria Police; Victoria Police wishes to obtain or use information from the person or task the person to assist a criminal investigation or with the gathering of criminal intelligence; and the person has a reasonable expectation their identity or relationship with police will remain confidential. A person will be defined as a human source from the time they are registered and Victoria Police will be prohibited from using information or tasking the person until they have been registered. This is subject to some narrow exceptions (outlined below).

The Bill also establishes an external oversight framework, where the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (**IBAC**) and the Public Interest Monitor (**PIM**) provide oversight of Victoria Police's

human source management program, and the Victorian Inspectorate (VI) in turn provides oversight of IBAC and coercive powers exercised by the PIM.

Human Rights Issues

Human rights protected by the Charter that are relevant to the Bill

The Bill engages the following human rights under the Charter:

- right to life (section 9)
- right to privacy and reputation (section 13)
- right to protection of children in their best interests (section 17(2))
- right to freedom of expression (section 15)
- right to security of person (section 21)
- right to fair hearing (section 24), and
- rights in criminal proceedings (section 25).

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

Registration of human sources to assist in gathering criminal intelligence or to support a criminal investigation

The Bill will require Victoria Police to go through a formal registration process before using a person as a human source to assist with the gathering of criminal intelligence or to support criminal investigations.

A Victoria Police officer must apply to the Chief Commissioner of Police (CCP) or their delegate to register a person as a human source if:

- Victoria Police wishes to obtain information from the person, task the person, or use or disseminate information obtained from the person; and
- the person's identity is known to Victoria Police and they have a reasonable expectation that their identity or the assistance they provide to Victoria Police will remain confidential (clauses 11 and 18). Whether a person has a 'reasonable expectation of confidentiality' will be an objective test based on the circumstances, rather than the subjective views of the person or Victoria Police personnel.

The registration process will involve a police officer submitting a registration application to the CCP or their delegate, outlining the reasons for the application and including sufficient information for the decision-maker to determine whether to approve the registration (clauses 21 and 31). Normally, the applicant police officer must be notified of a decision to register a human source in writing. The Bill will enable the CCP or their delegate to orally notify the applicant police officer of a registration of a non-reportable human source in urgent circumstances, where a delay caused by requiring a registration decision to be made in writing would prejudice the purpose for which the registration is made (clause 36). The Bill will also include a streamlined process for registering a person in 'emergency circumstances.' That is, where there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of any person, and the information the person is expected to provide cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means (clauses 40 and 41).

The Bill will enable the CCP or their delegate to register a person as either a lower risk 'non-reportable' human source, or, if the registration or use of the person as a human source poses a greater risk, as a 'reportable' human source who will be subject to more stringent regulation (clauses 23 and 33). The Bill will require the following people to be registered as reportable human sources:

- those who are under the age of 18
- those who have a serious medical or mental health condition, or
- those reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to privilege.

The Bill will not require Victoria Police to apply to register a person who proactively volunteers information to Victoria Police on a discrete occasion if the police officer is reasonably satisfied that the person is not under the age of 18, does not have a serious medical or mental health condition, and is not reasonably expected to have access to privileged information or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to privilege (clause 19).

Right to life and right to security of a person

Section 9 of the Charter provides that every person has the right to life and has the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of life. Section 21(1) of the Charter further provides that every person has the right to liberty and security.

I consider that the rights to life and security are engaged by the provisions in the Bill enabling Victoria Police to register and use people as human sources. The Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (**Commission**) noted there are significant risks to a person's safety that may arise when they are used as a human source.¹ If a person provides information or assistance to Victoria Police covertly, particularly about a criminal associate, there is a risk of retaliation against that person should the nature of the person's human source relationship with Victoria Police be suspected or uncovered.

However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any interference with the rights to life and security is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

Providing a legislative framework ensures an appropriately structured pathway for Victoria Police to use human sources to gather criminal intelligence and investigate crime. The Commission noted that human sources play a critical role in detecting and preventing serious crime, particularly as technological advancements and the sophistication of organised crime groups limit the effectiveness of other law enforcement techniques.² There are benefits to policing and community safety that arise from Victoria Police being able to use human sources.

The Bill includes mechanisms to ensure Victoria Police's power to register and use people as human sources is proportionate to the anticipated impacts on their rights to life and security.

The registration process itself is a key mechanism to manage the risks of using a person as a human source. Until an application to register a person as a human source is approved by the CCP or their delegate, Victoria Police will be prohibited from using a person as a human source. This will prevent Victoria Police from acting on information or covertly tasking the person in a way that may engage the person's rights to life or security, until such activity has been properly considered by a senior decision-maker within Victoria Police.

Victoria Police will be required to obtain informed consent from a person before they are registered as a human source. If the person who Victoria Police wishes to register is under the age of 18, both the child and their parent or guardian will be required to provide informed consent for the child to be registered, unless it is inappropriate in the circumstances for the parent or guardian to do so (e.g. if the child is providing information to Victoria Police about the parent or guardian). The Bill includes further safeguards for people under the age of 18 (outlined below) to ensure children are appropriately protected if their parent or guardian's consent is not obtained. These consent requirements will ensure that the human source management framework is voluntary for people to participate in, and that engagement with their rights to life and security is more reasonable.

This consent requirement is subject to only one narrow exception, when a person requiring registration as a human source proactively volunteers information to Victoria Police on a discrete occasion where it is also an emergency. In such cases, the CCP or their delegate will be able to register the person and act on the information without obtaining informed consent, ensuring that Victoria Police can respond quickly to the emergency. Other safeguards will apply to appropriately manage the risks involved, including:

- the requirement to satisfy the high threshold for emergency registrations, outlined above
- an emergency registration will only be valid for the duration of the emergency. Once the emergency circumstances have subsided, Victoria Police must either temporarily suspend the human source's registration pending a further application, or permanently deactivate the human source, and
- retrospective external oversight of emergency registrations by IBAC and the PIM, with the PIM responsible for overseeing emergency registrations of reportable human sources (see further below).

The registration process will also specifically require the CCP or their delegate to consider the risks of registering and using the person as a human source before approving a registration application. The decision-maker must be satisfied that:

- using the person as a human source is necessary and proportionate to achieving a legitimate law enforcement objective
- the risks associated with registering the person must have been identified and capable of being adequately managed, and
- registration is otherwise appropriate and justified.

In determining whether the 'appropriate and justified' threshold is satisfied, the CCP or their delegate are required to consider several factors, including the seriousness of the offence to which the person's information or assistance relates; the likelihood of being able to obtain the information or assistance through other

investigatory or intelligence methods; and conditions that would be imposed on the person's registration. The Bill also draws attention to the CCP's existing obligations under section 38 of the Charter, to ensure proper consideration is given to the potential impact of registration on a person's human rights.

The Bill will include additional requirements for registering a person as a reportable human source. These decisions may only be delegated by the CCP to an officer at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner. By aligning the seniority of the decision-maker with the level of risk posed by the registration, the Bill provides a clear process to ensure that the use of a person as a human source is appropriate and justified.

In addition to the 'appropriate and justified' threshold outlined above, the CCP or their delegate will only be able to register certain reportable human sources in exceptional and compelling circumstances. To register either a child, or a person for the purposes of obtaining or using privileged information, the CCP must be satisfied that:

- there is—
 - o to register people to obtain privileged information—a serious threat to national security, the community, or life and welfare of any person, or
 - o to register children—either a serious threat as outlined above, or a need to investigate a serious offence, and
- in both cases—the information the person is expected to provide cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means.

This additional requirement will assist in ensuring vulnerable people, or those whose registration poses a higher level of risk to the administration of justice or personal safety, will only be registered as human sources where it is proportionate to the risks involved and where there are no other policing methods available to achieve the law enforcement objective.

When considering whether to register a person as a reportable human source, the CCP or their delegate will also need to consider specialist advice. For children, this could be advice from a social worker or registered psychologist. For a person with a serious medical or mental health condition, this will be advice from a mental health or medical specialist. For a person reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, this will be legal advice.

The PIM may also make recommendations that the CCP or their delegate must consider before making a decision to register a person as a reportable human source. Victoria Police must notify the PIM of the application to register a person as a reportable human source and provide the PIM with all relevant information to assist the PIM in making recommendations to Victoria Police.

The PIM will provide retrospective oversight of emergency registrations of reportable human sources, noting that these registrations are time critical and require Victoria Police to respond urgently. The CCP or their delegate will be required to provide the PIM with all information relevant to the emergency registration within two business days after registration, to enable timely oversight.

The provision of specialist advice and advice and recommendations from the PIM will further ensure Victoria Police's decision to register a person as a human source are well informed about the risks and proportionate to any human rights impacts.

When approving a registration, the CCP or their delegate may impose conditions on how the human source will be used. This will enable Victoria Police to tailor the planned activities of the human source in a manner proportionate to the potential criminal offences being investigated and risks posed to their life and security.

The Bill also includes maximum periods for which a person may be registered as a human source (12 months for a non-reportable human source and six months for a reportable human source), and minimum periods for registration to be reviewed during that time (monthly reviews for reportable human sources and quarterly reviews for non-reportable human sources). The Bill enables Victoria Police to re-register a person upon the expiry of a registration period. Maximum registration periods and required review periods ensure that the risks to a human source's life or security are managed appropriately, including where those risks change over time.

IBAC will also provide broad external oversight of the human source management framework by retrospectively monitoring Victoria Police's compliance with the Bill, any regulations, and relevant Victoria Police policies. IBAC's oversight will ensure that the Bill's requirements in relation to registering and using people as human sources are upheld by Victoria Police and that any trends towards non-compliance that might endanger a human source's life or security are identified and addressed.

Right to privacy, right to fair hearing and protection from self-incrimination

Section 13(1) of the Charter provides that every person has a right not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Section 24(1) of the Charter provides that a person

charged with a criminal offence has the right to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal. Section 25(2)(k) protects the right of a person charged with a criminal offence not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt.

While section 25(2)(k) of the Charter refers to ‘a person charged with a criminal offence’, courts have interpreted the protections as extending to a person who has not been charged.³ This interpretation acknowledges that the privilege against self-incrimination can be infringed by using evidence in criminal proceedings that a person was compelled to give prior to being charged.

I consider that these rights may be engaged by the Bill in relation to persons whom human sources are being used to investigate. The Bill provides a legislative framework for Victoria Police to use human sources to covertly gather information about a person (‘target’), without that person’s knowledge, to assist with criminal investigations. The target of the human source activity may unwittingly provide self-incriminating information to the human source. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limitation on the target’s right to privacy is lawful and not arbitrary. Any limitation on rights to a fair trial or freedom from self-incrimination is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

As noted above, the CCP or their delegate may only approve an application to register a person as a human source if satisfied that it is necessary and proportionate to achieving a legitimate law enforcement objective; the risks can be adequately identified and managed; and registration is otherwise appropriate and justified. As outlined above, one of the factors to be considered when determining whether the registration is ‘appropriate and justified’ is the likelihood of being able to obtain the information through other investigatory or intelligence methods. The elements of the registration test ensure that the use of human sources to obtain information or provide assistance is proportionate to the offences being investigated, and is proportionate to any limitation on the rights of persons being investigated.

Registration and use of people under the age of 18 as reportable human sources

As noted above, the Bill empowers the CCP or a delegate at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner to register children as reportable human sources, where satisfied that certain criteria have been met (clause 23). The Commission urged Government to include children as reportable human sources in the legislative framework, recognising the welfare and ethical risks associated with their use as human sources and the framework’s role in mitigating these risks.⁴

Right of children to protection in their best interests

Section 17(2) of the Charter states that every child has the right, without discrimination, to such protection as is in his or her best interests and is needed by him or her by reason of being a child.

I consider that the right of children to protection in their best interests is limited by the provisions in the Bill enabling Victoria Police to register and use children as human sources, given the risks to individual safety that arise when doing so. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limitation with the right is reasonable and demonstrably justified, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with the Charter.

The Bill provides for the registration, use and management of children as human sources, to ensure they are afforded the important safeguards offered by the legislative framework, including the more stringent protections for reportable human sources. If a child provides information to Victoria Police and Victoria Police are prohibited from registering them as a human source, those protections would not be guaranteed and the interactions with Victoria Police would lack both internal and external oversight.

The Bill includes measures to ensure that using a child as a human source is proportionate and justified, recognising that it may limit the right to protection in their best interests. As outlined above, the registration process itself serves as a key mechanism through which the rights of children are safeguarded in the Bill. The registration process ensures that Victoria Police must first go through a formal risk assessment and approvals process before using a child as a human source. As part of this process, Victoria Police will securely store information about the child to protect their identity. Registration therefore provides strong protections to prevent the child’s identity and status as a human source from being disclosed in an unauthorised way. It is also an offence under the Bill to disclose a person’s status as a human source (see below), which is an additional protection for all human sources, including children.

The Bill also provides a range of robust safeguards at the registration phase. In addition to those outlined above (e.g. the ‘exceptional and compelling circumstances’ threshold and the requirement to consider specialist and PIM advice), the Bill requires the CCP or the delegate determining a registration application to specifically consider whether:

- the person subject of the application is a child and if so, whether the registration is in best interests of the child, and
- the expected impacts on the child’s wellbeing.

Further protections are also provided in the Bill for children following registration (e.g. maximum registration and minimum review periods). Together, these safeguards serve to protect the right of children to protection in their best interests by:

- narrowing the circumstances in which a child can be registered and used as a human source
- ensuring the registration and use of children as human sources is informed by advice and consideration of factors that specifically address the risks to children, and
- ensuring the conditions governing the use of a child as a human source remain commensurate to the risks.

Given the particular vulnerabilities of children aged 14 or younger, the Bill will limit Victoria Police's ability to use children in this age range as human sources. The Bill will prohibit Victoria Police from initiating contact with children aged 14 years or younger for the purpose of requesting, inducing or procuring them to become human sources, only enabling such children to be registered as human sources where they have approached Victoria Police. If a child aged 14 years or younger is registered as a human source, Victoria Police will be prohibited from tasking the child to gather information or provide assistance, and may only obtain or disseminate information where the child has proactively approached Victoria Police with that information. These safeguards ensure that the use of children aged 14 years or younger as human sources is strictly confined and proportionate to the risks involved.

Additionally, children will be entitled to have either a parent, guardian or independent person present during interactions with Victoria Police. The child will also have an entitlement to a lawyer for interactions relating to registration, tasking or deactivation, recognising that these are points in the human source relationship where key decisions are made, and significant risks arise. Victoria Police will be required to notify the child of their right to have a lawyer present prior to any interactions where the entitlement arises. These provisions will ensure Victoria Police's ability to use a child as a human source is reasonable, by providing children with adequate support and protection in the process.

Functions and powers of IBAC and the PIM

To assist in performing their oversight functions under the Bill, both IBAC and the PIM will have the power to:

- access or inspect relevant material (clauses 53 and 66–70)
- request information from Victoria Police personnel (clauses 52(2)(a) and 65(2)(a)), and
- require Victoria Police personnel to provide them with answers or documents if necessary (clauses 52(2)(b) and 65(2)(b)).

Victoria Police will also have obligations to report proactively to the PIM on any applications to register a person as a reportable human source (clause 54) and to IBAC on:

- general registration application matters, such as the total number of registration applications submitted and total number of applications approved
- emergency registrations and oral notifications, and
- emerging issues, such as material contraventions of the human source management framework, instances where Victoria Police used a human source to access to privileged information, and Victoria Police's implementation of IBAC's recommendations (clauses 71–74).

To facilitate the full and free provision of information by Victoria Police to oversight agencies and best ensure they are able to perform their functions, the Bill will not allow for Victoria Police personnel to assert client legal privilege or public interest immunity (**PII**) where information is required, requested or directed to be provided by Victoria Police to the PIM or IBAC, or is where information is otherwise shared between the PIM and IBAC under the Bill (clauses 59 and 76).

Where the PIM or IBAC direct Victoria Police personnel to provide information, the privilege against self-incrimination will also be specifically abrogated (clauses 60 and 77).

Both the PIM and IBAC are required to report annually to the Attorney-General on the performance of their functions under the Bill (clauses 62 and 79). For the PIM, annual reporting obligations will include reporting on the number of times they have been notified about an application made by Victoria Police to register a person as a reportable human source, including in emergency circumstances. For IBAC, annual reporting obligations will include reporting on the extent of Victoria Police's compliance with the human source management framework. Both IBAC and the PIM are empowered to provide special reports to the Attorney-General at any time outside of this reporting period, on any of the same matters. Following provision of their reports, the Attorney-General is required to table these in Parliament within 14 sitting days (clauses 64 and 81).

Additionally, IBAC and the PIM are required to notify the VI where they have exercised a power to require Victoria Police personnel to provide them with information to support their oversight functions (clauses 52(3) and 65(3)). In turn, the VI is required to report on the performance of its functions in its annual report (clause 86).

Right to fair hearing and right to freedom from self-incrimination

I consider that clauses 60 and 77 of the Bill may engage the right to fair hearing in section 24(1) and the right to be free from self-incrimination in section 25(2)(k) of the Charter. However, for the following reasons, I am satisfied that any limits imposed by those clauses on those rights are reasonable and demonstrably justified.

Enabling IBAC and the PIM to compel information from Victoria Police personnel is critical to ensure the oversight agencies can access the material required to perform their oversight functions. Preventing claims of privilege in these instances will also give Victoria Police personnel comfort that they may provide sensitive human source information to oversight agencies lawfully, and without breaching statutory secrecy provisions. The power to obtain necessary information to perform the oversight functions will ensure improved accountability in Victoria Police's human source management framework.

The Bill includes four significant protections for Victoria Police personnel who are compelled to provide information to the PIM or IBAC where the privilege against self-incrimination is abrogated.

First, the abrogation of the privilege against self-incrimination is limited to instances where either the PIM or IBAC direct Victoria Police personnel to provide answers or documents, rather than where information is requested by oversight agencies. This provides the PIM and IBAC with an avenue to access information from Victoria Police personnel without abrogating this privilege (that is, by requesting the information first) and discretion over when the privilege against self-incrimination is abrogated.

Second, the Bill also limits how information can be used where the privilege against self-incrimination has been abrogated. Consistent with other legislative schemes (e.g. section 84 of the *Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011*), if a member of Victoria Police personnel is compelled to provide information, the Bill expressly prohibits that information being used as evidence against the person who provided it before any court or person acting judicially, except in proceedings for:

- perjury or giving false information, or
- breach of discipline under the *Victoria Police Act 2013*.

Third, in addition to the information itself being largely inadmissible, the Bill also provides a broad derivative use immunity, which prevents any evidence obtained as a direct or indirect consequence of the coercively obtained material from being admissible as evidence against the person who provided it in a criminal proceeding or proceeding for the imposition of a penalty.

These immunities recognise that, while it may be appropriate for the privilege against self-incrimination to be abrogated to enable the PIM and IBAC to perform their oversight functions under the Bill, it would disproportionately limit a person's rights to a fair hearing and freedom from self-incrimination to enable such information to be used to prosecute or gather further evidence against them.

Fourth, the Bill further provides that both the PIM and IBAC must notify the VI when they have exercised a power to compel Victoria Police personnel to provide material. This requirement will ensure the VI can monitor the lawfulness of the PIM and IBAC utilising coercive powers. Once the VI has assessed the exercise of these coercive powers, it may make recommendations to the PIM or IBAC around any action they should take to remedy conduct that may have been unlawful. This will assist in ensuring coercive powers are exercised in a way that is proportionate to a person's rights under sections 24(1) or 25(2)(k) of the Charter.

Right to privacy

In my opinion, the right to privacy is engaged by the Bill providing for Victoria Police to give information to IBAC and the PIM where required, requested or directed to do so. Given the provision of information in these circumstances is subject to an abrogation of client legal privilege and PII, the material could include personal information relating to individuals involved in the human source management program.

The right to privacy is also engaged by the requirement in the Bill for IBAC and the PIM to provide information in their reports to both the Attorney-General and the VI, and by the VI being required to include information on the performance of its functions under the Bill in its annual report. Such reports could include a limited or high-level form of material provided by Victoria Police personnel and, in subsequently being tabled, could result in that material being made publicly available.

However, for the following reasons, I consider that any interference with this right is lawful and not arbitrary, and therefore that the Bill is compatible with section 13 of the Charter.

The requirements for Victoria Police to provide information about human source management to IBAC and the PIM, as well as the oversight agencies' reporting requirements, are intended to promote greater accountability and transparency of Victoria Police's human source management program.

Information relevant to a decision to register a person as a human source is likely to be subject to PII. Legal advice obtained as part of the registration process for reportable human sources is also likely to be subject to client legal privilege. Preventing claims of privilege is therefore critical to the PIM and IBAC's ability to perform their respective oversight functions.

To balance these objectives with human rights, the Bill includes protections to safeguard the right to privacy for a person involved in Victoria Police's human source management program.

The Bill explicitly prohibits IBAC, the PIM and the VI from including in their annual reports information that could tend to reveal a person's involvement in the human source management program. Agencies are required to omit from their reports information if satisfied that the information could disclose the identity or location, or otherwise compromise the safety, of a person who:

- Victoria Police has made an application to register as a human source, or
- is currently or was previously registered as a human source.

Before reports are provided to the Attorney-General, the PIM and IBAC will be required to provide a copy to the CCP, who may recommend the removal of sensitive information outlined above.

Office of unauthorised disclosure of human source information

Clauses 87, 88 and 89 of the Bill create offences for a person to disclose information that reveals, or is likely to reveal, that another person is registered as a human source, has previously been registered as a human source (but has since been deactivated), or is someone who Victoria Police has made an application to register as a human source. The purpose of these offences is to ensure that a person's potential, current or former involvement in Victoria Police's human source management program is not made publicly known in a way that could jeopardise their safety. This offence protects the identities of individual human sources or people who have been involved in the human source process but is not intended to limit transparency around Victoria Police's use of human sources.

The offence is modelled on section 30 of the *Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act 2004 (Assumed Identities Act)*, which makes it an offence for a person to disclose any information that reveals, or is likely to reveal, that an assumed identity acquired or used by another person is not the other person's real identity. The offence in the Assumed Identities Act provides a relevant model for the offence in the Bill, given both legislative schemes deal with circumstances where a person is involved in covert activity with Victoria Police and their true identity and the nature of the assistance they are providing is hidden from the public.

The Bill includes exceptions to the offence where a person discloses information for a purpose permitted under the Bill. These exceptions include disclosing information for the administration of the Bill, for the purpose of legal proceedings (including obtaining legal advice), or where the information is disclosed in accordance with any other law.

Rights to life, privacy and security of a person

In my opinion, the new offences will assist in promoting a human source's right to life (section 9), right to privacy (section 13) and right to security of person (section 21).

By broadly prohibiting disclosure of information that could reveal their involvement in the human source management program, the Bill will protect human sources against the risks to their life or security that could arise if this information is disclosed. Additionally, the offences ensure that details about a person's status as a human source or application for registration as a human source remain confidential, which means that a human source's identity is protected throughout all key interactions with Victoria Police, not just from the point of registration.

Right to a fair hearing and freedom from self-incrimination

In my opinion, the operation of the offence provisions in the Bill will also help promote the right to a fair trial (section 24) and freedom from self-incrimination (section 25) for persons who human sources are used to investigate.

The exceptions to the offence provisions ensure that information about the use of a human source may still be disclosed where this is required in criminal proceedings.

Right of freedom of expression

Section 15 protects a person's right to seek, receive and impart information freely. Section 15(3) states that lawful restrictions on this right may be necessary to respect the rights and reputation of other persons, or to

protect public safety, order, health or morality. By prohibiting the unauthorised disclosure of information revealing or tending to reveal a potential, current or former human source relationship, the Bill may limit the right of freedom of expression in section 15 of the Charter.

However, in accordance with section 15(3) of the Charter, I am satisfied that the offences of unauthorised disclosure in the Bill are lawful restrictions on a person's rights under section 15 that is reasonably necessary to protect the rights of other persons. Accordingly, I consider the unauthorised disclosure offences to be compatible with the right to freedom of expression.

The Commission recommended the creation of these offences, given 'the critical need to protect the identities and safety of human sources.'⁵ If disclosure of such information was permitted under the Bill, there would be a real risk of retaliation against the person, endangering their rights to life, security and privacy.

The scope of the unauthorised disclosure offence is narrowly confined in its application to information that reveals or is likely to reveal a person's potential, current or former human source relationship with Victoria Police. This ensures the offence targets information that poses the greatest risk to a person's safety if disclosed, rather than broad categories of information which might not necessarily reveal a person's particular relationship with Victoria Police (e.g. a person's name or location alone).

Consistent with the offence under section 30 of the Assumed Identities Act, the unauthorised disclosure offence applies only to a person who reveals information about *another person's* relationship with Victoria Police. That is, the offence does not capture disclosure of information by a person that reveals *they* could be, are, or were previously a human source. This ensures the offence does not unreasonably infringe on the freedom of expression of those it is specifically designed to protect.

Additionally, the exceptions to the offence included in the Bill ensure that information about Victoria Police's use of human sources can be disclosed where there is a legitimate reason to do so, or where disclosure is otherwise permitted by law. Circumstances in which disclosure will be permitted include where:

- a person wishes to make a public interest disclosure to IBAC about a member of Victoria Police personnel engaged in the human source management program, or
- the use of human sources is required to be disclosed in criminal proceedings.

To ensure the exceptions to the offence continue to appropriately capture reasonable and justified disclosures, the Bill will enable regulations to prescribe further exceptions to the offence. As noted above, the exceptions to the offence ensure it remains focused on protecting the safety of people who could potentially be, are currently, or have previously been registered as human sources, rather than unreasonably infringing on freedom of expression around Victoria Police's use of human sources. In my opinion, the Bill therefore appropriately balances the interest in protecting the safety of human sources with the Charter rights to freedom of expression.

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Minister for Corrections
Minister for Youth Justice
Minister for Victim Support
Minister for Fishing and Boating

¹ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 131.

² Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 131.

³ See, for example, *Re an application under the Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Act 2004* (2009) 24 VR 415, [162]–[163].

⁴ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, volume III, 138.

⁵ Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, *Final Report*, 30 November 2020, *Final Report*, volume III, 138.

Second reading

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice, Minister for Victim Support, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (10:36): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Human Source Management Bill 2022 (**Bill**) is an important step to fulfil the Victorian Government's commitment to implement all recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants (**Commission**).

This Bill delivers recommendations 8–18, 44–56 and 58 of the Commission by establishing a legislative framework to regulate Victoria Police's use of human sources.

The Bill is the first of its kind in Australia. It sets out the process for the registration, use and management of Victoria Police's human sources and establishes an external oversight model to ensure that human sources are used in an ethical and justifiable manner.

The Commission's recommendations

The Government announced the establishment of the Commission on 3 December 2018. This announcement followed the publication of the High Court's decision in *AB v CD, EF v CD* [2018] HCA 58, which revealed former criminal defence barrister, Ms Nicola Maree Gobbo, was a registered Victoria Police human source.

The Commission delivered its final report containing 111 recommendations on 30 November 2020. On 7 May 2021, the Government released its response to the Commission's final report and reiterated its commitment to implement the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission found that while human sources play a critical role in investigating and preventing crime, the use of a person as a human source can also create substantial risks. Victoria Police's use of Ms Gobbo as a human source exposed systemic issues within Victoria Police and had far-reaching and detrimental consequences for the Victorian justice system.

The Commission identified that the covert nature of the human source relationship increases the risks of Victoria Police officers engaging in corruption and misconduct and can expose individuals to significant safety risks. Using human sources with access to privileged information can also undermine public trust in important professional relationships, such as the relationship between a lawyer and their client.

The Commission noted that while Victoria Police has made significant progress in updating its internal human source management policies since the Commission, Victoria Police's internal policies are insufficient on their own to prevent the recurrence of the events that gave rise to the Commission. In contrast with other covert powers exercised by Victoria Police, there is no statutory regulation or independent external oversight of Victoria Police's human source program.

The Commission emphasised the importance of a clear legal framework to facilitate the effective use of human sources to investigate and prevent criminal activity, while simultaneously ensuring that their use is ethical, proportionate and justified. The Commission also emphasised that independent, external oversight is an important check and balance on the use of police powers, ensuring that Victoria Police is held accountable while maintaining public trust and confidence.

The Commission therefore recommended that the Government introduce legislation to regulate the use and management of human sources by Victoria Police and establish an external oversight regime.

I now turn to the Bill.

Registration and management processes

The Bill requires Victoria Police to go through a formal registration process before they can use a person as a human source. Victoria Police is required to register a person as a human source if Victoria Police wishes to use the person to gather information or provide assistance to Victoria Police, and the person has a reasonable expectation that their identity or relationship with Victoria Police will be kept confidential.

The purpose of the registration process prescribed in the Bill is to ensure a senior officer within Victoria Police formally assesses whether using a person as a human source is appropriate and justified. To achieve this, the Bill includes robust safeguards in the registration process, including requiring:

- registration decisions to be made by an officer whose seniority aligns with the level of risk posed by the registration
- the decision-maker to be satisfied that the registration of the person as a human source is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement purpose and that any risks have been identified and can be adequately managed
- the person's informed consent to be registered as a human source to be obtained prior to registration, and
- appropriate boundaries to be set for the human source relationship, including establishing the purpose of the registration and any conditions to be placed on the registration.

The Bill has been carefully constructed to recognise the numerous ways in which people provide information to police, to ensure it does not inappropriately capture circumstances that do not pose the level of risks inherent with human sources. The Bill does not require a person to be registered as a human source who falls within other categories of people who provide information to Victoria Police such as witnesses and anonymous tip-offs. A person who approaches Victoria Police to confidentially volunteer information on a discrete occasion is also not a human source under the Bill, unless they are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to privilege, are under the age of 18, or have a serious medical or mental health condition.

The Bill prohibits Victoria Police from using a person as if they are a human source unless the person has been registered as a human source. The Bill also prohibits Victoria Police from using a human source for a different purpose from the purpose approved at registration.

Reportable human sources

The Bill requires Victoria Police to apply to register certain categories of people as 'reportable human sources' because they are particularly vulnerable or using them as a human source poses a heightened level of risk to the administration of justice. The Bill specifies more stringent registration requirements for reportable human sources, including approval by a more senior officer within Victoria Police, requirements to consider legal, medical or other specialist advice, and involvement of the Public Interest Monitor (**PIM**) in registration decisions.

Stricter registration requirements for people who are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information

The Bill requires a person to be registered as a reportable human source if they are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information, or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to privilege. This reflects the significant risk to the administration of justice if Victoria Police use a human source to obtain information in breach of obligations of privilege, as demonstrated by the use of Ms Nicola Gobbo as a human source.

If a person is reasonably expected to have access to privileged information or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to privilege, the Bill requires the decision to register the person as a human source to be made by the Chief Commissioner or a delegate of or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner. The Bill also requires the Chief Commissioner or their delegate to consider formal legal advice and any recommendations by the PIM when making a registration decision.

The Bill only allows Victoria Police to intentionally use a human source in breach of obligations of privilege in very rare circumstances. If the person will be registered as a human source for the purpose of obtaining privileged information, the Bill only permits registration if the Chief Commissioner or their delegate is satisfied that there is a serious threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of a person, and that the information cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means.

Stricter registration requirements and additional safeguards for people under the age of 18 and people with a serious mental or medical health condition

The Bill also requires a person to be registered as a reportable human source if they are under the age of 18, or they have a serious medical or mental health condition. This requirement reflects the additional welfare and human rights risks associated with using people in these categories as human sources.

If children and people with a serious medical or mental health condition provide information to Victoria Police, it is important that the Bill allows them to be registered as human sources. Registration will ensure Victoria Police can give children and vulnerable adults certain protections, including concealing their identity and ensuring their relationship with Victoria Police is overseen by the PIM and the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (**IBAC**).

If a person is under the age of 18 or has a serious medical or mental health condition, the Bill will permit only the Chief Commissioner or their delegate at or above the rank of Assistant Commissioner to make the decision to register the person as a human source. The Bill requires the consideration of advice from a medical professional or other specialist, as well as any recommendations made by the PIM, before registration.

Importantly, the Bill includes additional protections for children. The Bill only permits a person under the age of 18 to be registered as a human source for the purpose of investigating a serious offence, or if there is a serious threat to national security, the community, or the life and welfare of a person, and the information cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means. The Bill also prevents Victoria Police from approaching a child aged 14 years or younger for the purposes of recruiting them as a human source or tasking them to seek out further information. The Bill entitles all children to have a lawyer and a parent, guardian or independent person present during key interactions with Victoria Police.

Streamlined processes in emergencies or urgent circumstances

The Bill recognises the need for Victoria Police to act quickly in emergencies to respond to imminent and serious threats to the community, national security, or the life and welfare of a person. The Bill includes a streamlined process for registering a person as a human source in these circumstances, allowing the registration decision to be made orally and removing requirements to obtain legal, medical or specialist advice before registration.

As soon as the emergency circumstances have passed, Victoria Police must deactivate or suspend the registration, and cannot continue to use the person as a human source until they are re-registered through the standard registration process for either reportable or non-reportable human sources.

To ensure that the emergency registration process is only used where appropriate, the Bill requires Victoria Police to notify the PIM within two business days of all emergency registrations of a person as a reportable human source. The Bill then empowers the PIM to make retrospective recommendations to Victoria Police about the appropriateness of the registration. The Bill also requires Victoria Police to notify IBAC of all emergency registrations on a quarterly basis. The Bill then empowers IBAC to review all emergency registrations or a sample of emergency registrations to assess whether Victoria Police has complied with the Bill and whether the emergency registrations should have been made.

Normally, the applicant police officer must be notified of a decision to register a human source in writing. The Bill will allow an oral notification of a decision to register a non-reportable human source if a person provides time-critical information that would assist police to respond in urgent circumstances. Like emergency registrations, oral notifications will be reviewed by IBAC quarterly.

Requirements for ongoing management of human sources

Once a human source has been registered, the Bill recognises the importance of ongoing risk management throughout a human source's involvement with Victoria Police.

The Bill therefore requires Victoria Police to conduct regular reviews of a human source's registration to ensure it remains appropriate and justified. The Bill requires a human source to be deactivated after 6 months if they are a reportable human source, or 12 months if they are a non-reportable human source. However, Victoria Police can re-register a human source after these periods in line with the risk assessment, decision-making and oversight processes in the Bill.

The Bill also includes safeguards if a human source unexpectedly provides privileged information during their registration, or if a human source develops a serious medical or mental health condition. In these circumstances, the Bill requires Victoria Police to immediately quarantine the information the human source provided and either deactivate the human source or suspend their registration until a fresh registration application is approved.

External oversight

The Bill also establishes an external oversight regime involving tiered levels of oversight by the PIM and IBAC across all human source activity involving Victoria Police. The Bill empowers the PIM to be involved in Victoria Police's decision-making process for registering reportable human sources. The Bill also empowers IBAC to retrospectively monitor Victoria Police's compliance with the human source management framework, including the Bill, any regulations and Victoria Police's internal policies. Finally, the Bill empowers the Victorian Inspectorate to have oversight of some of the PIM and IBAC's oversight powers under the Bill.

PIM involvement in registration decisions

The Bill gives the PIM new functions and powers to support their oversight role. The Bill gives the PIM new functions to:

- inform Victoria Police's decisions to register a person as a reportable human source by assessing registration applications and making recommendations about whether the person should be registered as a reportable human source, and
- provide retrospective oversight of Victoria Police's decisions to register a person as a reportable human source in an emergency by assessing the registration application and making recommendations to Victoria Police on whether the person should have been registered.

The Bill places certain obligations on Victoria Police to assist the PIM to perform these functions. The Bill requires Victoria Police to notify the PIM of an application to register a person as a reportable human source, provide the PIM with all information relevant to that application, and provide any other reasonable assistance the PIM might require. The Bill also empowers the PIM to ask questions, require Victoria Police personnel to provide information, and share information with IBAC.

IBAC compliance monitoring

The Bill also gives IBAC new functions and powers to support its oversight role.

Under the Bill, IBAC will retrospectively monitor Victoria Police's compliance with the Bill, any regulations, and Victoria Police's internal policies and procedures in relation to the registration, use and management of human sources. These functions include conducting regular inspections, receiving regular reports, and making recommendations to Victoria Police to support compliance with the Bill.

The Bill empowers IBAC to conduct regular inspections of Victoria Police records relating to human sources. As part of each inspection, the Bill requires IBAC to review all registrations or a sample of human sources and assess whether the decisions relating to each of those human sources complied with the Bill and should have been made.

The Bill also requires Victoria Police to provide regular reports to IBAC about the receipt of privileged information from human sources and any material contraventions of the human source management framework. Material contraventions are any breach of the human source management framework that is likely to undermine the integrity of Victoria Police.

After receiving these reports, IBAC must assess whether Victoria Police has put in place adequate measures to manage the risks associated with receiving privileged information and whether they have taken appropriate steps to prevent a recurrence of the material contravention.

To support its compliance monitoring functions, the Bill gives IBAC broad powers to require Victoria Police personnel to provide it with information or assistance, and to make any recommendations IBAC considers appropriate.

Victorian Inspectorate oversight of PIM and IBAC's coercive powers

The Bill gives both the PIM and IBAC the power to compel a member of Victoria Police personnel to provide information to support their oversight functions. While unlikely, it is possible that the information a member of Victoria police personnel must provide may incriminate them. To protect the human rights of Victoria Police personnel, the Bill ensures that any self-incriminating information a person is compelled to provide cannot be used in legal proceedings against that person. The Bill also requires the PIM and IBAC to notify the Victorian Inspectorate whenever they exercise this power to compel information. The Bill empowers the Victorian Inspectorate to make recommendations to the PIM and IBAC to ensure the powers are only exercised lawfully.

Protecting sensitive information in the oversight regime

The Bill also includes safeguards to ensure that sensitive information that Victoria Police provides to the PIM and IBAC is handled securely. The Bill requires the PIM and IBAC to return documents to Victoria Police as soon as reasonably practicable after performing their functions.

Reporting functions

The Bill requires the PIM and IBAC to prepare annual reports to the Attorney-General on the performance of their functions. The PIM and IBAC may also report directly to the Attorney-General, at any time considered appropriate, on any matters relating to the performance of their duties and functions.

The Bill requires the Attorney-General to table these reports in the Victorian Parliament and publish them on a Victorian Government website.

Given the sensitivity of human source information overseen by the PIM and IBAC, the Bill prohibits sensitive information from being included in reports to the Attorney-General, including information that could identify a human source. The Chief Commissioner of Police must also be provided with the reports and may recommend sensitive information be removed before they are provided to the Attorney General.

Criminal offences

The Bill creates new offences to protect the safety of human sources and the integrity of investigations involving human sources. These offences prohibit the unauthorised disclosure of information that is likely to reveal that a person is a human source, or has previously been registered as a human source, or that Victoria Police have applied to register the person as a human source. The Bill includes a more serious offence if a person discloses such information with the intention of endangering a person's health or safety, or with the intention of prejudicing a criminal investigation, intelligence-gathering, or a criminal prosecution.

The Bill provides appropriate exceptions to these offences. For example, it will not be an offence to disclose such information when required to in criminal proceedings or between law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

This Bill introduces a comprehensive regulatory framework to ensure Victoria Police uses human sources in an ethical and justifiable manner and is subject to external oversight.

The Bill includes robust safeguards where Victoria Police wishes to use vulnerable people as human sources or where the use of a person as a human source could result in a breach of privilege.

The Bill represents another important step forward in increasing confidence in Victoria's justice system and ensuring that the events that led to the Commission can never occur again.

I commend the Bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:36): I move:

That this debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 31 August.

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES, HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES REGULATION
AMENDMENT (ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022**

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:37): I rise to contribute the lead of the opposition on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Of course there are very few things more important than the access of Victorians to a home—a home that is permanent, a home that is safe, a home that is affordable and accessible. Homes are an essential element of our society, and the government has a very important role in making sure that there are adequate homes and adequate spaces for people to live and enjoy their lives. Most importantly, homes in this day and age are an essential part of ensuring good mental health and positive health outcomes for people, because the stress of not knowing where you are going to live, the stress of housing insecurity, the stress of not knowing where you are going to be and the stress of how you are going to look after your children and raise your family are all issues that a lack of affordable housing and accessible housing creates.

Disappointingly after eight years now this government has finally started to move on housing. It is worth the house taking note of where we have gone in the last eight years with affordable and accessible housing. In this state when this government took over there were 9990 people waiting on a priority list for housing. Under eight years of the Andrews government and billions and billions spent on all sorts of unfinished projects, they have managed to increase that list threefold. There are now, from the government's own statistics, 30 508 people as of the last measure in March. That is a massive increase of 20 500 people desperately waiting for a home that they can call their own. Of course that is just the priority list; that is not the entire list. The entire list today includes both people in urgent need of priority housing but also people not in adequate, safe, secure or appropriate housing; that list now sits at 54 945. These statistics are important for us to be mindful of when we are assessing the bill today, because the government is lauding some pretty big figures in what they are wanting to do with their Homes Victoria approach. But when you see the scale of the problem that this government has created and allowed to continue month after month, quarter after quarter, year after year, then it is worth being aware of the scale of the solutions required.

The bill presented today has some good elements; there is no doubt about that. However, it does not go far enough in addressing the chronic housing shortage that we have. Worse still, it has an element in it where the government is seeking to unleash its corporate side, if you like. It is wanting to engage in every manner of commercial deal and operation with developers across the state to undertake

independent business deals, and we will talk a little bit later about the appropriateness of that and the ability of the state to manage its commercial operations.

This bill largely sets about transitioning what was the department of housing to Homes Victoria. It contemporises the language throughout various housing legislation and of course provides for the ability of Homes Victoria to manage its properties, its tenants and its business relationships. So there are sort of mechanical, technical and structural changes to various legislation. There have been advisory boards for the department of housing in the past, and this establishes a new advisory system but under the new title of Homes Victoria Advisory Board, a skills-based advisory board. As a general mechanism they are not a bad thing, for ministers and governments to have access to people within the industry and outside, so there are no real issues with that. Apart from the name changes there is not a mechanism in here that encourages or insists that the government demonstrate on a regular basis to the community the benefits it has in the way it is managing its properties. In the rental housing market across Victoria around 640 000-odd people rent homes. That is largely managed by the private sector in various forms, who are accountable to their shareholders, are accountable to their business owners and are accountable to the people that give property to them. But the government, under this scenario, is not really making itself accountable, and in fact, in inquiries about what obligation the government has to publish the benefits of its business transactions or its management of property, the department has sort of been unwilling to have a mechanism that is transparent and clear to the community about any business deals that it enters into.

Speaking of business deals, this legislation—and I guess this is where the opposition’s biggest concern is—will include the ability of the government to establish companies, joint ventures, trusts and partnerships and lend and contribute funds to support any development of its private property with private developers. It is not only the opposition that have concerns about this government’s ability to do that. We only have to open the paper nearly every day to see yet another government project going over budget, huge sums of money being wasted and vast amounts being paid in wages to consultants and others that consume the public purse.

Victorians essentially want to know that when they are investing in public housing and in such an important element as providing a roof over a person or a family’s head they are getting good value. So there is concern about some of the projects already underway—for example, the project that is in Ascot Vale, which has had quite a bit of media coverage, where the government has decided to pull down a series of apartments that have been there for 50 or 60 years. That may in fact be reasonable, but the community said, ‘We actually like what’s there. Can’t we refurbish it?’. The sums that came back from an independent analysis of that indicated that that accommodation, that housing, could preserve the character and the lifestyle that the tenants have been used to there for just under \$200 000 each—\$182 000. But the government has opted for a much, much more expensive development in partnership with other private groups, and they are investing \$413 000 for essentially the same outcome for the community.

I think it is fair and reasonable for not only independent housing advocates to be asking the question: why is the government spending that level extra for the same outcomes, and what is in it for the developer, what is in it for the state and what are the benefits? The benefits are not clear in that example. Unfortunately across the state’s estate there are vast areas of land that are now in very prime and sought after areas, and some of the areas we are talking about are well known to property developers—Ashburton, Flemington, Hawthorn, Richmond, Heidelberg West—and all now very desirable places for people to live. This government is setting itself up to get into bed very, very early with developers, and I think it is only reasonable that the Parliament should be able to have a clear view of what the benefits are. Where is the money going? Is that money being actively reinvested back so that those in public housing get the best benefit from it?

This legislation makes provision for a much closer connection between Homes Victoria and the Department of Treasury and Finance, and any casual observer of Victorian budgetary outcomes at the moment would be well aware that this state is fast running out of money. The debt levels in Victoria

of course are at record highs. We have got now the debt equivalent of all the eastern states combined, and it is a valid concern that people would have that this money may in fact be siphoned off at some point, whether it is now or into the future. But more importantly, can the Victorian taxpayer be guaranteed that the benefit, the uplift in property values, the uplift in developments, is being given to the taxpayer, to the state, to the homeless of Victoria in the levels it should be?

I think we have learned long enough now, with these other projects that the government have undertaken, that we cannot take them on face value that they are in fact the best deals. So the opposition will seek to move an amendment to this piece of legislation essentially allowing for either house of Parliament—either our chamber or the other place—to move to disallow a business deal that this government enters into, because without that provision the taxpayers and the people of Victoria will find themselves unable to question or to stall or to insist that the benefit of that long-held public estate returns to the people of Victoria.

Another element that this bill seeks to work on is making available more affordable homes, and no-one could deny the need for more affordable homes. As I said at the opening, the list has ballooned month after month, year after year under this government; the list of people waiting to have affordable homes has grown considerably. One of the concerns we also raise is the lack of ambition in this bill. The minister in his second-reading speech—we are now up to another minister since the original minister, the member for Richmond, brought this in—made a claim that there was going to be, as part of this, an allowance for 2400 affordable housing places as a way for this government to help to ease the housing crisis. While 2400 may sound a reasonable attempt, it is again worth noting that just in the December–March quarter this year, as I point to this ballooning list for affordable housing, a further 358 people were added to the list. That has been a very consistent growth rate, and based on that you are talking 2400 over the course of a year—60 per cent of the people that are added just this year—not including the people that have been on the list now for 10 years. The backlog of people waiting to get into affordable housing continues to grow, and quite frankly a commitment by this government of 2400, while noble in its initial figure, is but a drop in the ocean. It is a five-year commitment for 2400 homes. Just in one year, just in this year alone, 60 per cent of that allocation would be consumed. At the end of a five-year period, there is no hope that the list will not continue to grow. This does not make a substantial hit to the growing and chronic problem of housing affordability and housing accessibility in the state of Victoria. It is in fact as they say, too little, too late.

Combine this with the issue of significant property development and deals being struck with private developers, where literally land that was for the public use, that was to provide public housing, is now providing expensive townhouses and penthouse apartments. The *Age* listed recently one of the developments in Maribyrnong where apartments were going to be selling for \$2 million and \$3 million. Clearly apartments selling for \$2 million and \$3 million are not aimed at the affordable housing market. Clearly apartments selling at \$2 million and \$3 million are not helping ease this chronic and growing list of public housing shortage. Most importantly, the taxpayers, this Parliament, the people of Victoria do not know where that extra money is coming from. If the government is publishing the fact that on average it is costing around \$400 000 to produce a public housing house and they are selling properties on these public estates for \$2 million and \$3 million, people quite rightly want to know where the difference is going.

There is a growing gap between the existing private market and social housing, and that is because social housing and affordable housing is not keeping pace with the demands of the market. This government in talking to the not-for-profit sector, in talking to other providers of affordable homes, whether they are through the NRAS system—the national rental affordability scheme—and others, has not been prepared to partner enough or clearly enough with these other groups to help get the volume of houses we need. As the state's largest landlord, and the minister acknowledges that in fact Homes Victoria is a large landlord, the obligation for them to plan and manage properties in a way that is fair and equitable to the tenants and to those living in the public housing estates is paramount.

This legislation does actually go some way to working with communities in public housing to get fairer outcomes. There are two main issues that have come to my attention in preparing for this bill. They are around the management of tenants so that people feel safe in their homes and what they consider their local community, but they also have an expectation that the state will maintain those properties in a fair and reasonable way, as we expect any landlord to do. Over the last couple of years many have argued that this has led to a housing shortage and a housing accessibility shortage because of the many rigorous expectations that they now put on landlords, such as heights of rangehoods in kitchens, regular electrical testing and other issues. Certainly in rural and regional areas, and the member for Eildon has probably had similar experiences, much lower cost housing simply becomes unaffordable to rent in smaller regional communities because the landlords are not in a position to spend sometimes \$20 000 and \$30 000 on what many would consider are basic upgrades.

I think across most rural and regional parts of Victoria at the moment the housing availability is at 1 per cent to 2 per cent of properties available. Reports recently in Geelong, for example, had over 60 per cent of the houses that were being rented not being in fact affordable, meaning that more than 30 per cent of people's income was being consumed in trying to pay the rent. Likewise, I met with some constituents on the Surf Coast only last week, and their single biggest concern was housing affordability.

Someone who is fourth generation in a small community, who has lived there all their life and who works—and in fact this person is a medic, an ambulance person, who is providing critical, much-needed services in that rural community—finds themselves now living many kilometres from where they need to be and in a caravan in a paddock, and the simple reason is they can no longer find any housing in any of the coastal communities that is in any way affordable for someone on a paramedic's wage. That is of great concern, and sadly this bill will not really address that issue. But more importantly it highlights the very problem that this bill ultimately needs to fix and what this government ultimately needs to do, which is to find new and innovative ways to really eat into that affordable housing problem that, as I pointed out earlier, continues to grow.

So while Homes Victoria still do not have a strong focus on maintaining properties to what many communities would consider an adequate state of maintenance, some of the provisions of this bill are noteworthy in that they are attempting to support those residents in the way antisocial behaviours of some residents can impact on their lives, their safety and their security. They talk about community impact statements, and the opposition certainly welcomes that element of it—anything that can help people in sometimes complex situations—because where antisocial behaviour, perhaps even criminal activity, is carried out, many people are not prepared or are unwilling to put their name to complaints, and that is for obvious reasons. This bill in part works with the system to allow confidential impact statements to be used by VCAT and Homes Victoria to better manage the tenant mix. In order to broaden that appeal they have also decided to create a definition of common areas in relation to larger community complexes, flats and others, where there are common stairwells and common areas where everyone has to interact safely to move to and from their own premises.

So the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill will not be opposed by the opposition, but the opposition notes very clearly that while there are some good improvements and the government is at last after eight years acknowledging the affordable housing problem, this bill does not put in enough and guarantee enough to solve that problem. The opposition also notes that the government has given itself a much bigger remit to enter into all manner of commercial negotiations and processes, but it does not provide a safeguard for taxpayers or the Parliament to be assured that the best deals are being struck. There is no requirement for a public benefit statement to come from any deals that the government strikes so that we can be assured that the existing tenants and future tenants have the best deal possible.

Finally, I would just note that while there have been elements added into this that ensure that tenants can be better looked after, there is still a lot of feedback from public housing tenants and from others about the priority of maintaining apartments and dealing with problematic waste disposal. I was at a public housing estate recently where ongoing problems of excess furniture, old cars and other elements

that aggrieve some of the tenants still are being very poorly dealt with by Homes Victoria. From questioning Homes Victoria they make it clear that their priority is putting a roof over someone's head, and of course that should always be their priority. But the active management of the built and physical environments in public housing is also a very important element not only for the safety of those residents but for their dignity and wellbeing—that they feel that they are in a lived and built environment that is as appealing as it can be and as safe as it can be.

In conclusion I just make the point that while this bill seeks to allow the minister to formalise and make all the various consequential amendments and changes to various acts to allow for the new Homes Victoria, a name change, as we know, is not enough. This government has to be actually getting the runs on the board, not just be seen to be making grand commitments and massive departmental changes. They have got to get the runs on the board. The minister is here. I suggest to him that when you look at that endless ongoing growth in lack of priority housing, lack of affordable housing, and a waiting list that continues to grow, the only measure of success for this government when it comes to how it manages public housing and how it provides safe, affordable and accessible housing to Victorians is that these lists go into decline. I would suggest that when the total waiting list is growing at a rate of nearly 400 families—this is not 400 people but 400 families— a quarter, that is not something anyone can be proud of. As a First World state we cannot be proud of that sort of direction in our housing, particularly when people are waiting for a home, when people are finding themselves having to live in a caravan in a paddock, when families with two or three children find themselves in a one-bedroom flat or when there are people who are disabled or have mobility issues, as I found with a person in the township of Camperdown, where the fridge has to be in the hall and they cannot get their wheelie walker or wheelchair down the hall. These are all issues that are simply not good enough, and they need to be dealt with quickly and promptly. Those people of course will be looking at the media and at the various hard hat announcements of this government, standing in front of another railway or another half-built tunnel with another commitment to spend billions and billions of taxpayers money in Melbourne but forgetting about the essentials. Those essentials are making sure that there are homes for all.

The opposition will not be opposing this bill. But we believe it is our responsibility to raise these issues, and of course we reserve our right in the upper house to move an amendment that may see either chamber have the opportunity to disallow any development deal that the minister or the government may enter into if they cannot adequately demonstrate the public benefit to the people of Victoria.

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (11:03): I am delighted to have the opportunity to rise and make a brief contribution on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. May I assure the house of—and not one member of this Parliament should be in any doubt about—the depth of commitment that our government has to addressing the issue of housing insecurity and ensuring the most basic of human rights, and that is the right to have a decent roof over your head that is fit for purpose. That sits at the heart of all of the housing reforms that our government have pursued, embraced and troubleshot.

There is absolutely no question that too many people live without housing security. We see that in the data of waitlists in terms of access for public and social housing. We see that in terms of those that are seeking to change their lives in the context of family violence. We understand issues around insecurity of housing given the rising costs of rent. And this is not just an issue that impacts those that are economically vulnerable. We have got a growing class of those that are not able to access affordable rental properties, let alone some of the meta-issues about buying a house, the great Australian dream. Those are of course impacted by a whole range of government and market policies at many levels of government. But rest assured, to the extent that the Victorian Andrews government can access and influence a lever on those matters, it has, and I would absolutely assert that its commitment to improving housing affordability and accessibility is rolled gold.

It has been a long time coming. I have been in this Parliament for perhaps too long, and over that period of time I have seen—

Ms McLeish interjected.

Ms HENNESSY: Could we just note those that contest that as a proposition. That is very kind of you. I have seen in that period of time many laudable and notable attempts to improve housing affordability and accessibility, and whilst they might have made some impact on the margin, they have not got to the fundamentals. What I would put to you is that the Labor government's housing policy, that which is enabled partially in this bill, is about changing the fundamentals of affordable housing in this state. It is critically important, but of course it needs to be seen in the wider context. I mean, you do not have a government committing \$5.3 billion to a big build for housing that is going to deliver over 12 000 social and affordable homes if they do not take the issue of housing seriously.

I have seen the issue of social and affordable housing kicked around in respect of lowbrow politics about the mix and the demography of people that live in social and affordable housing. A former Liberal Party member for Western Metro Region for many years used to propose that we sell the public housing flats down at Williamstown, the undertone being that those views were too good for people that were vulnerable or on low incomes. We have heard one of the former housing ministers, also in the other place, make egregious comments about the sorts of people that live in social and affordable housing and that 'We wouldn't want to put them in areas where there are middle- and high-income people, lest they can't afford the right sneakers'.

I think it is time for us to really Etch A Sketch a lot of the lowbrow politics out of the housing debate and for us to absolutely concede that we need to change the fundamentals. In order to do that we need to take the structures of delivery from a government perspective. This bill effectively does that in an important way through the establishment of Homes Victoria. Homes Victoria is a conversion, in large part, of what would have been known as the old director of housing. It establishes a board that will bring a robust governance process to that work—to actually have people scrutinising the work of what many people would refer to as the department of housing and enable them to have a very strategic forward program to deliver on the investment that the government has made in order to improve the access and availability of social and affordable housing. Understand that there are some incredible people out in the not-for-profit sector that deliver social and affordable housing, but we have these very navel-gazing debates about how we can improve the stock of housing. Then we talk about various different financial methodologies we could use, various different partnerships we could use. Many of them kind of weigh into areas where you hit other commonwealth regulatory issues, either from a prudential point of view or from a corporations law point of view.

What this does is it acknowledges that there are many great partners and that we absolutely have to be innovative and creative about how it is that we build and deliver more social and affordable housing. That might mean joint ventures with the not-for-profit sector. It might mean looking at different financing structures in order to deliver that. You do have to have a credible governance process to be able to do that, and this bill makes a very important contribution to that end by establishing it. I also want to just note that in doing so it also makes sure that it is a board that reflects the diversity of the Victorian community and where some of the paucity in availability and access is.

My friend who spoke before me referred to some of the issues around regional Victoria. There are a whole host of groups of people and regions where housing affordability is a particularly acute problem. Making sure that we have got a board that is able to look through many different prisms as to the availability and affordability of the housing that is being delivered is going to be an important improvement. Having things like KPIs to deliver on housing rather than kind of cavorting along at the pace of a Snuffleupagus, having a board that actually drives the outcomes and drives progress and holds people accountable—that is the kind of scrutiny that this bill will enable for Homes Victoria as well. So I want to indicate my very, very strong support for that.

In my time in Parliament it is the first time I have seen something really significant in the structural change as to how we procure and deliver housing. To really try and make some meaningful progress around the very interesting ideas, from social bonds to the use of things like pension funds and industry

super to help deliver housing—to actually get structure in place to nut these things out—I think is absolutely critical, and more power to Homes Victoria’s arm when it is established.

My friend also made some comments indicating concern about the heads of power contained in the bill—that it will give the minister approval—and I would just like to make the argument that what the bill actually says is that when there is a development proposal or a particular finance proposal that has been suggested or approved by the board, it requires ministerial approval. I think that is a very sensible policy position, and I think it is a very sensible governance position. It does not enable the minister to go willy-nilly and involve him or herself in various development proposals. It basically is a form of approval and scrutiny and ensures that what is being proposed by Homes Victoria accords with government policy, has been the subject of due diligence and accords with whatever the other housing priorities of the day might be. So I do not think that we should have any undue concern about that.

I do just want to also very quickly make some brief comments about some of the proposals about resolving some of the disputes that can sometimes occur. Now, as local members, many of us are the subject of those or on one side of the debate and know how difficult it often is to get disputes between neighbours resolved. The bill puts some pretty sensible propositions as to how we can potentially avoid those things and involve people in a debate and discussion through the use of community impact statements. But I would just like to say this: it is not just people in social and community housing that have neighbourhood disputes. Certainly the evidence is really clear that the biggest source of disputes is actually not social and community housing but privately owned housing, and it is always over fences and tree roots. You can look at insurance data and VCAT data to bear that out.

Having said that, it is important that we have got ways in which we can quickly get these disputes resolved in a way that is fair and gives confidence but also protection to people. The evidence identified in the course of the development of this bill was that people felt that if they made a complaint about someone, their identity would be known and they would be the subject of repercussions. This bill deals with that in a very, very sensible way and gives them some protections, and I am confident that at the other end vexatious complaints will be managed through the processes that are set out in this bill. I think that is a really sensible improvement from where we are.

In closing I just want to acknowledge the wonderful new Minister for Housing, who is with us. I know of his personal commitment to public and affordable housing. Long may he continue to deliver such great reforms.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (11:14): It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I note the comments from the previous speaker and certainly agree with the majority. I would challenge that the majority of disputes between residents of social housing and neighbours are predominantly around fences and tree roots, but I will get onto that a little bit later. There are some elements that are far, far more serious than that which come into my electorate office on a regular basis.

The main purpose of this bill is to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to rented premises as follows:

- to provide for Homes Victoria to provide a community impact statement with certain applications for a possession order; and

- to provide for Homes Victoria to specify certain areas to be common areas ...

It also amends the Housing Act 1983 and the Residential Tenancies Act, which I will get onto a bit later, in relation to the provision of affordable housing and the functions and constitution of Homes Victoria, and it establishes the Homes Victoria Advisory Board. It also extends the default commencement date for the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and extends the operation of regulations under the Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010—all elements and

all amendments to the various bills that those of us on this side of the chamber have no problem with. But there are indeed some questions to be answered.

The bill does establish the Homes Victoria Advisory Board, which will provide advice to the minister and CEO of Homes Victoria in accordance with written terms of reference, and the second-reading speech says that:

This embeds the board as an enduring structure to provide the governance and oversight of Homes Victoria.

Well, to my knowledge and my understanding Homes Victoria already does have an advisory board that functions quite well and that works quite effectively and already reports to the minister. So what we would need to know is more specifics around the changes to this, because the second-reading speech simply says that it will embed the board as an enduring structure—questions like, ‘Are there any extra costs or payments to board members, any extra expenses?’. I think our lead speaker covered off on some of these concerns, so I will not go into them in any great level of detail, but they are questions that it would be handy to have a little bit more information on.

The second-reading speech says it will enable the:

... streamlined delivery of the Big Housing Build by embedding and clarifying the transaction structures available to Homes Victoria ...

and being able to implement so-called ‘innovative financing models’. Again, our lead speaker, who had half an hour rather than my 10 minutes, was able to go into that in a higher level of depth and detail, so I will not repeat those concerns, but how those new financing structures will work is something that I think all members of this chamber and the general public would also like some more detail on.

Through amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 the bill also clarifies requirements for providers and renters of affordable housing. One area is the application of eligibility criteria for schemes that assist people on lower incomes that are in rental situations. One such program is the national rental affordability scheme, known as NRAS. We all know that this is a commonwealth government program that is based on providing affordable housing. It seeks to address the national shortage of affordable rental housing by offering financial incentives to organisations that provide renters on low to moderate incomes with homes at a rate of about 20 per cent below the market value—a good scheme. To remain eligible NRAS providers must ensure the income of renters in their properties remains below that eligibility cap. Recent reforms, we are told in the second-reading speech, to the Residential Tenancies Act have resulted in there being no means to ensure properties are only being rented by eligible renters. I would have thought that was fairly important, making sure that properties being rented under this scheme are only being accessed by eligible renters, and it seems that this impact must not have been realised in recent amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act and we are now backtracking to some degree to fix up that anomaly.

The bill also ensures the continuity of the NRAS scheme in Victoria by ensuring that providers can continue to house renters who satisfy this income criteria, so I would have thought that that would have been a key element and that we should not have to be coming back into this chamber to have that anomaly fixed. A similar situation applies under the provisions of the Victorian affordable housing programs to enable providers of affordable housing under a declared Victorian affordable housing program to continue—again, similar to the national scheme—to house renters who satisfy the program’s criteria. Again, this is another scheme where we have question marks over the eligibility that are only being fixed now, and that should have been done when previous legislation was tabled.

I want to take up a comment from the previous speaker. I agree with nearly everything the previous speaker said, actually, but just that final comment is an area I had down to discuss. There was some commentary that the majority of issues around disputes relate to tree roots and fences. The second-reading speech goes to some length and detail in explaining how some of the behaviours that take place are quite serious—I would not have thought tree roots and fences were that serious—to the extent

where neighbours are concerned about standing up to raise their issues because of fear of retribution. I have had a number of instances in my electorate alone—and I am sure it is probably no different for other members of the chamber, regardless of which side of the chamber they are sitting on—where I have had claims coming into my electorate office around serious abuse, high levels of vandalism and drug use. I have got people who are neighbours who are not seeking extra protections to be able to put this information and their concerns forward; they are more than happy to put their concerns forward and stand by their claims because they want them fixed. So whilst neighbours are happy to stand up, I have got some that have documented between 20 and 50 cases of serious abuse, violence and vandalism, and little action is taken on the perpetrators of these actions.

We have tenancy laws in place, and I know that it can get complicated when you have got children involved in these situations, but I have had cases where there are no children involved where people in public housing are not respectful of the opportunity they have been given to get their life back on track and be afforded a public housing home and where they are putting their neighbours through an absolute nightmare situation. There is an element in this bill that says, 'We're going to put in place more provisions to allow people to speak up and be protected'. The problem that we have got is that those people are already speaking up and are prepared to diarise all these areas of concern—all these issues around drug abuse, vandalism, getting their letterbox torn off their fence, palings torn off, things thrown through their windows, things thrown onto their roof—and after this happening time and time and time again over one- or two-year periods, we have still got these tenants in these homes with no respect for the law, no respect for their neighbours and no respect for their communities. So whilst we are making it easy for people to make their complaint, for goodness sake, when people are receiving these threats and living a nightmare—I have got people coming into my home, neighbours, who have not had a good night's sleep for months because of the behaviour that is going on next door—we must take stronger action.

Having a public housing home—and I am a strong supporter of public housing—is something that just should not be taken for granted. It is a hand up that should be respected and observed as that. It is not a privilege, it is not a right, it is something where the government is genuinely trying to assist these people. So whilst we have made this step through, in those cases, making it easier to give this information, it is not all about tree roots and fences. It is about very, very serious issues, and I would hope that the government in time would consider—and it probably does not need legislation, it probably needs just a direction from the minister—taking stronger action against those who abuse this right. I conclude my contribution with those points.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (11:24): I am glad today to be speaking on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The fundamental effect of this bill is to improve our government's provision of social and affordable housing for all Victorians. No government in Victorian history has done as much on housing as this side of the chamber. We have committed over \$5.3 billion to the Big Housing Build. This is the biggest single investment in social housing out of all the states and territories of this country. We are building 12 000 homes, including 2400 affordable homes for the Victorians who need them most. This includes 260 new homes in my electorate of Hawthorn at Bills Street, and I will have a bit to say about Bills Street a bit later in this speech and make some generalisations drawn from my experience there. These homes are currently under construction and are emblematic of our policy commitment on housing. We are making sure that every Victorian has a roof over their head. These are not just promises. Homes Victoria has already passed the halfway mark, with 6300 homes completed or underway.

I will just say a few words now about Homes Victoria. The importance of the Big Build has been eloquently stated by my colleagues many times, and I would like to contribute to this debate by explaining how this bill will allow for the streamlined delivery of the Big Build. To achieve our ambitious goals in this area we need to make sure that Homes Victoria has the powers it needs to participate in the property development market. This bill is the government supporting the evolution of the director of housing into Homes Victoria. It is part of the broader revitalisation of housing policy

under this government, as this bill formally establishes Homes Victoria as a contemporary housing agency with contemporary governance structures. It will create a sleeker, more efficient housing body whilst keeping the goal of every Victorian having sufficient housing at front of mind. This will allow the agency to better achieve its dual goal of social housing for our most vulnerable and affordable housing for low to moderate income earners, including essential workers.

Whilst on collective failure, I would like to address very briefly, because I know this will be taken up by one of my colleagues later today, the opportunistic approach of the Greens on this issue. Whilst it will shock no-one that the party who exclusively target the most progressive Labor members are again making spurious claims and undermining progressive policy, here they are again. Individuals like the member for Brunswick consistently lament that we are not doing enough, and whilst I listened very intently to the member for Brunswick, who I respect very much when he speaks on health, I believe that he is not on the right track here. It will not fix the issue, but it will make a significant dent in it. It seems as though the Greens would like us to start building another 16 000 homes before the first 16 000 are finished. We promised this ambitious goal two years ago and are already halfway. This is on top of the rental reforms which protect renters in a massive way. After all, who could forget the Greens Yarra council vetoing the building of one of 100 new social and affordable housing units. These tree Tories will continue to promise policy they will never deliver, whilst this progressive Labor government will continue to get the job done. But the moment they have a chance for real change they reject partisanship, they reject social housing. Indeed they almost remind me of the Victorian Liberal Party.

Let us talk about Bills Street. The Bills Street project in my electorate of Hawthorn will be one of the first projects delivered under the Big Housing Build, with 206 homes being built for those who need them. This is an incredibly important example of a Homes Victoria project, and I have enjoyed working with that organisation. I chair and regularly attend the community reference group organised by Homes Victoria and have been continually impressed by their response to feedback. Not only will this project create stable housing for 500 Victorians, it will also create 1050 jobs. It will contain 103 social housing dwellings and 103 affordable housing dwellings. It will be an integrated community, which I am confident will serve to make Hawthorn a better place.

However, in talking about the Bills Street project I would like just to comment a little bit on the very disappointing and indeed disgraceful behaviour of the Liberals in the area, including Liberals on the Boroondara council, the previous member and now candidate for Hawthorn and various others, who I believe were unhelpful in trying to raise the level of anger and heat on this project. Whilst I think it is perfectly reasonable for local residents to be concerned, there needs to be balance in this, and we need to try and reduce some of the political impact of it all so that it is not just a case of disguised nimbyism, for example—‘We don’t want them here’. There were some appalling things. Research showed that a majority of the people moving into Bills Street will be single women over 60, yet these were being presented as presenting a drug problem and that they could be trafficking and so on. Well, just think about that. I notice that in an earlier speech today the member for Caulfield spoke about shoeboxes and what I call the great euphemism for nimbyism, ‘overdevelopment’. When in doubt use the word ‘overdevelopment’. It covers a multitude of sins and aspirations, if you like, and I just think that throwing all those sorts of words around was really unhelpful. I was disappointed in Boroondara council in particular and the way they behaved in regard to the matter. Certainly they have a role to protect their citizens, their ratepayers, if you like, but I do not think they have any right to keep building up the heat.

The interesting thing about that reference group is that when we first started to meet, we probably had very much full attendance, and they were drawn from different sections of the community involved. There would have been maybe about 14 or so on the group. Time has gone on and the project has begun, and at the last meeting we had two people turn up. I think that is a good example of how initially people can be afraid of the future and fear the unknown and so on. But as more information became available and they started to see that this was not the worst thing that could ever happen on this earth, the interest waned and they just got on with their lives, so much so that the next one has had to be

cancelled because there is nothing further to go on with. So I think that the Bills Street thing is an exciting project. I was disappointed by the behaviour, or the language, if you like, and the disposition of the Liberals on this, and I hope that we can look forward to more cooperation, particularly when the lead speaker today was speaking so fondly of social housing and the need for it and so on. So I look forward to perhaps something new in that respect.

I would like to move on to a couple of other things. One thing we can all agree on is that, despite the recent progress made, our social housing stock is still too low. The Big Build is a significant step, as is this reform of Homes Victoria. However, we still have work to do. In the suburb of Hawthorn 45 per cent of people rent and 39 per cent live in apartments. I would recommend the article in the recent *Sunday Age* by Michael Koziol about ‘light greens’, which sheds light on the residents of these apartments. I think that we have made a great start. There is a lot more to be done. This bill will enhance Homes Victoria and our housing system, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (11:34): I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The main purpose of the bill, as we have heard, is to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, particularly on rented premises; to provide for Homes Victoria to provide a community impact statement where the application is for a possession order; and to provide for Homes Victoria to specify certain areas to be common areas. The bill will also amend the Housing Act 1983 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 in relation to provision of affordable housing, in relation to the functions and constitution of Homes Victoria, formerly the director of housing, and also to establish the Homes Victoria Advisory Board.

I have got real concerns about this advisory board. My understanding is there is already a board in place, so this is a board to advise the board. I have got real concerns that we have seen over time that this government has plenty of jobs for mates, and on face value this looks to be another such board until it gets proven otherwise. I suppose with the amount of retiring MPs we have got coming this November we might need more boards to fit all those snouts in the trough. So we are here again in this place debating a bill that is short on detail about remuneration of the board positions or even what classification they come in.

May I say housing in regional Victoria is at a crossroads. I know the Ovens Valley—as in most other regional centres, but I know the Ovens Valley better than other regional areas—and towns like Cobram, Yarrawonga and Wangaratta are really feeling the pinch in every aspect of housing. I hear particularly from constituents nearly daily about the lack of rentals available, because sadly renters who are being forced to leave through either their property being sold or owners wanting to move back in simply cannot find other rental opportunities. It is a scarcity of supply.

Other parts of the legislation will extend the default commencement date of the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 and extend the operation of regulations under the Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010.

Our concerns go further with regard to profits generated by joint ventures. Will they go directly to the general fund? There is no guarantee these funds will be redirected to Treasury. The Treasurer assured us that all money remains for Homes Victoria, as per section 25 of the Housing Act. Furthermore, there are other concerns: do profits gained by joint ventures go directly into the project fund? There is no guarantee these funds will be redirected to Treasury, as I said a moment ago. Money may be permitted to be paid out of the project fund, including any amount to be paid into another project fund on the written approval of the Treasurer. So risk-sharing arrangements are by project and oversight is by the Treasurer, but the specifics are shady and there is a lack of transparency again.

Clause 24: current legislation does not stop Homes Victoria from participating in these types of transactions, such as joint ventures, corporations, trusts, partnerships or non-profit bodies. The bill will make it clear that for entering into such structures the transactions require approval from both the

Treasurer and the Minister for Housing, who will use high-value or high-risk finance assurances to show money is not given away for free. Again there is a lack of transparency, as I mentioned before.

Housing is at crisis point, as I have mentioned, in the Ovens Valley and all around the Victorian regions. I know Myrtleford and Bright are really feeling the pinch as well of this predicament, trying to get rental houses built. In my recent meeting with three of the mayors in my electorate they all raised that they are struggling to keep up with the demand for housing, and this government has done nothing to help regional Victoria. It has certainly been left behind, and people are suffering at the hands of the booming housing market. It is creating more and more problems as we go forward.

The Alpine shire has seen house prices more than double in the past few years, and rental prices have increased at a similar rate. This is forcing hundreds of locals out of the region that they grew up in and they have lived in their whole life, and I hear these stories on a regular basis, with locals calling me about their troubles finding somewhere to buy or somewhere to live. Indeed just the other day I had a gentleman from Myrtleford contact me regarding the government's homebuyer scheme and why he is being excluded purely because he chooses to live in the community he lives in. Again, regional Victoria is not high on that radar. That gentleman now faces having to move further away from his community so he can afford his first home, which also means commuting further to work. I do not really think this is satisfactory, and I hope that the government can see fit to have a long, hard look at the guidelines and how they discriminate against regional Victorians.

We are also seeing a rise in Airbnbs, like all communities, and other short-term rentals in the region and that is putting more pressure on the housing market. Property owners can make an extra \$10 000 per annum by renting their house out as a short-term rental rather than on the long-term, traditional rental market. Local councils are doing what they can to try and incentivise property owners to lease these houses out as long-term rentals in order to provide for expanding workforces and places for people to live closer to their workplace.

It is also felt in Wangaratta, where the government's outdated and out-of-touch planning red tape has caused the delay of a 90-home social and affordable housing development. Now, there is one objector to this. This one objector, granted, needs to be heard, and I understand the process, but this is going to set this whole process back probably two years in the end, from start to finish—not the start and finish of the project but to actually get the project going. We call on the government to try and assist some of these planning departments, because we know about the concerns out there. We know about the building industry; that is on a knife edge as well. I have got builders who talk to me about how they cannot get to lock-up stage because they need doorjambs or they need cabinets or they need windows or something. We know there are significant payments at the lock-up stage, so obviously the client can withhold payment until they get to the lock-up stage. This can drag on and on and on. So if not for the goodwill of all involved—the traders and the clients and the hardware suppliers and all those—we really could be at a standstill already. So we do not need something like this 90-home social and affordable housing development in Wangaratta to be held up any longer than absolutely necessary. As I say, we should be building walls with bricks and mortar and not with red tape. Wangaratta desperately needs this development, and it would certainly help to alleviate and reduce the rapidly expanding list of people in need of crisis housing. Instead we are waiting to be dragged through a long and protracted VCAT hearing.

If the government were serious about housing reform, they would be introducing a bill to reform planning and remove the obstacles that our local councils face. I mentioned earlier today in a previous speech Yarrawonga and the growth and development of a town like Yarrawonga, the fastest growing regional town in Victoria. People are moving to Yarrawonga in droves, and the building industry cannot keep up with what is going on there—which is great for the town and great for the community. We need other infrastructure to keep pace with that. There are ongoing housing developments already, but they are selling out very quickly, ahead of schedule, and the council just simply cannot keep up with the demand. We know North East Water have got some concerns about trying to service these new developments with water and sewage and whatnot in various communities throughout the Ovens

Valley. I do not know whether this happens in other regions, but certainly that is holding up some development. We just do not need anything else that stops or slows down this process.

Regional Victorians are suffering, and the government comes out and taxes housing developments with a new windfall gains tax. Again, that just puts more stress on different areas. We know that this state financially is certainly struggling because of the Big Build in Melbourne. We know with the health crisis and all the other housing development things, we are trying to move forward and to get back after COVID. We all knew it was not going to happen overnight. Getting back on our feet, getting our communities active again, as I say, was not going to happen overnight. We need all the help we can get. Instead of just 'head down, build more tunnels', we really need to get back to the basics and get back to trying to understand how regional Victoria ticks and how we can service those communities in housing, health and roads, and the list goes on. With that I will commend the bill to the house.

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (11:43): There is nothing more fundamental than the safety, security and dignity of a home. We all know this personally and intrinsically. We know it as legislators in this Parliament. We know it morally and materially. It is why we have a housing act and why its core objective is to ensure that every person in Victoria has adequate and appropriate housing at a price within their means.

The reality of achieving this is complex and paints a picture of social and economic disparity in this state. It is a picture that has many layers: market forces, gentrification, cost-of-living pressures, wage stagnation, gender inequality, entrenched disadvantage and sometimes violence. The truth is that the need for housing is both great and urgent, and there are no simple solutions. We need lots of tools in our toolbox if we are going to achieve tangible and rapid boosts to the supply of social and affordable homes in Victoria. The amendments in this bill give us more of these tools.

The bill formally establishes Homes Victoria as a modern housing agency with a robust governance structure, including an independent skills-based advisory board. Critically, though, the amendments give Homes Victoria the capacity to implement innovative financial models so it can continue to invest in new social and affordable housing at a rapid rate—and that affordable housing component is important. We know that housing insecurity is experienced on a continuum. There is the devastating, acute end where people are sleeping rough. There are those in crisis accommodation or long-term social housing, and there are also many low and moderate income Victorians who are in precarious housing or being priced out of their communities. We are seeing this play out in the inner-urban suburbs like Northcote, once an affordable option for migrant and working-class families. Suburbs in the inner north are increasingly out of range for low and moderate income earners. Rents are high, housing prices are even higher. Close to jobs, public transport, great schools, services and amenities, areas like Northcote are desirable places to live, but it is critical that as our suburbs continue to grow equity and diversity of housing choices are built in at the foundation.

This bill allows the minister to declare a project to be a Victorian affordable housing program. It means there will now be a legislative framework to provide eligible households with access to affordable properties managed and accounted for distinctly from social housing. It also includes models which can support housing for essential workers, such as nurses, police, teachers and care workers in regions that need them most. This is a big step forward in delivering more affordable housing across Melbourne, and as I said, everyone deserves a safe place to live. Social and affordable homes are core to achieving this goal.

You would think that something as fundamental as the right to a home would elicit support across the political spectrum, but it is with sadness, disappointment and frustration that I must report to you that it does not. Across the inner suburbs the Greens have stood firmly in the way of multiple social housing projects in our communities. Just last year we saw the Greens-controlled Yarra council block a proposal to build a minimum of 100 social and affordable homes next to Collingwood town hall, including 1000 square metres of new community space. It was a project three years in the making and backed in by a substantial investment from the state government, and they threw it in the trash. And

then there is Flemington and Ascot Vale where I am sure the member for Essendon, the now minister, can tell you about his dealings with the Greens political party as they fought to prevent new homes being built. In the last parliamentary term they opposed giving working people the decency of affordable, safe, modern homes, a chance to break out of the cycle of disadvantage.

Let us not forget in my own community where the Greens-dominated Darebin council acted to deliberately delay our critical social housing project in Preston. This is a project that will deliver 99 homes for some of the most vulnerable and isolated members of our community, and in a disgusting display what they did was delay the project for eight months—eight months until we had to take it out of their control and go through the Minister for Planning for approval instead. If not for these delays, construction would have started so much earlier and we would be well on our way to having these critical homes built, homes that give people opportunity, hope and a chance to live with dignity and aspiration. I raised this travesty in Parliament as a question to the former Minister for Housing. In his response in May 2021 the minister said:

If not for this unnecessarily protracted process with council for no avail, the construction of the 99 social housing dwellings for the most vulnerable members of the community would have already commenced.

He also pointed to the difficulties and unnecessary delays they had to deal with in getting development plans approved, noting that:

Timely consideration of applications has not occurred, irrespective of how much consultation, flexibility and common sense approaches the project team offer up to progress the project.

Yet, in some kind of collective self-delusion, the Greens try to paint themselves as champions of social and affordable housing. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Greens political party could not care less about social housing, but they sure do recognise an opportunity to appropriate a cause so that they can market their supposed moral credentials. Well, we see through it. Those of us who are actually out there actively working to build equity into our suburbs, actively working to make a tangible difference to the lives of people who are less fortunate but equally as deserving, we see through it.

They stand on their pedestal and preach to us about how they care about social housing, affordable housing and the people who need those homes, but time and again the Greens' track record has shown their words are empty, nothing more than marketing spin, while they put roadblock after roadblock in front of critical housing projects. When it comes down to the wire the Greens political party are not interested in delivering social housing, at least not anywhere near their strongholds. It does not serve them. In their sinister calculations it just does not serve them. So what do we get? Opposition, delays, protests. These frauds are actually not interested in wealth creation for disadvantaged people; they could not care less. They are not interested in raising people up or in backing in a proactive and progressive Labor government that is building these homes. Twelve thousand new homes are being built as part of the Big Housing Build—\$5.3 billion in funding, the biggest single investment into social and affordable housing in Victoria's history. Yet at every step all the Greens are interested in doing is undermining our work, all the while offering nothing but marketing and spin while they expect us to swallow this message that they give a damn about housing tenants. Give us a break. I mean, seriously, do they think that we do not see through the smoke and mirrors? The Greens are on a mission all right, but you can bet your life that it is not a mission about helping the most vulnerable Victorians. It is their mission. It is their political mission.

I have got 2 minutes left. We are now over halfway towards our target of 12 000 new homes, including 2400 affordable homes, with 6300 already completed or underway. Many of these homes are for people with mental illness, people with disability, women and children escaping family violence, as well as First Nations Victorians. These are people and families who deserve a chance. They deserve security and safety. They deserve to be part of a community—our community. The Big Housing Build and our investment in social housing is transformational. It is changing lives. I have seen this firsthand. Just last week I joined the Minister for Housing for a visit to one of our local social housing builds in Fairfield. This site has a long history. A hundred years ago it was a home for pregnant and unmarried

women before becoming a refuge and then a boarding house. In partnership with Unison Housing and a \$3.3 million investment from the Labor government we have transformed these 22 cramped bedrooms into 38 beautiful self-contained apartments for women. These are light, bright, modern and safe, and they have got regular staff on site as a point of contact and support. This is the kind of thing that we are doing through our Big Housing Build. It is transformational. The Greens need to get behind it rather than continuing to undermine it, particularly at local government level, where they have the power to approve these projects being built. It is disgraceful, and it needs to be called out.

On that note, I want to see more social housing in the Northcote electorate, and this bill goes towards doing that. I am part of a team and a government that is committed to delivering on this goal. We have done a lot already. There is more to do. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (11:53): I rise to contribute on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. Before I provide my contribution I just want to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Northcote—her passion, her emotion, her feelings. I know she probably wanted a lot more time. I would love to forgo my 10 minutes and give it to the member for Northcote, because it was an unbelievable contribution, and I thank her for it.

I had great delight in reading the former minister's second-reading speech when this important piece of legislation was introduced to this house. The fantastic and dedicated work he has done in this portfolio will continue with the new Minister for Housing, who shares his passion for this portfolio, and I note the new minister is at the table. In the former minister's speech one thing that stood out to me was his acknowledgement of the many essential workers who got us through this pandemic—our healthcare workers, our essential services delivering the water and the energy that we all need, the supermarket and food workers, our delivery drivers, our first responders and everyone that contributed to keep this place going during such terrible times in the pandemic.

Of course many of these workers are often priced out of the housing market and can become vulnerable to the price pressures of a volatile private rental market, and we know that in my electorate there are many, many people that could not afford the rental prices throughout the electorate, so it is quite right and correct that the minister acknowledged that the Andrews Labor government implemented this Big Housing Build for these workers and others in society who are vulnerable.

Electorates like mine of Melton on the fringes of metropolitan Melbourne have often been a pocket of housing affordability and lower rents that help many low- and middle-income families. It is constituents like mine that often felt the effects of the pandemic harder than others, but it is also important that all suburbs have affordable housing. Regardless of whether you are in Melton or whether you are in Brighton, affordable housing is important, irrespective of the shoes that you wear or the phone that you might be able to use. Essential workers and lower income families still have a right to safe and affordable accommodation, and I think all of us in this Parliament have on one occasion had constituents reach out to us after facing a crisis or a time of need and housing becomes a need that they require assistance with. I know that I have had many contacts with constituents for these very reasons. Increased reporting of family violence in particular during the height of the pandemic can be a prime example of the need for programs like Victoria's Big Housing Build, and recently I had a constituent come into my office for that very reason—a family violence situation, no housing available, and fortunately we managed to assist in providing a house and some furniture to furnish the house.

I was lucky enough to join the former minister in Melton South to tour some extraordinary, amazing houses that became available through this government's investments. Those houses were welcoming, they were warm and they were fitted out with energy-efficient appliances. They were like the many houses that surrounded them, and the pride the builders took was the same pride that they took in all their properties, even their own private properties. So social and affordable housing provides many Victorians with the safety, security and dignity of a home. The residential tenancies, housing and social

services regulation amendment bill will bolster this government's commitment to an expanded, effective and sustainable social and affordable housing system.

The Andrews Labor government is delivering more homes for the people who need them most because we know a safe and secure home is the foundation to a good life. I know in my background, I was born and bred into a housing commission area in the western suburbs in Braybrook, a very low socio-economic area. We lived in that house for 30-odd years. My family moved there in the late 1950s. It housed eight family members—my parents and six siblings—and I cannot say enough about having that roof over our head. That neighbourhood was a fantastic neighbourhood. All the families contributed, everyone had a job and kids went to school. I heard stories from the opposition about complaints and things like that about public and social housing and how some people wreck the housing and things like that—well, I can assure you in my time in Braybrook that never, ever happened. People took pride in their housing commission house, and I daresay around the state today people still take pride in the public housing that they are provided with. The \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build is the biggest single investment in social housing out of all the states and territories and in Victoria's history. This Big Housing Build will deliver more than 12 000 homes, including 2400 affordable homes for the Victorians who need them the most.

I would like to acknowledge the great community organisations that target homelessness in Melton. We have wonderful programs like Hope Street, with their work with youth experiencing homelessness. Youth often are just that little bit more difficult to house. Hope Street have developed positive relationships with many local real estate agents where they are prepared to go on the lease at times, but such is their relationship that many real estate agents trust Hope Street to transition their clients from emergency housing to rental housing. And there are great plans for Melton—I and many of the western MPs meet regularly, both state and federal Labor MPs, and we have worked collaboratively to address homelessness in the west. That work of the many homelessness agencies has been fantastic, and I applaud them for all their efforts.

We have also been working with some of the unions and our comrades at the Health and Community Services Union and the AMWU as we look to address the needs of those that need public and social housing in the west. This bill will help ensure that through Homes Victoria we can continue to boost the supply of modern, energy-efficient, affordable homes for Victorians most in need so that they have a place to call home, and that is what I referred to before in regard to my family. It was really important that we had public housing as we were growing up. It was a place and it was a home, and we enjoyed that upbringing and cherished that roof over our heads. It is an important point; energy efficiency is an important need. As older private rentals often do not have access to insulation and energy-efficient heating or solar, it is vital that the government helps deliver this energy efficiency to those who are most susceptible to the rising costs of energy and those who cannot invest in energy efficiency as they do not own their homes.

Something flows on from this government's investment in free TAFE, and this has been a game changer in regard to the involvement of the Big Housing Build and how we are recruiting people to work in the construction industry. We are helping and including a high number of women in the construction industry, and I think that is fantastic. Indigenous Victorians have also been helping out in the construction industry, so I think that is fantastic as an outcome of this Big Housing Build.

The bill formally establishes Homes Victoria as a contemporary housing agency with a robust governance structure, and it also provides powers to bring a more commercial way of operating to Homes Victoria but which keeps at the forefront the objects of the Housing Act 1983 to ensure that every person in Victoria has adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her means. The bill formalises the transition of the director of housing to Homes Victoria and establishes an independent skills-based Homes Victoria Advisory Board to provide strategic advice to the CEO of Homes Victoria and the minister. The board will be required to present an annual forward plan to the minister and support Homes Victoria through its independent oversight, providing expert advice on

Homes Victoria's long-term strategic direction, financial performance and stability, strategic risks and opportunities and the corporate plan and performance indicators.

Just before I finish, I want to respond to the member for Ovens Valley. He referred to the fact that regional Victorians are not being provided for by this government, and I have just got to refute his comments. It is my understanding that regional Victoria will receive \$765 million in the housing build across all of the regions. In fact in the Ovens Valley region Wodonga will receive \$30 million, Wangaratta \$20 million and even further towards the west, I suppose, Shepparton \$45 million, so in total that is \$95 million that will be spent on housing through that corridor of the north-east. I do not know what the member for Ovens Valley was referring to when he said that regional Victoria is not being provided for.

These reforms show the value of the Andrews Labor government in its transformational way of investing in our communities, our workers and our families. The benefits go far beyond the economic. This massive policy will shape Victoria for years to come. I support this legislation, and I commend this bill to the house.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (12:03): I also rise to make a contribution on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I think, as previous speakers have put it well, this bill seeks to further deliver and consolidate our Andrews Labor government's commitment to an expanded, effective and sustainable social and affordable housing system, and it will do this in a variety of ways. As has been spoken about, when there is community attitudinal change or other things change, whether it is technology or attitudes or funding or the way our society works, we need to have legislation that is up with the times, whether it is through changing wording or how we refer things. In this case of course it is about a massive new system that the Victorian Labor government is bringing into play, which is a massive rethink, a rebuild and a great injection of funds in order to revamp our affordable and social housing system in the state of Victoria and ensure it is providing for Victorians as best it can and getting the best value for money.

This legislation really is talking about making sure that any innovations, new ideas, new ways or new partnerships can be developed to maximise the dollar spend in terms of providing as much housing as possible and in models and systems that people need, that reflect the way people live, rather than just plonking down something and then saying to people that they have got to go and use that facility or go into that house. We all know, for example, that as members of Parliament we get a number of residents that may come to us seeking affordable, social or public housing, and not everybody is the same. Their families are different. The way they live their lives is different. So there has to be some understanding and accommodation of that when providing housing to Victorians, because a basic human right for all people is the right to a home and to shelter.

Before going into the contents of this bill I would like to in particular give an example of a new model that is occurring in the Thomastown electorate. I was there with the former Minister for Housing not that long ago, and it was great to be there, to announce and turn the first sod on a project that is called the Riverlee estate, which is on Cooper Street, a stone's throw from the Northern Hospital and two stone throws from the shopping centre. There is the community health centre there; there are a whole lot of services. This Riverlee project, which is going to be almost the size of a small town, has included in it—and this is the first work that they are building—151 social housing homes, which include 79 one-bedroom and 72 two-bedroom homes. This is a collaboration with both the developer, Riverlee, as well as Haven; Home, Safe, which is a homelessness service that also acts as a referral agency and places people in homes. This collaboration in building these 151 social housing homes is going to be a system where Haven; Home, Safe not only builds and owns the properties but also will provide a caretaker service, case managers and other people that are actually on the premises acting to ensure that everything runs smoothly because there is always some sort of neighbourhood dispute in any street or place. This system will be where there are extra services provided in place, if you like, within that housing tower which will be part of the Riverlee estate, which also will include a private hospital, private dwellings—both houses and apartments—and so on.

Getting back to the bill, the bill will make a number of amendments to the Housing Act 1983 and the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, and it allows the vision that our government has in terms of making social housing fit for purpose, maximising value for money and also providing the housing that actual people need and in the way they need it. I need to mention that we are talking about a \$5.3 billion investment.

This bill will formally establish Homes Victoria as a contemporary housing agency, and it will have a very robust governance structure. Homes Victoria has been established as the reformed and repositioned director of housing, and it aims to support Victorians who are finding it difficult, as we know, to secure stable, affordable housing. It will manage the \$31 billion in housing assets that currently house more than 112 000 Victorians in public housing. It will also oversee the renewal and expansion of those assets, as I have mentioned, as part of the Big Housing Build. It will also be expected to enable a sustainable housing system that can deliver for the generations to come. Again it is talking about, in line with the times and with the way of modern living, what is needed, what Victorians need. We need the governance and organising structures to fit in with the new times.

There will be new powers under the rebranded and reconfigured Homes Victoria. Part of it will be to expand housing stock and to look at different ways of doing that, whether it is through different financial arrangements or whether it is through partnerships, and also to look at what types of models of housing are required for different people. I think it is pretty fair to say that there has been a fairly locked-in system in the past about how social and affordable housing is provided, managed and maintained, but this is trying to create a new vision where there will be the ability within the legislation, with lots of accountability and good governance, to look at innovative ways to make the dollar go further as well as look at the type of housing and the way that it is provided to people.

I think an important aspect that probably has not been looked at before is the ability in this legislation to allow Homes Victoria to actually look at superannuation funds and see whether they are prepared to invest and to contribute. Particularly the industry funds are always looking for investments that are going to give good returns for people's retirement but also ethical investments and investments that will change people's lives, because it is mostly working people that are in the industry superannuation funds, and of course working people are in need of affordable housing such as what we are striving to create as well as social housing.

In terms of talking about some different models of provision of housing, I would like to perhaps give a bit of a shout-out to an initiative—and I think the member for Melton also raised it in his speech just before me—and that is the project that the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Health and Community Services Union are lobbying for and looking for in combination with Hope Street and also building company 3PE Build. They are looking at a new model, which would be the building of units for young people. Within the housing complex there would be services for those young people not just around wellbeing but also around training, connection to jobs, job agencies and mentors so that young people are given the best chance to get work and be able to look after themselves going into the future. These are the sorts of projects that you would hope under this legislation would be able to be looked at. It is a really incredible future that we are looking at in terms of housing for Victoria.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:14): It is with great pleasure that I join the debate on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I think it is great that you are actually in the chair during the debate, Acting Speaker Couzens. I know that as the member for Geelong this is an area that you are incredibly passionate about, and it is a passion that I really share too. It is great to follow the wonderful member for Thomastown, who is one of my neighbours and who I have had the privilege of working with since she was elected as my neighbour in 2010, 12 years ago. I think that it is only Labor that really gets down into the detail about provision of social and affordable housing.

I want at the outset of my remarks to pay tribute to the previous Minister for Housing, the member for Richmond. I know that the member for Richmond all his working life has really given a damn about

affordable housing, about the dignity of having a roof over your head—starting out as a housing worker as he did in public housing. I first met the member for Richmond when I worked in the office of housing. It might have been called the Ministry of Housing and Construction or the Ministry of Housing then. It had many name changes. As a young public servant I encountered the member for Richmond as an adviser to the then minister for housing, Barry Pullen. The member for Richmond was also then the Lord Mayor of Melbourne. I just experienced his passion. He and others were some of the key influences on me when I joined the party in 1988 as a young public servant, and I thought, ‘I can really try and make a difference in this policy area’.

I began work on the housing policy committee. I was the president of the housing policy committee. I worked in the youth housing program, in common equity rental co-ops. There was in those days a local government and community housing program where local government partnered with the state and federal governments. We had a federal government that actually put money into housing in those days. I know that the member for Richmond then went on to work for the then Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, on the national housing agenda. I am so glad that we now have a Labor government in Canberra again, because if they were to invest as much as we are investing through our Big Housing Build program in Victoria, we would have no waiting list here.

I said at the outset that only Labor gets into the detail around this. I heard the member for Hawthorn before talking about the ‘tree Tories’, the Greens. What we see them do in local government is always this wringing of hands. You know, ‘There should be more done about housing’. Any time we talk about social housing or affordable housing they are against it. They say that they want people in public housing in one area—the old demonised ghettos of public housing—and every time we say that we want diversity when we are redeveloping, they are against it. They are against it on the floor of this chamber, and they are against it in the upper house. They say it is undermining socialist values or something, as if they would know anything about that. Then what you see those tree Tories do on local councils is they are constantly opposed to the expansion of social and affordable housing, particularly in the inner city. Wherever they are on councils, they are opposed to it.

Then on the other side is the coalition, whether it is the Liberal or the National Party. We have heard their speakers today. Whenever you talk about public housing all they want to do is talk about poor behaviour and to demonise people in public housing. It is absolutely just lowest common denominator politics. They use it as an excuse to do nothing or, worse, to decrease the amount of public and social housing that is available to the community. They have been involved in sell-offs that derive no benefit in decreasing public housing waiting lists. Then you have the demonising of people in public housing—that they really should only be housed in lower socio-economic areas so that they never actually get the influence of people that are in work or, for young people, have mentors in a community that can assist them into work. You hear the most base, base criticism. I mean, the conversation—I think it was last year—and the drivel that came from a former housing minister, Wendy Lovell in the other place, was just disgraceful in her contribution in the upper house. She was an appalling housing minister. She was not supportive of the people that she was there to serve. Then she showed that she has learned nothing from that portfolio. To somehow say that there should be no social housing in Brighton because the kids that would live there would not be able to afford decent sneakers—well, that is about the level of their contribution on policy in public housing.

Mr Tilley: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, there are a couple of things here, but certainly we are getting a fair way off this bill. So I just call for the member for Yan Yean to get back to the bill, if you would not mind, Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Couzens): There is no point of order, but I ask the member to contribute on the bill. The comments are relevant to the bill.

Ms GREEN: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Well, this is an absolutely reformist bill and will enable the new entity of Homes Victoria to implement the most appropriate models and transaction structures to deliver on the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build. As a regional Victorian, raised and educated there,

what I love about our big build is our big build enshrines 25 per cent of the spend in regional Victoria, but I believe that with the lower land costs in regional Victoria there is every possibility that we will get a third or more of those units being built in regional Victoria.

We have seen in regional Victoria that there is a huge affordability problem and there is a supply problem, and we are finding it is not even just people that would have traditionally been seen as homeless, but you are finding that jobs cannot be filled—teachers, nurses, police officers, baristas, the hospitality industry. There are just not houses in many, many towns. I know in St Arnaud, for example, there are two businesses there that are running at about 60 per cent capacity because they cannot get the workers there, and one of the businesses is actually blocking out the motel and paying for the workers to live there.

I want to give credit. I spoke yesterday about the wonderful Tony Driscoll, the late mayor of the Shire of Northern Grampians. He was passionate about ensuring that there was a better housing mix in the town that he loved. Tony was a real estate agent, but he was not just about the big end of town, he was about people having dignity and a roof over their heads. The second last time I met with him, with Martha Haylett, the Labor candidate for Ripon, I said, ‘Tony, where is the land?’. He talked about the big houses there that a lot of single older women were living in and having difficulty heating and maintaining and how those homes would be ideal for families and how we need to build a different form of housing either for single people starting out or for those older people to be able to age in place in their township but in a more appropriate place. I said to Tony, ‘Okay, where’s some public land where we could do that?’. He immediately said, ‘The old St Arnaud High site’. Martha and I went and visited it with him. There is a sports stadium there that used to be part of the old college, and I just think it is an ideal site. I really hope that Homes Victoria will look at this site as a future place for affordable housing that can really help that town of St Arnaud. But there are numerous towns across regional Victoria and parts of our suburbs that will really benefit from this initiative. I commend the new minister and staff, and I commend this bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:24): I am very excited to speak on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022, which of course will bolster this government’s commitment to an expanded, an effective and a sustainable social and affordable housing system. Something I am extremely passionate about and I know all members on this side of the house are extremely passionate about is the premise that everyone deserves a roof over their head, whether it be social housing or affordable housing. They deserve to have the safety, the security and the dignity of a home, and it is this bill and the structures that this bill rolls out that will enable that.

We have heard many people on this side of the house talk about the \$5.3 billion—yes, ‘billion’, you heard that right—commitment to the Big Housing Build, which is the biggest single investment in social housing out of all the states and territories and in Victoria’s history.

The Big Housing Build will deliver more than 12 000 homes, including 2400 affordable homes for the Victorians who need them most. As part of that Big Housing Build, we will secure 2000 homes for Victorians who have a mental illness and 1000 homes to provide a safe space and security for survivors of family violence, and 10 per cent of new dwellings will support Aboriginal Victorians to have culturally safe self-determined housing options as well. Our government’s investment means that Homes Victoria has passed the halfway mark, with 6300 homes already completed or underway and 1400 households either settled or about to move into their brand new homes, which is just amazing.

The formalities of this bill are really about establishing Homes Victoria as a contemporary housing agency with a very robust governance structure. It also provides powers to bring in a more commercial way of operating Homes Vic but keeps at the forefront the objectives of the Housing Act 1983 as well, which is essentially to ensure that every person in Victoria has adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her means. This will allow Homes Victoria to deliver housing with a consortium—from social housing for the most vulnerable members of our community to affordable housing for the

low- to moderate-income earners, including of course essential workers as well. The bill also formalises the transition of director of housing to Homes Victoria and establishes an independent skills-based Homes Victoria advisory board to provide strategic advice to the CEO of Homes Victoria and the minister. As I have said, there is a fairly robust governance structure.

If there is one thing you will hear about in the community of Frankston—indeed I am sure every member has this in common, and Frankston is no different there—it is mental health and housing. When I am on the phones or knocking on doors on the weekends or out at a street stall listening to people or holding a listening post, I always hear about housing. It is a huge local issue, an issue that Frankston council and a number of other partners in our community really decided they were going to become part of, get some skin in the game, a few years ago. They developed Frankston Zero, an initiative to combat homelessness, which is chaired by the Peninsula Community Legal Centre CEO, Jackie Galloway, who is a great human being. As part of that Frankston Zero initiative we got a lot of local agencies on board—Neami National, TaskForce, Launch Housing, the list goes on—to establish what we need to bring from the coalface to the government policy rooms to make sure we are decreasing homelessness and providing an offering that is inclusive, provides equality and actually gives people what they need, so we do not have people being readmitted, so we do not see recidivism or see people just being homeless on the beach or on the seats of Frankston. I am sure some other suburbs have got their own programs as well, but this is one that came out of Frankston, and the advocacy behind it is amazing.

It is a passion of mine to make sure that everyone in my community, including Frankston of course but also Victoria-wide, has a roof over their head. There are some very complex problems around that. There are some very complex reasons why some people are homeless. We require a wraparound model. We require a model that has a no-wrong-door approach, I guess, to do that, and that requires a lot of other services besides just the infrastructure of housing itself. But I am very confident that with people working together and agencies working together we can actually do that. I note that that is what is being done in Frankston at the moment and, again, quite a few other suburbs.

We have seen and heard some campaigning against housing. I think Brighton was mentioned just before. I do not mean to tread on that well-tilled soil again, but I was pretty disgusted with what I heard in the other place recently—about how we should not allow people who need affordable housing to live in Brighton because their kids might not be able to afford bloody shoes. I would love to have a talk to that person—a coffee, a beer. I think there is some education needed there. I think that is what it comes down to. I am not sure it is anything other than that. I just think people maybe need to be educated about what is actually going on in their own communities. That is a pretty easy thing to do, but people have got to lend themselves to that as well.

When I talk about a passion for housing, I will go above and beyond. I will go anywhere in Victoria to find out about a new housing initiative. That is what I did I think with the member for Thomastown and also the member for Melton when we took a trip out to Melton with members of the mighty AMWU and the mighty Health and Community Services Union to see a project run in conjunction with Hope Street, where they are providing housing that to me ticks all the boxes. It is managed. People feel safe.

There are a lot of other, I guess, ancillary kinds of services that are around that, from social enterprises to work-readiness programs to employment programs as well. But out of that came a discussion about another project that both these fantastic unions were pushing, and that is Homeless to Homemaker, which is essentially a project that was brought from consultation with the shop floor and members of Headspace, Bunjilwarra Koori Youth Alcohol and Drug Healing Service, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Alfred Health, Peninsula Health, Western Health and Melbourne Health. Members from all those stakeholders contributed to a plan where we would be able to explore opportunities to include more social enterprise housing models. That includes a company called 3PE, who are an engineering company run by a bloke I have spoken about in here before, Charlie Hamod. Charlie has had a great career, but he wants to leave a legacy. He sees people who are homeless and he wants to

tell us how he can help out, and this modular-style initiative that we are calling Homeless to Homemaker certainly does that. I know there is land in Frankston. We would love to see that one get up. For helping people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues, over-55 women who are unfortunately over-represented in homeless statistics or people that are at risk of recidivism or readmission or who just need a job, this is a great plan and a great way to do it.

I also had the chance last week to visit TaskForce in Frankston, who are an agency whose motto is 'Where hope finds help'. You walk through this door, and you have got a bunch of very, very experienced workers in the Frankston area. Basically it is a no-wrong-door policy. They will be able to find you the service you need in a wraparound service kind of way with a bunch of very, very passionate people. I know they are about to open their new office in Frankston, so they invited me to come and take a look at it and have a bit of a tour. I was amazed. We were walking through. There are any amount of people in Frankston that are finding that hope, finding that door and finding the help they need. If you look at the stats, it is actually quite amazing. These things range from housing to mental health issues to alcohol and other drug issues. But the fundamentals of this bill are the foundation of a structure for some of those agencies. Anyway, I just wanted to say that I was very, very impressed with TaskForce. They run some very, very good initiatives, including their initiative regarding young women who are coming out of the justice system. It is fantastic, and the results speak for themselves.

\$5.3 billion is Victoria's largest ever commitment to housing. There are a lot of people that have pooh-pooed that: 'How are you going to do it?' and this, that and the other. But right now and right here people in this house and people out in our community are actually seeing these houses being built and people moving into these houses. It just shows that where there is a will, there is a way, and often it is the will that is not there. This government certainly does not lack that will. We have been listening to communities like Frankston, like Thomastown, like most of Victoria, saying there is a homelessness problem. There is only one way to solve it, and it is to bite the bullet and create more social and affordable housing. This is a great bill. It provides the structure to actually do that, and I strongly commend this bill to the house.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:34): I too rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and I echo the sentiments from this side of the house on the importance of the strong support and action of the Andrews Labor government to the social services sector since it was elected in 2014. The minute we were elected our government moved to create this important work for Victorians, and that is to make sure that we provide safe and secure public housing for everyone in the community and the services that they need also to make sure that, as I said, every Victorian has a safe, secure and stable home. We know the importance of having a safe, secure home. This is the aspiration of every Victorian and Australian, the hope of owning your home or having a safe, reliable place where you can raise your family and, most importantly, be in a safe and secure environment each and every day.

This particular bill will assist with the implementation of our fantastic Big Housing Build by ensuring that we are delivering in a manner that maximises the efficiency of every project by reducing long and unnecessary delays. It will create the legislative framework for the Victorian affordable housing program to manage affordable housing separately from other social housing and create those important mechanisms for dealing with antisocial behaviour and any other issues, making sure that we are protecting our communities. This will make sure that these homes are delivered as quickly as possible, and we have seen that already in my electorate of St Albans, where we have seen some fantastic developments which are really giving more options to single mothers and the elderly and providing those support services as well. As I have already mentioned, we have not wasted a minute since being elected. We are absolutely committed to making sure of the investments in our communities, in particular when it comes to providing social and public housing, and we understand when it comes to social, community and affordable housing that this is a real pillar in our community that is important and fundamental to the lives of Victorians.

I for one know the importance of public housing. I actually live in the middle of a public housing estate in St Albans. I am a lifelong resident of St Albans. I have been there for over 40 years and lived side by side with residents in public housing, and I have become quite close friends with those residents. Seeing some of their journeys and their challenges, seeing firsthand what it means to be in public housing and hearing some of the stories of their journeys before they actually entered into public housing, I am always inspired by those families. They also include pensioners who live on their own. It becomes a place of opportunity, and I will just single out one family in particular who live near me in public housing. Their family has worked very hard, saved every penny for the last 20 years, and I can tell you that one of their daughters, on her 18th birthday, received a Mercedes-Benz from her family. So I just want to put forward the public housing families. On the other side some would say—and there were comments made, unfortunately, by a previous housing minister on the other side in relation to—‘Well, these people can’t live in Brighton. They can’t afford sneakers and they probably can’t afford the latest iPhone’, or words to that effect. Well, I say to you that some of the people in public housing work very hard, they are aspirational, they save every penny. As I said, one of them that I know very well, one of my neighbours, on their 18th birthday received a Mercedes-Benz. The whole family had saved to make sure that this could happen, and it just shows you that it is not just about a safe home. These are places where opportunity is created. Kids go to the local school and they really excel, move and contribute in our local community as pharmacists, doctors and public service officers. So to stereotype—as some of the comments that have been made have—is really disappointing, and it just shows the lack of understanding and the lack of compassion on the other side when it comes to public housing and when it comes to families who need that assistance at the beginning. But I can tell you, having friends and family that lived at the Flemington flats for many years, they take that as an opportunity, move forward and really contribute back into the community.

I am really proud to have numerous developments across the St Albans electorate, and I had the great opportunity of recently visiting some of those developments in St Albans with the former Minister for Housing, the member for Richmond. It was amazing. Not only did we see partnerships being created with Women’s Housing Ltd for a development of homes for women and families—up to 100 women and kids in another development—all these projects now come with modern energy-efficient homes that are appropriate and blend in with the character of the neighbourhood. But most importantly it gives women and their families, as I said, a safe place, and it is also about, with our projects in particular, making sure that there are innovative housing options.

Another development that I had the pleasure of visiting was in Albion, and this incredible development brought cutting-edge technology, one of the first 7-star ratings in Australia, using passive house design to make social housing far more energy efficient and, most importantly, cutting power bills up to 80 per cent. So not only are we providing safe, reliable homes but we are also making sure that they are innovative, are meeting the demand and are cost effective for the residents that will be living there.

I do say this as someone who lives in the middle of public housing: this government—and it is only Labor that has delivered—is making sure that we see 10 000 houses created from the Big Housing Build alone, and most importantly this housing is a chain reaction. It creates local jobs. It creates the local economy also to be part of those projects, and that is extremely important for the electorate of St Albans. I have just got to say the other side and some of their mates outside in local government have just been horrendous when it comes to this issue. Some of the misleading statements that they make in relation to public housing and social housing, in particular out in the west, are absolutely outrageous and show again the level of understanding, the lack of understanding and the fact that they are just not here to really think about and have compassion for families, pensioners, single parents—those who need it most in their time of need. But I am extremely proud of our government. We are making sure that we deliver appropriate housing, whether it is public or whether it is social. This is the need, and we are delivering on that need to our communities across the west. I also want to thank the member for Melton and my western region colleagues.

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (12:44): It is with some pleasure this afternoon that I rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022, and I must say I do so with some profound pleasure, really. My part of the world is Geelong's growth corridor, and we have got, as you would be well aware, Acting Speaker Couzens, many, many thousands of people who are making their way to the Armstrong Creek growth corridor and setting themselves and their families up for a future living in Geelong but as a part of that growing community. In my time as a local representative, as the state member for South Barwon, I have had many opportunities to talk with those communities and to hear firsthand their stories about how they ended up living in Armstrong Creek, their backgrounds, where they came from and the challenges in their lives. A very large proportion of those residents are local Geelong people who have moved from the northern suburbs of Geelong, having grown up in social housing, and have done a little bit better than their parents did and have had the opportunity to buy a house. But they never forget where they came from, and they never forget the important role that social housing played in their life in helping them have that security as a young person growing up and the dignity of a place to go at the end of their day that was affordable and that was, in a relative context, a safe place to be.

Recognising their stories, every time the Andrews Labor government has put in place further reforms to provide people, particularly those that are renting, with further rights and to put in place more clarity about the relationship and expectations that the state government has with renters and landlords or when we are putting a post out about Victoria's big build, particularly in terms of social housing, my office—and I have no doubt your office, Acting Speaker—gets inundated with phone calls wanting clarity about what those rights are. From my end one of the very important points that we need to acknowledge is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for many people to have that aspiration, that goal, of property ownership. What we are increasingly seeing is a greater proportion of people living in properties that are owned by others, and that could be indeed the state, it could be a social housing provider or it could be a private landlord. We need to make sure, recognising those economic realities, that we do provide where we can a set of new rights to particularly renters, and I just want to highlight some of those.

The first, from my perspective as a dog owner, is that we are now providing the opportunity for renters to have pets in their household, in the house that they are renting. That comes with an obligation, and that obligation is that any damage that their pet might do to that property needs to be repaired once they move out. I think that is a fair obligation. I have owned dogs that have from time to time scratched doors and those things, and I think it is quite reasonable that, in exchange for me having a pet in a rented property that I am living in, I make good that door when I move out. I think that is a fair and reasonable thing.

I think it is also fair and reasonable that we make sure that houses are fit for purpose. We do not want to see slum lords, and we do not want to see properties being made available on the rental market that are not fit for purpose. In that context we need to make sure that those houses are safe, and that is why we have put in place I think biennial checks to make sure that houses, in an electrical context, are fit and safe for people to live in. We also need to make sure, as pointed out by the member for Frankston, that there are regular gas checks to make sure that gas heating in the house is working effectively, that it is appropriately exhausted and that we do not see CO₂ build-up in properties, because unfortunately we have seen quite a number of tragedies over the years where people have gone to sleep, they have had the heater on and they have literally never woken up, because there have been carbon monoxide leaks in that house, effectively causing the death of members of a household if indeed not the whole household. So we have put in place those things.

We have also recognised that for a very significant period over the last 30 or 40 years the proportion of properties in Victoria that are provided as social housing has not kept up with population growth. I very much want to acknowledge the very long advocacy of the member for Richmond to make sure that, going forward, really substantial public policy reform is put in place. I know this: he advocated

to make sure that we massively increased the availability of social housing. Of course a very substantial part of our big build program saw a massive increase in the supply of social housing. I think that supply of capital to address that is in the order of \$5.3 billion, and that is a massive catch-up. I certainly hope that we can enter into a substantial partnership with the Albanese government around having further federal investments like we used to have in the past in housing agreements between the commonwealth and state governments. I must say that it was very disappointing to see the election of an Abbott government way back and the massive cuts that it made to working in partnership with states around the country in delivering affordable social housing, having a good supply of new stock coming onto the market and making sure that there was a really good investment in renovating tired and old social housing. So I am looking forward to further work that can be done in that context.

As I say, many new people are making their way to the Armstrong Creek growth corridor. It is great to see. It is great for jobs, and it is great to see all of these reforms that we are bringing to the table. I look forward to continuing to advocate for further public policy reform in this space. Housing is such a critical issue. It does not matter who you talk to, whether it be— *(Time expired)*

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (12:54): Acting Speaker Couzens, before I start, can I take this opportunity to congratulate you for your recent elevation to extra responsibility in this place.

I am very delighted to rise today to speak on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. It is even better to follow the hardworking member for South Barwon and his contribution. I would just like to quote his contribution and say that those who have had shelter over their head, whether in public housing or a rental, ‘never forget where they came from’—like many of my constituents, including my parents-in-law and my wife, who had recently arrived from a refugee camp in Thailand back in the 1980s and stayed in a public housing tenancy for a short time. From time to time she would ask me to go for a drive and look at the property where she grew up. It is a good feeling. They are all good memories, so they never forget where they come from.

This is another very important bill, and it is very relevant to my constituents. I am proud that our district is home to a great deal of social housing, because having a home is essential to a person’s health and wellbeing, and social housing is an essential part of every housing system in the world. Social housing ensures that people on low incomes or with barriers to getting private rentals or owning their own property still have a place to call home. It is a lifeline for women and children escaping family violence, people experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges and people with disability. Anyone can have difficulty finding a place to call home at some point in their life.

A strong social housing system is essential to a fair and inclusive Victoria. That is what this government stands for: fairness, equality, inclusiveness and delivering strong social outcomes for all Victorians. So I am extremely proud of our district’s social housing and support network. In fact in the suburb of Clarinda the percentage of social housing dwellings is more than five. In the surrounding suburbs of South Oakleigh and Clayton South I believe it is a little lower, between 2 and 3 per cent. So this is a great start, but we need to do more. In the City of Greater Dandenong we have a huge demand, with nearly 2500 Greater Dandenong residents at risk of homelessness. There are well over 5000, closer to 6000, people living in overcrowded conditions. The rates of rental-related poverty and the number and percentage of homeless persons in Greater Dandenong are one of the highest in Victoria.

We need to do more, and we will—more homes, more security, more stability and more opportunity. This is what is at the heart of this bill. The bill seeks to deliver on the Victorian government’s commitment to expand the effective and sustainable social and affordable housing system. It starts by enshrining key governance reform for Homes Victoria as well as enabling Homes Victoria to implement the most appropriate model and transaction structure to deliver the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build. It is \$5.3 billion, the biggest single investment in social housing out of all states and territories and in Victoria’s history. The 12 000 new homes include 2400 affordable homes for Victorians who need them the most, 2000 homes for Victorians who have a mental illness and 1000 homes to provide safety and

security for survivors of family violence, and 10 per cent of new dwellings will support Aboriginal Victorians to have culturally safe and self-determined housing options.

This is life changing for thousands of Victorian families—thousands of people housed and secure, an opportunity for many to rebuild their lives and to be somewhere which is safe to call home. For others it is a vital safety net offering the dignity, stability and opportunity they need to fully participate in their community, a historic and life-changing agenda that I am very proud to support here today. The Andrews Labor government has been brave and has looked at society's greatest challenges right here and right now with mental health, family violence and social housing, just to name a few, and taken historic action and made historic investments to support vulnerable Victorians. We are seeing in Clarinda—

Sitting suspended 1.00 pm until 2.01 pm.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

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. Seventy-nine-year-old Maurie Killeen from Stratford has been waiting three years for a knee reconstruction. Maurie contacted us in the last few days, saying that some mornings he can barely walk due to the pain, and he has asked, 'Will it be my turn anytime soon to get an operation?'. Why are Victorians continuing to wait in pain because this government has let surgery waiting lists blow out to almost 90 000 people?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:02): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As always, if he wants to provide the details of the person whose circumstances he has raised today in the house, I am very happy to get the department to follow up and to see if there is any further advice or care that can be offered to him—I think his name was Maurie—at this time. But again I need to make the point—I have made it many times, but I will keep on making it—that our health system has been under unprecedented pressure, and this is as a consequence of the global pandemic.

This is being experienced right around the nation and indeed around the world, but let me tell you this: our government has a plan. We have a \$12 billion COVID repair plan, and let me add also that in the data that was released transparently by our government, as it is every quarter, what we saw is some stabilisation in the system, and indeed we saw almost a doubling in the number of planned surgeries that occurred in the previous quarter compared with the quarter before. This is absolutely because we have committed healthcare workers working hard every day throughout the pandemic—they are tired, they are fatigued. They tell me that, but do you know what? They love their work. They know that this is a government, the Andrews Labor government, that has their back. We will work with, not against, our healthcare workers, and we will continue to do that in order to ensure that Victorians can access the very best health care. I want to make this point: it is important to remind the house and to assure all Victorians that for category 1 surgery—that is, the sickest people in our state—99.7 per cent of those people were all seen within the clinically approved time line, which is 30 days. The handful of patients that were not seen during that time was as a consequence of either their illness and not being ready for surgery or, indeed, their surgeon's illness.

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Frankston is warned.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition) (14:04): I thank the minister for her answer. Given surgery waitlist data is not released publicly by the government for all regional hospitals, how many regional Victorians like Maurie are among the record near 90 000 Victorians still waiting for pain-relieving or life-changing surgery?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:05): I want to make this point: here in Victoria, whilst we have some 85 health services, they work together as a system. Again I suggest that if the Leader of the Opposition is really interested in Maurie's wellbeing, if he cares about patients, if he is more interested in people than politics, then what he will do is send me the details and I can ask the department to get in touch with him.

Mr Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I just ask if you could draw the minister back to my supplementary question, which was around the number of regional Victorians who are on a hospital elective surgery waiting list. That was the substance of my substantive question.

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

Ms THOMAS: Again, I am very happy to provide further information, including that every person on a waitlist in this state is being actively managed by the healthcare system.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:06): I am delighted to rise to update the house on one of the most important and significant public transport projects in our nation's history. Of course I speak of the Suburban Rail Loop, a project that was supported by the Victorian community before the election back in 2018, a very, very important project, one that is all about jobs, one that is all about getting people where they want to go, getting cars off the road, cutting emissions and making sure that a world-class city—and state—has a world-class public transport system. I know that my good friends the member for Mordialloc, the member for Clarinda, the member for Bentleigh, the member for Oakleigh, the member for Mount Waverley, the member for Burwood, the member for Box Hill and so many others—in fact everyone on this side of the house—and their communities are very, very pleased to think that we are getting on and delivering this project. And we do it in the full and certain knowledge that whilst we are starting this project, it is of such a scale someone else will open it and someone else will finish it. That is what leadership looks like—actually building things that are important today, and every day that goes by they become more important. I tell you something else: they also get more expensive if you were to put them off, for instance. You need to get on if you are the government of this state. You need to get on and do road and rail, hospitals and schools, skills and jobs. You need to do more than one thing at a time. That, it would seem, is beyond the capability of some.

DENTAL SERVICES WAITING LISTS

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Health. Maddy is 21 years of age and is currently in agony as a result of severe tooth pain. In October 2020 a dentist told Maddy her severely impacted teeth needed to be removed and an extraction appointment was made in November 2020. When Maddy attended her extraction appointment she was told that her procedure had been referred to a dental hospital and it would be 18 months before her extraction procedure would take place. It is now 21 months since Maddy was told her appointment had been deferred. She still has not had those teeth removed and is yet to receive any advice as to when this vital surgery will occur. Why does the government have no plan or strategy to reduce Victoria's growing dental waiting list, which has currently more than 150 000 Victorians?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:09): I thank the member for her question, and there are a couple of points and opportunities that I want to alert the member to. Under our government we have continued to invest in public dental health services, and indeed we are investing \$321.9 million over four years for our signature school dental program, Smile

Squad. This is such a significant investment, one that is delivering very important health care and dental care to the children of Victoria, conveniently—

Ms Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister may be reminded in terms of relevance. The question was not about the school dental program, it was about Maddy, who has been waiting 21 months for vital surgery.

Ms Blandthorn: On the point of order, Speaker, the member for Evelyn asks what action is being taken, and what action is being taken is in the process of being detailed. The minister was being entirely relevant.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Ms THOMAS: The reason why I am detailing our significant, substantial investment in Smile Squad and our school dental program is that by providing free dental health care to all children in government primary and secondary schools we will significantly reduce the demand on the public dental waiting lists. This is the inconvenient truth that those on the other side do not want to hear. No government has made as big an investment in public dental health services as our government. We are very proud of that. Once again, as always, if the member wants to provide me with Maddy's details, I am very happy to follow up.

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Frankston is warned.

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:11): Also to the Minister for Health on a supplementary question, as a consequence of waiting 21 months for her extraction surgery Maddy is in constant pain. She can only manage to work part-time, leaving her barely enough money to survive on. Maddy can no longer sleep or eat without being in pain, and her mental health is deteriorating rapidly. How is ruining a young person's life an acceptable consequence of the Andrews government's failure to lower the public dental waiting list?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:12): I absolutely reject the premise of the question. No government has provided as much investment in public dental health services as our government. We have a plan to deliver dental health care to every child at a government primary or secondary school in this state. This is about preventative dental care. This is about addressing the real issue of oral health, which we know is a real challenge for many in our community.

I might point out that some communities were systematically neglected by those on the other side when they had the opportunity to govern. When they had the opportunity to deliver services, they chose not to do that. They chose instead to cut services, cut public health services, and given the chance we know they will do it again.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie—Minister for Public Transport, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Business Precincts) (14:14): I rise to update the house on the massive impact the Andrews Labor government's Suburban Rail Loop will have on our city, our state and our jobs. It is the most ambitious transport commitment in Australia's history. It has captured the hearts and minds of all Victorians except the small group opposite—and they will be a bit smaller the way they are going come November. But it is not just about a railway line, Mr Speaker. It is city shaping. It will reshape our suburbs for generations to come. It is a multigenerational project that will support the growth of Melbourne. SRL will connect every major railway line from the Frankston line to the Werribee line via Melbourne Airport. Can I also say it will improve access to housing, jobs, universities and, yes, hospitals and TAFE. Construction worker jobs, engineering jobs, crane operators, traffic jobs—these are all jobs that would go under the Leader of

the Opposition to save one job: his own, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, at the last election he cut his party in half, on the weekend he cut his name in half and today he has cut the Suburban Rail Loop in half.

The SPEAKER: Members, no prefix is required, just ‘Speaker’.

HEALTH SYSTEM

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (14:16): My question is also to the Minister for Health. Wendy is a 53-year-old Yarra Junction resident. She requires rotator cuff surgery to reattach tendons to the bone in both her left and right shoulders. She is also a type 2 diabetic. Wendy has endured more than four years of debilitating pain and restriction of movement while awaiting surgery. Her orthopaedic specialist is administering regular steroid injections into her shoulders to help reduce the extreme pain. Wendy has been waiting four years—long before COVID. Can the minister explain why Victorians in pain must wait four years for basic surgery because this government has totally mismanaged the state’s health system?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:17): I thank the member for her question, and I invite her to send me further details about Wendy, which I am very happy to ask the department to follow up. I know myself how painful shoulders can be if they are indeed injured in some way. The point that I would like to make in response to this is that over the last couple of weeks the Premier and I have had the opportunity to make some very exciting announcements. That of course is the purchase of Bellbird Private Hospital and its conversion into the Blackburn public surgical centre, and indeed before that the Premier and the previous minister announced the purchase of Frankston Private Hospital.

Ms McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question to the minister was about Wendy, her pain, her surgery and the government’s mismanagement. This is not a time for the minister to say what she wants to say. She needs to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Ms THOMAS: Thank you very much, Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to further explain the initiatives that our government is putting in place to grow public surgery provision in this state, and indeed the purchase of these two private hospitals, which those on the other side oppose, will deliver an additional 15 000 public surgeries every single year. Yet again we hear from those opposite: they come here with their alleged concern about individuals but do not want to listen to the answers. They do not want to hear about the plans that are being implemented as we speak in order to deliver more public surgeries to more people here in Victoria, including Wendy.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (14:19): I am sure Wendy would be delighted to go to Blackburn and be at the top of the list there. In September last year Wendy was also diagnosed with a severe form of MS and needs shoulder surgery more than ever. Wendy struggles with basic everyday tasks, and she is fearful she will not be able to stop herself from stumbling or falling due to her painful failing shoulders. Does the minister understand that delayed surgery caused by this government will lead to permanent disability and a much more severe outcome for people like Wendy?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:20): A couple of comments in response to this question. The first is of course that Wendy is under the care of a clinician—I am very glad to hear that—so she is receiving the care. I want to assure both the member and indeed all Victorians that planned surgery in this state is done according to acuity. Clinical decisions are being made every day in our health services in terms of which surgery can be done the soonest.

Once again what we see here is complete disregard for the fact that we have had a global pandemic. It has had a significant impact most acutely on our healthcare workforce, many of whom over the last few months have been furloughed at home with COVID themselves.

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms THOMAS: Indeed. People who are immunocompromised are at particular risk of COVID, and it is very important that we do all we can to protect them, including wearing a mask in a crowded indoor setting.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park—Minister for Energy, Minister for Environment and Climate Action, Minister for Solar Homes) (14:21): I rise to update the house on the Suburban Rail Loop project and the positive outcomes it will have on our environment and our climate change targets. It will take cars off our roads by increasing public transport patronage and active transport options. In fact 606 000 car trips and 2.2 million vehicle kilometres will come off our roads every single day by 2056. The reduction in car use will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and provide other environmental benefits, including improvement to our air quality and a reduction of noise and water pollution.

As part of our world-leading climate strategy we will be the first state in Australia to power all of our government operations with 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2025, including all metropolitan trains and trams. That means all of those extra public transport trips will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. We are soon to release our air quality strategy, an important part of which is getting cars off our roads. Globally transport emissions remain a significant challenge, and they are going up, which is why we must take every opportunity to turn this around. This kind of innovation and climate leadership is what will help Victoria reach our emissions reduction targets by 2050. Planning for the project will also support Victoria's shift to a circular economy, considering whole-of-life impacts of infrastructure that is sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change, and it will include renewable energy generation initiatives, integrated water management and other circular economy opportunities. There is no doubt about it—this project is a win for the environment and a win for our livability as the best state in the country, and only our government will actually get on and deliver all of those benefits through this project.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:23): My question is to the Premier. Victoria's three coal-fired power stations are currently Victoria's biggest source of climate pollution, and the Loy Yang power plants are licensed by the government to operate for another 2½ decades. Premier, why doesn't the government have a clear, transparent time line for the staged closure of Victoria's remaining coal-fired power stations?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:23): I thank the member for Pahran for his question. There are a couple of things he omits in his question, and one is of course that the government does not own the coal-fired generation capacity that he cites. It was for better, and I expect for worse, sold off by another group in this Parliament. What a winner that has been for the environment. What a winner that has been for consumers. What a winner that has been for workers in the valley who were promised many, many things and delivered not very much at all, or at least not very much good.

On the issue, though, that the member raises, with the greatest of respect to the member for Pahran, I just make this point: it is called an energy transition for a reason. If there were a switch that you could simply flick and go from the emission profile we have now to zero, then of course even this indolent lot over here might have done that in the four wasted years they spent sitting on this side of the house most recently. But it is not quite as simple as that because, for instance, you need heating and cooling, you need light and power, you need industry and jobs and you need to make a transition, particularly in the context of a national government—the Morrison government and then the secret Morrison government as well—who I think in nine years had how many energy policies. Actually they may have had lots of energy policy; they certainly had no energy plan, and they had no energy to make this transition.

So it is not a simple matter. It is a complex matter. But one thing is simple and obvious, I would hope, to all, even those who are climate commentators, renewable energy spectators, people who sit on the sidelines and perhaps never actually get any of the real work done. There is not much power being

generated by the Greens political party. There is not much reform being delivered by the Greens political party. You have only got to wonder: imagine where we would be today if we had not had a Greens political party in another Parliament stop an emissions trading scheme twice. I would say to the member that he would have more credibility if he had done more. In any event, regardless of his credibility or the lack thereof, I reckon Victorians are not so much into climate change talk; they want more climate change action. And the way to do that is to keep supporting Victorian Labor.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:26): On a supplementary question, it is a shame that the Premier has forgotten the prime ministership of a Victorian, Julia Gillard, who actually governed with the support of the Greens and delivered Australia's best ever climate policy. This is the critical decade on climate action, and whilst the—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Sandringham can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Member for Sandringham withdrew from chamber.

Mr HIBBINS: The Premier points to the privatisation of our energy system, but it is the government that actually does issue the licences for those coal-fired power stations. The fact is this government does not have a time line for the closure of coal, instead leaving it up to those private energy companies that the Premier seems to so oppose. Premier, I ask: why is the government leaving our climate and affected communities at the mercy of private energy companies?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (14:28): I am not sure that I should thank the member for Pahran, because I could not follow the last bit of that. Are we running these things? Are the private companies running these things? Are we in charge? Are they in charge? Are we at their mercy? Are they at our mercy? You would not be confused, would you, perhaps? You would not be nothing more than a cheap commentator on the sidelines while Labor governments get on and do the heavy lifting to create jobs, the heavy lifting to protect the planet, the heavy lifting to make sure that we have got a low-carbon future, not just talking about climate change but delivering climate change action? Surely even those as self-obsessed as—

Mr Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has already indicated that he did not understand the question and clearly does not understand how the energy system works. And if that is the case, he should sit down.

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

Mr ANDREWS: What is hard to understand is how someone who has never so much as lifted a finger to reduce emissions in this state has the gall to get up and ask a question like this. Commentary is cheap and useless. Action is what we need. That is what we are delivering. Stick with Labor, and there will be more of it.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: SUBURBAN RAIL LOOP

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:29): I am delighted today to update the house on the delivery of the Suburban Rail Loop. This is a project that is supported by Monash University, Deakin University and La Trobe University. This is a project that hospitals, including the Monash Children's, the heart hospital and Box Hill Hospital, support. This is a project that the RACV, the state's peak car industry body, supports. This is a project that local councils support. This is a project that industry, construction, property, development, employee and jobs bodies support. This is a project that Victorians want. This is a project that Victorians voted for. Anyone who is living and working in the suburbs of Melbourne and is stuck in their car or sitting on a bus would support it.

We know not everyone supports the Suburban Rail Loop. They do not support the connections it will bring. They do not support the thousands of jobs it will support. Some in this place will cut the

Suburban Rail Loop. We have seen today a desperate stunt from a desperate individual. Imagine wanting to cut 20 000 jobs just to save your own. Former Premier Jeff Kennett cut and closed rail lines. The Leader of the Opposition wants them cut before they are even built in this state. In government you are faced with choices: to invest and build or cut and close.

There are some who during their time in government delivered nothing. Imagine being in Doncaster. You were promised a train line; it was never delivered. Monash University: you were promised a train line and it was never delivered. Now those opposite want to do it again. In government they promised it and did not deliver it, and now they want to take away from Doncaster and Monash University the connections that the Suburban Rail Loop would deliver.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Frankston will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

CAULFIELD HOSPITAL

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:31): My question is to the Minister for Health. Alla from Caulfield was diagnosed with MS in 2000. In the years since, she has used the Caulfield Hospital hydrotherapy pool three times a week with friends as it is the only safe and effective way she and many suffering MS can exercise. This pool has played a vital role in sustaining Alla and many MS sufferers' physical and mental health, but for two years the pool has been closed. Although initially shut for COVID-19 the pool has not reopened because its facilities simply are not fit for purpose. Due to the complete lack of funding from the current Labor government, Alfred Health has sought to use private donations to fund upgrades, but this has not been enough. Does the government have any plans to reopen this important rehabilitation facility at the Caulfield Hospital, or is it yet another part of that hospital that the government will allow to fall into disrepair?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:33): I welcome the member from Caulfield's question. I had the opportunity to visit Caulfield Hospital only a few weeks ago. I was able to visit with the federal minister for NDIS, Bill Shorten. We were there to meet specifically with the allied healthcare team at Caulfield Hospital to understand the impact that the previous federal Liberal government's failure to invest in the NDIS has had on many of those at Caulfield Hospital requiring rehabilitation. What we have seen in that hospital is significant bed block from people who are eligible and medically well and need to go home to continue their rehabilitation but, because of the complete failure of the federal Liberal government to provide the NDIS services that people living with disability need, are stuck in hospital. This is causing real problems—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Barwon South is warned.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this question was about Alla, who cannot use the pool because it is closed due to disrepair and whether the minister will provide funding to allow that hydrotherapy pool to open for Alla and many others that cannot use it because of the lack of funding.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister was being relevant to funding in relation to disabilities and health services and disability services.

Ms THOMAS: Thank you again. I was just making the point that, having had the opportunity to visit the Caulfield Hospital, I am very aware of the important role that that hospital plays in the provision of rehabilitation services led by fantastic healthcare workers. And let me say this: the healthcare workers there know that there is only one side of politics that will work with them to support them to deliver the very best care.

I will make this final point. Under our government right now \$10 billion is being invested in capital projects as we speak. No other government has invested as much in the infrastructure projects that our health system needs. Not only that, not only are we working to deliver first-class health care, we can deliver transport projects as well, unlike those on the other side, for whom it is one or the other.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:36): Like many of Victoria's hospitals, Caulfield Hospital is in desperate need of a complete upgrade. It is old in parts and run down, and some areas are being cordoned off for being unsafe. Why after eight years in office has the Andrews government ignored any meaningful upgrade to this hospital and left local residents and healthcare staff with a substandard hospital that is no longer fit for purpose?

Ms THOMAS (Macedon—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services) (14:36): I will make the point once again: no other government has invested as much in public health infrastructure as this Andrews Labor government. We are very proud of the investments that we are making and continue to make in our healthcare services. We are building a magnificent new Footscray Hospital, a brilliant new Melton hospital. I have been right across the state to see all of the capital infrastructure projects that are being delivered by our government, and I look forward to visiting so many more.

Mr Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, Melton is a long way from Caulfield, and I ask the minister: is she committing to funding for the Caulfield Hospital, which is in desperate need of upgrades? Will she commit to that funding?

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Caulfield, it is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister was referring to funding for hospitals, and she is being relevant.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjecting across the chamber. I will remove members without warning.

Ms THOMAS: The Andrews Labor government will continue to invest in the health infrastructure projects that our community needs. What we will not do is go out and announce funding black holes like those on the other side—half-funded projects relying on the commonwealth. They do not do any of the groundwork, and they will never get built.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (14:38): I rise again to speak on Victoria's donation laws to ensure that all members of the house, not just members on this side, are aware of their legal obligations. The process for declaring a donation is robust. People making donations of \$1080 or more in a financial year must disclose them to the Victorian Electoral Commission with 21 days. The Victorian Electoral Commission then has seven days to publish the information. The requirement to disclose donations in a timely manner is all about transparency because Victorians have a right to know who is donating to decision-makers. Not only is this disclosure requirement in place, but there is also an onus on the person or party receiving the donation to provide an annual return to the VEC, and the VEC publishes this as well. 'What is an annual return?', you may ask. An annual return is a summary of money received and costs incurred in a financial year. To ensure complete transparency the annual return process complements the donor disclosures to ensure the information matches up.

So what happens if you do not follow these disclosure rules? Let us say you tried to get around the rules by using a Hotmail address and a personal business for donations. What happens then is hefty fines and potential imprisonment. To enforce compliance the Victorian Electoral Commission has the power to monitor and investigate potential breaches, including requiring people to produce documents. Considering the seriousness of the consequences I have just outlined, you would think the Leader of the Opposition would come forward immediately to clear his name. But the question remains

unanswered: has anyone employed by the opposition been paid by an undeclared source? The member for Malvern answered yes, so why can't you?

The SPEAKER: Minister, I remind you not to refer to 'you'. You are reflecting on the Chair.

Mr Tilley: On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to point out a question on notice to the Minister for Health. Question on notice 6558 was regarding the state's promised funding to catch up on massive waiting lists at Albury Wodonga Health. The question was asked 106 days ago. The question database still has no answer available. Our health system is in crisis. We need answers. People are waiting years for surgery. That should be done. Three months is a disgrace.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, I have two matters also outstanding for the Minister for Health, 6334 and 6370. One is about waiting times at Dandenong, and the other is about delays at the Monash hospital. I would appreciate if you could follow those up.

The SPEAKER: We will make sure they are followed up.

Mr Northe: On a point of order, Speaker, there are a number of outstanding items that I do not have answers to: adjournment matter 6222, 22 February 2022, to the Attorney-General about the establishment of a Latrobe Valley Drug Court; adjournment matter 6254, 8 March 2022, to the Minister for Emergency Services around a constituent's asbestos contamination issue; question on notice 6498, 22 March 2022, to the Minister for Emergency Services about a new CFA station for Newborough, when and where that is happening; constituency question 6292, 24 March 2022, to the Minister for Mental Health in relation to increasing the number of alcohol and drug detox beds in the Latrobe Valley; adjournment matter 6332, 7 April 2022, to the Minister for Health around vaccine mandates; question on notice 6607, 11 May 2022, to the Minister for Ambulance Services around vaccine mandates; question on notice 6608, 11 May 2022, to the Minister for Health on vaccination mandates; question on notice 6609 on 11 May 2022 to the Minister for Health, again on vaccination mandates; question on notice 6610 on 11 May 2022, to the Minister for Agriculture in respect of timber supply issues and litigation matters, in particular to Opal Australian Paper in my community; question on notice 6631, 24 May 2022, to the Attorney-General around the establishment of a Latrobe Valley Drug Court; adjournment matter 6382, 25 May 2022, to the Minister for Mental Health around funding for Lifeline Gippsland and its demand for a crisis hotline; question on notice 6661, 26 May 2022, to the Minister for Housing around the lack of local social, public and crisis housing and homelessness generally in the Latrobe Valley; and the final one, question on notice 6672, 7 June 2022, to the Minister for Mental Health with regard to a number of questions around suicide prevention.

The SPEAKER: I will make sure they are followed up.

Constituency questions

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:44): (6476) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. In the last few weeks I have received calls and emails from constituents deeply concerned about the proposed Yarra Trams substation at 211 Balaclava Road, Caulfield North. The substation will sit squarely in the heart of a popular, growing, well-positioned cafe business precinct in my electorate. Local businesses and residents had not been consulted about the project until the site was already purchased. Locals feel blindsided by the government's lack of transparency and simply want basic answers. I ask the minister to provide reassurance that local small businesses will not be impacted by the installation, location or operation of this substation.

NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE

Mr MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:45): (6477) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy and concerns the new \$250 power saving bonus that started on 1 July. Minister, how will this cost-of-living initiative benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South? Electricity bills continue to be

a real concern for many families in my electorate, and my office has assisted several hundred of our constituents to apply for the previous power saving bonus and the latest round, which is now open to all households. Many local residents have expressed their appreciation for the program, which helps them to make ends meet. It was fantastic to recently hear that over 1 million applications have been made and further funding has been provided to ensure that eligible households do not miss out. I would appreciate any further information that the minister could provide on how the new power saving bonus will support my constituents, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

LOWAN ELECTORATE

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (14:46): (6478) My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the question has been raised by my local road users, who have contacted me regarding the stalled progress of the Western Highway duplication project. This highway is the third-largest major freight route in the nation but also an important roadway for my constituents who live in the Wimmera. Duplication to Stawell has been funded with \$365 million allocated by the former Liberals and Nationals federal government to deliver the project, with an expected completion date of 2016. However, the Western Highway has not been duplicated and is instead riddled with potholes and has been the site of far too many near misses and accidents, some tragically resulting in the loss of life. The information I seek is an update from the minister as to when duplication of the Western Highway to Stawell will finally be completed, including when the Buangor to Ararat section will be completed and the cultural heritage planning finalised and when planning will be reinstated for the Ararat to Stawell section.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:47): (6479) My constituency question is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep regarding the introduction of 30 hours per week of fully funded universal pre-prep for all Victorian children from 2025. How will this transformation of Victoria's early education system benefit parents, carers and children in Ballarat? I am proud our government is committed to supporting families to address the cost-of-living pressures. I know firsthand from when I was working part-time the cost of kinder fees was another expense in our family budget. That is why I am so pleased that from 2023 every Victorian child will have access to free three-year-old and four-year-old kinder. This will provide families with savings of up to \$2500 per child, making a real difference for household budgets. I thank the minister for her commitment to high-quality education and care for all Victorian children regardless of where they live or their household income.

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (14:48): (6480) My question is to the Minister for Education. Can the minister please explain why the schoolchildren in my Rowville electorate are less deserving of taxpayer money than children in other electorates? Under the last Labor budget these schools missed out on funding for important work for upgrades to their buildings: Knox Gardens, Knox Park, Holy Trinity, Wantirna South, St Mary's, Heany Park, Karoo, Lysterfield, Park Ridge, St Simon's, Rowville, Scoresby, Carrington and St Jude's primary schools, as well as Waverley Christian, St Andrews, Rowville and Scoresby Secondary College, have all failed to receive funding for much-needed upgrades to their schools. I have repeatedly sought answers on the lack of funding both in Parliament and with ministers but am still yet to receive an adequate answer. It is time this government finally got the backs of these hardworking schoolteachers and stopped politicising the budget.

MORDIALLOC ELECTORATE

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (14:49): (6481) My constituency question is to the Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, and my question is: how many vehicles are expected to be taken off local roads in the Kingston and Greater Dandenong regions as a result of this transformational project? The Suburban Rail Loop goes on our record of delivery of infrastructure projects for the future. Sixty-five level crossings have already been removed across metropolitan Melbourne, 16 on the Frankston train

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line, and there are 11 new stations with four more to go in Parkdale, Glenhuntly and Neerim. We have also delivered the Mordialloc Freeway, taking pressure off local roads and giving local roads back to local residents, and we are just about a couple of years away from delivering the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, a generational project that would only be delivered by an Andrews Labor government, creating tens of thousands of jobs across those infrastructure projects. My community really wants to know how many vehicles will be taken off local roads in Kingston in Greater Dandenong as a result of the Suburban Rail Loop.

MORWELL ELECTORATE

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (14:50): (6482) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Health. Minister, what is the latest information with regard to the requirement that CFA volunteers must be COVID triple vaccinated to be an active member of their local fire brigade? I have been contacted by multiple CFA volunteers from local brigades who are extremely concerned that this rule is negatively impacting their ability and capacity to turn out to emergency events. These selfless people have given so much to their communities, yet even if they are double vaccinated, they are still currently precluded from assisting a fellow community member in need because of this outdated restriction. If a house is on fire and lives are at risk, do we think those in danger really care if the first responder is not triple vaccinated? But that is the practical reality of where we sit right now and coming into the fire season, so we therefore implore the Minister for Health and the indeed the Minister for Emergency Services to remove this restriction to allow CFA volunteers to turn out and support their community when needed.

BASS ELECTORATE

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:51): (6483) My question is for the Minister for Health. Can the minister please advise how the government is continuing to support healthcare workers throughout this extended period of high demand on our health system? I was so pleased to share the news of the winter retention and surge support program, which includes a \$3000 pro rata winter retention and support payment plus \$13 million to support free meals prioritised for night-shift workers and those working double shifts. This is an important step in easing the daily pressures on our frontline workers in recognition of the high level of skill, empathy and compassion required to continue in their profession. I look forward to an update on how the Andrews Labor government is continuing to support our most valued and hardworking frontline public health staff and their families.

EVELYN ELECTORATE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:52): (6484) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety on behalf of Coldstream, Yering and Gruyere residents. When will the \$20 million in commonwealth road funding allocated to the state government back in 2019 be spent to fix Maroondah Highway and the dangerous intersections at Killara Road and Station Street in Coldstream? For nearly 3½ years the Andrews Labor government has been sitting on the money for this important project to duplicate Maroondah Highway and make it safer for motorists and pedestrians. Is the Premier and his Labor government waiting for another tragic accident? Can the Labor government provide certainty they will not attempt to redirect the money allocated specifically to upgrading Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, away for projects in other electorates? Last year the government said it was, and I quote, 'investigating treatments' for the intersection, but for years Labor has done nothing. What is the start date for these works? It seems that only a change to a Liberal government will actually get Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, fixed.

BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:53): (6485) My question is to the Treasurer. How is the electorate of Broadmeadows benefiting from the Victorian government's economic recovery plan? I want to acknowledge the state's jobless rate is now less than half of when it came to power in November 2014, and that is great result, but also we need to actually go to the areas of greatest

disadvantage and turn them into postcodes of hope. That is the strategy from 2016, and it has been backed up. I have been delighted to inspire \$1 billion in shovel-ready and pipeline projects—no cost to the taxpayer, 5000 new jobs on the way—turning the derelict Ford site into a green belt for new industries and jobs. The vaccine manufacturing strategy is proven: we have got 50 million doses of AstraZeneca out of CSL and another \$1.8 billion nearby for influenza coming as well. So I just want to get the Treasurer to focus on what else we can do to deliver jobs where they are needed most.

Bills

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES, HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES REGULATION AMENDMENT (ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (14:54): As I said before the lunch break, the bill goes to achieving the following: establishing an enabling framework for the Victorian affordable housing programs as well as preserving the integrity of affordable housing programs in Victoria, ensuring community impact statements provided by the director of housing are considered by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and addressing gaps in the definition of ‘common area’ in relation to public housing in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. These are all important changes moving us towards a fairer and more inclusive Victoria.

The Big Housing Build is well underway. Our government’s investment means that Homes Victoria has passed the halfway mark, with 6300 homes already completed or underway, and 1400 households have either settled in or are about to move into their brand new homes. Again, thousands of lives have been changed and transformed, and this is just the beginning. Across the electorate in the City of Kingston we have 162 new dwellings across 50 projects. In the City of Greater Dandenong we have 50 new dwellings across 29 projects; 32 of these new dwellings are already completed. The neighbouring City of Monash has already completed another 150 dwellings across 120 projects, with almost half already completed. It is truly amazing. There are many associated benefits. As we have heard, the Big Housing Build will create an average of 10 000 new jobs each year creating new employment opportunities through the Victorian community.

Across the projects I have just mentioned there are also more than 1400 jobs. That is really significant. What is more, apprentices, cadets and trainees undertake 10 per cent of the work on the major projects. There are also gender equity plans which will support the increase of women’s participation in the construction industry, helping address inequalities that have been exacerbated throughout the pandemic.

In conclusion, we have heard that homelessness can affect anyone—our friends, our family, people old enough to be our parents or grandparents and those young enough to be our grandchildren. I am really very glad to see this bill here today, one that continues to move us on the long journey in the Big Housing Build towards a fairer and more inclusive Victoria. I commend the minister for bringing the bill before the house. The bill will help deliver security and stability to the thousands of Victorians that need it most. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr EREN (Lara) (14:57): I am also delighted to be speaking on this very important bill. As members may know, this is my last term in Parliament. I cannot be any prouder than I am, in the 20 years that I have been in Parliament, of some of the legislation that comes through this place, but this is one of them that I really, really love. This is in our DNA. Labor always look after those people that need us the most. It is not in the DNA of the opposition in relation to housing, and I will get back to that a bit later on. I am the product of social and public housing. I lived in the high-rise commission flats in North Melbourne, Alfred Street—147, the 12th floor of Alfred Street. We lived there for many years. I have got some great memories from there. Most of my youth was spent actually growing up

in that area. You make lifelong friends, and obviously it is something that I will always remember. I cannot be prouder of the investments that we are making as a government in it now.

I am also proud of our Prime Minister, who made it very public that he is also somebody who grew up in public housing. There is no shame in that, none at all. In fact we are all proud of it. It is transitional. I know, for example, when I was the Minister for Veterans we invested in veterans housing as well in Richmond, in the former Minister for Housing's electorate. I recall vividly going to open, along with the minister, that very important service, if I can say that. A few months later—in fact about a year and a half later—we were out at a veterans event at Craigieburn. A gentleman approached me, and he said, 'Look, I just want to thank you for providing that housing for veterans. At that time I really needed it. I stayed there for a brief period of time. I'm back on my feet. I've got a job. Now I'm purchasing my own property'. That is what it is all about. It is about making sure that it is not a handout, it is a hand up. From time to time people do it tough, and if governments are not there to support them and if particular governments actually want to demonise them, shame on them.

Obviously from my perspective as the local member for Lara, the northern suburbs of Geelong—3214, Corio and Norlane—have one of the highest populations of public social housing. I want to call it 'affordable housing'. They are salt of the earth people; I would not swap them for anyone else. They are great people doing it tough. Generational unemployment, generational alcohol and drug abuse—there are issues there, there is no question about it, but everybody deserves a roof over their head.

Of course when I consider the investments that we are making, I want to thank the previous Minister for Housing and the current minister, who will continue on the legacy in relation to delivering this \$5.3 billion worth of Big Housing Build, and—I think the member for Yan Yean actually mentioned it—I am sure that the current federal government will add value to our build; I am pretty confident of that. The previous federal government did not want a bar of it. Obviously the Prime Minister was busy with these other portfolios that he had in secret, but he certainly did not have the secret housing portfolio. Through COVID we saw some devastating impacts on the community, and again I say proudly that roughly \$150 million of this investment will go into my electorate and broadly into the Geelong region.

I saw some very ugly politics a few years ago when there were petitions being made in relation to public and social housing going into certain areas where they do not want 'those sorts of people'. I found it disgraceful that people that needed government assistance could be demonised in that way—that they are different from anyone else, that they will not fit into our society. 'We're an affluent society, you know, leafy suburbs; we don't want those people living next door to us'—I mean, that is just outrageous. I really got upset about this. When the former minister in the other place, Wendy Lovell, made some comments about public and social housing, it hurt me—it genuinely hurt me—because I felt for those young people that are living in those circumstances right now. If they were to pick up the paper at their school or if they were to watch the news or listen to the radio, which was broadcast widely, and read about the insensitive comments that Wendy Lovell made—it is outrageous, because they were hurtful. This is by Tarla Lambert, the publisher of *Women's Agenda*—

The SPEAKER: Member for Lara, can you refer to members by their correct titles, please?

Mr EREN: Sorry, the member in the other place. She knows who she is.

There is an article in *Women's Agenda*, and it states:

It's hard to contemplate what was going through Victorian Liberal MP Wendy Lovell's brain when she uttered the words she did in Parliament yesterday.

During a debate on a Greens Public Housing bill, Lovell claimed there was "no point" in establishing social housing in affluent areas "where the children cannot mix with others". She also suggested children from low-income families would face barriers in socialisation given their inability to afford "the latest ... sneakers and iPhones".

I mean, how could she have been the former Minister for Housing? Clearly there is a divide. It is in our DNA to look after people when they need it the most, and obviously it is not in their DNA. It is the dog whistle stuff that really annoys me.

I am proud to be part of a government that actually helps people in need. We will certainly benefit from this \$5.3 billion worth of investment in Geelong and hopefully see a transition from people needing public, social and affordable housing to people moving into private accommodation and hopefully one day buying their own homes.

This bill will do a few things. One of them is enshrining key governance reforms for Homes Victoria. It will enable Homes Victoria to implement the most appropriate models and transaction structures to deliver on the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build; establish an enabling framework for Victorian affordable housing programs; preserve the integrity of the affordable housing programs in Victoria; ensure community impact statements provided by the director of housing are considered by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal; and address a gap in the definition of 'common area' in relation to public housing in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. The bill also makes amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to delay commencement of the social services regulatory scheme to 1 July 2024.

As I have indicated before, I am proud to be a member of the government, on this side of the house, as we understand that social housing and affordable housing provide many Victorians with the safety, security and dignity of a home. That is what it is all about. It is about dignity—living in dignity regardless of your socio-economic background. Everybody is entitled to dignity. Regardless of where you find yourself or what family you were born into, everybody at some point does it hard. It is incumbent upon governments to be good governments—governments that care, that are compassionate and that understand some of the issues relating to people that have difficulties in having, if I can call it that, a normal life.

So from that perspective it is like many other bills this government has brought before the house. I am proud that we have been sitting here in the time that I have been here—20 years. Unfortunately we had four bad years of the Baillieu-Napthine governments from 2010 to 2014. Then we recovered government again, and we continued on with good legislation coming before the house that protects all Victorians regardless of their background, regardless of their socio-economic circumstance. We do not discriminate; we help all Victorians. I cannot be prouder. I commend this bill to the house, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (15:07): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. There have been some fantastic contributions from this side of the house, very passionate ones, and of course the member for Lara has just spoken. I grew up in public housing, firstly in Norlane and then in Corio, which is in the member for Lara's electorate, though he was not around at the time—I do not think you were even born then.

It was a great privilege to grow up in public housing in the northern suburbs. It really did give my parents the start that they needed. I grew up in quite a large family, a low-income family. My parents were not high-income earners and, having six kids to feed and clothe and send off to school—public schools that we went to, great public schools—that is what gave them a start. For people like me, that start in life—having secure, affordable housing—makes all the difference. We know it is very challenging now for people. I was one of those very privileged people who grew up in public housing and still very much appreciate it today, because I probably would not be standing here if that did not happen. I know how hard the member for Lara works, often in competition with me, to get more public and social housing in our electorates. It is really important. We have some amazing services in our community, services like Neami, who were funded by this government to provide a wraparound service for homeless people. They have been doing an amazing job in the Geelong region. Haven is another really important housing provider that has got a number of housing projects across our region.

We have been very lucky to have that. To their credit the City of Greater Geelong have made the decision to look at providing some public and social housing in three key areas in the Geelong region, using some of their land and working with some of the social housing providers. I really do commend them for that. A final decision is yet to be made, so I will be keen to see where they go with that.

As the member for Lara mentioned, we have seen in the past petitions opposing public and social housing in the Geelong area—pretty disgusting campaigns. We have just seen that again with the City of Greater Geelong’s proposal to use some of their land. For me it is really concerning that we still have people out there that oppose public housing. When we have comments like those from the other side about the negativity around social and public housing, it just feeds into that. It gives people licence to come out and say terrible things about public housing tenants. I do not think I am a horrible person, and I do not think the member for Lara is a horrible person. We grew up in public housing. You might get very limited situations across various public housing estates or social housing projects, but you get them everywhere; it is not just in social housing and public housing. I hope that the City of Greater Geelong continue on that journey and ignore basically the negative comments that have been put out there not only in the media but through petitions and things in my electorate and in the member for Lara’s electorate. We have seen that in the last couple of months. I would, as I said, hope that the City of Greater Geelong stick to going down that path, providing the much-needed housing that we need in our community and supporting the government’s strategy as well.

I think it is also worth noting the importance of a Labor federal government in supporting housing and the commitments that they have made. I know they are in discussions with our government here in Victoria so we can try and get whatever we can through federal funding. As I said, this is really important. Many years ago we used to have what was called the commonwealth-state housing agreement. Under that agreement funding was matched dollar for dollar, which provided public housing and social housing, like where I grew up, and many people I know got the benefit of that. That is long gone. We have seen conservative governments in the federal Parliament, and in this place of course we had four years of absolutely nothing. It is Labor governments that deliver affordable, safe and secure housing for people in Victoria, and we know that very clearly.

Social and affordable housing provides many Victorians with the safety, security and dignity that they need, and what I have just talked about and what the member for Lara has talked about—and other members in this place in fact—is proof of that. This bill will bolster the government’s commitment to an expanded, effective and sustainable social and affordable housing system. We need to rebuild the system. We need to make sure that there is that housing in our community for those that need it.

I know very well that we have serious problems in Geelong. We have people who are living on the street. We have people who are living in inappropriate, substandard housing. The rental market is very slim in Geelong and people are grabbing whatever they can get, but they are also paying high rents for that. When you are on a limited income, whether it is a pension or a benefit or low-income employment, putting food on the table and paying utility bills are becoming more and more difficult. I know that this government has tried to address some of the cost-of-living issues. We have the power saving bonus and a whole range of things, including free TAFE and all those great things that we have rolled out, but we need to be doing more and more, as much as possible, because it really does impact people’s lives.

It is a fundamental need to have a roof over your head. It is so important that it is affordable and that it is secure and that you are not being asked to move every 12 months because the landlord wants to use the house for other purposes. I have a lot of people coming to see me or contacting me about their housing situation, some of them in really desperate situations. And as I said, we have some amazing services in my electorate of Geelong that actually work really hard to make sure that we are providing safe, secure and affordable housing for people in need.

As I said, I know we do need to do a lot more, and as part of the big build the Geelong region is allocated a minimum guarantee of \$180 million, so that is going to provide a lot of housing. Of course the Surf

Coast, which adjoins the Geelong area, is guaranteed \$20 million, and most other regions have been guaranteed a minimum. That will make a huge difference. So far in the Geelong region there have been around 400 houses delivered, and that is 400 families that will be housed in safe and secure housing and be able to at least put food on their table, pay their utility bills and do all those things, but importantly they will be able to engage in things like free TAFE, be able to work and be able to support their children and their family across the board with all that they need. So I know there is an urgent need, which is why Homes Victoria are employing multiple approaches to boosting the housing supply.

This is a fantastic bill. The more that we do around housing provision, the better. As I said, in my electorate I know there are challenges, but there are 400 new properties now being tenanted by people needing that accommodation and there are a lot more to come. I know there are challenges in making sure that people are allocated the housing that they need, and I know certainly that, with the member for Lara, the member for Bellarine and the member for South Barwon, we are all working towards providing the best possible opportunities for everyone right across the Geelong region. This is a really important bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HAMER (Box Hill) (15:17): I also rise to make a contribution on the Residential Tenancies, Housing and Social Services Regulation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. I want to just firstly acknowledge both the current Minister for Housing and particularly the former minister for all of the work that they have done in the housing space. I know that it has been a passion for the former minister, the member for Richmond, for many, many years, not only in the time he has been in this place but certainly from the time that he was on local council and in his prior work, including social work, with the many people who live in social housing in his electorate.

If I can just reflect for a moment on my first campaign experience, my first election campaign experience was in actual fact in 2006. I had just joined the party, and I was living in the member for Richmond's electorate. There was a doorknock in the commission flats in Collingwood, and I was asked to come along. I really got to speak to a lot of the residents there. Particularly for a boy from the eastern suburbs who had had, compared to the people living in the commission flats, a very privileged upbringing, it was quite an experience, I suppose, to be going through those flats but then actually having conversations with those people and just seeing that really deep down their values were not that different from what my values were and that they were just trying to have a roof over their head and provide for their children and provide for their families as best they could.

I want to also pay tribute to the last two speakers, the member for Lara and the member for Geelong, who obviously speak with passion on a lot of bills but particularly ones around housing. I know how important it is to both of them, and they are both speaking from immense personal experience of what a difference social housing has made to their lives. It is one of the absolute necessities of life that we have a safe place to call home and have a roof over our head.

I was just having a look at a report that was actually submitted in the parliamentary inquiry that was done a couple of years ago which looked at the level of homelessness in Victoria, and it assessed the number of homeless at around 25 000 people, with the largest group likely to be people in overcrowded houses. But also there were a range of other accommodation types where people could be classified as homeless, and that could be temporary accommodation or supported accommodation, with only a relatively small proportion who are rough sleepers; it is usually estimated at about 5 to 10 per cent. Sometimes the rough sleepers are seen as the most visible example of homelessness, but clearly the issue of homelessness is much, much larger than that.

It always strikes me that homelessness can stem from a range of different causes. They are not always predictable, and they can also strike in areas where you would not expect it. Like I was saying, growing up in the burbs in what I would describe as a pretty middle-class upbringing, I probably was not exposed a lot to that, particularly amongst my friendship circles, but there was one case—I may have referred to it even in my inaugural speech—of the mother of a good friend of mine from university. They lived not far from us, in the neighbouring suburb. She was a nurse, a midwife in fact, but after

she retired she got into some gambling difficulties. They led to a bit of a spiral which ended up forcing her to lose her home, and she was for a time living in her own car. That is all she had—her car and her belongings. So it can strike in various situations. Obviously the situation with domestic violence survivors is fairly well documented, and there is a need to provide safe haven and allow people to have somewhere else to go to. I think it has been well documented that for many victims one of the factors that is preventing them from potentially leaving their home is that they have no safe place to go.

I just want to also reflect on the topical time in which this bill has come up, in reference to the members statement that I made yesterday talking about the visit that I paid to Box Hill High. As I referenced, there were some year 10 students presenting on contemporary issues, and two of the groups actually presented on this particular issue, housing affordability and homelessness. I think it is really good to see that it is not just an issue that is troubling the minds of the policymakers and legislators in this chamber but also an issue that resonates amongst the young people of our society and the next generation of leaders. They are very conscious of the need to have a roof over people's heads.

Just turning to the bill in a bit more detail, the overall objective of the bill is to deliver the Victorian government's commitment to an expanded, effective and sustainable social and affordable housing system, and it is doing this by enshrining key governance reforms for Homes Victoria, enabling Homes Victoria to implement the most appropriate models and transactional structures to deliver on the Big Housing Build, establishing an enabling framework for the Victorian affordable housing programs, preserving the integrity of affordable housing programs, ensuring the community impact statements provided by the director of housing are considered by VCAT and addressing a gap in the definition of 'common area' in relation to public housing in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

I just want to touch briefly on two of those items particularly in relation to the Big Housing Build. As I said at the outset, I think it is an enormous tribute to the work of, particularly, the member for Richmond and former minister in being able to get this program in. It will make an enormous difference in terms of addressing some of the shortages that have been faced in the social housing sector and in particular the preservation of some of those facilities and securing those facilities for those Victorians who need it most. There are 2000 homes for Victorians who have a mental illness and 1000 homes to provide safety and security for survivors of family violence. Ten per cent of new dwellings will support Indigenous Victorians to have a culturally safe and self-determined housing option. As the member for Geelong also touched on, there is also a significant component that will ensure that there is a Big Housing Build in the regions, because that is obviously where there is a real shortage and a real rental squeeze on housing.

The last thing I want to just touch on very briefly is the enabling of community impact statements provided by the Director of Housing. They can be considered by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This has come up a number of times in my own electorate. There is quite, I guess, a salt-and-pepper mix of community, social and general housing within the Box Hill community, and I know that many in the community will appreciate being able to have that opportunity and be heard by VCAT. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora—Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (15:27): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (POLICE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Mr CARBINES:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (15:28): I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022. If I could just start with the fact that obviously yesterday was a big day within Victoria Police. It was the 24th anniversary of the loss of Gary Silk and Rodney Miller. Gary Silk and Rodney Miller just went about their everyday duties in 1998 and in the early hours of the morning of 16 August were slain whilst out doing their duty of protecting Victorians.

I went to the memorial yesterday at St Kilda. Whilst I was there one of the things that struck me was not just the fact that so many had turned up, not the fact that we had so many young police officers there who were also part of that family and would have felt the attachment just by going to the event and how important they are, but listening to Peter Silk, the brother of Gary, who said that for the first time since they were slain on that day, 16 August 1998, there are no legal proceedings. All legal proceedings are done, and the family can actually find some closure. They did state some of their views and opinions on some decisions that have happened over the past 12 months, but Peter asked everybody to take a step back and recall the lives that these young men lost. Without those proceedings now the families have an opportunity to move on.

Can I just say to all the people who were there yesterday—to the Police Association Victoria, who organised the event, to the paramedics who went to the scene in Moorabbin, to all the police officers who would have got called out to the code 9 on that night, to everyone else who attended and assisted, to those over the years who have supported the families, football clubs including St Kilda and Hawthorn who keep the memory alive with their annual match, to every person who yesterday at some stage stopped for a second and thought about the lives of Gary Silk and Rod Miller—we thank you all, because it is so important that we continue to do that. I thank the house for the indulgence to go through that, because it is a very, very important part of our history.

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill is a bill for an act to amend the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, the Victoria Police Act 2013, the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and for other purposes, and according to the Minister for Police:

The Bill before the House introduces a range of policing reforms which are aimed at keeping the community safe and protecting the privacy of applicants to the Victoria Police Restorative Engagement and Redress Scheme.

We had a briefing from the department. I thank the department, who I know are here today, for their briefing. At a normal briefing, on most occasions we have the briefing from department staff where they do a lot. This one did tend to have more involvement from the minister's office, which we found a little bit different to our normal briefings. It should be more, in my view, the department briefing us at those.

The bill before the house brings in, obviously, a lot of provisions, going through the changes it will make. I will go through a couple of those in here and raise a couple of concerns that we have, but I put on record at the start that we will put a 'not opposed' position and we will reserve our right in the upper house to look at any amendments et cetera to the bill that we believe may be suitable when it gets up there. Some of the measures in here around the Sex Offenders Registration Act are just to clarify that a registrable offender has contact with a child if the offender engages in any form of actual physical contact, any form of oral communication or any form of written communication for the purpose of forming or maintaining a personal relationship. We know in this place, and we have heard and seen in the community too often we would say, some despicable behaviour, disgusting behaviour, things that we would be offended by in normal circumstances, but we also understand there are people out there that are the reason this legislation has to come in. I think that is probably the best way to put it—there

are people out there who are the reason this legislation has to come in. We do support the fact that the government is acting on these areas within what is happening with some of the people in the community to ensure that the act is staying up to date and to ensure that people cannot maintain or persist with some of those relationships.

Clause 4 amends section 14(1) of the Sex Offenders Registration Act to clarify that a registrable offender is required to provide information sufficient to identify where the person sleeps on a regular basis if the person has no fixed place of abode. This is actually one that at first, I will be honest, I had a bit of concern about, but after speaking to others in the association, out in the police force and others that implement this, our concern originally was that people with no fixed place of abode tended to not get bail. It made it obviously easier for them; however, one thing that I had not considered is that when someone does not have a fixed place of abode that can be that they are just moving from location to location, staying with friends and family. They just do not have anywhere they call a permanent residence for themselves, so I think the change in that to ensure that a person does update and identify it in their records so that Victoria Police are aware of where they are is a sensible and commonsense change.

The bill also amends section 23(1) of the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 so the duty to report in person is subject to the new section 23A, which is inserted by clause 6. The duty to report in person under section 23(1) of the Sex Offenders Registration Act is clarified. It provides that a reference to doing a thing in person is a reference to personal attendance at a place, and it is not sufficient to attend the place by telephone or other electronic means. It is probably more important today than in history. We have got Zoom, we have got everything else that happens now, so when someone needs to report it must be in person. We have probably all been on Zoom where we have got a fake background on, so you could be anywhere at any time according to a screen. It is pretty easy to mislead someone about where you are if you are over the phone, so I think this again is a good commonsense change that would ensure that offenders or people needing to report, if they are under those circumstances, would need to report in person to say they are where they are.

Clause 6 inserts a new section 23A of the Sex Offenders Registration Act to provide for electronic reporting in the circumstances of a disaster, emergency or pandemic. Clause 7 inserts new section 73L into the Sex Offenders Registration Act, which is for a transitional provision arising from the amendment of clause 8. It is in relation to some of the areas that will change, and as I said, we will be, on the way through, mostly supporting those.

There are a couple of issues we would like to raise. First of all is clause 22, on event cost recovery. In the bill briefing, when we asked specific questions, we did hear the words 'this is not the intention'. However, 'not the intention' and what actually happens can be, as we know, a lot different. One of these issues is event cost recovery. Currently large-scale events can cost recover for the use of police officers at an event. An example would be—one that is quite commonly used—the MCG. So for a footy match, if they need to get Victoria Police inside the ground, they might have 20 staff available. Obviously it depends on the size of the game. If it is Fremantle versus St Kilda, it might only be about three police officers, but if it is Collingwood versus Carlton, you might need 150 police officers—it is going to depend on the crowd in there. But the AFL would be required to cover the cost of who is inside that ground.

Mr Brooks: More if Collingwood wins.

Mr BATTIN: I will not make any comments because you can only lose votes picking on Collingwood outside. At a large-scale event at the MCG you will require more police officers. It would be reasonable, and it has been reasonable for a long period of time, that the AFL would cover that cost—or for a concert or for whoever else needs Victoria Police inside. The issue here goes to the cost recovery for the external area. When you leave the ground and police are required outside the facility to maintain crowds and maintain order, that is one of the things that will change. They will be able to

do a cost recovery on that. I raise this concern because this impacts on any large-scale event, not just at the MCG and not just the AFL, being a billion-dollar organisation.

As I said, whilst the intention is not there, it could be used at any time, so it could be a change for a show. I will use my local one: the Berwick show, a wonderful show. It is the longest running show in Victoria. I just thought I would put that out there in case anyone was wondering. It is one of the best agricultural shows around. It is a fantastic event, but they are facing challenges, and those challenges are directly related to finances. Committees struggle with the amount of red tape that gets put on them now and the amount of extra costs. They do not mind; they all understand that we have to have improved occupational health and safety. Rides have to be safer, you have to provide security, you have to make sure that steps in the place are marked—all those things you have to do with occupational health and safety now. But it does place increased pressure on those committees to deliver those shows.

We do not want to go backwards in those areas, but at the same time we have also got to take into consideration that if we do not have events like that, there will be an impact on the community. With something like the Berwick show—and they have in the past paid for Victoria Police to come within the show—if they have to pay for areas external to the show, that could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. At the moment, with the cost of tickets and cost-of-living pressures, the show's numbers are down. They have slowly declined over time. Weather does play some part in that when it is only a one-weekend event; however, what we have seen is on average a decline in the numbers over a longer period of time. As the population has grown you would like to think more people would be coming to the show, but the reality is less are coming to these shows, and the costs are continuing to increase because of the delivery of services.

If you speak to those at the show, just to deliver a traffic management plan—so just a plan, not any staff, not any facilities, not any infrastructure—is about \$5000. Now, \$5000 is not a lot, but when you are putting it into the cost of tickets, they need to sell a lot of tickets just to cover the plan to put to the council before they actually deliver any part of that road management to make people safer on the roads. To convert a highway—it is on a highway—down to a 40-kilometre zone, because a lot of kids are going to be crossing it, is going to cost \$10 000 to \$15 000 in staffing, in putting out equipment and in hiring a company to do it. You cannot just have anyone do it. In the good old days we would walk out in a vest—you would be lucky if you had a vest on—and you would put your hand up and hope the cars would stop to let people go. That has changed. We know that. We now have to have companies with people who are qualified, and we have to ensure that the kids are protected going across, because a lot of the parking is across the road.

However, again that puts a massive cost impost back onto an organisation or small organisations that deliver great community projects. If the police then want to turn around and say, 'We're going to start to cost recover for police use outside of that', the cost implications could be quite large, and I think that is something that we need to seriously consider in this bill. How is it going to impact on not just the MCG, on billion-dollar companies, but on small events? Because if something like this increased our tickets by \$5, the Berwick show would struggle to survive next year at a time when we want more and more people coming to the shows.

This is not just in Berwick. This goes all the way across regional Victoria, and I know there were some definitions or discussions around what a large-scale event is. I would say a large-scale event in Melbourne might be 20 000, but a large-scale event in regional Victoria might only be a couple of hundred people. So who is going to make those decisions on what is large-scale and when that 'large-scale' is being used? The costs are already there—that has already been done—but as I said, we are just worried about the stream of revenue.

The second section we want to raise concern around is clause 14, which is the additional powers for protective services officers. Protective services officers, as we know in this place, because they protect us here, are amazing, and they do a fantastic job. Over time in the last probably 15 years—or since I came into Parliament, so 12 years, since 2010—the role of protective services officers has changed,

up to and including that they obviously protect this place and they protect the shrine, which they have done for a lot longer than protecting here, and we have seen them expand to railway lines and railway stations and ensuring people are safe at our railway stations here in the state. We have seen over time that, although when we introduced that in government the opposition at the time did not support that, later on they have realised the importance of using the PSOs, and Police Association Victoria support for PSOs and the growth in what they can do and the ways we can use them throughout the state to best protect different parts of our state has been fantastic. This clause will give PSOs the power under the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, or the terrorism act, to patrol specific areas in relation to a terrorism threat or as a result of something to do with terrorism, and there is a high bar to be pushed so they can be used for those purposes.

I argue that PSOs are suitably qualified and suitably trained, or you would not be using them. So the high bar in there may not be as big an issue in our view. In the example we raised around what happened in Bourke Street, with a vehicle going through Bourke Street—and obviously we lost a lot of lives on that day—would the PSOs be able to attend that event? The answer is yes, but the process is it has effectively got to go through the Supreme Court. I am not sure how quickly that process can occur, but my view is that if you need PSOs at an event like that down on Bourke Street, you need them now, not after going through a court process to get them down there. The current process in this bill is it has got to go through the Supreme Court.

We will argue that it should be just going to the Chief Commissioner of Police. We trust the chief commissioner—we trust the person that is put in place to protect us and if you do not trust the chief commissioner to make these decisions then you have maybe got the wrong chief commissioner. I would trust the chief commissioner that in Victoria, whether it was reactive like Bourke Street or proactive if there was a genuine threat at an event or in one of our significant places in the city, we could utilise PSOs where we needed to and it does not take away from other resources within Victoria Police. It would be a last resort, I think. That is probably the best way to put it. We have already got the police response unit. I was going to say FRU—it used to be the force response unit; I think it is now the police response unit. We have got traffic control police that can come and get recalled. We have got police that can be recalled. You have got movement at stations that you can allocate and step up effectively and bring them into areas where you need them the most and still allocate police staffing to keep the areas they are already in protected and safe. But there are also times when you have major incidents where you cannot do that. In Melbourne alone at any given time we have generally got between two and four PSOs here. You have generally got four to six down at the shrine. You have generally got them at the railway stations. And we have got four stations in Melbourne from where you can utilise them, if you need to, and move them around.

So I think there is a capability in Melbourne to get a very quick response from the PSOs if we require it. It may mean alternative or adjusted training to be prepared for that. It may mean that when they go back and do their operational standards tactical training at the academy each time they update some of that training to include how they react to terrorism, what their role would be when they are there and how it would change and impact on the role they have. We have got obviously super training with the special operations group in Melbourne at the highest level. The police response unit have got amazing training with different weapons and different abilities to go into terrorism situations and highly dangerous and risky situations. You would need the PSOs to maybe adjust some of their training. So I am not saying bringing them up to a SOG but saying bringing them up so they understand what is going to happen and who is going to be reacting when they are in there. It is a concern that we have raised. We have consulted with the police association on this and we understand that on the whole they are actually supportive of the bill, so they have not got any objections to what is in the bill. However, they are supportive of the fact that we are looking at these changes, and it would be something they would be happy to have that discussion about in terms of where we can change what is going on in relation to this bill.

We will continue, as we always have, to support Victoria Police. We have always supported changes that better protect our community, particularly those who are vulnerable in relation to sexual offences,

so we will continue to make sure we do support that. As I said, in this house we will not be opposing, but in the upper house we will reserve our rights to look at amendments that we could make, particularly around the chief commissioner's powers moving forward.

In closing on this bill, I think there is one thing that the community expect of us in here. The one thing when they look at the Parliament that they most see is question time, with the theatre of it, but when they are looking at Parliament what they do expect is that at the best of times, when we do work together, we generally have better outcomes. Those outcomes today should be from every person speaking on this bill, from both sides, around the victims or potential victims when it comes to sexual assault. Every person in this house should have that as their first thought—not politics, not anything else but that. That was behind our decision, particularly around sexual assault and sexual offenders, to make sure we support that, because we want to make sure this bill does get through.

We have got limited time and not just in this place; we have got limited time left in the Parliament until the new term. Obviously, with the 26 November election, we have only got two more sitting weeks after this, so if the government are serious on this, we would be happy to have the discussion around the ideas and options we have for amendments so we can ensure that the bill goes through the upper house as quickly as possible, gets back down here and goes off to be put in place to ensure that these laws can be enacted when it comes to protecting, as I said, our most vulnerable. Also on some of those clauses I read out earlier on around no fixed place of abode, we must make sure those things are in there so our restrictions in a world of newer technology are placed upon people who are currently having to answer for that as well. The opposition will not oppose this bill, and as I said, will look to move any amendments in the upper house at a suitable time.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:48): I would also like to begin my contribution by paying tribute to Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller and acknowledging some of the words that the Shadow Minister for Police has said. Once you read about that case and you read about what happened around Cochranes Road and the Korean barbecue, the case they were on, the offenders and the level of their offending, I think there were probably quite a few people that, when Operation Lorimer ended, were hoping that offender might actually make the wrong move and draw a weapon; there was that much emotion. But the professionalism that was shown in the police force at the time when they were dealing with members of their own who were murdered is something to remember. It is also something to be reminded of—as we were, member for Gembrook, in this place today—that it is possible to go through that trauma, get to the other side of it and have a life with respect to those people that we are missing as well. Well played, member for Gembrook, and well spoken as well.

I am very, very happy to speak on Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022 today. It is just a pity I have only got 8 minutes now. I would love 30 minutes to have a go at this one, but I will get right into it. The bill introduces a range of amendments to the Victoria Police Act 2013 and the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, including but of course not limited to allowing Victoria Police to recover costs from the organisers of large commercial events for policing services in the areas surrounding the event—for example, traffic control services in surrounding suburbs. This is not a dissimilar change to what is operating now in, I believe, Queensland and New South Wales, and indeed overseas. Just a quick google shows that in Seattle in the US they were looking at doing this for quite some time, because like Victoria Police once they are outside the event—so we might talk about a Harry Styles concert or something at the MCG—which is where some mischief can happen sometimes, they actually cannot charge promoters a fee for effectively using police resources to maintain the peace.

This bill also provides police and protective services officers with the powers to protect the security of police premises, including requiring a person to provide a reason for their presence, asking a person to leave and not come back and, if they do not provide a legitimate reason, arresting them if they do not leave. There has been some consultation on this, but as has been pointed out this legislation brings police stations into line with law courts, the Adult Parole Board of Victoria and also Parliament as well as the Shrine of Remembrance. I think that new section 59A of the Victoria Police Act has been

actually drafted so they can only exercise these powers when there is a need for the powers, it is legitimate and the person does not have a legitimate reason to be at the premises. Of course the definition of 'legitimate reason' is now included in section 59 as well.

Moving on, this legislation also establishes a legislative framework for the restorative engagement and redress scheme, provides transparency about eligibility for the scheme and protects the privacy of participants. We have had a scheme that has been operating under an administrative model for three years, since 12 December 2019. The reforms in this bill establish a legislative basis for the scheme to provide better participant privacy and confirm the key principles of victim centricity and the importance of confidentiality and privacy and independence from Victoria Police, which is very important. The Department of Justice and Community Safety still administers the scheme independently of Victoria Police, and that is a key element of that scheme.

This legislation also allows the Chief Commissioner of Police to consider terminating the employment of a police recruit or a PSO who has not yet been sworn in if the individual returns a positive drug test. I think that goes without saying. Everyone will have their view on the issues around the recreational use of drugs and where we might be in the future and how that should affect someone's career, but right now I think that makes a whole lot of common sense. The legislation then goes on to amend another act to empower the chief commissioner to direct or permit a registrable offender to report to police electronically if a situation such as a state of emergency, state of disaster or pandemic is in force and require that registrable offender to provide the information that is already in the act.

The bill clarifies that the offence of sexual assault of a person with a cognitive impairment or illness is a class 2 offence when committed against a child, and any person who commits this offence is automatically a registrable offender and subject to reporting requirements. This is to clarify some ambiguity with class 4, where an offender would potentially be ordered by a court to be on the registrable offender list. With class 2 now there is no doubt that anybody who commits the offence of a sexual assault on a person with a cognitive impairment or illness will go straight through, via that class 2 offence, onto that list. The legislation also lists the commonwealth offence of using a carriage service to prepare or plan to engage in sexual activity with or procure for sexual activity persons under 16 as a class 2 offence, with any person who commits this offence automatically a registrable offender and subject to the reporting requirements of the act as well.

Everyone in this chamber have to talk about things that are reality and very hard to talk about at times, but for offenders who prey on children, and we know those bastards are out there, we need to make sure that police have all the powers that we can confer on them to provide justice and fairness and to make sure that our kids are protected as much as possible. I am sure that everyone on this side of the house is happy to hear that the whole Parliament is behind this bill, particularly when we are talking about children and offenders who prey on children.

This government is one with a record that is nationally known on policing and community safety, and we started that in 2014. We have been very clear on our stance that policing and community safety are a priority. We have provided the resources, the tools and the powers to give police the balance they need to keep our communities safe. I just want to go through a few highlights as well, because this bill is the latest tranche of providing police and the judicial system with what they need. We have turned around police investment, with a policing budget 63 per cent higher than in 2014. Throughout this term in government we have invested a record \$4.5 billion in funding for new police, new equipment and an initial 502 police further on top of the 3152 members we initially committed to. All those people have been rolled out onto the streets as sworn officers now. We have even announced 50 new protective services officers in the recent budget. We have worked very closely with police command to develop the staff allocation model, and that included consultation with Police Association Victoria. That is the staff allocation model as well, which essentially dictates when and where police resources will be stationed and used. As of March 2022 I am very proud to say that there are a further 3356 more police officers in stations and in specialist units than in November 2014. That is a 26 per cent increase. We have 355 more PSOs across our public transport network—that is a 32 per cent increase—and

under our watch the force has grown by 4855 police staff. That includes sworn members, PSOs and Victorian Public Service members. That is a 28 per cent increase.

We are not just funding things, though. It is great to talk about percentages and dollar amounts, but we have given police body-worn cameras, made investments in mobile devices, new intelligence systems, the police assistance line, new vehicles, longarms, protective vests, conductive energy devices, or tasers, as well—just the tools they have been asking for to be able to deal with the kind of offences they see in their everyday policing. I think it is very, very well known how much we support community safety and our police, and that has been reflected in the latest crime statistics, which have gone down 11.9 per cent. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:59): It is a pleasure to rise to speak. I will not be speaking for very long on this occasion on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022. If the member for Frankston had kept his contribution to 5 minutes, then I would have had a bit more of a go. I will let the member for Frankston know at 6 o'clock when I get the chance to come back. He can come back and listen to my insightful comments on this legislation. There are quite a number of amendments across a range of areas, including sex offender registration issues and police matters—the operation of the force directly.

I am pleased that the member for Frankston was just talking about police numbers, because it is something that the government likes to talk about in great detail, and I would like to do that as well, particularly when it comes to my electorate. South Gippsland in particular is an area of relatively low crime, and for that we are very grateful.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Matters of public importance

PARLIAMENTARY INTEGRITY

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

That this house notes the public reports in the *Age* on Tuesday, 2 August 2022, regarding secret arrangements between the member for Bulleen; his former chief of staff, Mitch Catlin; and a Liberal Party donor and that the member for Bulleen continues to refuse to answer the most basic questions regarding this scandal.

Through the course of debate on this matter of public importance I remind all members to comply with standing order 118, which prohibits imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on members. Imputations are disorderly other than in a substantive motion, and as members know, the MPI is not a motion. I will be listening closely to the debate.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Housing) (16:02): I rise to speak in support of the matter that I proposed. I was surprised to read the reports in the *Age* of 2 August, because it is something that runs completely at odds with the regime that was installed by the Andrews Labor government during the course of the last term. Specifically what I think has got everyone particularly focused and paying close attention is the quote from the former chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition:

Hey MG. Attached is the proposed agreement between [the donor]—

Mr Munz—

and Catchy Media Marketing and Management ...

It's as per the original email agreement between you and me.

Can I leave you to forward onto him?

Though brief, it speaks volumes.

It is 101 days until polling day. It is 14 weeks from Saturday. The election will be a contest of ideas, as it always is, and it is an opportunity for Victorians to have a very clear focus on who they want to lead this state over the next four years.

Mr Wynne: Who do you trust?

Mr PEARSON: Indeed, member for Richmond, who do you trust? Who is the best person to lead the state? I, like many of us during the course of 2020, watched the daily press conferences that the Premier gave—111 press conferences in a row. He did not have a day off. When you think about that for a moment and the endurance required, it was not like, ‘I’m going to spend the next 111 days coming up and talking for half an hour about all the great things and the wonderful things’. These were tough, difficult conversations to have with the community for 111 days, and they went not for half an hour, they went for 45 minutes, they went for an hour, they went for an hour and a half, talking to the Victorian people about people who had died, talking to the people about who had been hospitalised, telling people that the freedoms and liberties that they had enjoyed all throughout their lives had now been curtailed in order for us to deal with this pandemic. That was the standard set by the Premier. That is what he did day in, day out for 111 consecutive days. The Leader of the Opposition has ducked and weaved and gone to ground and will not answer basic questions about what is in his sent folder in his Hotmail account. This goes to a question about leadership and character and who is the best person to lead the state.

It is very clear, with the reforms that were passed by the Parliament that came into effect on 25 November 2018, that there were caps and there were limitations on what could or could not occur in relation to fundraising. These are the most strict and strident donation laws in the country. It is about making sure, for example, that there is a cap over the course of a parliamentary term of \$4320. It is about making sure that foreign donations are banned. It is putting those limits and putting a disclosure regime in place so that the person who is making the donation as well as the recipient need to be able to be honest and up-front and disclose to the Victorian Electoral Commission what is transpiring.

Because the Leader of the Opposition is not answering basic questions, we just do not know what has been occurring in his office. We do not know if this was a one-off, you-beaut special deal for Mr Munz or whether it was more wideranging. We do not know whether it is a case where other people were involved. We just simply do not know because basic questions are not being answered. I note the fact that lawyers were allegedly engaged to draw up a contract. That leads to its own questions. Which firm? Who was the firm? What were the drafting instructions for the contract? According to Mr Munz it was an unsolicited email that was dismissed out of hand; why would you engage lawyers if it was just simply a one-off. Who paid for it? Who was the client in this instance? Was it the Leader of the Opposition? Was it his former chief of staff? Was it someone else? Where did the funds come from? We do not know, and these are basic questions.

Again, I just come back to basic questions of integrity and leadership and being honest. It is about showing up and explaining what has occurred. I come back to what the Premier did back in 2020: 111 press conferences in a row. These things are very, very straightforward—or they should be—and I think that Victorians have a right to know. Very soon Victorians will be going to vote. It is 101 days till polling day. It is probably 80-odd days until pre-poll starts. People have a right to know. I think the other point to make is, if you come back to the quote that was in the original email:

... the proposed agreement between—

Mr Munz, the would-be donor—

... and Catchy Media Marketing and Management ...

It’s as per the original email agreement between you and me.

Can I leave you to forward onto him?

Where is the original email agreement? What was the email agreement? Who was involved in these discussions? Was it the Leader of the Opposition? Was it Mr Catlin? Was it both of them? Were other

people involved? Were there other members of this place or the other place—who? At what point did this occur in relation to these discussions? Why was it that this was agreed to and forwarded on? Why did that occur? Indeed if you follow the Leader of the Opposition's logic to its conclusion, I think the line was, 'Well, there was no agreement because it was rejected by Mr Munz, so nothing to see here'. Then why is Mr Catlin no longer the chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition? I mean, if he did nothing wrong, why is he no longer there? Again, these are questions that need to be dealt with.

The proposed agreement: what is the agreement? We know that there is a dollar sum. We know that there was potentially going to be a payment in excess of \$100 000. Well, are those the sum details? What were they buying? What was it that they were buying? If it was \$100 000 to potentially be paid to Mr Catlin's private company, where was that money going? Was that going just to Mr Catlin? Was that going to be forwarded on to the Leader of the Opposition's office? Was it going to go back to the Liberal Party? Was it going to go to individual campaigns? Again, we do not know. Where was the money supposed to go, and why was this entered into? What was the purpose of the discussion? And why was this—

Members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON: Well, I think the issue here is that there are a number of significant questions. If you want to defend this, you go right ahead.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Mr PEARSON: This issue is: what happened? Why did you have a situation where this was even contemplated? Why did it get to a stage where lawyers were involved? Why were lawyers involved?

What were the internal processes in the opposition leader's office that led to the decision that they thought this was a good idea? In terms of the donation laws it is very, very clear. It is \$4320 across a parliamentary term. Why did the Leader of the Opposition or anyone in his office think it would be a good idea to shake down a would-be donor for a contribution of over \$100 000? Why was there going to be an increase in the payment made between the would-be donor and Mr Catlin in the event that the opposition lost the election? Why was it that the agreement would only stay in place while Mr Catlin was employed by the Leader of the Opposition? The implication is that it is nothing more than a donation because what other explanation could there possibly be for funding being paid but only in the event that the person, Mr Catlin, remained as the chief of staff to the Leader of the Opposition?

Again, these questions need to be answered. The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition has not been forthcoming in answering any of this. If you look at the contribution that the Leader of the Opposition made in Wodonga on Friday, which was somewhat confusing, he was referring to items which were both on budget and off budget. I would have thought that running opposition room staff, where you have got probably anywhere between 20 and 30 or 40 staff, is a case where funding goes in and the bulk of it would be going out on salaries. So the question is: what is the difference between on budget and off budget? I would have assumed that the funding that would have been forthcoming was money that was solely focused in relation to there being one budget for paying salaries. Why was the Leader of the Opposition using this notion of what was on budget versus off budget? Again it does not make sense, because there should just be one budget.

Mr Wynne: It's a confection.

Mr PEARSON: Indeed it is the only conclusion that could possibly be drawn, member for Richmond, because you think about it and say, 'Where would the funding possibly come from other than one source?'. Mr Munz indicated:

I do not know how many people received this unsolicited and unwanted email ...

So was it just a one-off email to Mr Munz, or was it circulated far and wide? Again we do not know the answer to these questions, because the Leader of the Opposition has not been forthcoming. If it was just to one potential donor, then the issue would be: why would you engage lawyers, who engaged the lawyers and for what purpose? Again, we do not know the name of the firm, we do not know the drafting instructions for the contract, we do not know who was engaged, we do not know the payments which were made and we do not know the conditions.

The other point to make is, being this close to an election, what was the purpose of the original proposed engagement? Effectively, what was Mr Munz going to get out of this in the event that he had agreed to it? Have other people similarly been subject to these contracts and made these payments since 25 November 2018? I note the member for Malvern has been very clear on this. He has indicated very clearly that those arrangements did not exist while he was the Leader of the Opposition, but have these engagements been occurring since the now Leader of the Opposition continued his position?

These are questions I think the people really are entitled to understand because of where we find ourselves in the cycle. It is 14 weeks till polling day. People have a right to know, and we just do not know what has been occurring in relation to this. That is why I think it is important that the work is being done and that the information be provided.

The opposition leader said he was not sure whether he had a draft contract to provide the electoral commission. Why wouldn't he have a draft contract? If it was in his sent items in his Hotmail account, why wouldn't he be able to be very honest and up-front and say, 'Yes, here it is. I've provided it'. We also need to ensure that in relation to the way in which the integrity agencies conduct this investigation there is an opportunity to be able to be very clear in terms of making sure this material has been provided and will be provided. You need to make sure that the integrity agencies have every opportunity to do their job, to review this material and to be very clear as to what has been occurring. Again, the fact that the Leader of the Opposition seems confused about whether these materials are in existence or not is questionable.

Now, the reality is that these donation laws were brought into this place by the Andrews Labor government. They became law on 25 November 2018. Those opposite opposed the legislation in the other place, but the reality is that you have got an obligation to follow and adhere to the laws of the state. The legislation is very clear on this matter: if you are found guilty of breaching the act, then there is a fine and 10 years imprisonment. This is serious. As Catherine Williams from the Centre for Public Integrity mentioned last week:

It's appropriate that the regulator looks carefully when allegations of conduct that might constitute a breach of electoral law are raised.

So it is important that this occurs, and it is important that the Leader of the Opposition complies and provides all relevant information to the Victorian Electoral Commission.

Again, there are just so many questions in relation to what has occurred in the Leader of the Opposition's office. It is not clear to anyone on this side of the house whether this was just something that was cooked up in the opposition leader's office between the Leader of the Opposition and his chief of staff or whether it involved other staff members. Were other staff members being similarly paid for by other donors, or is it more wide ranging? Why was this raised in the first place? Why were lawyers engaged? Why was this even entertained by the Leader of the Opposition?

It comes back to integrity, and indeed in relation to Mr Munz, in the event that the Leader of the Opposition became the Premier of Victoria, how on earth could he deal with Mr Munz or any other of these donors without fear or favour? There are so many questions that remain unanswered, and Victorians have the right to know. It comes down to a test of character and integrity, and the Leader of the Opposition is lacking.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (16:17): I rise to speak on the matter of public importance, which I see is about public reports of questions needing to be answered, and so I also would refer to public reports

of questions that need to be answered. I refer specifically to the *Herald Sun* of 10 August, which ran a series of questions—48 questions—which definitely need to be answered. I will start with those:

- (1) Why did the Premier and his Labor MPs refuse to cooperate with Victoria Police over the red shirts riots investigation despite saying, ‘everybody should cooperate and everybody will’ in July 2018?
- (2) Who made the decision to hire private security guards for hotel quarantine in Victoria that led to 801 Victorian deaths and the world’s longest lockdown?
- (3) Why did the Premier say in his follow-up statutory declaration to the Coate inquiry, ‘I have no knowledge of what was discussed between Ms Ratcliff and Minister Neville’, despite his own phone records indicating he spoke with both immediately after the conclusion of national cabinet?
- (4) What secret deal did the Premier make with United Firefighters Union boss Peter Marshall over alleged firefighter pay deals and political support for the Victorian Labor Party?
- (5) Why did the Premier dismantle the CFA to satisfy union demands?
- (6) Why has the Premier been questioned again by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission in relation to secret dealings with property developer John Woodman?
- (7) What did the Premier promise John Woodman for his sponsorship of the Premier’s golf day?
- (8) Why does the Premier’s office continue to delay and refuse to produce correspondence between the Premier and Mr Woodman, as ordered by the Parliament, when the Premier has previously said no such documents exist?
- (9) Why did the Premier invite Mr Woodman to his post-election celebrations party?
- (10) Why did John Woodman’s consultant Megan Schutz tell the corruption commission, ‘He’—the Premier—‘gave me a kiss on the cheek and he said “Say hi to John, Megan, say hi to John”’ and that the Treasurer said, ‘Megan we work together, we work together to achieve outcomes’?
- (11) Why does the Premier continue to lie about the \$2 billion that has been cut from—

Mr Pearson: On a point of order, Speaker, it is unparliamentary language to impugn the Premier—

The SPEAKER: Yes, I was just about to pull the member up on that. That word is unparliamentary.

Mr Walsh: Why did he tell a mistruth?

Ms STALEY: Why does the Premier continue to tell a mistruth about the \$2 billion that he has been cut from this year’s health budget?

- (12) Why did the Premier approve an unsolicited bid by Transurban to build the West Gate Tunnel project whilst the Treasurer was a direct shareholder in the company?
- (13) Why does the Premier say he respects John Lenders, the mastermind of an almost \$400 000 theft and misuse of taxpayers money as part of the red shirts riots?
- (14) Why did John Lenders’s statutory declaration to the Victorian Ombudsman detail that the Premier had a red shirts campaigner in his Mulgrave electorate?
- (15) Why is the Premier refusing to repay more than \$1.3 million misappropriated from taxpayers, as confirmed by Operation Watts, for party political gain?
- (16) Why did the Premier’s office launch a targeted social media campaign against former Minister for Health Jenny Mikakos?
- (17) Why did the Premier’s private office control the media appearances of chief health officer Brett Sutton?

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

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- (18) What factional deals did the Premier agree to in appointing the current Minister for Planning, given her brother, John-Paul Blandthorn, is a director of major Labor-linked lobbying firm Hawker Britton?
- (19) Why does the Premier continue to accept political donations from the CFMEU, collecting more than \$3 million in total?
- (20) Did the Premier instruct Trades Hall to donate to the Transport Matters Party prior to the pandemic legislation vote?
- (21) Why did the Premier stand by staff who admitted to destroying a journalist's dictaphone that was stolen from the ALP state conference?
- (22) Why did the Premier bully a Liberal MP about being overweight and allegedly slur another female MP who was suffering from bowel cancer?
- (23) Where are the 4000 ICU beds that the Premier announced in 2020 and denied he announced in 2021, which has meant our most vulnerable are waiting in the rain outside an emergency department because there are not enough beds and are often being sent home?
- (24) Why did the Premier approve a \$10 million grant to Trades Hall, some of the largest financial supporters of the Victorian Labor Party?
- (25) Why did the Premier endorse more than 90 of his former ministerial staff being parachuted into plum public service roles?
- (26) Why have at least 21 people died waiting for an ambulance?
- (27) Why did the Premier break his promise of an injecting room in metropolitan Melbourne in a deal to secure preferences at the Northcote by-election?
- (28) Why does the Premier continue to hide the report into the second injecting room and further plans for suburban injecting rooms?
- (29) Why did the Premier break Victorian law by approving \$1.7 million in taxpayer-funded political advertising attacking the previous federal government?
- (30) Why, despite the warnings from the corruption commission and the Ombudsman, did the Premier confirm he would break the law again?
- (31) Why did the Premier breach the Victorian charter of human rights with the five-day hard lockdown of nine public housing towers in Melbourne in July 2020, which was found by the Victorian Ombudsman to not be based on direct health advice?
- (32) Why did the Premier restrict Victorians from their home state, which the Victorian Ombudsman branded 'downright unjust, even inhumane'?
- (33) Why has the Premier's ministerial staff budget increased by over 100 per cent from 2015–16 until now?
- (34) Why did the Premier's handpicked Speaker and Deputy Speaker—these are a previous Speaker and a previous Deputy Speaker—rort taxpayer funds by misusing parliamentary entitlements?
- (35) Why did the Premier's handpicked Deputy President's office rort taxpayer funds by misusing parliamentary entitlements to stack Labor Party branches?
- (36) Why has the Premier spent nearly \$1 million in taxpayer funds to buy friends on Facebook?
- (37) Why has the Premier spent taxpayers funds to take the Victorian Ombudsman to the High Court to stop himself being investigated for red shirts?

- (38) Why did the Premier back a minister who was caught chauffeuring his pet dogs around in a ministerial car?
- (39) Why can't Victorians expect an operator on the other end of a 000 call?
- (40) Why has the Premier backed a minister who kept a \$2000 bike given to him by a major events company?
- (41) Why has the Premier blocked an investigation into his breaches of the code of conduct for bullying three senior public servants?
- (42) Why did the Premier fail to launch investigations into accusations of bullying and intimidation of senior female MPs Kaushaliya Vaghela and the late Jane Garrett?
- (43) Why were lockdown measures like playground closures and curfews made when there was no health advice to support them?
- (44) Why did the Premier refuse to release the health advice that was behind locking us down, which was later revealed to be based on Big Brother political focus group polling that breached privacy and monitored public sentiment and also cost the taxpayer over \$4.5 million?
- (45) Why was the IBAC Commissioner, Robert Redlich, gagged at a parliamentary committee, shut down by the government when he mentioned the Premier's name?
- (46) Why does the Premier continue to back Nancy Yang as a Labor Party staffer?
- (47) Why did the Premier cut the budget to the corruption commission, then mislead a parliamentary committee about it?
- (48) Why has the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Deputy Premier failed to comply with the law requiring the production of an integrated transport plan even after being caught out by the Auditor-General?

They are some questions that have been in public reports, and the Premier continues to refuse to answer these most basic of questions. In fact when asked questions under oath, his favourite response is to say 'I don't recall'. The member for Essendon asked the question: who is the best person to lead this state? That is one question I can answer for the member for Essendon, and that would absolutely be the current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, because the current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, does not have 48 instances of where he has misused public funds—misled people about the answers on that. Over and over and over again this government is corrupt to its core, and as soon as that starts being called out they get a bit noisy on the other side. They want to shout that one down. They do not like the facts being put out there that this government is corrupt, deeply, profoundly corrupt. It sees no difference between the interests of the Labor Party and the interests of the Victorian government. They are not the same thing. But this Victorian Labor Party sees no difference. Red shirts—that is fine. Fine to use people's electorate budgets to pay. Where is the member? The only one of those who actually made it into the Parliament, the member for Buninyong. I note she is not here now, but she was a red shirt.

A member interjected.

Ms STALEY: Yes, we have got a great photo of the member for Buninyong going in to be questioned. That was before, of course, she stopped answering any questions. The Premier had said that they would cooperate fully, answer any questions. No members of the Parliament then would accept that. They said, 'Oh no, we had legal advice. We can't do it'. Well gee, why? Why would you not answer those questions? Why wouldn't members of the government answer those questions—

Mr Battin: Because they are guilty.

Ms STALEY: Because they are guilty as sin. Thank you. That is just one instance. They paid that money back, and then they tried another scheme to defraud the taxpayer, and they got caught out again. But they are not standing up saying they are going to repay that \$1.3 million. No, no, no; they are not paying that one back. In fact when it was suggested to the Premier that he could follow the example that he had set with the other money and pay it back, no, he was not going there. He tried to say that there was no equivalence. Of course there is equivalence. He could at least pay that money back. In fact if we are talking about questions that have appeared in the media in public reports, I can refer to a further media release from Wednesday, 10 August, and that said, 'will Labor repay \$1 348 750 of stolen taxpayer money?'. So far we have had an answer to that question. The answer is no. So we have an answer of either 'I do not recall'—the Premier says 'I don't recall'—or, to the question 'Will you pay back money?', 'No'. 'Will you cooperate with the police investigation?'—'No'. It does seem that this government can answer some of these questions. Unfortunately the answer is pretty consistent. It is a consistent 'No, we won't do the right thing'. Over and over and over again this government has fallen short when it comes to measures of integrity at every point. When we had the former minister chauffeur his dogs around, we thought there could not be anything worse.

Mr Wells: Patch and Ted?

Ms STALEY: Patch and Ted, yes. Then we had a former Deputy Speaker, the former member for Melton. Not only was he not entitled to get the allowance in the first place, he then moved himself fraudulently to a caravan that he did not actually live in to attempt to defraud taxpayers. He did, and then he refused to pay it back. He entirely refused to pay it back. So it is a pattern. This government is corrupt, and it needs to go.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (16:32): Interesting times. We thought earlier this week that the opposition liked public transport. We thought that they were getting on board with public transport. They wanted to give free public transport to nurses. They wanted to improve the access of working people to public transport, rather than what we are doing, which is actually giving health workers money in their pocket to show our respect and recognition for all that they have done over the last two-and-a-bit years. We thought that they wanted to go with public transport, yet now we find out that they want to cut the Suburban Rail Loop and they want to reduce access to public transport, not expand it. That means cutting 24 000 jobs. The Liberals confirmed this week that Cheltenham, Clayton, Monash, Glen Waverley, Burwood and Box Hill would never get the brand new train stations that are currently in early works were they to form government. Suddenly the Liberals do not like the eastern suburbs. The Leader of the Opposition will walk away from the train to Monash University, to Doncaster, to Deakin and La Trobe universities. There will be no orbital rail to connect Melbourne's suburbs.

The SPEAKER: Member for Eltham, is this going to be tied back to the MPI before the house?

Ms WARD: Yes.

The SPEAKER: You have strayed far from the MPI.

Ms WARD: Thank you, Speaker. Just like we needed a city loop all those years ago, with discussions that began in 1929 and construction completed in 1981, our growing city needs more public transport and we need an orbital rail loop.

Mr Wells: It must be the wrong MPI. Someone's given you the wrong MPI.

Ms WARD: I will get there.

Mr Wells: There's nothing to say.

Ms WARD: Nothing to say? That is quite astonishing—to think that on this side of the house we have got nothing to say, when we have got a lot to say about the state of the opposition. We have got a lot to say about what our government is doing. We could talk about how the office is being run by the Leader of the Opposition. We can talk about his Hotmail account. We can talk about who is paying

who. We can talk about where money goes. But let us talk about electoral success. Let us talk about how well that office is run and then lead into electoral success. Let us talk about a candidate who was unable to actually win council in 1993. Then where does that Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff go next? He ran for local government, and then in 2009, as the former adviser to state opposition leader Ted Baillieu, he put his hand up to succeed Chris Pearce as the Liberal candidate for Aston, but again he was not successful.

We can try and cover up Hotmail emails and all the rest of it, but let us go back to electoral success. Only a few years after that he ran for Jagajaga. Again there was a lack of success. By 2015 this man moved to Sydney, where he then sought preselection for the federal seat of Berowra—unsuccessful. Then he had another crack—two years later, still in Sydney—for the preselection for Manly. Again, this is the person that the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to reboot. We have the Matt Guy, we have Matt Guy 2.1, 2.3, 3.1—I am not sure which one we are up to—trying to uncover what is happening with this Hotmail account. I am so glad that those opposite really wanted me to get to the point. After Manly and again not being successful, and not being successful in Jagajaga, he came to run against me in Eltham—and here I am. Here I am with the highest margin that the seat of Eltham has ever had. By 2019, after again failing electorally, we had newspaper reports saying that—and at that point he was the former Leader of the Opposition, but he is now back to being Leader of the Opposition; still nobody has come back to me whether we are at Matthew Guy 2.1 or Matt Guy 3.0 or is it Matt Guy 1.1—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to refer to members by their correct titles.

Ms WARD: Thank you, Speaker. I will take your guidance. The Leader of the Opposition told his colleagues, according to the *Age*, that he was:

... considering a new career in the private sector, but no definite decisions have been made.

But that—

according to the *Age*—

hasn't stopped a shopping-list of hopefuls from stepping into the ring, ready for the seat of Bulleen if and when Guy goes corporate.

Close friend and perennial preselection hopeful—

the *Age*'s words, not mine—

Nick McGowan is understood to have Guy's tick of approval.

Well, that did not go anywhere either, as you can see.

Now, in 2021 there was a challenge to the member for Forest Hill, and who was the challenger then? It was the current chief of staff of the Leader of the Opposition, who, according to the paper, is close friends with Mr Guy. However, there was a bit of a roadblock. There was a traffic bump here, because as the Forest Hill MP decided to not vaccinate himself, he, according to the *Herald Sun*:

... wrote to party delegates ... urging them to vote against proceeding with the preselection on Tuesday night ...

because he was unable to attend due to the health measures that were in place at the time. While party rules did not require his attendance, he would not have been able to be heard; he would not have been able to have his say. Who was he being challenged by for that seat, which will become the seat of Glen Waverley? It is of course, again as recorded in the paper:

... a close friend of opposition leader Matthew Guy ...

the current chief of staff to the opposition leader. The paper says:

'McGowan will be furious. What a mess' ...

Indeed an absolute mess. I am not actually sure whether preselection for Forest Hill/Glen Waverley for the Liberal Party has ever actually happened. It seemed to be that it all just got too hard or perhaps

they were not happy with the candidates who put their hands up. I do not know. Maybe there was writing on the wall to say who would be successful and who would not. I do not know—again.

So we finally get to a point where he has now been preselected for the upper house, but he has failed numerous times to actually be elected—whether it be preselection or whether it be for an actual seat. He became a full-time member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, appointed until 2024, without being interviewed for the role, according to newspaper reports. So he has done pretty well for himself despite the fact that he has been, for nearly 20 years, unelectable. Yet this is the person that they have got in charge of the Leader of the Opposition's offices, who is to bring them to victory.

You have got an opposition who wants to rip public transport infrastructure away from communities in the east and invest in health. Well, this is quite amazing—invest in health. This is the party that has only recently discovered the importance of health care. In fact we did not see them for the last 2½ years because at every turn they have undermined the health messages. At every turn they have not supported the messages that have come from the chief health officer or from the health minister; they have undermined them. In fact we have seen them standing out there with those people who have continually protested against our health measures—those people who rocked up to the Royal Children's Hospital.

The SPEAKER: Member for Eltham, you have strayed from the MPI quite considerably.

Ms WARD: Thank you, Speaker. It is a bit of straying, but it is important, and it is important when we are coming to how this state will elect a new government when it comes to November. Do they want to listen to somebody who does not care and is not interested and cannot actually manage themselves, cannot manage their own Hotmail account, cannot manage how to employ people and cannot manage conversations? Do they really want to put our state in the hands of such a person—a person who has such a chequered history, a person who has got to rely on his school friend to be his chief of staff to manage their business, someone who has nobody else in his corner to support him?

I am glad that the Liberals have finally discovered the importance of health care, despite in 2018 not supporting nurse-to-patient ratios, despite cutting TAFEs, which we have reopened. There is a health workforce that is needed in this state which this government is supporting, which at no point have those opposite supported. It is shameful to think that they have got a Leader of the Opposition who is such a lame duck, a Leader of the Opposition who had to go out to private industry to prop up, it appears, the financial support of a staff member; the wage of that staff member was not big enough—or was it a donation? What was it? What was it that actually happened? And how did someone get an email that was apparently never sent? Those opposite have got—what was it?—48 questions.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:42): I rise to make a contribution on the matter of public importance proposed by the member for Essendon. In starting, I have often wondered what the definition of 'being hit with a limp lettuce leaf' was, and I have come to a conclusion—it is listening to the member for Eltham actually make a contribution on a government MPI. I just do not know what the point was of that whole presentation, and I do not think anyone that watched or listened to it or reads *Hansard* tomorrow will have any idea what the member for Eltham was talking about at all.

There is a veil of secrecy over the Andrews government—there is a veil of secrecy over the government—and there is the smell of corruption from the Andrews Labor government, and it is getting worse. In the 48 questions that the leader of opposition business raised in her contribution on this, there are a number of questions that require detailed answers if we are ever going to have good governance in this state into the future, because at the moment we actually do not have good governance in this state from the Andrews government. One of those is the question about the 90 former ministerial advisers who are now embedded in key roles within the public sector here in Victoria. I speak on behalf of the forestry industry, who are really, really concerned about the fact that former Labor staffers are now giving advice around an industry that is worth billions of dollars to Victoria, creates tens of thousands of jobs in Victoria and replaces imports with the timbers that we produce. You have got Labor staffers

giving advice, saying, 'Close that industry down. Close it down, it's bad'. That is about politics, not about good governance and about good decision-making for Victoria. The fact that we will see all those people put out of work because there will be no native timber industry, the fact that we will see an increase in imports of timber into the state because of those political staffers who are giving advice around closing that industry down—that is where there is this smell of corruption about Victoria, because the government is being run on nepotism, not being run on good governance into the future.

The other question that needs answering is, given that the Premier is apparently involved in three IBAC inquiries: why did the government actually cut funding to IBAC? You have got a Premier that is before three inquiries; there have been reports about that. Yet the Premier and the Andrews Labor government have actually cut funding to IBAC. Why did they reduce the legislative powers of IBAC? IBAC was set up by the Baillieu government and was something that had not been done in Victoria that was desperately needed in Victoria—to have an Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission here in this state. Having watched what had happened in New South Wales with their ICAC, there was definitely a need for an IBAC here in Victoria. It was set up. It had the legislation there. The Andrews government actually watered down the rules for IBAC and reduced their funding. That says to me: 'Guilty, guilty, guilty. We don't want to fund an anti-corruption commission that might be investigating us as a government'.

Why did the Andrews government reduce funding to the Ombudsman? The Ombudsman has done some inquiries around a number of things that were in those questions that the Manager of Opposition Business raised, particularly around the border closures during COVID and particularly around the lockdowns of the housing towers in Melbourne here—given the language that the Ombudsman would normally use, it was probably the strongest wording that I have ever seen in an Ombudsman's report—about how bad that decision-making was for those people that were locked out of this state and for those people who were locked in those particular towers. So the questions that the Andrews government, particularly the Premier, need to answer are: 'Why did you cut the rules for IBAC? Why have you reduced the funding to IBAC? Why have you reduced the funding to the Ombudsman?'. The member for Essendon in his contribution certainly did not make a case as to how this government has good governance, is not corrupt, has not failed in secrecy and is not being led by nepotism.

The other question that needs to be answered is the issue around the Premier actually endorsing the former member of the other place, John Lenders, as being a good citizen when he was found guilty of robbing \$400 000 of taxpayers money. The guilt is there in the fact that the Labor Party actually paid that money back. They knew they had done wrong. They knew that it was something that you should not do here in Victoria. Yet Daniel Andrews praised the former member in the other place, John Lenders, for his integrity—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members to call members by their correct titles.

Mr WALSH: The Premier. Sorry, Speaker. From that whole saga we need an answer to: why did the government spend over \$1 million of taxpayers money taking the issue to the High Court to try and stop it being investigated? If a Victorian who rang 000 and could not get an answer or a Victorian who rang an ambulance and could not get an ambulance knew that \$1 million was wasted on lawyers to stop IBAC investigating the government, they would be very, very disappointed. They are the sorts of things that need to be answered.

And there is the very first question that the Manager of Opposition Business raised: why were ministers refusing to cooperate with police through that whole red shirts saga? If you are an office-bearer of the government, if you are part of the executive government of Victoria, you swear an oath to uphold the laws of the state, so why did those ministers actually refuse to be part of that investigation? To my mind, personally, they are actually not upholding the oath they take with the Governor when they go out to become a minister, because they swear to uphold the law of the state. They fought the law of the state, and they spent over \$1 million of taxpayers money fighting that law and that investigation as well.

The other question that needs to be answered is: what discussions took place at the Flower Drum with John Woodman? If only the dumplings could talk—that would be a very interesting conversation to know if those dumplings could actually talk about what was discussed between John Woodman and the Premier at the Flower Drum at that infamous lunch.

What deals were done with Peter Marshall and the United Firefighters Union? What deals were done between the Premier, Peter Marshall and the UFU that absolutely destroyed the morale of volunteers in the CFA? That is the question that the CFA volunteers that I talk to want answered. What did Peter Marshall actually have over the Premier that would lead to that sort of thing happening to the volunteers in this particular state? That is another one of those questions that needs to be answered.

The question that was on everyone's lips at the start of COVID during the issues around hotel quarantine was: who signed the contract? Who in the government actually signed the contract to spend something like \$80 million to employ private security officers to run hotel quarantine? Tragically those decisions led to the deaths of over 800 people. Who signed that contract? Someone in government must have made that decision. How could anyone say that you would spend \$80 million on a 'creeping assumption'? I just do not know where this language of a creeping assumption can come in that you could spend \$80 million which tragically led to the deaths of 800 people. How does a creeping assumption become part of good governance? Someone somewhere must have signed a bit of paper to spend that money to put in place those contracts to employ those private security officers.

The last thing I wanted to touch on was the Coate inquiry into those very same issues. We all sat there and watched the Coate inquiry on the TV, because you could not go anywhere at that particular time, because of lockdowns. We saw the Premier there, and from my count the Premier actually said to former Justice Coate 27 times, 'I don't recall, I don't recall, I don't recall'. Twenty-seven times the Premier said that. That is not being honest with the people of Victoria. That is the Sergeant Schultz defence: 'I know nothing'. It is an absolute disgrace that we had the highest public office holder here in Victoria, the Premier of the state, someone who swore to uphold the laws of the state, appear before a judicial inquiry about 800 people dying and the whole issue of private security guards and hotel quarantine saying continually, 'I don't recall'.

I will finish where I started. There is a veil of secrecy over the Andrews government. There is a smell of corruption around the Andrews government. Unless they answer the questions that the Manager of Opposition Business put forward and unless they answer the issues that I have raised, no-one will believe them that there is good governance in this state.

Mr CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (16:52): It is with some pleasure this afternoon that I rise to make my contribution to this matter of public importance. In thinking about this matter when it was proposed earlier today, I sought out a couple of definitions. One of course was *Merriam-Webster's* definition of what corruption is, and it defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. I then sought out what the definition of 'integrity' is, and integrity is the practice of being honest and showing uncompromised adherence to strong ethical principles and values. I thought that seeking advice from the dictionary with respect to those two things was indeed very, very important. Of course in public life I think it is very, very important that we recognise and we respect those very things.

When it comes to the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, of course he has had a very, very long career here in the state of Victoria as an elected member and indeed as a planning minister in the Baillieu government. In my part of the world for a very, very, very long time my community has been campaigning to have very, very defined town boundaries set up, particularly for but not exclusive to Torquay and all of the other Bellarine towns through that area. My community has indeed fought very hard against the former planning minister, Matthew Guy, when he had—

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask you to refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr CHEESEMAM: The former Minister for Planning, the member for Bulleen, now the opposition leader, in that particular role through that particular debate wanted to establish town

boundaries that would see an additional 2000 lots developed to the west of Duffields Road, which would be a very, very significant change to the town boundaries of Torquay. My community fought extensively against that planning decision, and he overrode the very thoughtful decisions of the Surf Coast shire, who were elected and under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 are effectively responsible for determining these things. He wanted to override them, and he started that process.

It much later on came out that the then planning minister, the now opposition leader, was active in having private dinners with developers who were seeking planning decisions that would be favourable to them, and he was at the same time raising dollars by holding those meetings. It came out through that that he enjoyed a very fancy dinner with alleged mafia figures. He enjoyed a very nice lobster dinner, and if only those lobsters could talk, if only those lobsters had that opportunity to spell out exactly what was discussed on that particular occasion.

I know that integrity is very important, that you do need to have an enormous amount of transparency about the decisions that you are making as an elected representative in this place, particularly when it comes to things such as planning. I know that the Victorian community, as will the Torquay community, will have another opportunity in less than 100 days to again pass judgement on the integrity of the opposition leader, given his very long history of making favourable planning decisions for Liberal Party mates in exchange for very, very large donations.

I must say what the *Age* recently exposed, as they did—that the opposition leader through his former chief of staff was utilising that office to solicit illegal donations for the purposes of private gain for the Liberal Party—is absolutely consistent with the definition as is spelled out by *Merriam-Webster* in terms of corruption. I have no doubt that the integrity bodies, which these matters have been referred to now, will conclude in the months to come that there are substantial questions that he must respond to, and I certainly am of the view that he should lay all of that out to bear now so that the Victorian community in some 100 days have all of those facts that they can consider when they are casting their vote. Making sure that we have integrity in the Victorian Parliament is exceptionally important.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition has a lot to explain. I certainly know that he must be much more transparent about property developers and decisions that he made when he was the planning minister of this state. Because of course there are people that have financially gained significantly through the decisions that have been made by planning ministers, and when those planning decisions have been tied to intimate dinners I think the Victorian community has a right to know all of those details so that they can weigh that up when they go and cast their votes.

It is clear to me, and I think it was clear to the journalist and I think it is clear to everyone who follows closely Victorian politics that the structure that they set up that was exposed by the *Age* newspaper only a number of weeks ago was a clear attempt to break the very clear donation law reforms that we have put in this country and in this state. It is very clear that they set to contrive a structure to get around those donation law reforms, and I simply ask this question in the remaining 35 seconds: is this the only time they have done this or are there others in that office that still today have a job and whose wages are being propped up by others outside of the normal legal structures of employment in this place? Is there an illegal laundromat of political donations that are going through the opposition leader's office?

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (17:02): I rise to speak on the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Essendon. I have to admit the first thing that came to mind when the matter of public importance came out, submitted by the member for Essendon, was the thought, 'Oh my God. How bad is Labor that that is their attack dog?'. I remember Rob Hulls. You would watch him from home when I first came in here, and he would actually send shivers through oppositions. He would get up and speak and have authority. Even the member for Keysborough—when he gets up, you listen. He knows what he is talking about; I will give him that credit. When the member for Essendon gets up I have more fear that he is going to talk about a poet from the 1800s that has got no relevance at all to today, but yet they want to bring him out as the attack dog on the Victorian opposition. How sad a

state is it when that is the case? Even worse, he has decided to bring in a matter of public importance around reports and unanswered questions. That is what this matter of public importance is: reports and unanswered questions.

I am going to start with one. What secret deal did the Premier make with the United Firefighters Union boss Peter Marshall over alleged firefighter pay deals and political support for the Victorian Labor Party? At what stage does the Andrews Labor government, particularly the Premier, think it is okay to not answer questions when they currently have Supreme Court action to stop the IBAC report getting released? What questions need to be answered by a Premier who has been into IBAC on three separate occasions, most likely two of them in relation to UFU deals, one of those—pretty public now—Operation Richmond? What does the government know and what does the Premier know around deals that were made or what Peter Marshall was referring to in the media when he said that he would release the information he had on the Premier? What was the information? Does the Premier know? I am sure he would have to know. The Premier must know what happened that led to a deal that is now costing over a billion dollars here in Victoria for our fire services.

And the improvement? The response times are down. That is the improvement we have seen in the fire services from FRV. The firefighters in Victoria, and the ones that I have managed to meet along the way, have been fantastic, but interestingly whilst those on the other side will talk about all of their union mates it is actually members from the union now that are concerned about what deals were made and what impact they are having on the services they can deliver.

Operation Richmond is based around the deals made between the government office, the Premier's private office, and the influence it had in that enterprise bargaining agreement. There is also another operation underway in relation to who leaked information between MFB, CFA and the Premier's office. What information was leaked? Was there ever an Excel spreadsheet that was colour coded with who should get promoted and who should not get promoted, because that would be corruption. If someone in the union ever marked up a sheet and managed to have every person that was in the branch committee of management team of the United Firefighters Union as green and those that did not like Peter Marshall, for example, in red, and then if we went and compared that today to the management versus those that did not get promoted, if that aligned perfectly, that would be corruption. If the Premier was aware of that or his private office was aware of that, he does not only have questions to answer, he should have charges to answer. That is the difference in what is happening here in this state at the moment.

The Labor Party have put up a question about questions to be answered. I put to the Labor Party: you have charges to answer. Money has been stolen here in this state. Report after report has highlighted how much money was stolen. You admitted it by paying back \$388 000. If you pay a fine for speeding, that is an admission of guilt. That is what the law says. If you pay the fine in a 28-day period, that is an admission of guilt. Member for Footscray, I know you are looking at that. That is true, isn't it? That is 100 per cent true. If you pay the fine, it is an admission of guilt. So why did the Labor Party pay \$388 000 for their fine? It was an admission of guilt. Why was no-one charged? All of a sudden when they realised this was the case, they did not want to pay back the next \$1.3 million. A \$1.3 million payment would be another admission of guilt.

This government continues to rip off, steal. The corruption is just unheard of, of how much can happen in one state. A former Deputy Speaker came into this place and could not claim the second residence allowance because he was not in an area where he could claim it, in Melton, yet decided to get a caravan down at Ocean Grove and claim a second residence allowance even though he did not go to that caravan other than for an occasional holiday. He ripped off the Victorian people, stole over \$100 000, pocketed it during that time, and when he got caught he did not come out honestly and say, 'Hey, I'm being honest now. I want to admit my mistake'. He came out because he was caught and then he said, 'I'm not paying it back'. He said, 'Up yours, Victoria, I'm not paying it back', and it was only when the Premier realised it was affecting polling that he turned around and said, 'We're going to make him pay it back, but we'll make him pay it back in instalments over a period of time. We don't want to affect his income at the moment'. A man sat in this place stealing money and was not charged.

What was the answer from the Victorian Labor Party? ‘We’ll change the rules on how you can claim and who can claim the second residence allowance’. So the answer was, ‘Because we’re corrupt we’re going to change the rules, and everything is okay. We’ve said sorry again’. A former Speaker of this house, who should be above everything in this house, who is everything about our democracy, was stealing from the Victorian people whilst sitting in that chair, and when he got caught—not to be good—he came out and said, ‘Oh, I’ll pay it back, and I’m sorry’. Victorians get sick of politicians who want to steal their money, who want to continue that corruption and who, when they get caught, turn around and go, ‘I’m sorry. I’ll pay it back. That’s how we’ll fix it’.

And we know the member for Burwood has got no confidence in the government at the moment. He has got so little confidence he has decided to run for an entirely different seat. He is moving seats now over to Ringwood. Why? Because he knows that he is attached to a rotten government in Burwood and it was going to kill him. He was going to be pushed out in that seat. Well, unfortunately he has picked a seat where we have got an active candidate out there who I am pretty confident will take that seat on 26 November, and I look forward to it—to getting rid of the member for Burwood who wants to be the member for Ringwood because of the issues he has had in this place.

One of the other things that has been raised on so many occasions is John Woodman. For a development that goes through the member for Cranbourne’s and the member for Narre Warren South’s area where funding was put forward to those members to ensure they could get up and be elected—now they need to answer questions. What answers does the member for Cranbourne have about funding she got in exchange for positive influence on those making the decisions? At what stage will the member for Cranbourne and the member for Narre Warren South come out and explain exactly what money they got from John Woodman, the Ferrari-driving John Woodman? What money did they get in exchange for handing over advice and positive views on behalf of the development? At what stage does the Victorian Labor Party think it is okay that dead people signed membership forms? At what stage does the Victorian Labor Party think it is okay to use taxpayers money and electorate staff to campaign for them? I think that is the problem here.

The problem is these are questions that the government do know the answers to. They know the answers to every single one of those questions. They refuse to answer them. Why? Because they are more interested in protecting their seats, in protecting their access to the big white cars, than they are in being honest and open with the Victorian community.

Ms CRUGNALE (Bass) (17:12): Ventnor, Ventnor, Ventnor! Hear ye and hear ye! I bring forth to you perhaps a vociferous oration, certainly a fairytale not, nor a divine comedy. It is a tragedy indeed. I present to you the very lamentable history and the torrid back catalogue of greatest hits that is the tragedy of Ventnor brought to you by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition recently made a visit to Phillip Island in my electorate of Bass, a glorious place famous for penguins and the nature parks, wild beaches and the Ramsar wetlands of Western Port Bay. Now, making a visit to Phillip Island is not in itself unusual; millions come every year. So why would a visit from the opposition leader seem so uncharacteristic and so special? I wonder if, as he drove down the hill and saw the bridge, shivers ran down his spine. As the *Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser* noted under their July 2022 headline ‘Guy still in the shadow of Ventnor’:

The ghost of Ventnor again raised its head ...

and like Hamlet it is a ghost none in Ventnor or the whole of Phillip Island is wanting to forgive and forget. Really, I did not have to actually write anything for this matter of public importance debate; I just have to read the headlines. I wish to share some quotes from the local and national papers. The ABC on 22 September 2011 under the headline ‘Minister asked to change decision on Ventnor zoning’ reported:

The Bass Coast Council initially refused to rezone a 24 hectare block of land near the coast for residential development.

But Mr Guy overturned the decision saying the rezoning would make housing more affordable.

I said this was not a comedy; well, perhaps it is a comedy of errors. The tragedy continues. In the *Guardian* of 5 September 2018 is an article headed ‘Victorian Liberal leader allegedly settled \$2.5m planning case’—and I am quoting here—‘to protect his career’. Fairly framed in the *Bass Coast Post* of 14 September 2018 under the headline ‘Ventnor victory one for the ages’ was this:

It was a David and Goliath battle, pitching a small community against the might of a minister of state.

...

... then Liberal planning minister Matthew Guy tried to rezone a 24-hectare Ventnor paddock for housing, against the wishes of the local community and Bass Coast Council, and against the advice of two planning panels and his own department.

And in the comments section of this very article, a fellow called Andrew says:

As a former Liberal Party member, the actions undertaken by former Planning Minister and former Opposition Leader Matthew Guy was corrupt & potentially criminal to say nothing less.

I can tell you the community at Phillip Island have not forgotten the tragedy of Ventnor. They have not forgotten the bizarre actions over those two weeks—the rezoning backflip that cost Victorian taxpayers \$2.5 million plus costs, so a total of approximately \$3.5 million. What happened next? Well, the community breathed a sigh of relief, but the property owner sued him. To quote an article from the *Age* on 26 June, going back to 2013, headlined ‘The minister, the landowner and the rezoning backflip that is heading to court’:

The woman behind a contentious housing subdivision proposal at Ventnor on Phillip Island says she received a favourable hearing from Planning Minister Matthew Guy when she briefed him on the scheme at a kitchen table meeting in her home months before he controversially approved it in 2011.

Ms Nicholls said:

Surely the community should be able to take a minister at his word when he exercises his ministerial powers. But how can the community trust this minister at his word now?

There is the rub; how can a community indeed trust his word now? And the quotes move on. An article from the *Age*, 7 September 2021, headlined ‘The greatest controversies of Matthew Guy’, goes on:

The botched rezoning of farmland on Phillip Island in 2011 cost taxpayers millions of dollars and left a major question hanging over Mr Guy’s judgment.

...

... Mr Guy spent millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money to confidentially settle a lawsuit over the decision because he feared he would lose his job if the matter went to court.

From the *Age*, 3 September 2018, headlined ‘Matthew Guy paid out millions to keep his job: documents’—well, there were a lot of documents in that whole process:

... including the potential misuse of taxpayer funds to avoid the public airing of detail about the most damaging controversy in his tumultuous stint in planning.

These are all quotes, and they go on:

Opposition Leader Matthew Guy spent millions of ... taxpayers’ money to confidentially settle a lawsuit over a botched planning decision because ...

again, he feared he would lose his job if it went to court. From an article from 4 September 2018, headlined ‘Labor plots to force fresh probe into Matthew Guy over Ventnor deal’:

In 2011, Mr Guy used his ministerial powers to rezone 24 hectares of farmland at Ventnor, disregarding—as we said earlier—

the advice of two expert planning panels, the minister’s own department and lawyers, and the unanimous position of the local council.

He was later forced into an embarrassing backflip.

And the article states:

“This may be winnable @ law but this is a political fight and it is unwinnable,” Mr Guy is recorded as saying in confidential notes by the Victorian Government Solicitor’s Office in 2013.

However, Mr Guy told reporters that he did not remember making that comment.

On the same subject from the ABC on 4 September 2018, ‘Matthew Guy says Phillip Island settlement avoided “lawyers’ picnic” over Ventnor rezoning’, Mr Guy is quoted in a file note again, saying:

“This can’t go to court. I shall not be in the job if it goes to [court]”.

...

Another record said Mr Guy was worried about being cross examined in court:

“I’m v. good in Q time [question time]. But Q time is very diff to a court of law!”

Mr Guy today—

going back to 2018—

said he “was not responsible” for someone else’s file note.

But here is the sad and sorry story: \$3.5 million later in the tale of Ventnor on Phillip Island the land is still farmland, but the locals have not forgotten. And moving on to the distinctive area and landscape, according to the *Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser*, 6 July 2022:

We would stick with the council planning scheme and it would lead the process,” he said.

Mr Guy also fully supported the introduction of a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) proposal for Bass Coast.

“These were instigated by me as planning minister,” he said.

“We began it and I would support it.”

He may well have done some tinkering, but let us be really super clear here: it was our government, the Andrews Labor government, that did the work and introduced the legislative framework. Further on the distinctive area and landscape, on 4 November 2018 our Premier’s media release headlined ‘Stopping developers ruining Phillip Island and the Bass Coast’, says:

Under the Liberals, the town boundaries of Cowes and Cape Paterson were changed against the advice of independent planning panels.

To quote the former Minister for Planning:

History will judge Matthew Guy’s intervention in Ventnor as one of the darkest days in the history of planning in this state.

The imprint on this community from Mr Guy’s botched planning decisions cannot be understated. It is not just Phillip Island, as I said, but Cape Paterson and the whole of Bass Coast. We could probably bring in the green wedges of Pakenham and also the City of Casey area as well. The hoodwinking continues. When Mr Guy recently visited Phillip Island—

The SPEAKER: Member, please refer to the member’s correct title.

Ms CRUGNALE: Okay. When the Leader of the Opposition recently visited Phillip Island for a funding announcement the comments in the local paper went crazy. Janet Carlson said:

Matthew Guy and Aaron Brown sniffin’ around looking for votes with promises—

eye roll emoji—

they won’t keep ... obviously. Give it a break fellas ...

angry emoji. Nat Muir:

The only way he’s getting in down here, is if he pays for the pool ... no one trusts him.

Cyril Oppenheimer:

Lobster on the menu?

Stephen Urquhart:

Dodgy. Says it all.

Jay Long:

Not really welcome here Mr Guy. We haven't forgotten.

Sally Busby:

More empty promises?

And Joe Esposito:

Don't believe it, we have been promised so many time and when it come to the crunch they have no money to do it or it's not important. Only to buy votes.

So we draw to the end of this lamentable tale, the tragedy of Ventnor. How can the Leader of the Opposition seriously consider that the residents of Ventnor, Phillip Island and surrounds to all across the shire and the electorate of Bass and indeed across Victoria will take anything that he says at his word? How can they take him seriously and how can they trust him?

Give him heedful note. For I mine eyes will rivet to his face. And after we will both our judgements join in censure of his seeming.

Ms CUPPER (Mildura) (17:22): I rise to speak about the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Essendon, which he drafted in these terms:

That this house notes the public reports in the *Age* on Tuesday, 2 August 2022, regarding secret arrangements between the member for Bulleen; his former chief of staff, Mitch Catlin; and a Liberal Party donor and that the member for Bulleen continues to refuse to answer the most basic questions regarding this scandal.

Without going into too much detail on that necessarily I just want to talk generally. To me at its core the matter that the member for Essendon has written is about integrity and it is about trust. Based on what I have read in the media it is not entirely clear, I believe, what motivated the behaviour that is referenced in this matter of public importance—whether it was designed to get around the donation laws or whether it was to help a ministerial chief of staff to supplement their public salary—but for the purpose of my comments today I will focus on the second possibility, mainly because I think that aspect is of greater interest to my community.

Firstly, there are things that we can do as MPs to build trust with our constituents and also things that we can do to rip it apart. What builds trust with our constituents, in my view, is working hard and achieving results. I think it is important to find common ground and to share experiences and use that common ground as the basis for our work. It means acknowledging our privilege. I think that is an important connector, and I am very conscious of my privilege. Recently someone commented to me on Facebook about how much I earned and suggested it was too much for anyone, let alone someone like me who did 'nothing', which was his word, not mine. Look, in terms of the very broad general point—and I was not defensive about it—I agreed with him. I acknowledged that it is true that all too often the people who do the toughest, most monotonous, dangerous—I have got the word 'shitty', which I probably cannot say in Parliament—jobs are paid the least, and not only are my conditions more comfortable but I am also getting paid better than a mum who has to leave her kids on a Saturday for a 10-hour retail shift or a person who has to get up at 6.00 am on a Sunday to make coffees. But where I am now—and I think that this is important—is not what shapes or drives my politics. What drives my politics is where I am from.

Just to indulge the house a little bit on that, I do not come from poverty—I am not claiming that—but I was lower middle class. Until I was 13 we were a one-income, one-car family. We had enough money to build a house, which is a privilege, but not enough money to finish it, so we moved in. Well, we did two houses like that. I think I was six for the first house and about 14 for the second house. It

was barely at lock-up stage, so the curtains were sheets and the floor coverings in the lounge room were carpet offcuts on a bare concrete floor. I often tell people that Dad made our beds—but he literally made our beds with a hammer and nails. He went into one of the local furniture shops in Mildura and was writing measurements with a pen on his jumper. There was no internet in those days to get the measurements, so that is how he managed to work out how to make a bed. With interest rates over 17 per cent, we were lucky to own a house at all, but everything felt very precarious.

Things got easier when Mum went back to work—she got a job on the bottling line at Lindeman's winery—but we still struggled. In year 10—and I am actually embarrassed to tell this story but I am very brave—I had two very fetching skivvies. One was grey, the other one green, and I would alternate between these when I went out to the cinema or places like that. They were not brand label. I did get the occasional Sportsgirl shirt—a total of two from memory—and the *pièce de résistance*, which was very high status, was a blue Esprit T-shirt.

Ms Addison interjected.

Ms CUPPER: I know, thank you, member for Wendouree. It was pretty impressive. I was gifted it for Christmas in year 7 and still wear it to bed and to 1990s theme nights.

Eventually by putting one foot in front of the other Mum and Dad edged their way ahead, and they were able to put us through university and pay off their house. Hard work was integral to their success, but so was the support of good government policies that welded rungs on the ladder of social mobility. Their success was helped by high-quality state education. It was helped by universal health care. It was helped by unionised wages that gave teachers and blue-collar workers a shot at buying a house and sending their kids like me to university. It was helped by a progressive tax system that required privileged people like me now to contribute more so that battler families like us then could overcome barriers that could not otherwise be overcome by hard work alone.

To the man on Facebook I referred to, I agree that I get paid a lot and I think politicians do. My wage is paid by taxpayers, many of whom work in much tougher fields with much poorer conditions than me. That is why every single day I commit myself to using my privilege and influence not to help people like me get richer but to support families like the one I came from to build better lives. That is not just a part of my politics, it is the whole reason I am here. To me that is integrity. It is what builds trust and connection. On the flip side, what undermines trust and connection and does our profession—what I think is a noble profession—a profound disservice are things like exclusivity, elitism, condescension and pretending to care about poverty and disadvantaged children while kicking out every rung you can on the ladder of social opportunity that gives those kids some chance at a better life. It is pretending to care about public health care, public education, public transport, nurses, public housing and a legislative and policy framework for fair wages and conditions when you are in opposition and then trashing those things when you are a government.

I think what undermines trust is accepting public money that is already generously allocated to us, saying it is not enough and then bending the rules to get more. What undermines trust is failing to acknowledge how bloody lucky we are. Here we are in this magnificent building, which is paid for by our constituents, many of whom I know in the Mallee are genuine battlers. We have nice offices with nice couches. We have cleaners, security and computers, and we have social status. Every time I come into this building I am conscious of my privilege. In my community 25 per cent of families live on less than \$650 a week before tax. That has to pay for everything—rent, bills, school lunches, school shoes, child care.

I spent the last few weeks talking to autism families. Many of these families were battlers in the first place. Add to that the multilayered challenges of having children with a disability—the difficulty in maintaining employment if your child's school needs you to be on call every day for assistance with toileting, the battle with the NDIS in getting services, the battle in paying for assessments in order to get a diagnosis in order to get the early intervention services your child needs in the limited window

you have to have a meaningful impact on your child's long-term adaptive development. These families cannot afford private services. What they experience every day is financial hardship; what we experience every day is not.

My community know I work hard, but they also expect me to be grounded, to appreciate the privilege I have as their representative in state Parliament and to keep that privilege in check. That means acknowledging that my wage as an MP is a very good wage and acknowledging that I have no reason to whinge. What worried me most about the Mitch Catlin scandal was a column that followed suggesting the root cause of that scandal was not greed or entitlement but the miserly pay that MPs and senior advisers get—this idea that unless our constituents pay us twice or three times the amount that we are getting now, what is the incentive to work in the public sector? Well, maybe the incentive is values. Maybe the incentive is the opportunity to represent your community and to be part of a bigger cause than yourself and your own wallet. What this scandal showed me above all was that we need to check our privilege. We are not the victims of anything. We are extremely fortunate. In Mitch Catlin's case, if the honour of serving Her Majesty's opposition for a healthy middle-class wage is not enough for you, that is all we need to know about where your heart is. Helping Kim Kardashian flog her make-up at Flemington is the right job for you; serving the public is not.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (17:31): I am so pleased that I was in the chamber to hear the contribution from the member for Mildura—the very hardworking independent member for Mildura—who serves her constituency with pride. I have learned more about Mildura from the member's contributions in the last four years than I had learned in my lifetime as a person who has grown up in the city, in the suburbs, and I am very grateful for that. We all as individual members of this place have a very important responsibility, as the member for Mildura noted, to be mindful of our privilege and to be mindful that the things we say and do, whether they be in the media, via a Hotmail account or out in the community, have a real impact, can have a real impact.

Today I would like to make a contribution about a number of issues that relate to integrity and privilege and how they have impacted my community of Footscray and decisions that were made years ago that still impact my community of Footscray. I would like to speak particularly about the proud and hardworking members of the African community in my electorate of Footscray and how they have been impacted by commentary from the now Leader of the Opposition dating back to the last election campaign and the election campaign prior, when we were dealing with very serious planning matters in my community of Footscray. First I would like to speak about the impact on the African businesses and the African community of Footscray of the constant references to 'African gangs' by the opposition and the completely disgraceful imputations made about members of my community, many of whom have come to this country with experiences of the most profound trauma—hardworking people who were all of a sudden subject to the most extraordinary media scrutiny.

The Leader of the Opposition has said, 'Our policy never mentioned the words "African gangs" because many of the gangs we were speaking about at the time were not African'. Well, we know that in January 2017 the member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition, declared on several occasions that Victoria and Melbourne were becoming 'the Johannesburg of the South Pacific'. In my community in Footscray—I remember this very well—we had TV crews turning up. We had journalists walking around Footscray trying to get a sense of the kind of Johannesburg of the South Pacific that the Leader of the Opposition had been speaking about. It was not just me that felt like this—and my community. My community responded in a beautiful way to support local businesses after the now Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, joined in the chorus and said that people were too scared to go out and have dinner in African restaurants. It was my community that responded to those calls by urging everyone to go out and support our local Ethiopian and Sudanese restaurants in Footscray, which are terrific. I would encourage everyone to go and try the delicious African food in Footscray. The African National Congress released a statement in response, saying that, I am quoting here, the Leader of the Opposition's:

... comments were "unfortunate" and "seek to portray South Africa in a negative manner".

“These comments are regrettable, and feed into lazy stereotypes of African cities as crime havens ... They serve to tarnish the reputation of the City of Johannesburg—known widely as the gateway to Africa; and regularly cited amongst several indices as a world-class city ...

When I reflect on character and what one is willing to do to gain power, I often think about that as just a terrible failure of leadership. Footscray also has the Joseph Road precinct. People often talk about Fishermans Bend as one of the most egregious and well-known breaches of every rule in the planning book, but what happened in Footscray—we are still coping with the realities of decisions made by Leader of the Opposition when he was planning minister every single day. The residents of those apartment blocks that he approved have had to put up with dirt roads, no setbacks—I am glad that the Minister for Industry Support and Recovery is at the table; I have spoken to him on many occasions about our desperate need for a bike lane in front of these apartment buildings. It is going to be really hard to put in a bike lane on that section of Hopkins Street. Why? Because there are no setbacks. There was one rule for what happened on the Yarra and in the eastern suburbs and an absolutely different rule for what was approved in this City of Maribyrnong and on the Maribyrnong River.

You can now see a city of high-rise towers in Footscray that were approved by the then Minister for Planning. At the time the chief government architect urged him not to approve them. The City of Maribyrnong urged him not to approve them, because they went way beyond the height controls. The people of Footscray are not opposed to development or density as long as it is planned well, but to me the most outrageous thing for my community is that we were not provided with the public open space contributions or the developer contributions needed to build the essential infrastructure to accommodate 7000 new residents. Can you imagine for a minute developments being approved in any other part of Melbourne for 7000 new residents? A 35-storey development that planning permits were issued for and then were immediately flipped. He was the developer’s best friend. In Footscray we have not forgotten because we are still dealing with these issues every day, and those residents of Joseph Road, Footscray’s newest residents, deserve the infrastructure that is just basic when it comes to moving into a new community. They deserve asphalt roads as a bare minimum. But we, this Labor government, have had to introduce retrospective planning controls to make the developers cough up.

We have required the developers to make a contribution because the Leader of the Opposition thought it was absolutely fine to break all the planning rules—to take control of the planning requirements for that section of Footscray and say ‘Anything goes. The developers can do whatever they want in Footscray’. And they did. So now we have no setbacks. I am going to have to work very hard with the minister, and we are going to do that to talk about how we can get a safe cycling connection in there because there are no setbacks. We are working hard to retrofit pocket parks into these spaces. It overshadows the Maribyrnong River. You would never be allowed to overshadow the Yarra, but that was allowed in my community in Footscray. It is an absolute disgrace, and I will keep reminding people what the Liberal Party thought it was okay to do to Footscray and nowhere else in Melbourne. It was an absolute scandal, and it remains a scandal. We will work hard for the residents of Joseph Road and for that new precinct in Footscray. We will make sure that they have the infrastructure they need, which they were denied by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (17:41): Deputy Speaker, I do not think I have congratulated you formally on your new appointment, and I sincerely congratulate you.

It is very interesting that here we are near the end of this parliamentary term and we have a discussion brought on by the government about integrity. Well, thank you very much from the opposition for the opportunity for us to highlight the issues that plague this government when it comes to integrity. We are not talking about issues from 10 years ago. We not talking about issues from 15 or 20 years ago. We are talking about issues that currently affect the actions of this government led by the Premier. My colleague the member for Ripon in her contribution addressed a number of outstanding questions that she has put to the government, and for the purpose of this important discussion I am going to place on record again these important questions, because they deserve answers—not just because the opposition

wants the answers but because the Victorian public deserves the answers to these very, very important questions which the government to date has refused to answer.

So why did the Premier and his MPs refuse to cooperate with Victoria Police over the red shirts rorts investigations, despite saying ‘everybody should cooperate and everybody will’ in July 2018—an important question yet to be answered by this government. Who made the decision to hire private security guards for hotel quarantine in Victoria, which led to the deaths of 801 Victorians and the world’s longest lockdown? Why did the Premier say in his follow-up statutory declaration to the Coate inquiry that:

I have no knowledge of what was discussed between Ms Ratcliff and Minister Neville ...

despite his own phone records saying he spoke with both immediately after the conclusion of national cabinet? What secret deal did the Premier make with the United Firefighters Union leader, Peter Marshall, over alleged firefighter pay deals and political support for the Victorian Labor Party? Why did the Premier dismantle the CFA to satisfy union demands? Why has the Premier been questioned again by the anti-corruption commission in relation to secret dealings with property developer John Woodman? What did the Premier promise Mr Woodman for his sponsorship of the Premier’s golf day? Why does the Premier’s office continue to delay and refuse to produce the correspondence between the Premier and Mr Woodman, as ordered by the Parliament, when the Premier had previously said no such documents exist? Why did the Premier invite Mr Woodman to his post-election celebrations? Why did Mr Woodman’s consultant, Megan Schutz, tell the corruption commission the Premier:

... gave me a little kiss on the cheek, and he said, ‘Say hi to John, Megan. Say hi to John’.

And the Treasurer said:

Megan, we work together. We work together to achieve outcomes.

Those on the opposite side can cast aspersions as much as they like, but these are serious allegations levelled against ministers of the Crown—serious allegations that have been levelled against the heart of this government. It is not a joke. It is not a laughing matter. It is serious. It is about the integrity of this government, something that the opposition takes seriously when it comes to these issues but something that the Victorian public takes seriously as well.

Why does the Premier continue to mislead about the \$2 billion that has been cut from this year’s health budget? Why did the Premier approve an unsolicited bid by Transurban to build the West Gate Tunnel Project whilst the Treasurer was a direct shareholder in the company? Why does the Premier say that he respects John Lenders, the mastermind of an almost \$400 000 theft and misuse of taxpayer money as part of the red shirts rorts?

Mr Carroll: We all respect him.

Mr WAKELING: Well, there we go. I want to place on record the fact that Mr Lenders, who was one of the architects of the rort, is respected by those in government. Talk about a tin ear.

Why did John Lenders’s statutory declaration to the Victorian Ombudsman detail that the Premier had a red shirts campaigner in his Mulgrave electorate? Why is the Premier refusing to repay more than \$1.3 million misappropriated from taxpayers, as confirmed by Operation Watts, for party political gain? Why did the Premier’s office launch a targeted social media campaign against former health minister Jenny Mikakos? Why did the Premier’s private office control the media appearance of chief health officer Brett Sutton? What factional deals did the Premier agree to in appointing the new Minister for Planning, given that her brother, John-Paul Blandthorn, is a director of major Labor-linked lobbying firm Hawker Britton? Why does the Premier continue to accept political donations from the CFMEU, collecting more than \$3 million in total? Did the Premier instruct Trades Hall to donate to the Transport Matters Party prior to the pandemic legislation vote? Why did the Premier stand by staff who admitted to destroying a journalist’s dictaphone that was stolen from the ALP state conference?

Why did the Premier bully a Liberal MP about his weight and allegedly slur another female MP who was suffering from bowel cancer? Where are the 4000 ICU beds that the Premier announced in 2020?

Mr Carroll: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the matter of public importance is wideranging, but I just ask if you could caution the member opposite. With some of the things he is putting into *Hansard* I would argue, if they were said outside of this chamber, there could be a case. Just to be cautious—and it is a wideranging debate—we should all be mindful of the words we say and the impacts they may have.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order at this point.

Mr WAKELING: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Why did the Premier approve a \$10 million grant to Trades Hall, which has been one of the largest financial supporters of the Victorian Labor Party? Why did the Premier endorse more than 90 of his former ministerial staff being parachuted into plum public service roles? Why have at least 21 people died waiting for an ambulance? Why did the Premier break his promise of an injecting room in metropolitan Melbourne in a deal to secure preferences at the Northcote by-election?

Why does the Premier continue to hide the report into the second injecting room and further plans for suburban injecting rooms? Why did the Premier break Victorian law by approving \$1.7 million in taxpayer-funded political adverts attacking the federal government? Why, despite the warnings from the anti-corruption commission and the Ombudsman, did the Premier confirm he would break the law again in regard to his previous activities? Why did the Premier breach the Victorian charter of human rights with the five-day lockdown of nine public housing towers in Melbourne on 2 July 2020, which was found by the Victorian Ombudsman to not be based on direct health advice? Why did the Premier restrict Victorians from their home state, which the Victorian Ombudsman branded downright unjust and even inhumane?

There is more than I could have read, but I think what that does is just provide the house with an overview of the litany of integrity issues that beset this government. This government has an obligation to answer those questions for Victorians, because hiding from those questions tells Victorians it has more to hide.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:51): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this matter of public importance (MPI) submitted by the Minister for Government Services. This is the worst opposition Victoria has ever had, for a number of reasons: (1) they are not good at politics, even though they think they are, and (2) they are not constructive. Oppositions, especially an opposition that has been in the wilderness for eight years, need to act like an alternative government. But they do not. They recycle leaders, and this current Leader of the Opposition, whose leadership is hanging by a thread, has a lot of questions to answer. He is ducking and weaving, and he is avoiding answering these tough questions about the issue of payments in his office, questions that the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Malvern, might I add, was able to answer—that these sorts of payment arrangements did not exist in his office when he was Leader of the Opposition. The current Leader of the Opposition cannot, or will not, answer that question. He will not answer that question, and we need to know why.

We need to know what was agreed, as his former chief of staff claimed in that email. What was agreed? He said, ‘Dear MG, as agreed’. What was that agreement? The Minister for Government Services submitted in his contribution to this MPI a number of important questions in that regard. Why is the Leader of the Opposition unable to answer the most basic of questions, like what is in his Hotmail sent box? Answer that question. What is in his Hotmail sent box? Where is the original email? Who was involved in the original discussions? Why were lawyers involved? What were the drafting instructions to the lawyers? Who paid the lawyers? Where did these funds come from? Why, too, when Victoria has some of the most strict and transparent donation laws in the country? What were people buying? Was that month’s email a one-off or were there others? He refuses to answer these questions.

But we should not be surprised by that; we have seen this behaviour before. Of course in those dark four years between 2010 and 2014 when those opposite were in government—very forgettable years, might I add, because nothing of substance happened—the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Planning. There were a number of atrocities committed in that portfolio while the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Planning, but I think the most egregious of those was what happened at Fishermans Bend. That was an example, probably taught in universities right around the world, of how not to do planning in a capital city, because of course that was an example of old industrial land being rezoned to capital city without accounting for any infrastructure—no schooling infrastructure, no health infrastructure, no transport infrastructure and no open space. There was no accounting for any of that. He just went, signed the document, rezoned it to ‘capital city’ and made a lot of people very, very wealthy. And—‘Deidre Chambers, what a coincidence!’—they were Liberal Party donors who received that windfall profit when the Leader of the Opposition when he was the Minister for Planning rezoned Fishermans Bend. He did not cater for a single school, a single hospital, a single bus stop, any transport, a single park, a single kindergarten, a single playground or even just a Big W swing set—it was all about making Liberal Party donors very rich. Again—‘Deidre Chambers!’—some of them had even just purchased their land just before the decision.

Ms Addison: What a coincidence!

Mr STAIKOS: What a coincidence! It is a shame our windfall gains tax was not in place back then, because half of that windfall gain would have gone back to the people of Victoria, as it should have. But those opposite have never been interested in working for the people of Victoria. They built nothing when they were in government. They are only interested in looking after the top end of town, lining the pockets of their Liberal donors, and shame on them. They have not changed. They are the same people. He is the same old guy.

When we had a review into those decisions for Fishermans Bend, what did the report say? Well, I am going to quote from the report. The report said that this rezoning was ‘unprecedented in the developed world in the 21st century’—unprecedented in the developed world in the 21st century. Well, do you know what? There is another word for what happened at Fishermans Bend. I am not going to say that word because obviously imputations on members would be unparliamentary, but let me assure you there is another word for what occurred at Fishermans Bend.

This all goes to character, frankly, because this was a government, with the now Leader of the Opposition as the Minister for Planning, that built absolutely nothing, even in my electorate. Not a single school was rebuilt. They shelved the Metro Tunnel. All they were doing was lining the pockets of some very wealthy people who just so happened to be Liberal Party donors. What we do know about Fishermans Bend is that as early as 2011 they drew up the boundaries of that rezoning. But who was sitting around that table? Because we know—

Ms Addison: Tell me.

Mr STAIKOS: Well, we do not know. We know who was sitting around the table when he decided on Ventnor. We do not know who was sitting around the table when he decided on Fishermans Bend, but I can only imagine who was sitting around that table. When you look at the announcement today that they are going to shelve the Suburban Rail Loop because they would like us to believe they are interested in the health system—well, what a joke, what an absolute joke. Again, they will be ripping up a project that Melbourne needs. Melbourne is going to be the size of London by 2050. Imagine London without the tube. Those of us on this side of the house believe that Melbourne is one of the great cities of the world, and a great city of the world needs a transport system that is befitting a great city of the world. Only Labor can be trusted to deliver that.

Might I also say: only Labor can be trusted to invest in our healthcare system. Those opposite closed hospitals. They are trying to say they are going to build hospitals now. They closed 13 or 14 hospitals when they were in government. They tried to sack our nurses. They waged war on our dedicated

paramedics. They undermined the response to the pandemic. They will not even wear a bloody face mask in the Parliament. Yet we are led to believe that these people care about our health system. I mean, give me a break. Give me a break.

It is only this government that can be trusted to invest in our health system, to invest in our hospitals, to rebuild after the pandemic and to ensure that this state and this very, very fast growing capital city have the infrastructure that they need for the future.

Frankly can I say, when you are in a position where after eight years in opposition you are trying to sandbag the seats of Sandringham, Brighton and Caulfield, you are in a diabolical situation, an absolutely diabolical situation. This is not an alternative government. This opposition is not ready for government. This opposition, frankly, is all over the place. I mean, they talk about Georgie Crozier as an alternative leader. You know your stocks are low when you are talking about Georgie Crozier in the other place as an alternative leader, someone who likes to claim she is a former nurse but has done her level best over the last couple of years to undermine our dedicated health professionals. Well, frankly, as I said at the outset, this is the worst opposition Victoria has ever seen, and like a lobster in boiling hot water, the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition is dead.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (POLICE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr D O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (18:01): I was rudely interrupted only about 1½ minutes into my contribution, so I look forward to getting back to what I was talking about, and that was following on from the member for Frankston, who had been talking about police numbers and highlighting the government's record on that. I was just about to say that the decisions that the government made a couple of years ago with respect to police numbers, which they billed as the 'biggest injection of regional officers in history', provided South Gippsland shire with the sum total of one new officer. I said that at the time. There was a big announcement that the Bass Coast police service area, which is both South Gippsland and Bass Coast shires, got 11 new police officers. I had predicted a week before and I was sure that we would get very little in South Gippsland, and that was exactly how it panned out—10 of them went to Bass Coast and just one to South Gippsland shire.

At the time we had actually seen since the government was elected a 44 per cent increase in crime in the South Gippsland shire, and as I said earlier, at the start of my contribution, we are blessed in South Gippsland shire in particular that the crime rate is very low from a relative perspective, but it is still an issue. Indeed I had a call only last week, one that is a fairly regular occurrence, from a constituent who had seen some youths behaving suspiciously. They were literally just outside the police station, so she went over to the Leongatha police station to get some assistance and there was no-one there. So she had to call Wonthaggi, who said, 'Look, unless something happens, we won't send someone'. Now, that is no criticism of the Leongatha police or indeed any of the police in South Gippsland, because I know that they are doing their absolute best, but it is indeed a very, very thin blue line in the South Gippsland area, including Bass Coast. I know this is an issue that The Nationals candidate for Bass, Brett Tessari, is also interested in.

I do not like to say it too often publicly but my understanding is from Sunday night through to Thursday night for the whole area from basically Phillip Island—Cowes—through to Welshpool there are literally two cars and a sergeant available. So if you have got an accident at Welshpool or Toora and you need a call-out for a hot burglary in Nyora, you are going to be waiting a long time because there is just not much there on the road.

As I said, we are in a situation where the crime rate is quite low in South Gippsland. Our men and women in blue do a great job, but they are certainly severely stressed, particularly in a situation where,

while their numbers in principle, on paper, might look okay, when you take into account leave, maternity leave, WorkCover issues, long-service leave and deployments, very rarely are they actually replaced, and that is one of the problems that we have.

This legislation, though, has one other impact of concern that the member for Gembrook raised. I would certainly reiterate the concern, and that is about event cost recovery and how that will impact on events. Basically at the moment organisers of large-scale events are charged for the services of police within the ground or venue of whatever is happening, and the change in clause 22 will allow for the charging of services provided outside the venue, whether that is traffic management or managing people coming to and from an event. It would be good to get some clarity from the government, on the record—ideally from the minister—that this is not something that is going to be charged to small country shows, to small festivals or even to large festivals in country areas, particularly those not run for profit. Hopefully that is the intention—that it is not going to be targeting the likes of the Mirboo North Italian Festa, for example, where we have huge numbers. Ten, twenty thousand people were at the last couple of festivals before COVID hit—massive numbers there. They put on a huge event. The Meeniyar Garlic Festival I believe is also coming back in 2023. Again, these are big festivals, but they are community festivals; they are not run for profit. I would not like to see them charged for police services outside the venues where they come. Obviously the police do provide a service in terms of security and being around for a big event like that, but as the member for Gembrook indicated, this is something that we are a little bit concerned about and would seek some clarity and some assurance on, I guess, from the government. I understand that in the briefing to the opposition when these concerns were raised the response was ‘That is not the intention of the bill’, but we do get that a lot, I must say, from the government and from the departments: ‘The intention is not this’. We actually need to look at what the letter of the law is, so some assurances on that would be good.

There are a number of other clauses. I have not gone into in particular the number of clauses with respect to sex offenders and sex offender registration, but there are a number of changes to them. They may well be minor in nature or quite specific and detailed, but they all add up to important changes and we certainly do not oppose any of those. Then there are some other issues raised in there regarding the chief commissioner’s powers and the management of the force—the management of the officers in the force as well as PSOs.

I do note that there is one section that the member for Gembrook did not manage to get to in his contribution, which he suggested I might raise, and that is with respect to random drug and alcohol testing of police officers. I think this relates to clauses 16 and 17. There is a concern that those new officers, in their first 12 weeks of operation in the force and not yet considered sworn officers, if they did test positive to drugs or alcohol, actually do not have a right of appeal. That was a concern that the Police Association Victoria raised and that the member for Gembrook wanted to also have placed on the record as a bit of a concern. There should be the usual processes of natural justice.

Otherwise the bill addresses a compendium of issues across the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 amendments and then further the Victoria Police Act 2013, where there are a number of issues. I think it is important that the government understands that while it is forever patting itself on the back for what it does in community safety and particularly for police numbers, it is not necessarily spread right throughout Victoria and indeed especially not necessarily right throughout regional Victoria and rural Victoria. We see a lot of the numbers go to the big centres. The police officers that manage our small country towns, whether it is the 16-hour stations, the 8-hour stations or indeed the one-officer stations, of which I have a couple still in my electorate, are often doing it very tough, and the communities in those areas are relying often on cars and officers to travel a long distance for relatively minor events.

I should reflect that it is very similar to the situation with ambulances at the moment. I had someone in Fish Creek a couple of weeks ago tell me they called an ambulance and it came from Sale, which is a good hour and a half away. That happens day to day, depending on the workload and the issues that are happening at the time, but these are the sorts of concerns also happening with police that are a

concern to many in my community. However, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022 is not something that we are opposing, and I wish it well through this chamber.

Mr KENNEDY (Hawthorn) (18:10): I am delighted to say a few words in the 4 minutes that remain at least, and perhaps beyond. Our government's track record on policing and community safety is well known. I am proud to say that our record investment in our police has resulted in the policing budget today being 63 per cent higher than when we came to government in 2014. This term we have invested a record \$4.5 billion in new funding for police, which includes an additional 502 police officers and an extra 50 PSOs in the most recent budget. Gone are the days of the boom-and-bust cycle in police resourcing. Today police resourcing is not determined by election cycles but by experts, thankfully. We have invested a record \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police since coming into office. It is imperative that Victoria Police have the powers and resources they need to keep the Victorian community safe. We will not apologise for supporting a well-resourced police force. Our priority is a safe environment for our state, and we must focus on tackling serious organised crime and the ever-present threat of violent extremism.

The crux of this bill is a range of amendments that will ultimately make our state safer. For example, the police and protective services officers will have new powers to protect the security of police premises, including requiring a person to provide a reason for their presence, asking a person to leave and not return if they do not have a legitimate reason, and removing or arresting them if they do not leave. Measures like this will clarify existing laws and address gaps. The gap in this situation was that police only had the power to remove antagonistic individuals from police premises if they had committed an offence. Additionally, amendments contained within this bill will deliver on pre-existing commitments and drive new, innovative initiatives, like supporting the need for Victoria Police to better determine and recover costs for services they provide at large-scale for-profit events. This represents our proactive response to legislating in the area of policing. We do not wait for issues to come up. We identify problem areas and fix them.

I am pleased and proud to say that my daughter works for Victoria Police, and I am always happy to see changes to this great institution. Many of the changes proposed today are, in my opinion, especially prudent, like the new sentencing provisions for offenders who ram police cars or injure police officers and PSOs. If you injure police in this state, you should expect the full force of the law.

The changes we have made to the criminal justice system have worked. The latest batch of crime statistics shows that the offence rate per 100 000 Victorians has decreased by 11 per cent, the alleged offender rate has decreased by 18.6 per cent and the overall victimisation rate has decreased by 2 per cent. When you compare the most recent 12 months of this government with the last 12 months of the previous government, the crime rate has fallen 9.7 per cent. These are not empty statistics. These represent the tangible outcome of a deliberate, planned policy approach. We have increased police funding, we have changed the way policing is done and we have introduced innovative new measures to assist our frontline police. Yet another independent—

The SPEAKER: Order! The time has arrived for the joint sitting to choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant following the death of the Honourable Jane Garrett MLC. I will now ask the Clerk to ring the bells to call members to the joint sitting. The Assembly will resume after the joint sitting has concluded, and the bells will ring again at that time.

Sitting suspended 6.15 pm until 6.23 pm.

Mr KENNEDY: I am just wondering how many precious seconds I have left. Good. Back to the more interesting topic of the night: we have increased police funding, we have changed the way policing is done and we have introduced innovative new measures to assist our frontline police—that was just to see if you were listening at the last there, when we broke. New material coming up: yet another independent example of this is the recent Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services 2022*, which shows that Victorians are feeling safer in their homes and communities. This is

incredibly important for the peace of mind of Victorians. I have a community survey that constituents often fill out, and I can tell you right now that many of the residents of Hawthorn rate community safety among their most pressing concerns. I share their qualms on this issue, which is why I am proud of the investment of this government in our police force and why I am proud of our police. They are out on the streets protecting us day in, day out—rain, hail or shine. So what I am saying is thank you to all the hardworking police officers in our state. I want to say that we as a government appreciate your service.

I would like to just make some brief comments about the culture of police and their changing nature and why these particular changes represent further enhancement of their role. I mentioned the fact that my daughter is a police officer. She graduated with arts and law degrees but did not want to be a lawyer, so she joined the police. Now she has been in for about nine or 10 years—half a dozen on the beat and four or five at the Magistrates Court. What is interesting is she was in group 20, and she told me how the whole range of people coming into the police now actually represents a wide variety. She said at least half were university graduates and half were people from, say, private enterprise—from businesses and what have you—and it just seemed to me that that represented a change in recent times in terms of the intake and so on of police. I think we can be well pleased about that. I cannot identify particular factors or whatever.

The other thing where I think there is a bit of a change in the culture is in this whole question of crime. When I was standing for Hawthorn back in November 2018 we attended a crime and safety night at Boroondara council, and one of the councillors very proudly got up and said that he was working on the Adult Parole Board of Victoria and that he was very proud of the fact that he rarely, if ever, granted parole to adult offenders. Now, I just thought he was a little limited in his approach to the thing, but what was fascinating was the fact that nobody jumped up and gave him a wild applause. People did not sort of say ‘Well done. Lock ‘em up. Do this. Do that’ and so on. I was really very impressed by that, and what I put it down to is increasing amounts of education. People are starting to realise that it is not just a matter of locking people up, and can I say that the police have similar attitudes and that their contribution to that culture is quite considerable.

I also remember during that election campaign that the other side made a lot of the victims of crime. I remember one of my opponents, the then member for Hawthorn, introduced me to the president of the Crime Victims Support Association as they were going through our area in the Hawthorn West shopping centre. The main point they were making to me was how the man’s daughter had been abused and that the person who was found guilty was only given one year by the judge. I thought to myself, ‘This is pathetic’, and I looked across at the member for Hawthorn and told him so. I thought, ‘How can a Shadow Attorney-General encourage that sort of attitude that says that you question what the judge decided without having really any idea of the context—what it was, what happened, why the sentence was this amount and so on?’. When I looked at that situation of the victims of crime, I thought, ‘Yes, look, I think we are improving’. But the great thing about it is the fact that the police are matching that. Their background, their formal education, is being lifted, and so are their ideas when it comes to things like victims of crime or crime and punishment and so on. That is my take on that. Really, our police officers must be protected at work. They take extraordinary risks on our behalf, and today it is our turn to take measures to protect them. I commend the bill.

Mr FOWLES (Burwood) (18:29): Well, it is of course logical that commercial event operators should be paying for the total cost of policing their events. When I was on the board of the Melbourne Cricket Club we had a pretty significant line item devoted to paying for police resourcing at sporting events, and there was a debate internally, I guess, about whether that was a public good or a private good, whether that was the sort of thing that ought be met by the event itself through ultimately ticket pricing and charges to patrons or whether that ought be met by the state more broadly. I think frankly it is a reasonable thing that those who are at events expect those events to be secure, particularly when they are at places of great public importance like the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and it is entirely appropriate given that to have a cost-recovery model available to police.

But if you are going to do that you have to fill out the picture, don't you? It is not enough to say the police walking up and down the rows of seats are able to be cost recovered but those outside the ground are not. We know, particularly given the density of events in Melbourne's premier and indeed world-renowned sporting precinct, that there can frequently be traffic challenges, security challenges and all sorts of challenges relating to the movement of people around the precinct. I know that there have been occasions in Melbourne where we have had Australian Open tennis scheduled at the same time as one-day international cricket matches, both very well frequented. You could potentially have as many as 100 000, 120 000 or maybe even 140 000 people utilising the entire precinct. You have pedestrian flows over the Jolimont rail yards in both directions. These are all things that need to be managed by police for the safety and benefit of those patrons and more broadly for community safety, and of course it is entirely reasonable that if we are making a cost recovery for the police that are deployed inside those venues we make a cost recovery for police deployed in service of the event but not strictly speaking within the boundaries of the venues. So that element of this act I think is a very sensible one. It ensures that the state is not unduly burdened as our events industry roars back to life and that it is not finding itself having to ultimately subsidise, in effect, those events with police resources.

I think one of the greatest disconnects in modern Victorian politics is the suggestion that there are some in this place who are great at law and order and some who are not or whatever, but when Naomi Oakley is elected as the member for Warrandyte on 26 November and when Jackson Taylor is returned as the member for Bayswater there will be two former police officers on this side of the chamber and only one on the other side. That is testament, frankly, to the enormous effort, the enormous resources that this government, the Andrews Labor government, has put into policing in the state of Victoria.

It is not just through some of the headline measures that perhaps have been the focus of some over the journey. It has also been through some really clever, thoughtful, well-consulted changes that have been made not just to police funding but in fact to the way police are funded. In particular the staffing allocation model that has been spoken about a bit in this chamber is a very, very important model because it allows police resourcing to better reflect need. Clearly in a modern electronic age it is easier to deploy this more sophisticated way of allocating resources than might have been the case under the old analog systems. That has resulted in a far better prioritisation of resources.

I know members of the coalition are fond of decrying any contraction in police station opening hours as a signal that somehow the government is soft on crime. In fact nothing could be further from the truth, because by redirecting police hours from behind the desk to out in the community we are allowing them to do their job better, we are making it easier for them to do their job and we are making the community safer. Having police trapped behind desks doing stat decs—administrative nonsense; the opening hours of a police station are ultimately largely about administrative matters—is not about community safety. Community safety is achieved when you have well-resourced police supported by the government and given the tools they need to do their work.

Of course it is not just the staffing allocation model that has changed. Throughout this term of government we have invested a record \$4.5 billion in new funding for police, including funding for an additional 500-odd police officers and 50 PSOs in the recent budget alone. It is a convenient narrative for some to suggest that somehow this government has not been the most fulsome supporter of Victoria Police, and nothing frankly could be further from the truth. This government has essentially given police every single tool they need to do their work, and that includes significant technological upgrades. We are taking VicPol's tech out of the analog and fax machine age. We have got mobile devices, iPads, placed in the hands of every single frontline officer, and that gets them connected to the intelligence, the communications and the data gathering that they need in order to be able to prosecute their jobs efficiently but also to make sure that they can ultimately prosecute criminals efficiently as well.

Indeed with the body-worn camera innovation there was some resistance, sure, at the outset of that. There was I guess a fair bit of work to be done on both sides of that debate. But the body-worn cameras have undoubtedly been a great innovation in modern policing. They ensure that when people lie about

their interactions with police there is a record of that and we have the ability to hold those people doing the wrong thing to account, but equally there is also an accountability measure for police and that is very, very important as well.

Another component of this Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022 is providing both police officers and PSOs the ability to properly protect police premises, including requiring a person to provide their reason for being there and asking them to leave if they do not have a legitimate reason. The previous threshold required that they needed to have committed an offence in order to be asked to move on or be detained. This lower threshold is a very, very sensible threshold that does not unreasonably impinge on civil rights. We do to varying degrees impinge upon the civil rights around free assembly, but we do that reservedly, we do it carefully and in this case I think this is a proportionate, measured and sensible response to a very real risk. We know that police premises are high-value targets. We know that they are likely to come under pressure from various criminal organisations in our society and criminal elements in our society, and it is important to make sure that police officers and PSOs have the tools available to be able to respond to those circumstances, to be able to adequately protect the premises they are charged with protecting and ultimately to be able to protect their comrades as well. Because ultimately, protecting police premises is not just about the bricks and mortar, it is about protecting the personnel who are inside those premises.

This justice legislation amendment bill also establishes a legislative framework for the restorative engagement and redress scheme to support current and former Victoria Police employees who have experienced past workplace sex discrimination or sexual harassment. That of course is a very serious matter and something that is part of the cultural change that has come through VicPol. It is part of the response from a government that is always about safety in the workplace, always about ensuring that people can live out their work lives and indeed their lives free of vilification, harassment, sexual harassment and worse. We need to make sure that Victoria Police workplaces are just as safe, if not safer, than all the other workplaces in the state of Victoria. That is a very, very important matter indeed.

There are some additional changes here around the obligation on police personnel to only access, make use of or disclose police information if required by their current duties, and that is in order to impose a clear, standalone obligation on police personnel to maintain the confidentiality of police information. There have of course been some pretty high profile matters around this. It is very, very important that if someone is in police custody, charged or not, the presumption of innocence is in place and similarly they are not subject to adverse publicity—or any publicity—by police personnel. That is a very, very important principle, a principle that is embodied and enunciated very clearly in this legislation. I could go on, but regrettably I am out of time. I do commend the bill to the house.

Mr TAK (Clarinda) (18:39): It gives me great pleasure to speak once again, on this bill, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022. It is great also to follow the member for Burwood and his fine contribution. Last week I had the privilege of making a contribution on the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 in response to the Eastern Freeway tragedy, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to another bill that aims at supporting Victorian police—our police officers and PSOs. Again, as other members have done already, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of Victoria Police from across the state and in my electorate. We are fortunate to have and thankful for all the members at the Springvale and Clayton police stations as well as those at Moorabbin, Cheltenham and Oakleigh. They keep us safe and have worked especially hard over the course of the global pandemic. Our police and emergency services workers have been in overdrive. Like our frontline healthcare workers, police and PSOs have also been right there on the front line for the state's response to COVID-19, and a huge thankyou to all the police, PSOs and emergency workers once again. They are protecting us and supporting our community each and every day. It is so very important that as a government we recognise the true value of and support our police and emergency services through investment and through legislation.

We have here before us today once again another piece of legislation that goes to the heart of that, an important amendment that will introduce a range of policing reforms which are aimed at keeping the

community safe and protecting the privacy of applicants to the Victoria Police restorative engagement and redress scheme. The bill will make a host of amendments to the Victoria Police Act 2013, the first of which will allow Victoria Police to recover costs from organisers of large commercial events for policing services deployed to the area surrounding the event. Just to clarify in terms of the events covered, the amendments refer to events where charges are made for admission to or participation in the event, or an event that is commercial in nature or that is commercially promoted or sponsored. As such, an event that is conducted for fundraising and/or charitable purposes will not be considered as commercial in nature and costs will not be recoverable there.

Moving on, the bill will provide police officers and protective services officers, PSOs, with powers to protect the security of police premises, such as requiring a person to provide their reason for being there, asking the person to leave and not return if they do not have a legitimate reason, and removing or arresting them if they do not leave. The relevant clause here is clause 15 of the bill, which introduces new sections 59A and 59B into the Victoria Police Act. Further, new section 59A(8) provides an inclusive definition of 'legitimate reason'. In terms of why this is necessary, police officers and PSOs are authorised to exercise similar powers to maintain the security of locations such as Parliament, the courts and the Adult Parole Board of Victoria. Further, Victoria Police premises can present security risks due to the sensitive information held at the premises and the nature of work undertaken by Victoria Police.

Most importantly, Victoria Police and the Police Association Victoria have reported numerous security incidents at a number of police premises over the past four years, including antagonistic persons attending police premises in the absence of a legitimate reason and harassing police officers and other employees. This is not acceptable. Police stations and premises are also workplaces, and these powers are necessary to support police to respond to these risks.

Moving on, the bill clarifies that the Victoria Police Act does not limit the places where PSOs may exercise special powers under the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003, as recommended by the *Review of the Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003*. Just to clarify, these are not new powers for PSOs. The stage 2 report of the review recommended that:

Legislative amendments should be made to clarify that protective services officers may exercise special police powers anywhere within authorised areas, consistent with the broader role of protective services officers and subject to the provision of appropriate training.

That was recommendation 12. I have spoken previously on the findings of the Expert Panel on Terrorism and Violent Extremism Prevention and Response Powers. There was also a host of recommendations and findings from the panel on the importance of creating pathways for early countering of violent extremism intervention, which is really important, and those were implemented here in Parliament last year.

More broadly on that point, we are continuing to do some great work in the south-east on community harmony, enhancing social cohesion and promoting community harmony through our community groups and the many multicultural organisations in Clarinda and particularly across the City of Greater Dandenong. We know from the review that isolation is a big factor in potential radicalisation and the consequences of that, and this makes the opportunity to share one's culture, beliefs and experience with others even more important. Through this opportunity we can develop a greater sense of trust and belonging among all Victorians. In doing so, we have also seen in Clarinda and across Victoria the minimising of social division, misunderstandings and isolation. Clarinda is a great example of multicultural Victoria and, I believe, a success story of multicultural Victoria. I am proud to be part of a government that continues to celebrate our diversity.

There are a host of amendments that I will not get the chance to touch on, but I will mention the establishment of the legislative framework for the restorative engagement and redress scheme to support current and former Victoria Police employees who have experienced past workplace sex discrimination or sexual harassment, to provide transparency about eligibility for the scheme and to

protect the privacy of the participants. This is a very important initiative and was a key recommendation arising from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission 2015 review. There are also some important clarifications around the offence of sexual assault of a person with a cognitive impairment or illness, as well as the listing of the commonwealth offence of using a carriage service to prepare or plan to cause harm to, engage in sexual activity with or procure for sexual activity a person under 16 as a class 2 offence.

This is a robust bill with a range of reforms which are aimed at keeping our community safe and supporting Victoria Police. These are important changes which I am happy to support, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGHIE (Melton) (18:48): It is always a pleasure to contribute after the member for Clarinda. I rise to also contribute to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The bill introduces a range of amendments to the Victoria Police Act 2013 and the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, including but not limited to allowing Victoria Police to recover costs from the organisers of large commercial events for policing services in the area surrounding the event—for example, traffic control services that may be surrounding those suburbs. I know from my experiences within the ambulance industry for major events and for large commercial events the ambulance service has a check sheet in regard to the safety requirements and the provision of ambulance services in regard to these larger organised events. Those organisations that seek assistance from not only the police but the ambulance service have to meet certain standards, and the ambulance service determines even the resources that it requires at those events. In most cases paramedics will be called in on overtime to do some of those events, or there may be spare paramedics on reserve. It can be quite a costly exercise for the ambulance service and, I dare say, for Victoria Police. That is why this is a good measure to try and retrieve some of those costs and recover those costs.

This bill also provides police and protective services officers with powers to protect the security of police premises, including requiring a person to provide a reason for their presence, asking a person to leave and not return if they do not have a legitimate reason and removing or arresting them if they do not leave. Clearly there would be people that have seen this occur. Again, I know in my experience as a paramedic I saw this happen many times around police stations. You may have some person that arrives at the police station and basically makes a nuisance of themselves. The police try to do the best thing by convincing that person to move on, but in some cases common sense does not prevail on the individual and the police have to take greater action when dealing with that person.

The bill also establishes a legislative framework for the restorative engagement and redress scheme. It provides transparency about eligibility for the scheme and protects the privacy of participants. It provides for the Chief Commissioner of Police to direct or permit a registrable offender to report to police electronically if a state of emergency, state of disaster or pandemic declaration is enforced and require registered offenders to provide improved information. It also clarifies that the offence of sexual assault of a person with a cognitive impairment or illness is a class 2 offence when committed against a child, and any person who commits this offence is automatically a registrable offender and subject to reporting requirements. It lists the commonwealth offence of using a carriage service to prepare or plan to cause harm to, engage in sexual activity with or procure for sexual activity persons under 16 as a class 2 offence, and any person who commits this offence is automatically a registrable offender and subject to the reporting requirements of the act. Of course the amendments in this bill are necessary to address gaps and provide clarity—including, for example, clarification of existing PSO powers—and to ensure police have the powers they need to keep their members and members of the community safe when attending a police premises.

I would like to take a moment just to acknowledge the police in my electorate, the Melton police, and in particular the area command, for the fantastic work that they do throughout Melton and within the community, not only in keeping us safe but also dealing at the community level and being engaged with many community programs, whether that be through community groups and through the schools or just through youth groups and engaging with the youth. I cannot thank them enough for the tireless

work that they do, even more so over the last 2½ to 3 years during the pandemic, when it has been difficult for everyone but in particular it has been very difficult for the police. It is not only the Melton police but police in the western part of my electorate, at Bacchus Marsh. Again, I cannot extend my appreciation enough to the Bacchus Marsh police, who deal with such a big area and a wide range of issues. But it is the way that they deal with the community. It is even the way that they deal with offenders. The professionalism of our police is amazing. So to both the Melton and the Bacchus Marsh police I say thank you, in particular for your tireless efforts through the last 2½ years.

This bill also contains amendments which deliver on commitments and drive proactive initiatives, including establishing a legislative framework for the restorative engagement and redress scheme and supporting the need for Victoria Police to better determine and recover costs for services they provide at large-scale for-profit events. I know Wayne Gatt and the Police Association Victoria have been closely consulted on the amendments set out in this bill. They support the amendments and in particular welcome the actions of the government to provide police with the powers they need to ensure police premises continue to be safe for both police and members of the community.

The community legal centres and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service have also been consulted on the development of the bill. Community safety is a key priority of the Andrews Labor government, and that is why we have invested a record \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police since coming to office. That is to ensure that police have the powers and the resources that they need to keep the Victorian community safe. Of course the Andrews Labor government makes no apologies for supporting a well-resourced police force. It is essential to providing a safe environment for our state in how it tackles serious and organised crime and the threat of violent extremism. This bill will deliver important amendments to the Victoria Police Act 2013 and the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. These amendments are designed to keep the community safe, clarify a number of provisions and protect the privacy of participants in the restorative engagement and redress scheme.

Of course our record is one of backing police and delivering on our commitments to Victoria Police and the police association. It is always better to work with the representative bodies of our service industries—police, ambulance, fire; it makes it a lot easier. We get a better outcome for the whole of the Victorian state in regard to our service and emergency service industries. It is what we have always done and what we will continue to do.

The government is clear on its stance on policing and community safety. Since being elected in 2014 we have provided the resources, the tools and the powers that police need to keep the community safe. We turned around police investment with the policing budget—it is 63 per cent higher than it was in 2014. Throughout this term of government we have invested a record \$4.5 billion in new funding for police, including funding for an additional 502 police officers and 50 PSOs in the most recent budget. This investment is building on the 3135 new police officers already on our streets, which includes general duty police officers working in local communities but also specialist officers, including hundreds of family violence police officers—and we know what the family violence situation is like in the state, in particular after the pandemic, so it is essential that we have these specialised family violence police officers. We have worked with the force command on developing this recruitment pipeline, which includes the development of the staffing allocation model, a sophisticated model that assists police to guide police resourcing needs.

One of the issues, and it is a matter of fact to point it out, is that the relationship between the former government and Victoria Police command was not a happy one, and the governance issues in 2012 and 2013 that plagued the relationship between the executive arm of the government of the day and Victoria Police are well documented. Reports such as the Rush inquiry tabled in this Parliament document all of that for everyone to revisit if they wish to. But our government is focusing on what matters: providing Victoria Police and PSOs with the resources and powers they need to keep our community safe. We know that each and every day Victoria Police members perform the vital work needed to keep Victorians safe, and we acknowledge this work and we thank them for it.

This bill is an important piece of legislation that covers a wide range of issues facing policing in Victoria, and I thank the Minister for Police and his staff for their work on this bill. I support these reforms and I commend this bill to the house, and I thank Victoria Police.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:58): I rise to just make some quick comments on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Police and Other Matters) Bill 2022. In general we are very supportive of a number of changes. There is one clause, clause 22, which I have somewhat of an issue with, particularly with the police's ability to charge people at public events. The events industry has it so tough at the moment, and it is a real concern that the government will be imposing potentially more charges on the events industry. These could be community events. These could be festivals. These could be food and wine events. This could happen right through regional Victoria. This could be schools. We know that this industry has had it so tough. We want to get the events industry back on its feet, but we do not need this government, the Andrews government, imposing more costs on the events industry. So I do ask that this be taken into consideration and certainly that the events industry are supported at each and every turn, because without that we are going to see more events providers close. We are going to see the kinds of things that put smiles on people's faces actually turn them the other way around.

We need hope, and this is very much something that is all about community. It is all about bringing the community together. It is all about taking us forward after being locked down for two years. I would say and I would plead with the government: do not use this bill as a hidden path to actually impose more costs on the events industry—as if they have not had it hard enough. This is not just about the big, large, main, major events that have got budgets, these are the community events. This is the grassroots kind of stuff. They should not have impositions on them. They should not have additional charges. The government should be working with the events industry, not trying to charge them more as part of this. That is why I would ask the government and implore the government to consider clause 22 and what the ramifications might be of getting the police to effectively charge the events industry for additional security.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McCurdy): The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

CAULFIELD ELECTORATE CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:00): (6486) My adjournment tonight is for the minister for transport, and the action that I seek is for the government to go back to the drawing board when it comes to pop-up bike lanes, particularly when it is regarding safety and safety issues. I want to bring to the minister's attention a pop-up bike lane in Westbury Street. This pop-up bike lane is done not on the side of the road but right through the guts of the road. We have a situation where we have already had a number of near misses—people have actually come off their bike as a result of it. What this government have suggested they have tried to do is encourage more people to ride their bikes. It has done quite the opposite in terms of causing safety issues.

On top of that, in Westbury Street the residents have said to me that they now have a Big Brother style camera that is recording people as they come out of their driveway. One of the residents actually said to me that he is concerned that if he even just turns the wrong way out of his street he is going to be pinged with a fine. We do not need these kinds of things. Certainly if this information is being recorded for data, then it should be de-identified and not be a situation where people are being recorded 24/7 as they drive up and down their street into their driveway. It is a real concern. We already have had situations where this government, the Andrews Labor government, have been using data for all kinds of information, and certainly there should be the ability to not have to operate with fear of the government using this sensitive data for a whole range of different purposes.

I ask the minister to reconsider, as part of this action, and to have a look at Westbury Street in terms of its safety. And if we are going to have these pop-up bike lanes—which are important to promote bike riding—we should do it properly. Here is another situation where the government have rushed out, they have tried to do things without proper consultation and they have left the community high and dry. That is why I ask the minister to start with Westbury Street: get it fixed, get it fixed properly and make sure that bike riders are safe when they are on their bikes and also that those residents do not have the Big Brother style camera recording them as they go about their business in their street.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (19:02): (6487) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy in the other place. I would like to invite the minister to visit my electorate of Wendouree and the great city of Ballarat to discuss with members of my community how we may be involved to maximise the benefits and legacy that hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games will bring to Ballarat and regional Victoria. I am beyond excited that Ballarat will be a regional hub alongside Geelong, Bendigo and Gippsland in hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games. It is estimated the Commonwealth Games will contribute more than \$3 billion to the state's economy, creating more than 600 full-time jobs before the games, 3900 during the games and a further 3000 jobs beyond the closing ceremony. Ballarat is expected to benefit significantly from the games, including with the creation of additional housing and jobs.

As a proud Ballarat local, I know that hosting the Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria will be an excellent opportunity to showcase our state and my beautiful city of Ballarat to the world. The games will be held between 17 and 29 March 2026, with an incredible 12 days of competition between the commonwealth's best athletes, in regional Victoria, allowing Ballarat to welcome athletes, officials, media and supporters from across the commonwealth. Unlike some Melbourne-centric types, I strongly believe that Ballarat is an outstanding location to stage the athletics as well as the boxing and cricket. The upgrades to Mars Stadium to host a crowd of 30 000 spectators will make an electric venue to watch the best commonwealth athletes competing for gold in 2026 as well as provide my community of Ballarat with a world-class venue for events for generations to come. The Ballarat athletes village will also create a housing legacy for Victoria that will extend well beyond the competition period. I am pleased to hear that the planning is underway for infrastructure upgrades, transport, housing and all aspects of the games.

Last week's closing ceremony in Birmingham included a celebration of Victoria. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the contribution of Wadawurrung traditional owners Aunty Joy Oldaker and Macaylah Johnson, who were among the contingent of Australian dignitaries representing Victoria at the closing ceremony of the Birmingham games on 8 August. Thank you for representing Ballarat in Birmingham. Now the Commonwealth Games baton has been passed to Victoria 2026, the countdown is on. It is only 1308 days until the games begin, and it will be Ballarat's time to shine on the world stage. I thank the minister for his strong support of Ballarat and welcome the opportunity to host him in my electorate of Wendouree.

RUPANYUP PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (19:05): (6488) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to urgently fund a new playground for Rupanyup Primary School. This is a matter that I raised a few months ago, back in May. The school has actually had an inspection, and their playground has been found to be unsafe and it must be demolished. This would leave this fabulous little primary school in far western Victoria without a playground. A primary school without a playground—it is completely unacceptable, and they should be at the top of the list, really, when it comes to getting any government funding for their facilities. The school have been fantastic advocates. They are a great school community. I have been out there a couple of times. They do such a good job. There is a small number of students, but they are all absolutely amazing. The educators and the parents, supporters and volunteers do so much to make sure not only that those kids

have an amazing education full of those important skills of literacy and numeracy but also that they come out as wonderful little human beings.

The school have been fighting, applying for grants for their playground. They recently inquired with the Victorian School Building Authority, who advised that their grant application was highly ranked but not awarded due to the volume of applications with a focus on grants for toilet blocks and roofing. Now, no-one argues whether every school needs a toilet that works, and they need to make sure they have got roofs that do not leak. But they also need to have playgrounds, and given this school could be faced with having no playground at all, I think they should be top of the list. That is why I am urging the minister to support the fantastic Rupanyup Primary School community and to ensure that she urgently finds the funding to build a new playground at Rupanyup Primary School so we can make sure that that is built ready for the school year next year.

NEPEAN ELECTORATE BOAT RAMPS

Mr BRAYNE (Nepean) (19:07): (6489) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Fishing and Boating. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Nepean and update my community ahead of a busy summer on upgrades and concepts for the Capel Sound and Rye boat ramps. These two boat ramps can be very busy during the holiday season, and I know that previous works at other ramps in Nepean have been welcomed by residents and holiday-makers. This government has already invested heavily in upgrading boating and recreational facilities in my community, and I look forward to updating my community with the minister about any other works underway at Rye and Capel Sound.

CROYDON ELECTORATE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVALS

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (19:08): (6490) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure regarding the Croydon level crossing removal project, and the action I seek is for the minister to organise a briefing from the level crossing removal authority for me and my staff at the earliest convenience. The level crossing removal authority appear to be very selective with the information they are disseminating to the Croydon community over the works that are being undertaken, and I do not have confidence that the community or I are receiving all the relevant information regarding this project. My office was recently bypassed when pertinent material was being handed out to the Main Street traders in Croydon. One of my staff members needed to chase down and approach the level crossing removal staff after witnessing them visiting shops and businesses on Main Street, Croydon, and not entering my office. My staff member requested a copy of the information that was being circulated to the other traders in Croydon and noted that it was about upcoming online community information sessions as well as a Main Street trader information meeting. The removal of this crossing is a big deal in the Croydon community, and it is vital that as the member of Parliament I be kept informed of every step in the process. It is very apparent that as I am an opposition member the government do not consider me important enough to be kept informed of what is happening in my electorate—such disappointing and unprofessional behaviour. As the minister would know, a member of Parliament's office is often the first point of contact for constituents who are concerned about the impact on their properties and businesses of such a massive project. A bipartisan approach should be adopted in these matters, and I therefore reiterate my request for a briefing with the level crossing removal authority regarding this major Croydon development.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (19:09): (6491) My adjournment is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in Cranbourne to discuss the importance of women's health and in particular the importance of breast screening. The Cranbourne community is diverse and resilient, with many women balancing raising a family with work and caring responsibilities. They are also great volunteers. But inevitably they put their own health needs last. Last week I visited Cranbourne Primary School at the invitation of the wonderful Shazia Khanum to speak to and hear from the many women who attend their community hub. Together with superstar principal Lachlan Yeates, we chatted to the women about what matters most, with the sound of children playing in the

background. Nearly all of the women at the hub speak Dari, and many have recently arrived. Holding events where women can hear from clinicians about how to look after each other and themselves is a priority of the Andrews Labor government. I look forward to welcoming the minister to Cranbourne to hear about how we can better support women.

YARRA HILLS SECONDARY COLLEGE

Ms VALLENCE (Evelyn) (19:10): (6492) The matter I raise is for the Minister for Education on behalf of the Yarra Hills Secondary College community, specifically the Mount Evelyn campus community in my electorate—the students, their families, the college principal, the Mount Evelyn campus principal and the teaching staff. The action I seek is for the minister to provide much-needed funds that will be sufficient for major building upgrades at Yarra Hills Secondary College's Mount Evelyn campus, and I invite the minister to join me on a visit to the school to see firsthand why these upgrades are needed. Sadly the Mount Evelyn campus was entirely overlooked by the Andrews Labor government in its Lilydale district and Yarra Valley education plan. Disappointingly, the Department of Education and Training and the minister's office nearly forgot to include the Yarra Hills Secondary College altogether, and I commend the school and its principal on their advocacy to ensure the Mooroolbark campus at least received some upgrades.

Now it is time for the Andrews government to turn its attention to the Mount Evelyn campus, because the students and the teachers there also deserve to learn and work in a modern and safe school environment. The Mount Evelyn campus of Yarra Hills Secondary College has not received any capital improvement funding for over 20 years, and when you consider the Andrews Labor government has been in power for 17 of the past 21 years, it is unacceptable Labor has failed to invest in this school. I have had the pleasure of visiting the Mount Evelyn campus of Yarra Hills Secondary College on a number of occasions to hear firsthand from principal Darren Trippett and campus principal Leighton O'Donnell their vision to revitalise the school and attract more students from the Mount Evelyn community given it now offers programs from 7 to 12 and VCAL. In particular there is a need to revamp the front entrance at the architectural archway, to create a new administration and reception and then to upgrade classrooms throughout. Furthermore, I ask the minister to take note of the indoor basketball courts, on which the Andrews government's Victorian School Building Authority contractor has recently conducted some very shoddy works that have caused significant leaking and severely damaged the basketball court flooring. I ask the minister and department to have this rectified without delay. I call on the Andrews government to fund these school building upgrades at the Yarra Hills Secondary College Mount Evelyn campus.

NORTH EAST LINK

Mr TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:13): (6493) The North East Link is the biggest ever investment in Melbourne's east, and it will change the way people move around the east and Melbourne forever, so I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. I would like to have the Minister for Transport Infrastructure come down to our part of the world to discuss further the massive future upgrades to the Eastern Freeway as part of the broader North East Link project. One of the biggest and most significant parts of this exciting project will see a major overhaul to the Eastern Freeway. We are adding more than 45 kilometres of new lanes where they are needed most and up-to-date technology which will slash travel times on the Eastern by up to 11 minutes. There will also be six express lanes that will provide smoother trips between Middleborough Road and Chandler Highway, reducing the merging and weaving that cause congestion today. In addition to the major overhaul to the Eastern Freeway are of course the new twin tunnels, which will close the missing link finally in Melbourne's freeway network and connect the Eastern Freeway from Bulleen Road to the M80 ring-road. We will upgrade the ring-road with five new lanes, smart technology and a seamless interchange with the North East Link. The North East Link tunnels will also take 15 000 trucks off local roads every day and slash travel times by up to 35 minutes. The cherry on top is that the project will also see the creation of Melbourne's first dedicated busway, which will make it quicker and easier to get to and from the city, slashing travel times for more than 6 million express bus trips a year.

In a nutshell: massive project, huge investment in the east, slashing travel times. It stacks up, it is creating lots and lots of jobs and construction is absolutely well and truly underway. On that note, I look forward to welcoming the minister out to discuss progress on this project and what it means for our community very soon.

BENAMBRA ELECTORATE ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (19:15): (6494) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Premier, and the action I seek is the provision of advice to support constituents to have asbestos, in particular crocidolite and chrysotile, removed from their residence. Danielle Poser and John Humphrey purchased a home in Wodonga in September 2020. They did all the checks, building inspections, all of the things to protect them et cetera, but about a year later they rented the property out. In May 2022 this year the tenants had an issue with a flickering light. An electrician was called and discovered asbestos insulation. Tests revealed not only that it was asbestos but a particularly toxic brand technically known as crocidolite and chrysotile, colloquially known as Mr Fluffy.

Mr Fluffy operated out of the ACT in the 1980s and was installed in over 1000 houses in the territory and more than 500 houses in New South Wales. The asbestos is so toxic it has been deemed a community health hazard by the ACT and New South Wales governments. Schemes are in place to demolish affected houses, some requiring plastic domes over the worksite, and to provide financial assistance to home owners. Victoria does not have a scheme similar to the ACT or South Wales. In fact it has no assistance to home owners. The EPA says five homes have now been identified in our state, but I fear many more undetected, particularly on the border.

Danielle and John have now gone on a government roller-coaster, handballed from one to another—all care and no responsibility. WorkSafe Victoria says the house was not a place of work so have limited to no assistance available. The EPA said it was a local council issue. The Wodonga council closed the file as they do not oversee asbestos removal from private dwellings. Now, the couple have had more extensive assessments done, and there is no good news in this.

The results have come back positive to crocidolite, chrysotile and amosite in the bedrooms, cupboards and flooring. It means there is no option to remove the asbestos in the ceiling, seal up the roof cavity and make the house habitable again. They have been told the asbestos is highly likely to have spread throughout the building, including carpets, floorboards, window frames, curtains and furniture. Demolition is the only option. This is a huge, immediate and ongoing financial burden and clearly not covered by insurance. As I said earlier, my fear is that this is not only limited to one home in Wodonga but there may well be some more.

METRO TUNNEL

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (19:17): (6495) My adjournment is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure, and the action that I seek is that the minister update me on our government's outstanding Metro Tunnel project. As the minister knows, the Metro Tunnel project is going to drastically transform the way trains move around Melbourne, especially in Melbourne's west. With five new underground stations between South Kensington and South Yarra stations, this project will have a trove of benefits for commuters in Melbourne's west, including those folks in the Tarneit electorate who commute to the city on the Werribee line as well as the V/Line services on the Wyndham Vale line.

This means that by 2025 an additional 63 000 passengers will be able to get on the Werribee and Williamstown lines every single week during peak periods. That is a 24 per cent increase to our peak-hour capacity. It is up to 10 minutes off a journey to Parkville and 5 minutes off a journey to St Kilda Road for commuters heading to work in the city, and what is more, if someone needs to access the Metro Tunnel from an existing line, they can just swap between Flinders Street station or Melbourne Central to access the new Town Hall and State Library stations that are currently under construction. This project is an absolute game changer for all on our network, and I cannot wait to see it open in

2025. That is why I know commuters in Tarneit would greatly appreciate an update from the minister on this very, very important infrastructure project.

RESPONSES

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development) (19:19): The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport; the member for Wendouree raised a matter for the Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy; the member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Education; and the member for Nepean raised a matter for the Minister for Fishing and Boating. We had the member for Croydon, the member for Bayswater and the member for Tarneit raise matters for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure. The member for Cranbourne raised a matter for the Minister for Health, and the member for Evelyn raised a matter for the Minister for Education. Finally, the member for Benambra raised a matter for the Premier, and I will refer them accordingly.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.20 pm.

Joint sitting of Parliament
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

Members of both houses met in Assembly chamber at 6.17 pm.

The Clerk: Before proceeding with the business of this joint sitting, it will be necessary to appoint a Chair. I call the Premier.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I move:

That the Honourable Nazih Elasmr, President of the Legislative Council, be appointed Chair of this joint sitting.

He is willing to accept the nomination.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition): I second the motion.

The Clerk: Are there any other proposals? There being no other proposal, the Honourable Nazih Elasmr, President of the Legislative Council, will take the chair.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR (Hon. N Elasmr): Under the Constitution Act 1975 this joint sitting must be conducted in accordance with rules adopted by members present at the sitting. The first procedure, therefore, will be the adoption of rules.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I move:

That joint rule of practice 2 be the rules for this joint sitting.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition): I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR: The rules having been adopted, I now invite proposals from members for a person to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I propose:

That Mr Thomas McIntosh be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

He is willing to accept the nomination. In order to satisfy the joint sitting as to the requirements of section 27A(4) of the Constitution Act 1975, I also advise that the President has received advice from the state secretary of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party that Mr McIntosh is the selection of the Australian Labor Party, the party previously represented in the Legislative Council by the Honourable Jane Garrett.

Mr GUY (Bulleen—Leader of the Opposition): I second the proposal.

The CHAIR: Are there any further proposals? As there are no further nominations, I declare that nominations are closed.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR: I declare that Mr Thomas McIntosh has been chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council. I will advise the Governor accordingly.

I now declare the joint sitting closed.

Proceedings terminated 6.20 pm.