



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 9 February 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Jordan Crugnale, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke,
Wayne Farnham, Paul Hamer, Lauren Kathage, Nathan Lambert, Alison Marchant,
John Mullahy, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor and Iwan Walters

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Deputy Leader of the Opposition

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ¹	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren ²	South Barwon	Ind	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan ⁵	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Famham, Wayne	Narracan	Lib	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Foster, Eden ³	Mulgrave	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
Fowles, Will ⁴	Ringwood	Ind	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁶	Warrandyte	Lib
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² ALP until 29 April 2024

³ Sworn in 6 February 2024

⁴ Resigned 27 September 2023

⁵ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁶ Sworn in 3 October 2023

Party abbreviations

ALP – Australian Labor Party, Greens – Australian Greens,
Ind – Independent, Lib – Liberal Party of Australia, Nat – National Party of Australia

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Thursday 9 February 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:32 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

*Announcements***Photography in chamber**

The SPEAKER (09:33): I advise the house that I have given approval for a photographer to take photos from the public gallery and the advisers seats on each side of the chamber during question time today. The photographs will be used by the Parliament for community engagement purposes.

*Members***Acting speakers**

The SPEAKER (09:33): Under standing order 20 I have tabled my warrant amending the panel of members to preside as acting speakers to include Jordan Crugnale, Paul Edbrooke and Michaela Settle.

*Documents***Documents****Incorporated list as follows:****DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT** – The Clerk tabled:

Emerald Tourist Railway Board (Puffing Billy Railway) – Report 2021–22

Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978 – Register of Interests – Returns submitted by Members of the Legislative Assembly – Primary Returns 16 January 2023 – Ordered to be published

Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority – Report 2021–22

Racing Integrity Commissioner – Report 2021–22

Victorian Racing Integrity Board – Report 2021–22.

*Business of the house***Adjournment**

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (09:34): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 21 February 2023.

Motion agreed to.*Members statements***Werribee electorate education funding**

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:35): I rise to update the house about the significant investment by the Andrews government into children's education in my electorate of Werribee. Our government is ahead of schedule in opening up 100 new schools by 2026, with 75 new schools opening between 2019 and 2024. I am pleased that this includes opening 21 new schools in the City of Wyndham to support our growing local community. This year in my electorate we opened Ngarri Primary School and Lollypop Creek Primary School. Construction is also continuing for our new schools for 2024, which includes a primary school and a specialist school in Werribee. Since 2014 our government has invested \$12.8 billion in building new schools and delivered more than 1850 school upgrades, creating more than 17,400 jobs along the way. Building the Education State also means investing in early childhood education for the youngest Victorians. This year every kindergarten in Wyndham is offering free kinder so every child can have the best start to their schooling life. As well as free kinder we are

introducing pre-prep, a play-based year of learning, and establishing 50 new government-operated childcare centres. And we are collaborating with Wyndham council for the \$47 million Building Blocks partnership, creating more than 3600 kinder places across Wyndham by 2029. With investments such as these, the Andrews Labor government – *(Time expired)*

Caulfield electorate

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:36): It is an honour to be re-elected into the 60th Parliament in what was a tough battle, and I am very pleased with the 2 per cent swing in Caulfield. Our campaign was and always will be about making Caulfield and our area better together. Our success was a team effort, and I want to thank the 300-plus volunteers; the 400 residents that displayed my signs; a special thankyou to my family Hayley, Tyler and Paige and my mother-in-law Judy Rose, who did not leave pre-poll; my staff Jane Rapke, Patrick Irwin, Will Murphy, Hila Kwait, Peumike Dissanayake and Abby Levy; some stand-out volunteers, campaign director Andy Gordon, SEC chair Joel Silver, Daniel King, Miaosheng Yang, Harry Shardey, Daniel Weil, Debbie Thomas, Peter Wessner, Luke Vasquez, Ari Kalmek, David Jaffe, Adir Shiffman, Rosanna Ferrucci, Inna Zaitseva, David Wilde; and our interns Danah Akritidis, Alex Argyropoulos, Samuel Morgan and Tatijana Dobric. We will continue to fight for better schools, we will continue to fight for a hospital development at Caulfield, we will continue to look at ensuring that we get a fair deal when it comes to planning laws and open space and we will continue to make Caulfield better together. Thank you very much to all of those residents that supported us in ensuring we were re-elected to make Caulfield the best place to live.

Williamstown electorate education funding

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:38): Kinder kids and families in the Williamstown electorate this month started the next stage in their education journey with the Andrews Labor government's rollout of free kinder. Kinder kids in Williamstown, Newport, Spotswood, South Kingsville, Seaholme, Brooklyn, Altona and Altona North will all benefit from early childhood services being rolled out by the Labor government's once-in-a-generation kindergarten reform of free kinder for Victoria's three- and four-year-olds in 2023. Families enrolled in three-year-old kinder will receive between five and 15 hours of funded learning each week this year and those in four-year-old kinder will receive 15 hours per week. We know that our free kinder initiative is life changing. Not only will it save families up to \$2500 each year, it also gives the Williamstown electorate parents, especially women, even more flexibility to return to work if they want. This not only gives kids the best start in life but also gives families the opportunity to make work and life balance better. Even better, they start their journey with a free kinder kit full of fun and educational toys, books and resources to help them grow and thrive through creative play. Thank you to all the teachers and the carers that put so much of their effort into making these kids' journeys successful.

Gippsland South electorate infrastructure

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:39): I congratulate the Labor Party on its success in returning to government but remind it that a vast geographic portion of the state did not vote for it, indeed turned strongly away from it, including the electorate of Gippsland South. That means people in my electorate strongly supported the commitments the Nationals took to the election, including those such as the fix for the dangerous intersection of the South Gippsland and Strzelecki highways in Leongatha, otherwise known as kamikaze corner to locals. This intersection is a headache for Leongatha, with two highways and three other roads meeting on a bend, with a newly completed section of the Great Southern Rail Trail right through it as well. A solution is crucial for the town for the safety of motorists and to help make the rail trail a success for tourists and local users alike. The Nationals recognised this at the election and committed to a solution. Labor did not but cannot ignore it continually.

I call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to visit Leongatha to see the intersection herself and understand why money needs to be allocated in this year's budget to get a solution underway. Likewise

our other commitments in South Gippsland should be matched by the Labor government, including finishing the Foster Primary School rebuild, a new overtaking lane on the South Gippsland Highway at Toora, a new Mirboo North stadium and upgrades for the Korumburra Bena Football Netball Club and Waratah Beach Surf Life Saving Club. In a break from tradition Labor actually made some commitments in Gippsland South this time, and I expect to see progress soon on a proposed \$11.7 million upgrade of Leongatha Secondary College and delivery of new fire stations at Yarram, Foster and Mirboo North, as announced by the CFA.

Lunar New Year

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:41): I am pleased to inform the house of the Whittlesea Chinese Association's wonderful Lunar New Year celebration, which I had the pleasure of attending last weekend. This festival was a lovely display of culture and celebration as we welcome the Year of the Water Rabbit. This event is undoubtedly the highlight of the Whittlesea Chinese Association calendar and is always a wonderful mix of colour, music and community. It is events like this that bring our entire community together, and I take the opportunity to congratulate the committee and the organisers on a job well done. The celebrations were hugely successful, and I wish to acknowledge the president Regina Leung-Huning, whose work is invaluable to bringing these festivals to life. The Whittlesea Chinese Association hosted an incredible event, and I look forward to celebrating with them more in the future.

Türkiye and Syria earthquakes

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:42): Whilst the world celebrates the Chinese New Year, sadly, the world now mourns the devastation wreaked by this week's earthquake on the people of Türkiye and Syria. I offer my deepest sympathies to the Victorian Turkish and Syrian communities, who are coming to terms with the loss of families, friends and entire communities and towns. The reports from Türkiye and Syria in the past few days have shown the widespread destruction and heartache this event has caused. We have seen tragic scenes from the ground – but from tragedy comes bravery, and we have seen the inspirational courage shown by the rescue crews, who are risking their own lives in their desperate attempts to find and rescue survivors. Our thoughts are also with them as they go about their work without fear for their safety, and I encourage every Victorian who is able to contribute to the relief effort.

Australia Day awards

David HODGETT (Croydon) (09:42): I rise today to congratulate the recipients of the Maroondah City Council Australia Day awards for 2023. It was a pleasure to be in attendance to celebrate those making a difference for our community. Dennis Johnston was awarded Citizen of the Year for his hard work and contribution to Biala Ringwood. Jackson Smith and Alyssa Solidaga both received Young Citizen of the Year. The Chin National Day festival was awarded Community Event of the Year. This terrific event, which celebrated the 74th Chin National Day, attracted 4000 members of the community. This event was held outdoors in Main Street, Croydon, in February last year and was a day to celebrate identity, culture and Chin traditions. It was a colourful, fun and vibrant day, which would not have been as successful without the support of the Croydon Main Street crew, who were instrumental in the success of the day. I look forward to the same event on 18 March 2023. Congratulations to all the Australia Day award nominees and recipients, and thank you for the positive impact your hard work delivers for our community.

Heather Clarke

David HODGETT (Croydon) (09:43): On a more solemn note, I want to acknowledge the passing of my good friend Ms Heather Clarke. I have known Heather and her family for over 17 years. She was a tremendous person who was so generous with her time. Heather was a dedicated Liberal and

made contributions to Liberal Victoria as well as the Croydon electorate conference. Heather always gave her time, advice and support and was actively involved in our local community. She taught us to make the most of what you have in life. I am truly thankful for having known Heather and been able to call her a friend. My sincere condolences to her husband Tony and sons Andrew and James. May she rest in peace.

Ivanhoe electorate

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:44): I am pleased to say that in the Ivanhoe electorate we are of course back to work. We have got a range of significant election commitments that our local community – in overwhelming numbers in a two-party preferred swing to Labor, growing our support in the Ivanhoe electorate – are keen to see delivered. We have come a long way with the Heidelberg Primary School commitments, with some \$14 million to expand and redevelop classrooms there on that site. That is a very popular announcement that we will deliver this term.

The North East Link work continues; 15,000 trucks a day we will be getting off local roads. That is a super commitment and one that continues to be reaffirmed by the Ivanhoe community election after election. The Austin Hospital emergency department redevelopment and expansion – that is a several hundred million dollar commitment there. Again, it was only a Labor government that saved the Austin Hospital from privatisation and built two new hospitals on one site – the Heidelberg Mercy, the Austin Hospital and of course the magnificent Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. We will all have more to say and show our great respect and support for the late Olivia Newton-John in due course later this month. Ivanhoe Bowling Club is a great place to celebrate election victories and a great place to invest in their facilities across this term. Lots of great work is happening in the Ivanhoe electorate, and there is much to thank the local community for with their ongoing support. With the work that we will continue to do together I am really looking forward to what is going to unfold across the Ivanhoe electorate this term under Labor.

Food producers

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:45): I rise today to acknowledge the food producers in the great north-west of this state. Some have just finished their grain and legume harvest, and others, like for grapes and nuts, are about to begin. Food producers, yes, is how I will refer to those who are growing our food in the north-west corner of this state. I encourage you all to do the same – not to refer to them as irrigators or farmers but food producers, as it might cause a change in the thinking of the government and cause it to remember us when it comes to critical services and infrastructure.

Family violence

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:46): Mildura is a long way from this place, and it seems we have been forgotten, as have many of our priority projects, such as the multidisciplinary centre, which houses the Mallee Sexual Assault Unit, the sexual offences and child abuse investigation team and Victoria Police's family violence unit, among other services. We have some of the highest rates of domestic violence in this state, and this project appears to have fallen off the radar.

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:46): There has been a lot of talk in this place about jobs training and investment in that sector. Recently I have done many tours of the Sunraysia Institute of TAFE and had a look at the expansion that is needed. It is overflowing, and with the interest in TAFE training and education I look forward to investment in health and further investment in Sunraysia Institute of TAFE to help expand their large automotive offering. I also look forward to investment in health, education, training and social welfare, which the government are also very excited about, actually where it is needed most, in the Mildura electorate, to ensure our food producers can keep doing just that.

Robert Stokes

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:47): I rise to pay tribute to Robert Stokes, who passed away on 13 January, aged 98. Every year I profile a veteran and share their story with our community in the lead-up to Anzac Day. In 2022 Robert kindly allowed his story to be shared with our local community.

Conscripted to the Second World War at 18 in 1942, Robert was too young to serve overseas and instead was posted to Yallourn to protect the coalmines as an anti-aircraft gunner. At 19 he convinced his parents to allow him to transfer to the 2nd AIF, making him eligible for overseas service. Robert was then sent to the south-west Pacific theatre, where he served as a member of the Australian 472nd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Troop as a gun layer targeting enemy aircraft up to 30,000 feet. However, one of his most vivid recollections was being hospitalised with dengue fever, a disease he called more deadly than the enemy. He was discharged from the army in 1946.

Robert and his wife Joan moved to Craigieburn in the late 1980s. They had four children, nine grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Robert will be remembered by several generations of children as the lollipop man at Our Lady's primary school crossing. He was the last known World War II veteran residing in Craigieburn and the last to attend local Anzac Day services. I am thankful to Robert for sharing his story with our community, and we are collectively grateful for his service. Robert was from one of the greatest generations. Lest we forget. Vale, Robert Stokes.

Brunswick electorate

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:49): I would like to thank the people of Brunswick for returning me to represent them for the next four years. I am particularly keen to name a few key volunteers without whose help I would not be here. In particular I would like to mention Nick Rouse, Ross Wilkinson, Chloe Holmes, Tom Lockwood and Tate de Klerk for their work on our campaign. Lots of volunteers across Brunswick knocked on doors, entered data, spoke to people, answered phone calls and so on. Everybody in this place knows an election campaign in a lower house seat is a big job and we cannot do it without a lot of people volunteering an enormous amount of their time. Other people I would like to name include Laurence Bretag, Kenna Morrison, Gerard de la Rue, Thomas Granger, Alex Marx, David Micallef, Sarah Garry and Matt Mabey. We also had some staff on our campaign team, particularly Louise Sampson, Oskar Summers-Dixon, Luci Nicholson and Tahlia Bowen. There are far too many people for me to name – more than 100 volunteers in all and then other supporters who handed out how-to-vote cards on the day. I just want to say thank you to all of those people and that I will do my very best to represent you as we encourage the government to go further and faster in tackling climate change.

Ash Wednesday commemoration

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:50): I rise to mark the approaching 40th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday bushfires on 16 February 1983. This devastating day was one of the worst bushfire events in our history, claiming the lives of 47 Victorians. On that day across both Victoria and South Australia winds fanned fires in 40-degree temperatures, causing massive loss and destruction. Seventy-five lives were lost, 180 fires burnt, 2676 people were injured, 2545 homes were destroyed, over 8000 people were evacuated and over half a million hectares were burnt. We all remember where we were that day, and we are reminded of the fire's fury by this quote from a survivor:

We were up at five o'clock in the morning and you knew something bad was going to happen. There were sirens going then and by 10 o'clock we could not see anywhere around here because of the dust and you couldn't tell what was dust and what was fires ...

... it was like getting a glimpse inside the gates of hell.

While more than 40 years may have passed since that day, the impacts on so many individuals, families and communities still resound. In my electorate of Macedon seven much-loved community members were taken that day and more than 400 homes were razed, including those of many members of the magnificent Mount Macedon volunteer fire brigade. I pay tribute to and honour those who died during these horrific events, and I stand alongside all who continue to grieve for what was lost that day.

Lilydale Youth Hub

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:52): Sadly, our local youth mental health service, the Lilydale Youth Hub, which serviced right across the Yarra Ranges, was forced to close in December at the hands of the Labor government. This vital early intervention youth mental health service closed because the new federal Albanese Labor government stripped it of funding and the Andrews Labor government refused to support it. The hub's closure is devastating and poses a significant clinical risk to the clients, who will unfortunately lose those valuable connections. They will be discharged into the general mental health system, which is already at capacity. Over 100 young people in my community that were clients of this service are now in the mental health service and are not being helped at all. They are devastated. Our community is devastated. I have listened to many local teenagers and young adults about how important and helpful this service was and how it saved lives. We rallied, we fought, we wrote to the Prime Minister, we wrote to the Premier and I raised it personally with our Minister for Mental Health in this place. It is an absolute shame. But I do thank those staff who are dedicated to our youth, the amazing team at the hub for their dedication and their resilience and their commitment to Yarra Ranges youth, and those at Inspiro community health, Anchor, Cire Services, Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation, and the Eastern Community Legal Centre.

Ballarat electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:53): It is an absolute honour to be re-elected to represent the electorate of Wendouree in the 60th Parliament. Thank you to the Ballarat community for your strong support, and I promise to work hard every day to make Ballarat an even better place to live. Ballarat is a growing city, with more and more people choosing to call Ballarat home. It is becoming a more culturally diverse community, and there is no place I would rather be.

Ballarat Sikh community

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:54): Thank you to Simran Singh and the Ballarat Sikh community for inviting me to attend the ceremony to establish holy scripture in Ballarat, a very special event and significant day for the Ballarat Sikh community. It was a privilege to be a part of the celebrations welcoming the nagar kirtan from Melbourne to Ballarat and to meet the very respectful high priest Sant Baba Avtar Singh Ji from Sur Singh, Punjab, in India.

Filipino Australian Association of Ballarat Inc.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:54): I wish to congratulate all the newly elected officers of the Filipino Australian Association of Ballarat for 2023–24, including president Gersen Wardlaw, vice-president Rose Boquida, secretary Josephine Crowe, assistant secretary John Burford, treasurer Dionesia Muaje, assistant treasurer Clarence Nielsen, public relations officer Frank Williams, property custodian Urbing Duffin and assistant property custodian Dion Thorp. The Ballarat Filipino community is inclusive and welcoming. It does great work. I look forward to continuing to support FAABI to grow a deeper understanding of the Filipino culture.

Xavier Cooks

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (09:55): Finally, congratulations to Ballarat-born Sydney Kings captain on your NBL MVP.

Geelong major events

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (09:55): So far Geelong's major events have attracted thousands of visitors to our beautiful city and given residents plenty of reasons to enjoy their home town. The Andrews government proudly supports these events that put the national and international spotlight on Geelong, boosting tourism and our local economy. These events require a great deal of work obviously, and I want to thank the organisers of these events and particularly acknowledge and thank the many volunteers involved in making these events a success.

Throughout January Geelong welcomed the Bay Crits, which gave top cycling action over three days featuring some of our nation's and the world's best. It attracted thousands of visitors and local spectators. We welcomed the Victorian Country Athletics Championships to Landy Field, a three-day track and field athletics championship with 900 participants, competing in 2200 events, from all over the country. Formal athletics started in Geelong in 1862, and it has continued its growth in high participation levels. The facility of course is named after the legendary John Landy, who we have acknowledged and paid tribute to in this chamber this week. The Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race welcomed the world's best women and men cyclists to Geelong and the Surf Coast. Since the inaugural event in 2015 the race has become a pillar of Victoria's world-leading major events calendar. In Geelong the excitement is incredible as thousands line the track along the Geelong waterfront – *(Time expired)*

Portarlington Mussel Festival

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (09:56): It was with great pleasure that I attended this year's Portarlington Mussel Festival. Volunteering on the main gate was a lot of fun, and it was a joy to see so many people from the region excited to see the mussel festival back. From the humble beginnings of a street stall in 2007 the Portarlington Mussel Festival is now one of the most popular community events in Victoria, with over 30,000 attending in recent years. Since that time thanks to the hard work of determined volunteers the festival has gone from strength to strength. Of course the festival highlights and celebrates the quality product of the local mussel industry. But it does far more than that. With around 200 stalls visitors get to sample a wide range of quality produce from the Bellarine, including our world-class wine and food. In addition people enjoy music and other entertainment across five stages. This year the art show was also very popular, with artists from right across the peninsula and beyond exhibiting a diverse range of art mediums. Thanks to this festival nearly a quarter of a million dollars now has been raised and contributed back into local community initiatives. I take this opportunity to congratulate the committee on their dedication in putting back on this festival this year after COVID, and I sincerely thank all of those volunteers that have once again made this mussel festival an outstanding success.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:58): To be re-elected was beyond amazing, humbling, and tears of gratitude were streaming. It is a privilege and honour to work with and for our community, and together we have achieved so much. I will apply that same determination, grit and fight and be your voice at our government table and build on the momentum we have already started and keep at it. We need and deserve a whole heap more.

A big welcome to the new communities of Bass, from Tooradin across to Pearcedale, Devon Meadows and Cranbourne South. I so look forward to listening, walking beside you and representing you in Spring Street. You equally deserve to get the services, programs, support and infrastructure you need. I want to thank the communities and people in Pakenham and Clyde North for opening their arms, homes, schools, clubs and centres in welcoming me so I can represent you, work with you and get positive outcomes too. Our paths will always cross as so many of our projects and programs go beyond the electorate walls, and the many beautiful connections and friendships made are long lasting too. In admiration of candidates that put their hands up, our time at pre-poll gave me insight into what drives and energises you. To our Labor branch members, volunteers, friends, supporters and my office team

extraordinaire, you have held me and my family these last four years. You worked your bloody guts out during the campaign in a myriad of ways. More tears of gratitude flowed here too. Season two has begun. Let us get cracking.

The SPEAKER: I remind members about unparliamentary language.

Eureka electorate multicultural communities

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (09:59): I am proud to live in a vibrant multicultural community. Over the last two weeks I was honoured to attend many commemorative services, events and ceremonies that acknowledge the many cultures that contribute to the district of Eureka. I was proud to stand as an ally to the Wadawurrung people at the Survivors Day commemoration on the shores of Lake Wendouree, and I am proud that Victoria is the first jurisdiction to action treaty and truth.

Later that week the Ballarat Chinese association hosted the inaugural Chinese New Year festival in Ballarat, with spectacular music and dance. I was delighted to join the Ballarat Indian Association to acknowledge India's Republic Day, and I watched the pot boil at the Thai Pongal event in Garibaldi. This is an important Hindi festival. Thanks go to the multicultural harvest festival. The food was delicious and plentiful at the Croatian association annual barbecue, and it was really great to see the wonderful new community clubroom full to the brim – so many people, so many Croatians, visiting from Melbourne and across the state to see the wonderful new clubrooms that were funded by the Andrews Labor government.

It was a great pleasure to welcome a record number of new citizens in the Moorabool, Golden Plains and Ballarat council citizenship ceremonies. Our diversity is our strength.

Yan Yean electorate

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:01): I would like to take this opportunity to thank my caucus colleagues for so warmly welcoming me to this place, especially my neighbouring MPs: the member for Kalkallo Ros Spence, the member for Mill Park Lily D'Ambrosio, the member for Thomastown Bronwyn Halfpenny, the member for Bundoora Colin Brooks, the member for Eltham Vicki Ward and member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes. The north is well served by hardworking MPs who know their communities inside out, who have become part of the fabric of their communities and who use each day to make life better for others, bringing fairness and opportunity to the communities they serve. I look forward to working with the member for Kalkallo on the priorities of our shared communities of Wallan and Beveridge and the shared needs and goals of those in Donnybrook and Kalkallo. One of the most important projects we will deliver is the Watson Street upgrade, which will provide additional direct access ramps to the Hume Highway for residents of Wallan and surrounds. This will mean families can get home safer and sooner.

I also thank the member for Williamstown Melissa Horne and the member for Niddrie Ben Carroll for setting a high benchmark for serving their communities. They have shown that it takes guts, it takes smarts and it takes a Labor government to deliver for communities.

Casey Community Awards

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:02): I was delighted last week to join with the member for Narre Warren South, the member for Narre Warren North, the federal member for Bruce, the federal member for Holt and Mr Galea in the other place at the City of Casey's annual community awards ceremony, as well as others in the chamber. It was terrific to have the opportunity to congratulate people who won awards for their contributions to the community. I would particularly like to recognise nominees Helen Bell, Kristen New, Caitlin Frost, David Duncan, Alfredo Tilan, Kuldeep Singh, Sue Morris and Daniela Maslen, who have all represented the very best of Cranbourne in these past few years, and I thank everyone for their valuable service. Having extraordinary and hardworking members of our community is a source of great pride to me, and it is something that I love to celebrate.

I would also like to congratulate the Berwick Amateur Theatre Company for their nomination, the Casey Basketball Association for their work, the Gethsemane church charity and the U3A.

I would also like to say how pleased I am to say that Jo Ann Fitzgerald will make an amazing Casey Citizen of the Year and Tanisha Dooley will be a great Young Citizen of the Year. I congratulate Peter Cahill, Senior Citizen of the Year; Liesel Kippen, Casey Woman of the Year; the community group the Food Pantry from the Berwick Church of Christ; our environment champion, a special person to me, Melanie Bramble, someone who tells the story in an amazing way; and the Afghan Australian Philanthropic Association.

Footscray electorate

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:04): It is the greatest gift to be re-elected as the member for Footscray. My commitment to my community is to be the fiercest advocate I can be for our brilliant, ever-changing community in Melbourne's inner west. Together over the last four years we have achieved great things together, and I am looking forward to continuing that work over the next four years. My door is always open to you, I am always available on the phone, and I will not waste a day to achieve great things for our community.

Footscray Hospital

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:04): To that end, I was thrilled to join the Premier this morning and the Minister for Health for the topping up ceremony of the new Footscray Hospital. It has reached the halfway point. We have 500 workers on site, and this new beautiful \$1.5 billion hospital will have 200 extra beds, will see 15,000 extra patients each year and was co-designed by the community.

Bills

Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (10:05): I am delighted to rise and make some comments on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. The Shadow Minister for Racing, the member for Gippsland East, is unwell this week, and I am happy to step in and support him on this bill. As we know, this bill lapsed in the last Parliament after the government did not introduce it until the last sitting week, giving it no chance of getting through the upper house.

Racing is a great part of our state's and our nation's heritage, and certainly I want to put up-front that this bill has largely been driven by the industry. This amendment seeks to make those who are attending our race meetings more accountable and more responsible for their behaviour, and that is the reason why we will be supporting this legislation. When we read the second-reading speech, there is commentary from the Minister for Racing about how these are important reforms and how we need to get these processes in place, and I am pleased that this bill, which lapsed, as I said, in the previous Parliament, has certainly now been prioritised. Due respect to the Minister for Racing, who I think probably by his own admission came to this portfolio with relatively limited knowledge of the racing industry and is on a steep learning curve, but I am sure that he knows and he has cottoned on to the fact that racing in Victoria is an absolutely enormous economic driver, has a huge following – cult like – around the state, and many of us have some form of racing in our electorates, whether it is thoroughbreds, whether it is greyhounds, whether it is harness racing.

So a couple of comments – whilst we are supporting the bill because the content of it is basically common sense, I will be very interested to see whether our friends from the Greens are prepared to come in and make comment on the racing bill, because we know how anti racing they are. But this bill is not necessarily about racing, it is about behaviour on the racecourse. It is about preventing situations

where spectators interact, largely inappropriately, with the horses, and this is a safety issue for the horses and the humans. That is what this bill is primarily about. We know the Greens hate racing – they have said it on numerous occasions – but I do hope that they will see the common sense in this being a safety matter and that this bill addresses safety elements relating to the racing industry. I will be very keen to see what their approach is – whether they are going to have a commonsense approach or whether they will go with their usual opposition to everything to do with racing.

Racing does have a very long and proud history in this state, and anybody who is involved in the industry knows that it is a very good industry and a very strong industry. We have world-class racing and training facilities. It is an industry that employs many, many thousands of Victorians across the length and the breadth of this state. The latest figures – and they go back a couple of years – are that the racing industry is worth \$4.3 billion to the Victorian economy, with over 33,000 full-time equivalent jobs and over 120,000 people directly involved in the industry. That is a massive industry in anyone's language. Obviously there are a lot of part-time workers when you look at stablehands and track riders and the like. But it is a massive industry here in Victoria – as we know, nationally, but certainly in Victoria – and it is growing.

Certainly in communities like mine, in Wangaratta, which are fortunate enough to have a thoroughbred racetrack, we understand the importance of this industry. Sean Barrett is our CEO up at Wangaratta and does a fantastic job managing the track, managing the trainers and obviously the race days. Most punters and racegoers who turn up at a racetrack on race day see the glitz and the glamour of the race day, but the reality is it is the trainers that provide the funds that keep these turf clubs ticking over. The trainers every day of the week have early starts, as we know – jockeys, trainers, stablehands – and they benefit from these facilities. But as I say, they are economic drivers through the whole of the region – Wangaratta itself, but certainly broader than that, out in the regions, out in the country areas outside of Wangaratta.

Bill Carlisle, president of the Wangaratta Turf Club, and his board have continued to see its impressive facilities grow into what they are today. I must say, when I came into this place in 2010 the Wangaratta club was on its knees. It was financially in a bad place – in a very poor place. With the support of successive governments we now have a first-class facility in Wangaratta, which is just outstanding. The former Premier and racing minister Denis Napthine was very, very supportive of Wangaratta and helped sow the seed to clear the path for trainers, who are the backbone of the industry and who pay to use the facility. Denis was and still is a great lover of the thoroughbred industry and all things racing. Former racing minister Pakula was also outstanding as a supporter of the Wangaratta Turf Club. Without his commitment we would not have what we have today in the social facilities and the training facilities at Wangaratta. So I certainly want to commend former racing minister Pakula for what he did for Wangaratta and for racing all throughout Victoria. It shows that when both sides of the house act constructively and in harmony great results can occur. I know the current Minister for Racing will be a great supporter of this industry as well.

Again, as I say, the Wang Turf Club is one of the premier venues in regional Victoria, thanks to government support, hard work by the community, the board and those who work at Wangaratta Turf Club. They host dozens of events. The Wangaratta Cup is coming up on 4 March, as are the spring carnival and the Christmas races. In fact Wangaratta was lucky to pick up four extra race meetings this summer because some tracks were too wet. Again, they jumped into action – they have had three of those four already, and they have been a great success. But it is not fair to the families and the hardworking trainers and employees to have their race meetings interrupted by disrespectful protesters. This is their livelihood, and as I said, it provides countless jobs in the local community. That is just a very, very small snapshot and insight into what a massive industry this is.

Another important part of this industry is the thoroughbred breeding industry. Northern Victoria is home to some of the major breeders worldwide. The member for Euroa knows only too well that it is a multimillion-dollar contributor to her electorate. In Euroa and around Nagambie are some of the best breeders in the world as well. Each of these studs at this time of the year is a hive of activity, with

people running around and undertaking this very important work for what is a multimillion-dollar contributor to the local economy in the electorate of Euroa and wider.

This, as I say, is just a small snapshot. The breeding industry in Victoria has come ahead in leaps and bounds in the last decade to the stage where we are now rivalling New South Wales, which for a long time was known as the breeding mecca of Australian racing, and Victoria is right up there with them now. When you take these things into consideration, it just astounds me that some elected representatives who sit in this chamber and some who sit on the other side of Queen's Hall are opposed to this great industry. I am obviously talking about the Greens and the Animal Justice Party, who openly say that they want to end racing. But when you have a think about some of the Greens policies, it is probably just in line with them wanting to ban most of the things that we enjoy in regional Victoria. So that is how it rolls. Rural and regional people are not impressed with those from Fitzroy who want to overlay their view of the world onto the regional centres that feed this state and are also the playground of our metro cousins and the economic drivers for this state. The industry is and should be recognised as being a key economic driver in this state, because that is very much what it is.

It is not just about the spring and autumn carnivals. It is about week in, week out racing – thoroughbreds, greyhounds and harness racing in little towns, in big towns and in metro Melbourne. We see racing at Caulfield, Flemington, the Valley and Sandown – the big race meetings. But let us not forget you have got the Pakenhams and Cranbournes of the world, the next tier down, and certainly other racetracks right across regional Victoria. Right throughout our autumn period we have a huge amount of significant race meetings, a lot of country cups and other feature events that are so important to the economies of those local towns. Our picnic circuit – the annual picnic race meetings that go on in many electorates are sometimes the biggest event for the year. They are events that bring people together, events that raise money for local charities or services, and the horses are nearly secondary, because the fun and the social occasion that they create are the benefits of picnic races. In some of these small communities, as I say, it is the highlight of the calendar, and the Dederang races are an example of that.

I attended Dederang last year – just a massive picnic race. People come from far and wide. Of course in Wodonga and Wangaratta they head there; people just come out of the hills. This year it is on 25 February. If anybody wants to come to the Dederang Cup, they will enjoy an absolutely outstanding day. As I say, these race days are a really strong part of their communities and their culture. I know the member for Eildon and the member for South-West Coast will also contribute on this bill. They have a great understanding and a great appreciation for country racing. I know the racing in and around Healesville and other small communities is a highlight of the calendar every year, and I am sure when the member for South-West Coast makes her contribution, she will mention the Warrnambool Racing Club carnival – what it does for the township and what it does for the economy down there. It is absolutely massive, but sadly, as I said earlier, we have got people who want to come in here as elected representatives and try to get rid of this fantastic industry. The races are a part of our fabric; they are a part of our make-up. We need to support racing because it is such an important industry. We on this side of the house – well, most of us on this side of the house; as I said, there are a couple who do not necessarily agree with racing up the back there, but the majority of us do – recognise the great benefit not only of this bill but obviously that the industry brings to the state.

I will get on to some of the elements of the bill and the provisions included in it – the first being to prohibit unauthorised access to certain areas of racecourses during race meetings and official trials. Trials are a big event these days, where a lot of horses are schooled so that they can be presented to race effectively on race day. I am advised there are no changes to the status quo of what exists now in legislation, but the bill does formalise those permissions that are included. It introduces new charges for all race meetings and official trial meetings as well as provides for enforcement of those provisions. A key point that we will make is that provisions included in this bill are currently covered in the Major Events Act 2009, which manages crowd provisions at eight major races. The Major Events Act 2009 provides for certain rules and regulations in the eight major races in the spring carnival to stop

protesters coming onto the track. What this bill does is it now broadens that to every race meeting and every trial, and that is common sense. That is a very good approach, because we get people at little country meetings or other meetings, like the Warrnambool Cup and those sorts of places, who try to misbehave. That is where what currently exists at those eight major meetings is broadened out in this bill to every race meeting and every trial. We are now at a stage where racing is much bigger than those eight major meetings, with more meetings on city tracks. We have also got, as I mentioned, an enormous amount on regional tracks, from Mildura to Warrnambool, Bairnsdale to Corryong and everywhere in between. This bill seeks to include equivalent arrangements to that Major Events Act and duplicate them so that they cover all those meetings. Again, as I say, we certainly support that.

The main area of change in this legislation sets standards for behaviour at certain locations on a course. That could be adjacent to mounting yards and obviously near where the horses are running or competing on the track itself. It relates to throwing or kicking projectiles, causing projectiles to enter a restricted area and climbing on fences or barricades that are adjacent to the restricted racing area. It will be interesting to see, as I said earlier, these very important safety measures. I do hope that we get full support in this chamber for the safety elements that we are trying to put in place here. It is common sense. These sorts of behaviours, which others encourage, unfortunately – idiots trying to invade the racetrack – have no place at trials or at race meetings. It really is stupidity at its greatest level, and we need to prevent that. It leads, obviously, to the horses acting in an unpredictable manner. It can not only lead to a jockey injury but also impact crowds – so crowd injuries as well. So for the patrons that we see taking part in this stupidity – for want of a better word – there are generally two reasons: they are either drunk or they have got some anti-racing banner strapped to them and they are trying to make some ridiculous point with it.

As I say, this bill is designed to prevent that sort of behaviour. One small area of concern that I believe the minister needs to address more specifically is in the second-reading speech where it states that these new laws are to be enforced by police and authorised officers. That is fine when you are at Flemington, Sandown and the bigger race meetings – the Valley, Caulfield. In smaller communities like Wangaratta, police do not necessarily have a regular presence at these smaller race meetings, and if there are no police there, according to the second-reading speech the enforcement will fall to those authorised officers. An authorised officer – hypothetically we are talking about PSOs. They will not be there either, obviously, in regional Victoria. This bill intends to make stewards authorised officers and where required some club personnel. That, I suppose, in one sense ticks that box to say there is an authorised officer there. But in many instances these people who are given that job as authorised officers – stewards and club personnel – are actually pretty busy on any race day as it is. They have got their hands full doing what they need to do to run the track and to make sure everything goes seamlessly, and we just have to be careful about where that onus lies and making sure that they are resourced well enough. Maybe a speaker on the other side, from the government benches, might be able to clarify that for us – as to how that will unfold. I am not saying that stewards are not the right people; stewards just have enough on at a race day meeting. Maybe that is something we can flag and just watch this space as we go forward and see how this all rolls out in a practical manner. We need to have a situation where we are sure that the people have the time available and are not otherwise engaged in what, as I say, is a busy race day. We need some of those people to have the flexibility and the time to act when required.

I do note that all the codes and various interested groups have been pushing for this outcome and stronger and tougher rules, so it is largely, as I say, an industry-driven bill, and they are the best bills. When we get an industry who stands up and says, ‘We want to change. We need change. We are trying to make this safer’, and you have got both sides very keen to support it, that is what we want to see, particularly in an industry that is growing and is an economic driver for a lot of communities.

Cobram Harness Racing Club is another terrific club in my electorate. In smaller communities, a border town like Cobram Barooga, it is a great opportunity to have harness racing. We need to protect smaller communities like that to ensure that there are no idiots that want to create a scene and cause

trouble, because it is really just a local track meeting that provides an enormous boost for the local economy but certainly social opportunities as well. Again, I say that this bill is about safety trackside and making stupid people accountable for stupid actions on or near a racetrack that is a risk either to humans or horses – or greyhounds, for that matter. I do hope we do not have to deal with any amendments later on from the Greens or the Animal Justice Party, who will have their say somewhere along the track, I am sure. As I say, hopefully common sense can prevail and the bill will pass when it goes forward.

While on racing I want to mention Dan McCarthy Racing in Wangaratta. I do have to confess that my wife has a very small part in a horse called Gulf of Aden, which was saluted this week in Wodonga, which was very exciting to see. That is the sort of thing that racing does. It brings a whole heap of people together with a common knowledge. They get together at the racetrack and have a bit of fun. Although sometimes it is very frustrating, sometimes you get a bit of joy out of it. We got some joy this week. Tahlia Hope did a wonderful job riding that horse this week at Wodonga, and there are many, many happy people around Wangaratta at the moment. Dan Wallace is undoubtedly the unofficial mayor of our local industry. I am sure he wants to see more wins both locally in Wodonga and maybe in metropolitan. As I say, this is an example of having a little share in a horse that is part of an industry where you go and catch up with people, and that is what our communities love to do. It is just an opportunity to get together, for whatever reason.

I have spoken about the thoroughbred industry a lot. Greyhound racing is a significant player in this space. We did lose our greyhounds in Wangaratta in 2009. They were taken away by the Brumby government. That decision was a very hasty decision, and we had concerns at the time. I say it is never too late to revisit this opportunity. I would like to think the minister could see that maybe 2023 is an excellent opportunity to reverse this decision. We will talk about that as we go forward, because there is room for greyhound racing in north-east Victoria, that is for sure. The industry is more than just race day; it is about the training facilities and all those things as well. As I have said, the industry contributes some \$4.3 billion to the Victorian economy, and the greyhound racing industry contributes almost \$500 million – so half a billion dollars from the greyhound industry alone. Bringing a piece of that pie back to Wangaratta would be well appreciated by the Wangaratta community and surrounding communities; they would support greyhound racing if there was room to do it. I think, as this industry goes, there are opportunities we can look at, and the government, who I have consistently praised in this industry, in their support for Wangaratta, could get on board and maybe help us with some greyhound racing industry in this region as well.

We have a one-off harness racing night at Avian Park in Wangaratta, and that is fantastic. It is an opportunity to still have the industry going in Wangaratta. Although it is only one racing night a year, it shows that with limited resources you can still enjoy it and people will come out. They say, 'Build it and people will come.' Well, this is the same; if you hold events, people will come. They love these nights out, and they support them.

Racing in country Victoria is an essential part of regional life and provides thousands of jobs, as I have mentioned, and millions of dollars in local economic benefits to our communities. These benefits are often ignored by the city-based activists, who have got no idea about well-cared-for animals and how well they are cared for or the importance of the racing industry. The last thing a family wants or needs during a fun day out at the races is an idiot running onto the track or out on the course, risking their life and ruining the day for everybody else involved.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that the racing industry in all forms – thoroughbreds, harness racing and greyhounds – is an extremely professional industry. It is an economic driver for local communities and of course an economic driver for the state, and it has certainly earned the right to be protected from fools that want to disrupt a great day out. These commonsense reforms or inclusions will help make the industry safer for animals and humans. As I say again, we are supporting this bill, and I encourage other members in this place to support a safer industry.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:28): I am very pleased to rise today to support the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, which will further ensure the safety of Victoria's racing events – especially in my electorate of Wendouree, which is home to Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club and Ballarat & District Trotting Club in Redan. This bill will also benefit the Ballarat Turf Club, located a stone's throw from my electorate, in Ripon, and I wish to congratulate the newly elected member for Ripon. I look forward to working together to achieve more great outcomes for our region.

I am thrilled to be the first government speaker to talk on this, because I am a big supporter of the racing industry. I am a member of the Ballarat Turf Club. I am a member of the Ballarat & District Trotting Club, and I am really pleased to follow the member for Ovens Valley. I was nodding in agreement with the contribution that you were making –

Tim McCurdy: That is a change.

Juliana ADDISON: It is a change – about how important this industry is to regional Victoria. It is important to my electorate, and we are hearing how important it is to Wangaratta and the Ovens Valley. So, yes, it is commonsense reform, and I am delighted that the opposition is supporting this bill.

I would like to start today by congratulating the Minister for Racing for this legislation as well as the good work that he is doing with this portfolio, and I really hope that the minister can come and join me in Ballarat before too long to witness some of our truly fantastic regional racing events and to meet our local CEOs, our board members, our trainers, our club members and of course the incredible staff that play such an important role in making a day at the races such a great day. I would also like to thank the minister's office, and I thank the people who are here today, particularly Vic, who is working very closely with and is always a great support to my office. Thanks so much, Vic, for being here today. It is very important that when you bring any legislation to this place you undertake extensive stakeholder engagement, and that is what the minister's office has done and that is what the department has done.

I am grateful for those who have contributed their expertise and their experience, because this bill has included feedback and insights from Racing Victoria, Harness Racing Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria – people that I have spent a bit of time with at different race meetings over the years, good people who care about racing and care about the welfare of the animals that race, so I am really pleased. These changes that will be implemented, if this bill passes, I know are going to make a real difference to my local clubs and to the local industry.

It is interesting that the member for Ovens Valley also talked about racing being a part of our social fabric, because it is. Racing is such an important part of our social history of this state – from champions like Phar Lap, who drew the huge crowds to Flemington, giving hope to Victorians during the Depression, to more recent times when champion Winx won four consecutive Cox Plates – just amazing. This horse captured our hearts and our interest and was just such a champion. There are not many other places in the world that have a public holiday for a race meet, and I think that is something that we should all be very proud of. But then again there are not many places in the world that have a race meet like the Melbourne Cup. Not only is it a race that stops a nation, it is a truly global horserace. It also resonates very locally. My mum holds the family sweep – the winner takes home \$25. She rings everyone in the family, it is handwritten, she then takes photos of what horse you have got and as soon as the results are out, she is texting everyone – at 81 she is all over this. It is also great walking down Sturt Street on the first Tuesday in November. You will be seeing the fascinators, you will walk into shops and people will have the floral arrangements.

Cindy McLeish interjected.

Juliana ADDISON: Sorry, Cindy, I am sure you wear a fascinator to work on cup day.

A member interjected.

Juliana ADDISON: Exactly. There is so much excitement at around 3 o'clock on that race day, and it is really important to local communities. It is no secret that Victoria is proudly the pre-eminent

racing jurisdiction in Australia, and there is a good reason for that: the racing industry contributes \$4.7 billion in economic activity to Victoria and sustains almost 35,000 full-time equivalent jobs. As a proud regional Victorian I am delighted that 9000 of these full-time equivalent jobs are in regional Victoria and that over \$1 billion of economic activity is generated within regional Victoria through our racing industry.

It is imperative that our government continues to support our racing clubs and helps them ensure the safety and wellbeing of all racing patrons and participants, and it is especially important to name workplace safety for the racing industry employees, such as stewards and jockeys, and also for our horses and dogs. There are several areas of a racecourse which are in practice off limits to the general public during a race meeting or a trial meeting. As the member for Ovens Valley explained, under the Major Events Act 2009 participants in this area, including animals, are protected but only during the eight specific spring carnival events. Racing in Victoria is so much more than just the spring carnival. Just to give you an example, there will be 215 race meetings held in Ballarat across our six racecourses over a year. The Major Events Act only covers eight races in Melbourne when there are 215 races in my region that deserve protection, and those workers do deserve that protection as well.

Stupid and dangerous behaviour, such as running onto a track during a race, is thankfully rare, but when it occurs the potential consequences are severe. That is why this bill, the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, intends to extend similar protections to those already in place under the Major Events Act to now cover all race and trial meetings across the state. It does this by amending the Racing Act 1958, detailing the requisite offences as well as enforcement protocols and penalties. The proposed offences cover (1) unauthorised entry into restricted racing areas as well as disrupting a race or trial meeting from within a restricted area, (2) throwing or kicking a projectile in a restricted area or causing an object to fly in and (3) climbing a fence or barricade which separates a restricted area. These offences include commonsense exceptions and defences so commonplace and emergency activities will not be impacted. Areas which would be restricted are also in practice already inaccessible to the public during an event – for example, tracks, parade rings, stables and kennels.

This bill will also provide for enforcement of the new provisions by police officers, if present, or suitable persons appointed as authorised officers, such as race day stewards. There are practical arrangements informed by extensive consultation with the industry, and in instances when offending is repeated or its consequences are significant, the bill provides for courts to impose bans and orders of up to five years applying to specific meetings or meeting categories.

This bill does not affect the enjoyment of racegoers and does not prevent protests in public areas; rather, it provides strong deterrents to dangerous behaviours in off limits working areas – deterrents that are already in place, as I said, at other major sporting events. These amendments will protect the health and safety of participants, patrons, officials and animals during the many events held in Victoria, Australia's pre-eminent racing state.

The social impact of the racing industry is also significant. It supports the good work of over 1200 charities, and hundreds of community and not-for-profit organisations benefit from the use of racing facilities. These clubs are key facilities for local communities. I know my former school still have their year 12 dinner at the local trotting club and there are weddings at the local greyhounds and stuff like that, so it does provide an important social space for people to celebrate important events. That is why it is also important that we make sure that our racing industry can support local communities.

I would really like to thank all the CEOs in Ballarat. CEO Belinda Glass from the Ballarat Turf Club and her great team put on a great show. The Ballarat Cup is the last race of the Spring Racing Carnival in November each year; you are all invited to come. Manager of Ballarat greyhounds Jodie Faralla – I look forward to catching up with you soon. And of course the CEO at the Ballarat & District Trotting Club Paul Rouse and the board, David Young and all the team, thank you very much for the important

work you do. I look forward to catching up with you, because what you do is so important for my community. I commend the bill to the house.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (10:38): This is an important bill for the racing sector, the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. I will note that this is my second contribution on this bill. The last speech in the last Parliament I made was on this bill and the first that I am making in this Parliament is also on this bill. That is disappointing, because the government really did not take it seriously enough to actually get it through the last Parliament. They introduced it and did not debate it until several weeks later. I think the racing industry were very disappointed with that. To be debating it as Parliament is about to finish, when on that same day we had so many valedictory speeches – I was really disappointed that the government chose the timing that they did. I am pleased to see it is early up this time. It is such an important bill for this sector that the coalition does support it. We understand and we know that it has been driven by the industry. There have been well-documented events over the years that have really jeopardised the health and safety of so many people involved – not just the horses but the jockeys, participants and officials – because of bad behaviour of patrons, so there do need to be changes.

The key area here is to provide greater accountability and responsibility for those attending the races. Now, most of us will attend races and behave well – some people perhaps overindulge in some areas, but typically people behave – but you get that very small group that go there to disrupt the races. Whether that be a greyhound race, trotting race or other gallops, there are people that do the wrong thing at times. I know that the clubs go all out to try and prevent things from happening. They understand the seriousness. They know what it is like when a horse gets spooked and what a horse can do – it can not just throw a jockey but it can bolt, and it can bolt through fences depending on what has happened. It can be really quite distressing for everybody involved, including the animal. It is just so important that we have these changes to make it easier for clubs, because they do the right thing.

I look at the number of picnic clubs that I have in my area – and I know that a lot of them are surrounded by houses – and what they have to do to make sure that participants at the races do not interact the wrong way with the floats coming in. There is always a separate float entrance. There are always restrictions about who can go where and why, and that is not just to maintain some sort of order, but that is to protect the health and safety of those who are at the racetrack. You would think, actually, that this does not need to be legislated, but sadly, it does, because we have too many instances of people not doing the right thing. As I have said, animal welfare and the safety of the participants is a concern.

The racing industry itself is particularly important to Victoria. It was estimated a couple of years ago at \$4.3 billion. That is a very large industry, with 33,000 equivalent full-time jobs. If you look at the types of jobs that we have, you have those that you think about – obviously the people at the racetracks. The CEOs of some of the larger racetracks have the staff because they have got to put the events on. You will have catering staff, but you also have jobs in the breeding industry, and the breeding industry is particularly important in country Victoria. Whether you are trying to breed the next Melbourne Cup winner – sometimes that does not happen, and you might just breed those horses for running around on the picnic tracks. It is particularly important to consider all of these different groups that are involved in the industry in terms of who is employed, because it is really quite wide.

Not only that – there are so many volunteers. I look again at all of the clubs in my electorate, even the larger clubs like Yarra Valley Racing – which is not a picnic track, it is a larger club – and the volunteers on the boards and the committees and the work and the effort that they put in to bring about a great event for people. Every weekend there are racing events on, not just in my electorate. The committees do a really great job and put in so many hours.

For small towns racing has such an important economic contribution – all of the food, all of the catering, the marquees, the hiring. They bring people. The bus companies drive people from the centre of town to the tracks. The bus companies bring people from Melbourne. We rely so heavily on those patrons to really provide that economic boost. I know that every time there is a picnic race, whether it

be in Mansfield, Merton or Healesville, the accommodation is full, because people come and they make a big weekend of it. We have so many bucks and hens nights, and people come out for great fun. Occasionally those events do get a little bit out of hand, and people might try and run on the track and places where they should not, but I think the clubs have pretty well worked it out – that if you allow running up the track at a certain time, that allows that activity and curtails it.

I have represented some of the larger tracks in Seymour and Kilmore as well. I have got greyhound racing at Healesville on a straight track. It is a really great track there. They have so many events. I have got harness racing in the Yarra Valley. I see so many of these different events and understand the importance to the towns and the economic contribution.

Specifically around the bill here, the changes are driven by the industry. One of the key points – and it has been mentioned – is we have these requirements already in the Major Events Act 2009. There are eight events associated with the spring carnival, but there are so many more events that happen on long weekends, over summer, at different times of the year, where they draw large crowds, and they need the same protections. This bill extends or duplicates those types of crowd management provisions across the sector. The bill seeks to include these specified crowd management provisions so that the conduct is prohibited at all race meetings, as I said, across the board and at official trial meetings. Trial meetings actually can be quite large. I remember going to my first trial meeting. It was when I was at university. It was a very long time ago, and it was a very large one at Flemington. I can remember Kingston Town was quite proud of itself at the time. But the crowds were really large, and things can happen at those events as well, so I was pleased to see that this does include the trials.

This is about setting the standards for behaviour at specific locations on a course. That might be adjacent to mounting yards. It can relate to behaviours like throwing or kicking projectiles – it could be a footy but it could be a full bottle of water or it could be a bottle of beer; it could be something that is glass; people do very much the wrong things – and climbing on fences and barricades. They cross those, and that is just not on. We do need these protections because, as I have said, if a horse gets spooked from a projectile or from people climbing, people doing the wrong thing, it can have really horrible consequences.

There is one area of concern: that the second-reading speech says that these laws are to be enforced by police. I know that police are not always present at the races, at the non-major meetings. So in that case the enforcement falls to authorised officers. The chances of those being at Merton's one-day event on New Year's Day are pretty slim. In my area Mansfield get a couple of picnic events, Yea get a handful, Alexandra get a handful. Often we need minimal disruptions because they can tend to get washed out or be too hot and be called off. When they are on, they just need all of the support that they can have.

This bill here is a deterrent for poor behaviour, and I hope that it does make a difference, because we do know that there are so many people out there who do not support the racing industry. I hope that a number of new people, certainly on the government benches, that have been elected understand the importance of the racing industry, not just in metropolitan Melbourne at those big events but also what an impact it has for country Victoria. Around the cabinet table I would like to see much greater support for racing, and I would really urge the Minister for Racing to continue to find funding to support the small clubs, because they cannot do it alone; they do need those grants. In particular I would like the minister to have a look at how he can support the industry by providing funding to evaluate the economic contribution that racing makes to a town. It was put to me 10 years or so ago that every race meeting in Healesville had a \$300,000 economic contribution to the town. That is important. It would be much more now, but if we know those figures, I think it provides so much more support for an industry that needs supporting.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (10:48): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, and can I start by thanking the Minister for Racing for his work on this bill. This is a really important bill because it is about safety of people and animals, but we are also talking about people's workplaces as well, which is a really important factor in all this. We know that

over recent years there have been some incidences of unauthorised entry to racetrack areas during the running of a horserace in Victoria. Although it has not happened that often, there is concern about the potential consequences of somebody doing that, which could result in serious injury or death to people or animals, participants and officials. As I said, these are workplaces. People need to feel safe in their workplace, so officials and people working around racing tracks should have that safety aspect taken into account.

The bill amends the Racing Act 1958 to provide for offences and penalties to ensure the safety and welfare of all patrons and participants, including animals, at all Victorian race meetings and official trial meetings. There has been a great deal of consultation on this bill, which is really good. We have looked at what industry have had to say on this, and we have heard a bit about that already in the chamber. But I want to point out that this is not about stopping people from protesting at races. They can still protest, and I am a big supporter of protests when they are necessary, but it has to be done in a safe way so that we do not have foolish and dangerous activities from people that put other people in danger, basically, and animals. As I said, this is not about getting rid of protests, this is about protecting everyone and preventing those harmful acts from occurring.

In Geelong we have the Geelong Racing Club. We hold the Geelong Cup, which is highly valued in my community. It provides jobs and boosts our economy. We have tourists coming in. People want to go and watch the Geelong Cup. But it is much more than that, and we have heard that from previous speakers. It is about that sense of community; it is about socialising in a different environment. It is a huge deal in Geelong to go to the Geelong Cup. For many people it is about the social aspect, but it is also about the cup sweeps that we have for the Geelong Cup and obviously the Melbourne Cup. The Geelong Cup is in October and then we have the Melbourne Cup in November. They are real icons in our community, these races.

The Geelong Racecourse is one of the most significant regional racecourses in Victoria. It holds around 25 meetings a year and, as I mentioned, the Geelong Cup as well. As I said, people flock to that race. People want to have a good time, they want to have a flutter and they want to enjoy the day, and we have heard about the festivities that go with that – picnics and all sorts of marquees and different things – and they do not want to see this foolish and dangerous behaviour that is going to ruin everyone's day and also, potentially, harm people or animals. I am a big supporter of animal safety. I think animals need to be protected, but when we have these protesters outside of racing clubs, for example – which they are more than entitled to do – some of their actions can also impact the safety of animals during their protests. They can protest around the different areas that are not restricted – it is the responsibility of the club to deal with that, as it always is – but I know in my community the people of Geelong do not want those sorts of things happening at our races, particularly big races like the Geelong Cup.

The Geelong Racing Club provides all sorts of opportunities in my community. We heard the member for Wendouree talking about the different events that these clubs provide for our community – the different charity programs that they have and family days. In Geelong the Geelong Racing Club is a really important icon in our community that people rely on, but it also provides the economic activity that our community needs. It creates jobs and the tourism side of it. People coming in, using our hotels and using our restaurants all bring that economy activity that we need in our community. Unfortunately, when incidents happen, like where someone has been injured or something happens to a horse because somebody has been an idiot basically, it really makes people think about whether they want to go to these things. So we need to have the mechanisms in place to deal with them and to prevent people thinking that they can go in and run across the track or throw something on the track. We need to have the preventative mechanisms in place to stop that from happening.

Obviously the racing industry contributes huge amounts of money to Victoria, and as I said, in Geelong it is around \$130 million a year that is brought into my community through the Geelong Racing Club, which is really significant. As I said, there has been a lot of consultation with industry. The opposition are supporting this bill; we are supporting the bill. I think it is really important that we continue to

ensure that we do have those safety provisions in place to prevent these things happening. The new offences contained in the bill are around unauthorised entry into restricted racing areas. We are not saying people cannot protest out the front or whatever, but there are unauthorised entry provisions that restrict people from going into those areas.

Offences include disrupting a race meeting or an official trial meeting from within a restricted racing area, throwing or kicking a projectile into or within a restricted racing area, causing an object to fly into or land in a restricted racing area and climbing a fence or barricade which separates a restricted racing area from a non-restricted area. We know that some people may not be protesting; they might just be an idiot who decides to run across the track or throw something onto the track or at a horse. I think the member for Eildon in her contribution talked about horses being spooked and those sorts of things and the danger of that. We do need to ensure that those preventive mechanisms are in place and that we keep those areas safe. They are workplaces. There are lots of people around. As I said, the Geelong Cup is packed with patrons wanting to enjoy the day, and if we do not put those preventions in place and an incident happens, it makes it very difficult for people to think that they can go and enjoy a race and not have these things happen.

We know how important it is. We have heard from the industry. The industry very much support this bill, so I think it is important for us as legislators to ensure that we are protecting our community. I know that my community in Geelong, Geelong Racing Club, their members and the trainers – everybody – are on board with this bill, because they understand the importance of it. I do think that this bill is really significant for my community, having such a big racing club in Geelong. I commend the bill to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just before I call the member, I remind members to acknowledge the Chair as they pass the end of the table.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (10:58): I rise to speak on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Racing Act 1958. It is a bill that will prohibit unauthorised access to certain areas of racecourses during meetings and official trial meetings, particularly out at country race meetings, because it already happens in the main racing arenas. The main purpose of this legislative change is to set a standard of behaviour at certain locations, such as around the track, mounting yard and stables – the restricted areas – but it is also to improve safety. Behaviours such as climbing fences adjacent to restricted areas or throwing or kicking projectiles into restricted areas are included in this legislation, as is the flying of drones over those restricted areas.

Those things sound like things you normally would never, ever do in an arena where there are animals, particularly horses, which get shocked and startled quite easily. But in this day and age many people do not understand the sensitivities around animals, so unfortunately, we have to put legislation in place to get, what seems to me, normal common sense. But it is more the disruptive and deliberate behaviours that this bill is probably really trying to address. It is really quite upsetting for people like me who have worked with animals all of their lives to think that people would deliberately cause intentional damage or harm to an animal.

When you look back, in 2010 in my part of the world a then 56-year-old full-time student from Melbourne ran onto the Warrnambool Racecourse only minutes before the Grand Annual Steeplechase. He was convicted and fined in the Warrnambool court. That was a deliberate act. He told the *Standard* he would do it again if it would end jumps racing. That is why this legislation is so important. Protesters believe the cause justifies the means, but it actually just as much endangers themselves or other patrons and officials and the horses. In recent years protesters have used drones at Warrnambool Racecourse, so I am also really glad to see this as part of the bill. The bill does not restrict people from protesting outside the race meeting, which happens every year, and I totally endorse the right of people to peacefully protest. That is a democratic right and not something that we

should stop. But having deliberate impact and causing unsafe issues to happen around people or animals is just abhorrent in my mind.

I look at the importance of racing in our region to families who run businesses, like tourism and accommodation businesses and hospitality businesses, and events like our May race carnival. The Warrnambool Racing Club has been going for 150 years, and this year on 18 March I will be celebrating with the Warrnambool Racing Club its 150-year anniversary. Congratulations to all of the people who have made that, over the years, a great club. To get to 150 years is certainly commendable. I wish them all very well for the celebration events, and I look forward to taking part in them as well, because Warrnambool is very fortunate to have the May race carnival. It contributes an enormous amount to, as I said, the economy. But 'economy' is a word that actually means 'the families who live in that area, who run the businesses, who educate their children'. Racing overall contributes \$112 million to the South-West Coast economy per annum. That is harness racing, which is \$19.1 million; greyhound racing, \$14.5 million; and horseracing – thoroughbred racing – which is \$78.6 million. That is just in the South-West Coast – \$112.3 million. That is huge. It employs 900 people in our region – community members who all work together to bring the racing events to be such a celebration and time to come together. There are 637 full-time people in the thoroughbred industry, 148 in harness racing and 114 people in greyhound racing – a huge amount, who are contributing to the wellbeing of our community.

Almost 30,000 people attended the three-day May race carnival last year – in 2022 – and every year it seems to get bigger and bigger. That carnival itself – the three-day carnival – which has the longest race in the Southern Hemisphere, which we are very proud of, generates \$15 million for the Warrnambool economy just over those three days and employs another 250 casual staff to cover that period of three days. Not only do we have the May races but we have got 20 race meetings in Warrnambool each year, with the Jericho Cup, which has started in the last five years, I think it is, and is going from strength to strength. Again, well done to the committee who started that. How well it is going is fantastic because of the enthusiasm we have from people like those committee members. The Lafferty–Thackeray day and the Koroit, Port Fairy and Woodford cups are other very well-known and well-supported race meets.

It is really disappointing that we have to get to this point where people will deliberately cause mayhem and put at risk – to try and prove a point – people's lives and animal's lives. I have spent a quarter of a century working with animals, and I worked so closely with vets. Every week we would work with vets. We would be up at 4 in the morning, making sure our animals were cared for. We would make sure the last thing we did at night was check them before we went to bed. Any sick animals we would be caring for with every tool we had available to us.

Animals are smart. They do not do what they do not want to do. Farmers know that and horse people know that, and it always astounds me that people judge industries that they have not necessarily been part of. I just encourage people to get involved. If you actually have a problem, get involved and see for yourself. You can address these problems, and that is what we have seen with the racing industry. They have just got continuous improvement going on constantly. They actually support this bill, as do we, and that is why we have a support position on the bill, because the industry has brought this forward so they can protect their animals – and people of course. But the fact is that horses are so well looked after by their trainers, their owners, their stablehands and their carers. Those people are not leaving the industry in droves because they are shocked at what they see and they hate what they do; they love their animals. They have chiropractors for their horses. They have acupuncture for their horses. They have remedial massages going on. It astounds me how much people who work with animals care about them and love them so and spend so much.

I used to say when we were dairy farming I spent more on my animals' health than I did on my children's health – probably because we had Medicare rebates and PBS, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, but it was true. We never hesitated if our animals needed to see a specialist. That was absolutely done immediately. So it always shocks me when we judge so wrongly that people are raping

and pillaging the landscape and being cruel to animals. It is a bit like parenting. We all absolutely adore our kids, and 99.9 per cent of people do the right thing. Some parents do terrible things, and we are all shocked. It is abhorrent, and we want to make sure that never happens. But you will never be able to legislate for the lowest common denominator's behaviour, unfortunately, and my message is, 'Let's get out there, embrace these industries and not judge without knowledge'. I love seeing this piece of legislation go through, because we are protecting our animals and protecting our people. But let us stop judging the people who know the industry, and let us listen to those who actually work with the industry. Everyone can improve. No-one should be cruel to animals. Anyone who is should absolutely feel the full brunt of the law. But I embrace this legislation. I am very supportive, as is the industry, of this bill, and I look forward to seeing it enacted in legislation.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (11:07): It is a pleasure to speak today on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, and I would like to associate myself with some fine comments by colleagues from my side of the house, my friends the member for Wendouree and the member for Geelong, and also some of the passionate words from those on the other side of the house who bring a regional perspective to this debate and these issues. A few of us in this house had a few things going on in November last year, and it was a great privilege to be part of those in the run-up to election day on 26 November. But one of the real downsides for me – and I am glad that the member for Wendouree touched upon it – was the inability to get to the Ballarat Cup last year. I love country racing. It adds so much to the vibrancy and to the quality of life of communities around the state, and I look forward to getting back this year.

This bill is necessary. It is a commonsense set of measures. It will prohibit unauthorised access to restricted areas on Victorian racecourses, prohibit other dangerous and disruptive behaviour in or near restricted areas and provide for the enforcement of new provisions. The instances that this bill has been precipitated by are infrequent, but once is too many. It really risks inflicting harm on participants, whether that is horses, dogs, jockeys, those who ensure the safe and timely running of races or those who are there as spectators. We have heard a lot about the content of the bill, and I think that has been well put by both sides of the debate.

But it is still worth noting just the scale of the economic contribution of racing to Victoria. The Victorian racing industry generates nearly \$5 billion of value for our economy and supports nearly 150,000 jobs and participants. That includes 25,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and a disproportionate number of those are in regional areas. So I know that my regional colleagues the member for Ripon, the member for Geelong, the member for Wendouree and the member for Eureka understand the value of those jobs to their communities, as indeed do those around the house. Fifty-two per cent of the \$4.7 billion in economic activity generated by racing in Victoria does occur in those regional areas of this state, and racing is responsible for generating \$3.2 billion of expenditure in Victoria, 65 per cent of which is in regional areas. It is in those marquees. It is in the catering. It is in the stewarding. It is in the young men and women of country Victoria who work at stables as stablehands and in the breeding programs that we have in our state.

I know firsthand just how important racing is in fostering a sense of belonging and community in small towns. As a proud former resident of East Wimmera I have spent far too much time at racetracks at Avoca, at Ballarat, at Dunkeld, at Stawell, at Great Western, at Ararat and closer to Melbourne at Healesville and at Yarra Glen. The member for Ovens Valley made a really good point about the value of picnic races to our country communities. I think it may be in the member for Euroa's district, but the picnic race at Merton that goes by once a year puts towns like Merton on the map in the Goulburn Valley. These are really profoundly important events for country communities. The stables which are based in small towns are big employers in places like Stawell and Ararat and Ballarat. I know firsthand how many jobs are created by those employers and how important they are for young people entering the labour market to give them good local employment. They also add to the recognition and promotion of those communities around the state. These are televised national events that invariably

invoke where the trainers and where the horses have come from. I think that sort of promotion and marketing dimension of the industry to regional and rural Victoria cannot be underestimated.

As I have alluded to, I have got that personal experience of country race meets. They are great fun. They are wonderful opportunities to get out to country Victoria, and I join with those who have spoken already in encouraging all members here to give it a go. When you are one, two, five slabs deep, as some groups can be at the end of the day, it is fun and games until someone hops on the racetrack and decides that it is a great idea to do the last 100 metres with or without clothes. It might be fun at the time in the addled state of mind of those who are doing it, but there is a real risk of harm.

You will have to forgive me – I am a former teacher – but for me the reason why this bill is so necessary is that it is a set of commonsense measures, and I thank the minister for bringing it to the house. It is a question of physics. Momentum equals velocity times mass. If you will forgive me, I have not weighed a horse myself recently, but I am led to believe that your average thoroughbred might be 500 kilos. A decent thoroughbred can get up to about 60 kilometres an hour, so if we boil that down to a speed of metres per second, that gets you to around 16.5 metres per second. If you have got 16.5 metres per second and a 500-kilo thoroughbred, that gives you a velocity of 8332 kilometres per second or Newton-seconds. If you are a slightly inebriated participant at a country racetrack and you have taken the questionable decision to get across the fence and get on the straight, 8330 kilometres per second or Newton-seconds of momentum coming down the track towards you is a profoundly good reason why this bill is a necessary measure. In short, the provisions contained within this bill are a very sensible set of measures that will empower local officials and keep all participants on a racetrack safe – in addition to the eight Victorian major spring racing carnival events that are already covered by similar provisions.

I think it is important to pick up on the comments that my colleague the member for Geelong made – that this bill does not tamper or stomp upon the capacity of people to protest. Legitimate protest against racing – although quite why you would want to do that is beyond me – is still enabled by this bill. But it is not about protests. Those who want to register their views are free to do so, but not in a way that puts horses, jockeys and other participants at risk. There is a certain irony about protests that could lead directly to harm.

I speak as a resident of Greenvale and a member of the Greenvale community, and I know that they care deeply about equine health and wellbeing and the treatment of our thoroughbreds. I want to thank the Minister for Racing for coming out with me before the election to Greenvale to visit Living Legends in the Woodlands Historic Park, which I waxed lyrical about in my first contribution to this place yesterday. It is 1000 acres of beautifully preserved bushland 20 kilometres from Melbourne, and one of the most wonderful parts of that park is the presence of Living Legends, which was established to nurture the deep connection between the community and our racehorse champions and promote life after racing for all horses. It is a retirement home for champion racehorses, including Fields of Omagh, who won the Cox Plate; Melbourne Cup winners Brew, Almandin, Efficient and Prince of Penzance, which was of course ridden by Michelle Payne in 2015 – who could forget; and, as a child of the 1990s, it is the resting place of Might and Power, Saintly, Doriemus and Northerly, who saw out their dotage in comfort, being cared for by the wonderful team at Living Legends.

I want to particularly thank Professor Andrew Clarke, the chief vet of Living Legends and the CEO, and the team, who provide a safe, nurturing home and above all a home where animal welfare is at the pinnacle of everything they do. They support school students with excursions, providing that experience in the bush so close to the city. They support the next generation of vet students coming into the racing industry by giving them that firsthand experience of equine health. They care deeply for their horses and their welfare, and I just want to endorse the work that they do. In our hospitality sector Living Legends is an important employer. It is a great contributor to our local economy, and it was justly recognised as the Hume Business of the Year last year, which was a wonderful endorsement of the work they do.

I just want to conclude my comments today by coming back to the original point. These are a commonsense set of measures that will really, I think, clear up a couple of loopholes that exist in country racing and in non-metro meets around Victoria to stop the kind of behaviour that we have seen a little bit too often at some country race meets – Penshurst and others, in recent years – the kind of actions that the member for South-West Coast and the member for Eildon have talked about. These need to stop. I am grateful for the deep interest of the minister in equine health and animal welfare. The provisions in this bill go a long way towards improving those around Victoria. I thank him for his interest. I would love to have him back at Living Legends at any time he can spare. He knows as well as I do the scones are as good as the animal health care that is provided. I thank the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (11:17): There has been a lot of talk today about how racing, particularly country racing, is such a vital part of life in the bush. This bill will enhance the community's safety whilst they are enjoying this pastime, and not just in terms of the economy either but in terms of the social fabric in small towns right throughout the state – not just in my electorate of 36,500 square kilometres but right throughout the state. In fact the Annabelle Cleeland Euroa Cup was held at the well-loved Benalla racecourse recently in torrential rain, but as I understand it, it was a terrific day. Country racing in places like Mildura; Manangatang, where my favourite horse, named after my home town Bannerton, bred and owned by Tony Natale and Charlie Camera in Happy Valley, won the cup in 2022 – it was a glorious day post COVID; and of course many other country race meets like Wycheproof, Donald and even the world-famous Patchewollock sheep race contribute more than just racing to these towns. If you have not been to the Patchewollock sheep races on the weekend of the Patchewollock Music Festival, I invite you to. It sounds mad, and it absolutely is, but it is a great time. It is a chance to frock up, get out and have fun. They bring visitors to the area and, as has been spoken about before on both sides of the house, enormous economic benefit to all towns that offer country racing.

Whether it is gallops, trots or the sheep races, racing really is an institution in Victoria. However, after two years of no crowds due to COVID, racing clubs in my electorate have been affected and inundated by flooding now, which is unfortunate. As I spoke about, iconic country races such as the Wycheproof Cup were called off with only a week's notice, which is really hard. Meanwhile, there is no danger of anything going into unauthorised areas, or any area for that matter, in Mildura at the moment, which has recently been inundated by Murray River water during our recent flood event.

The Mildura Harness Racing Club, headed up by their president Pud MacDonald and his team, is a very hospitable racing club and is growing at a huge rate, going from 24 meetings a year to now 45 meetings a year, and more often than not – most of the time – that is a 12-race program, 45 weeks of the year, with average prize money of about \$85,000. Most of those trainers, drivers and horse breeders are local, but they do come from Bendigo and they come from right around our tri-state area. Female drivers are not catered for at this stage, because it has been 20 years or more since the harness racing club has had any sort of upgrade, going from a tiny facility like a shoebox for a single female driver to now needing to accommodate at least nine. That is right now, but into the future that area is growing as well. They are in desperate need of more stables to make sure the horses are able to be properly cared for and so that enforcing this bill can actually be practicable, because at the moment it is cramped, there are people everywhere and it is hard to enforce – not to mention they have been out of their admin building, which has been condemned since a flood event again in November. So things are hard, but they push on. They are resilient in the true sense of the word, and we will keep pushing on, because it is such an important part of life in regional Victoria.

Country races of all disciplines, like I said, are an important part of rural life. Protecting this is vital and protecting the people that enjoy the races as well as the horses, the breeders, the drivers and the jockeys is as well. This bill seeks to do that, which is why we are in full support.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarnait) (11:22): I am delighted to rise to speak on this bill, and I can ensure the member for Eildon that this side of the house and this government absolutely support the racing industry in Victoria. Indeed I do not know that there has been a government in the history of this state

that has supported the racing industry like the Andrews Labor government has. That is why I am so delighted to rise and speak on this bill, which has been designed in consultation with Victoria's racing industry. Indeed I would describe this bill as a commonsense bill, as others have. It will go to prohibiting unauthorised access to restricted areas of racecourses and also official trials, and as I think the member for Ovens Valley spoke about, that is a really important part of this bill as well. Particularly leading into large races, trials can be attended by large numbers of patrons and obviously large numbers of horses and large numbers of staff, so that is a really important part of this. The bill also prohibits the kicking and throwing of projectiles into these areas. I cannot quite put it as the member for Greenvale did as to why this is so important, so all I will say is: unauthorised access to racecourses is bad, and do not do it.

What this bill does not do, as was so eloquently put by the member for Geelong, and what it is not designed to do is limit protest. Those on this side of the house, including me, agree and support peaceful protest; indeed I have taken part in more than a few, as the member for South-West Coast, I am sure, has as well. As we attend the May races in Warrnambool each year, we walk past many people that are engaging in peaceful protest, engaging with people and having conversations as they enter the racecourse. That is peaceful protest. What is not peaceful protest and what is not acceptable is the unauthorised access to racetracks and to areas in racecourses that puts in jeopardy the lives of horses and the safety of horses – but not just horses – staff, officials, patrons and others attending the racetrack as well. That is what this bill is designed to stop. As I said, I do not think the aim of this particular piece of legislation could be clearer: it is all about safety. It will not only protect jockeys and those attending races, but it will also protect the stars of the show, our equine athletes.

Like the member for Greenvale, I also spent far too much time in my youth and in my adolescence, and indeed leading up to my election to this place, at different race meets – regional and metro, but many, many race meets. Let us pluck a good country cup horse out of the sky: let us say Inverloch. We attend the Warrnambool races or indeed any other country cup during the year to watch the races and to enjoy the company of our family and friends – let us say, the Warrnambool Cup jumps. Inverloch goes to the front, as he usually likes to. They come around the bend. From the 200-metre mark he lets down and somebody jumps on the racetrack, for whatever reason that may be. I do not think that we could get a worse situation than that, and frankly I am not sure that we could get a more dangerous situation than that, on a race day. It puts in jeopardy the life of the horse, the jockey and the patrons surrounding that situation.

But what it also does – and, once again, the member for Geelong touched on this very well – is it puts in jeopardy the safety of the workers that are at that racetrack on that particular day. Every worker, irrespective of the industry they are in, deserves to go to and from a safe workplace. The Victorian racing industry generates \$4.7 billion in economic activity for our state's economy each year but it also supports, as part of that, 39,900 full-time equivalent jobs. As I said, workers in every industry deserve to go to work and be safe, and those protections are particularly important in an industry such as this. There are inherent health and safety risks in lots of different industries, and we could go through them, we could name them, but I think in this industry in particular those risks have another layer to them. A horse is not a piece of machinery that we can turn on and off. They can be volatile, which means that these protections are incredibly important. In recent years we have seen a number of instances of unauthorised access. They are rare but they do happen at Victorian racecourses. What this piece of legislation does is it really legislates for that, because one instance of unauthorised access is too many and the risks that it presents are too great.

The City of Wyndham, which is of course where my electorate of Tarneit is –

Paul Edbrooke: Great area.

Dylan WIGHT: Great area. It is quite often, in my opinion, the forgotten jewel in Victorian racing's crown. We have the Werribee Cup in December each year, a fantastic event, and broadening the scope of this legislation, or broadening the scope of what already exists, will now mean that the

Werribee Cup is covered by this particular legislation. I know that the Werribee Racing Club is incredibly supportive of that. But we also have adjacent to that facility and as part of that precinct the Werribee international horse centre. Many racing enthusiasts will know that when international raiders from Europe or from Japan come and they want to compete in our major races – the Cox Plate, the Melbourne Cup or the Caulfield Cup – their very first stop in this country is the quarantine centre at Werribee. There are also breeding facilities adjacent to that as well. So many of our past and future champions have passed through that precinct. This Victorian government, the Andrews Labor government, has been supporting that precinct, as I say, since our election in 2014. The Victorian Racing Industry Fund has provided over \$1.6 million to the Werribee Racing Club to support eight infrastructure projects, with a total value of just over \$3 million. The VRIF has also supported 11 events at the Werribee Racing Club, with just under \$270,000 worth of investment.

In addition, the government has provided \$4.95 million from the VRIF to support the equine limb injury prevention program. The equine limb injury prevention program is jointly funded by the University of Melbourne, Racing Victoria and the Andrews Labor government. The program is being led by Dr Chris Whitton of the University of Melbourne and is providing findings that are leading to revised training and rest schedules for racehorses, ensuring that fewer injuries are suffered. The research program saw Australia's first standing CT scanner – at a cost of \$1.3 million – brought to Melbourne and located at Werribee, just in time for the 2019 spring carnival. So as I said, my area and my patch have left a lasting footprint in Victorian racing.

I spoke earlier about the health and safety concerns for workers at these race meets. It is not just the workers that are directly involved in the Victorian racing industry; more than 650 community and not-for-profit organisations share racing club facilities in Victoria, and over 1200 charitable organisations are supported by the racing industry. Those workers can be on course on any given day, whether it is for official trials, whether it is for race meets or whether it is for any other activity. Nearly one-third of Victorian racing clubs have partnerships with education institutions, and 80 per cent of racing clubs hire out oncourse facilities for private and corporate use. So as I said earlier, the Victorian Labor government is committed to ensuring the Victorian racing industry remains a pre-eminent racing jurisdiction in Australia.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (11:32): I rise to speak on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, which amends the Racing Act 1958 to limit access to restricted areas of racecourses during horse races. It makes sense to keep people away from the dangerous hooves of fast-moving racehorses, and existing trespass laws and 'Keep out' signs do exactly that. It is reassuring to hear from other speakers that occasions of trespass are indeed rare in Victoria. It is probably fair to say that people who are drunk or for whatever reason are stumbling into these areas in the future probably are not going to be aware of the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill. So I wonder really about the purpose of this. The provisions of this bill can also be used – despite statements to the contrary – to stop protesters from interrupting race meetings.

Horseracing is an interesting business. It is no longer just a bit of fun; it is a big business involving a lot of money, most of which – an increasing amount – is bet online. It is strange how often racehorses crop up in stories of those with ill-gotten wealth. They often seem to like to spend their money on racehorses along with motor yachts and fast cars. With so much money at stake, really, the horses do not stand a chance – and this bill shows that perhaps the protesters do not either. This sort of legislation that we might see for vital infrastructure like airports now seems to be being used to protect the horseracing business. It would be bad for business of course to remind spectators that horses are often raced until their lungs bleed or until they break the fine bones in their legs, in which case they are often shot. In fact I drove the ambulance once at a race meet – it was the Werribee Cup – a long time ago. People probably commented that the ambulance was a bit erratic on that day. I remember seeing the green tent go out. I do not recall the fate of the horse, but it was a particularly grim day. Of course, more often than injuries, if horses just lose too often they wind up in tins of dog food. None of this is

shown on the ads for the Spring Racing Carnival. In some ways I think horseracing would be more popular in the city if it was replaced with bicycles.

In any event, bespoke anti-protest laws disguised as safety legislation are not a new thing for this government. We have just seen it introduced recently to protect the native forest logging industry – we opposed that, and for the same reason we will oppose this bill.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (11:34): I could try and make some sense of that, but I am not sure I can. I am absolutely excited to rise and speak on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. From the looks of those opposite – my esteemed colleagues on the other side of the bench – I think they are as confused as I am about that previous speech.

It does not matter where you stand as far as your ethics and morals in the racing industry go, whether it is the dishlickers – the greyhounds – the horses or whatever; it is legal and people enjoy it, and it is part of our community. I cannot say that I have been to many horseraces but when I have, it generally has not been for the horses; it has been to have a couple of sherbets with friends, enjoy my community and have a good time – and responsibly enjoy a couple of sherbets too. The fact of the matter is that this is a bill we have introduced with consultation with the racing industry – wide consultation – to make sure that we are making this industry as safe and responsible as possible.

For years the Victorian racing industry has tried in a number of ways to make sure that they are doing the best thing by their workers, by their animals and by their jockeys and competitors. The worst thing you will ever see is someone putting all that at risk by doing something really stupid. As the member for Tarneit said, and as many of us can agree on this side of the house, a peaceful protest is a wonderful thing – and it is a way that we shift different paradigms in our democracy. But when you have one stupid idiot jump out on a racecourse, endangering the lives of every single jockey and every single horse and themselves, and people peacefully watching that event, that is a time where we need to look at rules and policies and regulations to make sure that does not happen and we prevent it from happening at all costs, because these things are potential powder kegs for disaster. You can go from, 1 minute, people enjoying their time, enjoying a weekend at the races – whether that be at the Yarram races or at all of those different regional areas which have races, and they raise a lot of funds regionally from those events as well – to an event where you have made the front page of the paper and someone has been killed and the animal has been put down.

The other part of this bill that is very important is how we are engaging experts to ensure that animal welfare is at the front of mind of racing organisers and the competitors. That CAT scan machine worth just over \$1 million is an amazing piece of technology. I have never imagined a horse going into a CAT scan machine. I am not sure. I might have to google it later. I imagine it is a fairly decent piece of machinery, but I am not sure too many states or nations would have that technology. That is another way to ensure – via this government – that we are looking after the welfare of these animals. Regardless of your thoughts on racing, there have been improvements over the last decade to make sure we are as responsible as possible.

The Victorian Racing Industry Fund has provided \$1.6 million, as we said, to the Werribee Racing Club alone. Across the state that figure is much, much more, and the VRIF has also supported 11 events in that area. The government has funded just under \$5 million – I think it is \$4.95 million – to support the equine limb injury prevention program, and that is jointly funded by the University of Melbourne, Racing Victoria and the Andrews Labor government. The one person I am missing today is the former member for Yan Yean, because whenever we spoke about racing, she was very, very enthusiastic about this and had some great tales, some good stories, that would have us all in stitches. However, I know she is probably watching this, and we all know she probably is. I will be getting some comments later, and she will be able to share some stories. This program is being led by Dr Chris Whitten of the University of Melbourne, and those findings are going to inform our decision-making for the future of this sport as well. I say for the third time, regardless of your thoughts on this sport, it

is legal, and like anything, if we are not moving forwards, we are going backwards. We really do need to make sure that we support these sports going forwards to make sure they are safe for everyone.

We have heard a couple of members talk about the fact that there are over 30,000 full-time jobs in the racing industry, and you see that throughout the regions; you see that in metro areas at metro races as well. But one of the things that I think is underestimated or overlooked at times is who these workers are. For a lot of us, we know our job is secure. The racing industry does provide secure jobs at the moment, but with the government investing in this industry we are ensuring that those jobs are as secure as ever, and we are building that industry. It is an industry that makes over \$2 billion a year, and it is very important to this economy. Nobody in this chamber, Greens or otherwise, can deny that. You can have your thoughts about these quick solutions – ‘Let’s ban coal’, ‘Let’s ban gas’, ‘Let’s stop racing’ – but it is not quite as simple as that. In hearing some of those quick solutions to very complex problems yesterday – and it does not work out like that – I was reminded of a time when the Greens political party held a protest at Hazelwood power station. If the members opposite would allow me to just go off track just a little bit, they were camped out at the caravan park next to Hazelwood power station and they were protesting coal power. Okay, that was their right. It was a peaceful protest. What was not expected was that one of the linesmen from Hazelwood got a little bit narky and decided to go out that night and pull the mains fuse from the caravan park. The irony of that caravan park being vacant the next day was lost on no-one. You cannot just stand here, as the Greens do, and say ‘We want this’, ‘We want that’ or like what is happening in federal politics at the moment where they are willing to throw the baby out with the bathwater for the sake of perfect.

Regardless of what you think of racing, it is legal, and it is the job of a good government, like the Andrews Labor government, to ensure that we are making it safer, that we are more inclusive and that we are talking to the experts in the field – whether it be on animal management, animal welfare, animal medical and health, whether it be our racing colleagues or whether it be people from interstate, nationally or even internationally – to make sure that we are at the absolute peak of providing the best we can for this industry. I know the previous minister has set the bar pretty high. Mr Pakula was very, very – what would the word be – excited about his horseracing and still is, and I think he was an absolute bonus for that industry. I went to a few events with him on the peninsula. His racing advice and his betting advice was rubbish, but he was very much into horseracing, and he understood the industry. I know the current minister does as well.

Can I conclude my remarks by thanking the current minister and the minister’s advisers, who were able to give me a really good run-down on this bill, not so much on dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s but on the actual practical effect that this bill would have and when it would have that effect for our racing industry and on the ground, where the rubber meets the road, at the racing carnivals as well. I also thank the department. They do a great job in putting these bills together. I know the amount of consultation that goes into a bill like this is massive. As I have reiterated many times, and not everyone will agree, but again, this bill, I guess, is a bit of a watermark for this new Parliament. It is about us all being together, all being able to have constructive debate and respecting each other’s opinions about certain things in our community that we do not agree on. That is something that is going to continue. This Parliament will be challenged. We will be challenged by bills much more controversial than this. It is important that we keep that debate at a respectful level, which we have not always seen. We have not always seen that. But I have confidence, looking across at my colleagues, opposition but also Greens and my Labor colleagues, that we can move forward and, with bills like this, have that constructive debate and come to a consensus for the good of Victorians. I will leave my comments there. I know so many people want to speak on this bill, and I will let them do that.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (11:44): It is my great pleasure to make a contribution today on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022, and I want to commence my remarks by dealing with some of the matters that were raised by the member for Brunswick. What we got today was the classic Greens speech, but it was sort of the Atkins version. It was all the protein and none of the fibre. It was the perfect Greens speech but just wrapped up in a 3-minute thought bubble. We had

bikes, we had greedy corporations, we had ‘We hate protestors’ – we had all of it, but it was just wrapped up in a 3-minute succinct little package of Greens unctuousness and angst, which is extraordinary because they are in fact the only people who oppose this bill in this chamber, as I understand it, and so the totality of their contribution, wrapped up as it was in a neat 3 or 4 minutes there, was made with really very little elaboration. There was not much in the way of fibre or carbohydrate there. It was all the protein, just the little bomb right in the middle of it, and boy oh boy it enlightened us exactly not at all.

This notion that this is, and I will paraphrase the member for Brunswick here, an anti-protest bill dressed up as a safety bill could not be further from the truth. That suggestion is laughable, as indeed are many of the contributions made by our friends over there. But this is of course about safety, and what we have seen, regrettably – not often, but we have seen it – is people engaged in behaviours on, near or around racetracks that are dangerous to animals and dangerous to the staff in those workplaces. We know that horseracing carries some inherent risks, and we, like any good Labor government, are going to do our level best to make sure workers in those workplaces are safe and get to go home at the end of their shift. The suggestion that this is somehow some anti-democratic crueLLing of public debate on these matters is just an absurdity, and I am disappointed that the Greens, who were the only people to oppose this bill when it came before this chamber in the 59th Parliament, have not sought to give us the benefit of their thinking about this and have simply just gone with the usual Greens tropes.

Paul Edbrooke: Three minutes.

Will FOWLES: Yes, 3 minutes of just the standard anti-corporation ‘We’re angry about the world’. I think he wanted bicycles to replace horses – was that in the race itself? A bicycle race on grass? It just beggars belief, frankly. But what it does give me an opportunity to do, apart from reflect on some of the contributions from the Greens party, is talk also about my idiot cousins. My idiot cousins are involved in a little punters club, and I will refer to them only by nickname. So we have got Freckles, Pincushion, Popcorn Teeth, The Masseuse and Fatso, and between them they are genuinely the worst punters I have ever spent any time with. Collectively the win rate would be lucky to be 3 per cent; it is just absolutely hopeless. One of them even works in racing.

Gary Maas: Which one are you?

Will FOWLES: I have got my own nickname, but that is unrepeatable in this chamber. One of them works in racing and still could not tip a winner to save himself. Extraordinarily, one of these idiot cousins has a stake in a horse called Kentucky Casanova. Apart from the name being stupid, unbelievably this horse was gelded a while ago and so is not looking at a big future in the stud farms. Despite that, when they got offered a big number, like half a million bucks, for the horse, they said no, and I’m like ‘What are you doing?’ Anyway, subsequent to that offer being refused stupidly, the horse has lost three races in a row, so they have literally seen the value tumble from 500 grand elite thoroughbred down to \$2000 carnival pony level. In a group of idiots that is perhaps the most idiotic effort, to have just basically handed back half a mil worth of horse in circumstances where the thing is gelded and it has got no post-racing career to –

Paul Edbrooke: What’s gelded?

Will FOWLES: What is gelded? The removal of the ability to procreate I think is perhaps the polite way of putting that. So can I say to Freckles, to Pincushion, particularly to Popcorn Teeth, to The Masseuse and to Fatso, you are very, very bad at what you do and you ought really stick to your collective day jobs, however useless they may well be.

But there are some serious elements to this bill. They include a new set of offences about entering a restricted racing area during a meeting; disrupting the meeting without a reasonable excuse; throwing or kicking a projectile into the meeting – this is really dangerous behaviour, where you could see jockeys, officials or horses injured; causing any object to fly into or land within a restricted racing area, which is important because drones of course are very readily weaponised – they would say as

part of a protest, but we would say as part of an unlawful and dangerous disruption to a lawful activity; and the last offence is climbing on the fence, barrier or barricade of a restricted racing area.

The penalties for these start at about – I just looked up the penalty unit in Victoria – \$184.92 at the minute, or at least until the end of this financial year, and I suspect that number will march up pretty significantly, given the current inflationary environment we are in. That means that the penalties for those five offences I have just outlined range between \$1800 and a bit over \$10,000. So they are significant fines, which is all about creating a significant deterrent to those who would seek to disrupt. Our hope as a government would be to never have to issue one of those fines. Our hope would be that this becomes theoretical only, that there is no need to have application because we do not see people engaging in this stupid, unlawful and dangerous activity. Whether they are making a political point or not, it is not fair to endanger the welfare or safety – the lives – of horses, jockeys, officials or anyone else involved in the racing industry. The racing industry is a very big part of the Victorian economy. It is an important employer in our state. It is inherently a thing that is enjoyed, admired and in many cases loved by so many across our community, and it is incumbent on all of us I think in those circumstances to make sure that the conduct of those race meets is safe.

I want to point out an important distinction here which I do not think has been addressed in the submissions that I have heard before you, Acting Speaker Halfpenny. There is a separate category for major sporting events – a separate set of rules – and they are in fact more significant and more onerous rules than the rules we are proposing to adopt in this place today. The reason for that is that major events, which are covered by the Major Events Act 2009, have a very, very important role in our economy and also are high-value targets, if you like, for those who would seek to disrupt. Whether it is the Australian Open or whether it is the grand final, a bunch of those very significant events need their own special statutory cover. Some race meets – obviously things like the Melbourne Cup – fall into that category. They get a separate set of protections that are not covered by the bill that is before the chamber today. What this bill does is pick up all of the other race meetings – so race meetings that are not classified as a major event under the Major Events Act. It is to those meetings that these rules apply.

Major events get a special bit of coverage and have a whole legislative framework around them to protect those events, given their significance to the state. There is one small exception to that, which is the offence of causing any object to fly into or land within a restricted area. That will apply to every single race meet, whether it is a major event or not, and that is because there is currently no such rule in the Major Events Act. If I could be so bold as to predict this: there may very well be a rule like that in the Major Events Act at some point in time because, as we are seeing with the proliferation of drones and their relatively low expense, we can reasonably expect that they will be used as a tool to disrupt by those who consider that making a political point in that way is appropriate. We do not have that view. Members on this side of the chamber do not have that view. Most of the people over on the other side do not have that view either. I commend the bill to the house.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (11:54): It is with some pleasure that I rise this morning on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. Indeed this is the second time I have had the opportunity to contribute to this particular debate. Of course this legislation did not make its way through this place and the Legislative Council at the back end of the last parliamentary term. I very much want to put on the record that the broader Geelong community is a place that has a very, very significant equine industry and has had for a very, very significant period of time. A quick snapshot of that industry very much highlights in a Geelong context but also in a Victorian context the significant size that it adds to our economy and the significant number of jobs that are either in part or in full created as a consequence of Victoria's very proud equine industry. In a Geelong context that equates to thousands of jobs when you look at it in its totality and indeed in a Victorian economy context to many hundreds of thousands of dollars. In a dollar context of course it is worth billions of dollars to the Victorian economy. When we look at racing particularly, Victoria has a very, very proud reputation globally of having a very strong and well-regulated racing economy.

The Victorian Labor Party has had a very, very long history of striving to improve every worker's rights, particularly when it comes to occupational health and safety. As we know from the history of this state we made significant gains as a labour movement in the mid-1980s with the establishment of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Of course that act applies to practically all industries in the Victorian economy, and indeed it applies to the racing industry. I think that has seen the rights and the opportunities, really, for workers to be able to participate in their workplaces throughout Victoria in all aspects of paid employment, ensuring that those people have a great chance of going to work, earning their wage and having that capacity to safely return home at the end of each day, at the end of each shift, and have secure employment. As a consequence of the introduction of those arrangements we have seen every single industry becoming practically safer in the Victorian economy, and that is a very proud and long reform in Victoria.

We know particularly in terms of racing we have got thoroughbreds that weigh up to 500 to 600 kilograms. We have got those racehorses on a racetrack moving at 50 to 60 kilometres an hour. In that context there are of course inherent risks to the animal and to the jockey. I think we need to have a set of arrangements in Victoria – and I would indicate that those arrangements ought be taken nationally and indeed internationally – to make sure that those that might have a different view about the contribution of the racing industry can protest and can do so legally and appropriately but in a way that does not place a huge risk on jockeys and indeed on those thoroughbreds that they race or see the consequences of spooked horses and what that might mean to those at the racetrack watching, whether it be as spectators, track attendants or others that are indeed at a racetrack, particularly in that competitive space where the horses are racing. This bill provides them that opportunity to be safe so that they are not spooked, as the spooking of those animals leads to those jockeys and others potentially losing their lives as a consequence. Every democracy is healthier when we do have the opportunity to peacefully protest, but of course that peaceful protesting must be done in a way that does not endanger people and that does not endanger those in their workplaces and others that might be enjoying, in this context, the sport that they very much love.

In a Geelong context of course we have got the Geelong Racing Club. That is a very historic race club that has quite a number of race meetings throughout the year. On some of their bigger race meetings on their racing calendar they will have up to 300 people working on that racecourse providing hospitality, but there will also be many thousands of jobs throughout the economy that are underpinned by that race meeting, even if those workers are not at that track on that occasion, whether they be vets or trainers or strappers or breeders or others that might earn their income in the broader equestrian economy, which is of course very, very strong. I am very proud to have the Geelong Racing Club in my community. I am very proud to see the contribution that they make to our civic life. They do create many, many jobs. Indeed the Geelong Cup, particularly as a lead-up event to the Melbourne Cup – many national and international horses use that race meeting as an opportunity in the lead-up to the Melbourne Cup, which is a fantastic occasion on the Victorian calendar. Of course we get a public holiday. Many people get along and watch it. Many people participate in sweeps and other things in their workplaces, and it certainly is the race that stops a nation.

I also know that we have many, many country race meetings, which are a highlight for those small communities throughout Victoria. The Andrews Labor government will continue to make appropriate investments into racing. We want to make sure that we have a globally strong industry and we are a place that globally has a strong reputation. I think the various legislative reforms that we have put in place strengthen that industry and make it an even stronger racing industry throughout Victoria and globally.

I am very proud to commend this bill to the house. I look forward to it passing both chambers in the near future so we can continue our proud reputation of supporting this industry and supporting workers to have a strong set of occupational health and safety rights so that they can return home at the end of a race meeting safely.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:05): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. It follows some great contributions in this house talking about the importance of the racing industry and the right to protest but also maintaining safety on all counts. But I had to bounce the ball and kick off, or giddy-up, on the contribution of the member for Brunswick, who got to about 167 seconds – this was the depth of the contribution – that basically fundamentally touched on, ‘Give those working people, who are underpinned by the racing industry, a bicycle.’ That was the message of the Greens to working people in regional and rural communities, in metropolitan areas – give them a bike. Forget about the tens of thousands of jobs, the billions of dollars in economic revenue. What is going to put food on the table is not a couple of bike tyres. That is the intellectual rigour that we bring into this place. The contribution did not reflect on the substantial work that is being done by Racing Victoria, the Victorian government and the University of Melbourne in equine safety and support or the investments, that I will go through, that really are leading the nation in equine safety and support in our communities. Of course those in the industry over a long period and a long journey want to see the best outcomes for their workers and for the animals that underpin the industry and make sure that we are always striving for a better outcome.

The Mordialloc electorate was littered with racecourses just over a century ago. There was the Mentone racecourse, the Epsom racecourse estate, where some fantastic horses were trained. There is a monument to Phar Lap at Braeside Park. And of course the suburb of Aspendale is named after a racehorse, Aspen, as the horses used to gallop around the track through there. So it is a part of our history out in the City of Kingston region and indeed across the south-east. Still some of the employment outcomes at Sandown and at Cranbourne and some of the events that are had there are quite significant across racing and the greyhound industry.

I want to take this opportunity to also recognise the contribution that has been made over a number of years by the Victorian government to the racing industry. Since we were elected in December 2014 more than \$126 million has been invested in more than 1200 projects that we have co-sponsored with the industry. We are fronting up not only in our words. The member for Eildon seemed to suggest that there was a bit of ambiguity or uncertainty in the support of the Victorian racing industry. The former minister Martin Pakula – who I do not think is tuning in, but we will give Marty a bit of a shout-out; he is always good for a quaddie and a tip – was a passionate advocate, if anyone saw him in action on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, with passion for jobs, the industry and support. You can see that investment being made. That is the partnership that Victorians have gone on in investing in jobs and creating opportunities in regional and rural communities. So \$126 million co-funded in that support. Some of the highlights include, just in the last 12 months, upgrades to the inside grass track at Warrnambool, which was \$1.57 million; upgrades to the synthetic track at Pakenham; and more than \$850,000 to support the kennels at Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Sale and Shepparton, just to name a few. So we are putting that investment into those projects that are really important as well.

But it is not to denounce some of the concerns and issues. We have seen that with some of the reviews that have been done of the greyhound and horseracing industry. It is not to denounce people’s right to express their view and to put forward their opinion on where they think our state should go into the future. Of course anyone on this side, anyone of the Labor movement, understands, appreciates and respects people’s right to freely voice their opinion in a safe and inclusive way. But where we put the lives and livelihoods of people at risk, directly undermining the safety of others in our community – that is where this bill is at the heart of this discussion. We have seen unauthorised access to tracks, to areas that put people at risk and put people’s safety at risk, and that has been of great concern. That is the nature of this bill. The fact that the Greens are fronting up to suggest that we are undermining protests is extraordinary. They turn up to try to be the workers’ friend for 5 seconds and then bail, then like today, make a 167-second effort that goes right away from working people’s values. It absolutely just shows their interest in this area and the lack of engagement and depth in this debate. It is a real concern to think about some of those discussions that have been had and the impact that they would have had on communities. But thankfully, with an Andrews Labor government majority, and

hopefully bipartisan support from the coalition, we can ensure that this industry is strengthened and protected into the future.

We want to make sure that at all times our trainers, our jockeys and our horses and animals are respected and protected as well, and this bill goes towards recognising that and bringing the level of enforcement and penalties – and enforcement is a really important element to this to make sure people are safe at all times. It is important to reflect – and I think it adds something to the debate – about the actual argument around equine safety and support. It is an important topic because we have seen this evolve over time, we have seen the discussion around jumps racing and we have seen the discussion around the horseracing industry as a whole. Evidence that was presented to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee at the last budget hearings talked about some really great leading work that is being done by the Victorian government. Just last year the former minister announced extra funding through the Victorian Racing Industry Fund for a new PET and a second CT equine-imaging unit for use by the thoroughbred industry. Importantly, the fund is a joint project between the Victorian government, Racing Victoria and the University of Melbourne, and it builds on research that is already underway and quite extensive into equine limb injury prevention. That program has seen nearly \$1 million invested by the Victorian government and then that significant investment by Racing Victoria and the University of Melbourne, taking that up to nearly \$2 million. That ability to have real-time data and access to those CT scanners and PET scanners, which are underway now and were to arrive for the spring carnival, is where you are putting practical solutions into action as well. I am advised that some of those really nation-leading technologies now are some of the first in Australia, so we are setting the tone in not just Victoria when all eyes are on our wonderful Spring Racing Carnival – you come out of the footy season and straight into the Spring Racing Carnival.

We see some substantial attendance across metropolitan Melbourne but then regional and rural Victoria that is almost all year round. For some of the events we see people piling into town. We want to get more people out of metropolitan areas into regional Victoria – that is going to be a really big focus going forward. We have seen that with Visit Victoria and the great campaigns. You can go out for a long weekend and you can check out some of the best that Victoria has to offer. Supporting the families, businesses and communities that underpin regional Victoria is a great way of the economy supporting those communities as well, not just a visit on racing occasions. You can go any time, but you might connect with a place and really fall in love with it and want to go back over and over again. That is the whole picture in this segment: tens of thousands of jobs underpinning generations in communities over and over and over, putting food on the table. Whether it is in science and technology or whether it is hospitality, events management and all of those inputs, the training and development outcomes are substantial, so we need to make sure we are providing support from a training and investment standpoint in the future.

Something that we all care so deeply about on this side is the protection of workers and their outcomes. I think that is really important of all the elements of this bill. It is complex policy that you bring together and you show as a government you are living your values and those actions as well. We do not walk away from some of these challenges; we lean in, we understand, we invest and we work with industry and some of the leading researchers in the nation, if not in the world, with the University of Melbourne.

This bill makes sense. It is coming back for its second go. Giddy-up – let us get it through the house into the future. There are a few more puns I wanted to run out, but that is probably where I will leave it. I thank the work of the former minister Martin Pakula not just in racing but across the Parliament – what an extraordinary leader in Victoria. You will see him at the trots, every single time with a hat and a coat, and off he goes. We really appreciate his service to Victorians. This is a great industry, and we want to see it thrive into the future. And to New South Wales: no chance. Melbourne is the destination – the Spring Racing Carnival. We own that space, all of Australia knows that and that is not going to change for decades to come.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (12:14): I rise to contribute to the Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022. Firstly, I would like to thank the member for Ivanhoe, the Minister for Racing, and of course his hardworking staff on their work on these vital updates to one of the most important pieces of legislation, the Racing Act 1958. As well as being a workplace for thousands of Victorians, our racing industry contributes upwards of \$4.7 billion to our economy. Of course racing has been part of our heritage, and I know with my upbringing in the western suburbs I was very close to racetracks and harness racing tracks, the royal showgrounds and Flemington Racecourse. As a younger person I and my brother and some friends of ours always used to either jump over the fence and get in free or cut a hole in the fence and get in free, so we were at the races on a weekly basis – not unusual for boys from Braybrook.

Regional racing is important to country towns and communities. It creates jobs; it creates productivity. It is a local celebration, and as the member for Mordialloc said, it is not just about the races; it is about getting to these towns and spending some money and having a great time. I know the local communities enjoy their local races and use them as very much a social event. Tabcorp Park harness racing track is in my electorate of Melton, and it is more than just a racetrack; it is a workplace, it is a recreational venue, it is a hotel, it is a conference space, it is a bar. Tabcorp Park is one of the most advanced harness racing tracks in all of Australasia. It is a fantastic place and a fantastic social gathering place.

Racing is indeed a worldwide market and attracts significant international investment and tourism. Horseracing events such as the Melbourne Cup and the Spring Racing Carnival draw large crowds of both local and international spectators. While international owners and breeders also participate in the industry by either importing horses or coming here to buy horses when the sales are on, they are also participating in the races, and we have seen over quite a number of years with the Melbourne Cup how international it is now. It is not just an Australian race, it is an international race.

I would like to acknowledge the remarks made earlier by the member for South-West Coast. I too am part of that club of those that have spent more money on our animals, our own horses, than we have spent on ourselves in regard to our health. I have owned horses for over 30 years, and they are quite expensive when they get injured or sick, but you do everything you can to try and keep them well. As I said, I have owned horses for a long time. I have been in racing syndicates with friends and family members. The member for Ringwood alluded to a syndicate of his cousins, and he said that they had a very poor win rate.

Will Fowles: Very poor.

Steve McGHIE: I can assure him the syndicate that I am in probably has a poorer win rate, but we keep going. It is every Saturday. It is like a magnet; they keep dragging money out of our pockets to have an interest in these beautiful animals running around a track. Of course this bill is to try and keep these animals safe by keeping people away from them and separating some people that think that they can go into areas that they should not go into.

I do want to make reference to the contribution from the member for Greenvale, his fantastic contribution and the earlier physics lesson that he gave us. I think it was fantastic. I used to love physics at school, and from his passionate contribution he obviously knows a lot about horseracing, the way that he was rattling them all off. It was fantastic. As a horse owner I can confirm that they are around 500 kilos and they do get up to speeds of at least 60 kilometres per hour, and they easily get spooked, unfortunately. They do have their own mind at times, and there is not a lot that we can do about that when a silly human being tries to do some damage and spooks a horse of such great weight and such great speed. People go to the races, and they can have a great time, but of course sometimes humans, when they go to the races, indulge in a little bit of alcohol. Most of the time it is men that try and put themselves in positions that they should not be in on a racetrack and that will certainly scare the great thoroughbreds. Also we have seen it at other race meetings, not only in thoroughbred racing but also

in harness racing, and there have been issues at the greyhounds also where people have jumped the track and scared the animals off.

This act predates the establishment of the TAB, which led the rest of the country in regulating and controlling the growing illegal betting industry. While it may have started just down the road from where I grew up, just near the Pioneer Hotel with its stunning views of Flemington Racecourse, we have seen significant and constant changes to this industry and improvements all the time. The member for Mordialloc referred to the amount of money that the Andrews Labor government has contributed to try and improve our racing industries, improve the facilities and improve the workplaces and make them safer. It is a fantastic industry with many tens of thousands of jobs and workers. We need to keep them safe, as we need to keep the animals safe, right across the industry. The changes to the Racing Act are necessary for a multitude of reasons: societal requirements, values and priorities, regulatory changes, protecting and enhancing the safety and welfare of animals, technological advancement, transparency, accountability and integrity. This act is one of the most regularly amended because of this, and always with valid and important reasons. We seek to strengthen the aging Racing Act by creating allowances within it. What we are trying to do here is to further protect Victorians at work by prohibiting unauthorised access to the restricted areas of racecourses during race meetings and also during official race trials and by prohibiting certain identified disruptive conduct and allowing for the enforcement of these new offences. These amendments are about protecting the workforce and horses and the other animals at other race meetings.

As I alluded to earlier, I have owned horses for over 30 years now. I currently have two retired thoroughbreds. I do not think they won any races; I am sure they did not win any races. Of course I know they are still costing plenty of money because they have got to be fed every day, they have got to be vetted all the time and they have got to have farrier treatment and all those sorts of things. So they are a costly beast but they are a beautiful beast, and we would not get rid of them for quids, even though it is costing us quids to keep them going.

Some of the necessary alterations include expanding the definition of a racecourse, which allows for the inclusion of areas that are necessary for safe conduct with greyhounds, training horses, land used by racers and the pathways that are required to connect them. So what you see is quite often you have got areas between the racetrack and racing stables – things like that – that are avenues for access for these animals to be able to get from one to the other. Clearly you try and keep spectators away from these restricted areas so, firstly, they do not interfere with the animal and, secondly, they do not spook the animal. We saw an incident at one of the Melbourne Cup events some years ago where someone did not jump the fence but waved quite a substantial-sized flag, and one of the high-priced horses – they are all high-priced horses in the Melbourne Cup, but I think it was an import and quite a favourite within the Melbourne Cup – unfortunately got spooked and put its leg through the fence. It seriously damaged its leg, and it had to be euthanised on that day. That was avoidable, that particular incident. Even just waving a flag near a horse can spook it and damage it, unfortunately.

Through these amendments we are seeking to create some sort of consistency and in some instances make the legislation easier to interpret, with an eye to improving compliance and the understanding of what we are trying to do here. These are industry-driven amendments with widespread consultation and acceptance. The community is on board with it all, the industry is on board, and these are amendments, as I said, that are approved widely. I have been to many, many race meetings right across the state, not only thoroughbred – harness racing, greyhound racing; I have tried them all. I have not backed many winners, but it is great fun. It is a great industry. I applaud these changes and amendments to the act, and I commend the bill.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:24): I am pleased to speak on this bill, and I think it is very important when we are discussing legislation to not create other purposes that are not actually those for which the amendments are being brought before Parliament. I have heard some suggestions around the chamber – not on our side of the chamber – that there may be some other interesting purposes for which these amendments are being brought forward, and I just want to make it clear that that is not the

case in this instance. I am being a little cryptic, I could say, and I am going to get to the point because it is obviously also important that we have clarity when we are discussing legislative amendments. This legislative program here, in terms of the bill that we are discussing today, is not about whether racing is or is not to continue, and so we have heard some who are wanting to go on these interesting tangents. But actually that is not what we are talking about today, and that will not be fulfilled in the discussion that we have here today. So I think it is important to park those various concepts because they do not in any way help in the discussion that we are having on the proposed amendments today.

Secondly, there have been some other suggestions regarding restricting protest rights et cetera, but I should clarify that this bill was never designed to deal with protest activity outside racecourses. This was never a consideration of this bill, so I think it really is not helpful to be importing such connotations or such elements. They certainly do not lend anything to the tenor of the debate. Fine, you can put forward what you like in the chamber; however, at the end of the day it is important to stay within the ambit of the bill if we are to fulfil the requirements of the amendments themselves.

So what are the problems that the amendments are trying or seeking to resolve? First of all, there have been several instances of spectators running onto the track at race meetings in Victoria and in other states and New Zealand. That is the problem. In Victoria incidents have occurred at Cranbourne, Moonee Valley and Penshurst, and it has been acknowledged around the chamber that these incidents are few; however, you only have to have one incident that has a devastating impact and that would be one incident too many. In that regard it is very important that we have appropriate controls in place now. I am going to speak further to those legal elements in just a moment because there are some important nuances when we are discussing the changes in front of us, because the areas that have been identified as restricted areas reflect the current operational arrangements that are already in place at racecourses across Victoria. So to suggest that we are expanding the areas that are going to be protected, so to speak, or where we want to prevent inappropriate behaviour is simply wrong.

Really the purpose of the legislation is to provide a clearer understanding for those who may not have already embraced what I would think is actually common sense – that you should not behave inappropriately and should not enter restricted areas. Why? Again this comes down to the problem that these particular legislative amendments are seeking to resolve – that is, that somebody or an innocent animal could get seriously hurt or, worse still, somebody could die. I hate to be so frank and so candid in our discussion, but we have to because we know that one cannot isolate the possibility of such an occurrence happening, particularly when there is reckless indifference in the way that someone behaves in and around a restricted area – noting what has been stated already, that this really is about health and safety. It is a workplace. I am reiterating some points that have already been made in the chamber, but they are very good and sound and rational reasons for making sure and for really making it very clear that there is no place for this kind of inappropriate behaviour.

Now, what sort of behaviour are we talking about? Again, it is coming back to the problem that the legislative amendments are seeking to resolve. The new offences will include unauthorised entry into a restricted racing area, disrupting a race meeting or official trial meeting while in a restricted racing area, throwing or kicking a projectile into or within a restricted racing area, causing an object to fly into or land in a restricted racing area and climbing on a fence or barricade separating a restricted racing area from a non-restricted area.

I think we can all agree that there are some very sound reasons as to why committing any of those offences would be extremely undesirable and on the potential ramifications of such behaviour. Simply no good will come from that behaviour, and it really is very much a validation of the reason for bringing about these amendments. Now, I should say there is a very important caveat – and that is, that a defence of ‘reasonable excuse’ will apply in respect of these new offences, which will cover situations such as retrieving a child or responding to an emergency. In that respect, certainly in terms of the drafting of the legislation, real-life circumstances have very much been factored in to make sure that the legislation does not extend beyond the purpose for which it has been designed. That should

give comfort to those who may have had concerns about what the ramifications or the potential contingencies of the application of these amendments might be.

I think the member for Brunswick was talking about – I may have misunderstood and do not want to misquote, and I am happy to be corrected – that somebody might not be aware of these particular amendments and so forth. Our having listed out the range or the ambit of the behaviour that is desired to be contained, so to speak, or to be deterred or that we are seeking to discourage but in the very strongest way, a reasonable person should be naturally mindful that that behaviour is simply unacceptable, and to suggest, ‘Oh, they may not have been aware of this’, or otherwise is fanciful at best, noting we have those necessary caveats in place which allow for the reasonable ramifications of human behaviour as well. I think that should bring some comfort to those who may have had concerns about how these legislative amendments might apply.

I did say that I would speak a little further to the nuances of the legislation, and I will do that now. We know that at most Victorian racing industry race meetings, people entering the premises do so having accepted any conditions of entry attached to their ticket and any accompanying risks, obligations and responsibilities as determined by the racing club managing the event at that racecourse. While this may provide an event manager with the ability to remove a patron who breaches the conditions, it does not – and here comes the clincher – provide a sufficiently clear and effective deterrent of dangerous and antisocial behaviour, and hence the rationale for bringing forward these amendments.

Now, there is a further nuance there. Civil actions for trespass or nuisance brought by the racing club, or body or person who manages the racetrack, against a trespasser could lead to an award of damages – yes. However, this is a costly and protracted potential remedy. Hence this is, I would argue, a far more practical and reasonable way of resolving the problems that have already been, I think, very well traversed in the chamber to this point in time. Accordingly, to conclude, it is very important – and I say this as humbly as I possibly can – that when we are discussing legislative amendments we do stay within the ambit and the purpose for which those amendments have been designed. Fundamentally this is about containing behaviour that is simply stupid, inappropriate and potentially extremely dangerous, so there is a sound rationale for these amendments.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:34): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Sonya Kilkenny:

That this bill be now read a second time.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (12:35): It is a pleasure to rise and lead the debate on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The purpose of the proposed bill is to deliver several legislative changes proposed in the lapsed Building, Planning and Heritage Legislation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. The amendments will acquit a 2018 government election commitment and aim to improve the clarity and operation of the building and planning systems. While we are not opposing the bill, we actually believe it can be improved, and as such, I move:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted and replaced with the words:

‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the minister – (a) consults with stakeholders including the Australian Institute of Architects about possible time delays incurred by the board in examining proof of insurance for architects already registered in Victoria; (b) provides clarity about the range of criminal

sanctions that would be considered in assessing registration applications; and (c) consults with green wedge advocacy groups and relevant local government areas on steps to further protect green wedge areas.'

I will come back to debate and argue for support for the reasoned amendment, but first I want to outline the purpose of the bill's main provisions and some of the areas of concern that we have and then argue the case for that reasoned amendment. The purpose of the bill of course can be found in the copy of the bill. The main purpose, I should say, is that it proposes to amend the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Surveying Act 2004 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987. In relation to the Building Act 1993:

in relation to the automatic mutual recognition of building practitioners, building employees and plumbers who are registered or licensed in other jurisdictions; and

to make miscellaneous amendments ...

In relation to the Architects Act 1991:

in relation to the automatic mutual recognition of architects who are registered or licensed in other jurisdictions; and

to make miscellaneous amendments ...

In relation to the Surveying Act 2004:

to amend the **Surveying Act 2004** in relation to the automatic mutual recognition of surveyors who are registered or licensed in other jurisdictions ...

And finally:

to amend the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** in relation to the protection of metropolitan green wedges and distinctive area landscapes.

There will be plenty on our side of the house that want to talk about green wedge protections there, and you will hear that through a number of contributions. I know the member for Nepean is keen to jump the speaking list to make a contribution on that, so I will be interested to listen to his contribution.

In terms of background, the bill seeks to clear a 2018 government election commitment and aims to improve the clarity and operation of the building and planning systems. The bill actually replaces a previous bill that expired at the table in the Legislative Council last Parliament. In the previous bill the government were proposing changes to the architects accreditation board, removing accredited architects from the board. The government has removed the changes to the accreditation board in this bill, so we are not dealing with those matters this time around.

In terms of the main provisions, the bill is about providing greater protection for metropolitan green wedge land by introducing objectives for green wedge land and a requirement for councils to prepare and review green wedge management plans. The bill will also provide the mechanism through which this can be implemented. I will come back to speak a little bit about each of these points. As I said a moment ago, our support for green wedges and the protection of those is solid and remains so. The bill seeks to streamline the process for endorsing a statement of planning policy for distinctive area landscape. The bill will amend the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991 and the Surveying Act 2004 to support the implementation of that national automatic mutual recognition scheme in Victoria. This will protect consumers by ensuring practitioners working under automatic mutual recognition are covered by insurance required under Victorian building laws and by making the registration details of practitioners working under AMR available to the public. Finally, the bill will amend the Building Act to provide certainty regarding the Victorian Building Authority's continuing power to issue restricted plumbing licences for private plumbing work, which will allow the VBA to continue to issue these licences in multiple work classes and minimise any potential for unlawful plumbing work.

I will talk about each of those points, but at the outset I might take the opportunity to say that when a bill is introduced to this place we know we have stakeholder engagement and we go through the minister's office to seek a bill briefing. I did want to put on the record my thanks to Aidan Wright from the minister's office and to Andrew Grear, Ada Young, Steven Elliott and Nick Mann from the

Department of Transport and Planning, who were able to give us a thorough bill briefing and answer the questions that I and my colleagues had or that indeed stakeholders asked us to put forward. So I do put on record my thanks to Aidan Wright and the departmental reps that were able to do that and thank them for their time.

There are two building elements and two planning elements in the bill. To go through the building elements first, one is to do with automatic mutual recognition. The bill makes it clear in Victorian legislation that the VBA as a regulator can check that the practitioners coming here from interstate have the right insurance. They also need to go on a register so that Victorian consumers know what kinds of activities the interstate practitioners can do. There are no additional requirements for those from interstate; it is just making what is required by Victorian practitioners as standard. There were some concerns raised about our border communities in particular where you might have someone in, say, the member for Benambra's electorate who is registered in New South Wales coming across and doing works in Victoria around fees and activities there, and I will come back to that.

The second component is the restricted plumbing licences. There are two categories of plumbing licences. At the moment you can be a licensed plumber or a registered plumber, and only licensed plumbers can issue a compliance certificate for works over \$750. The restricted licences are for people who have registration, and they allow them to work on their own homes or on family members' homes. So it is recognising that if you are a plumber and you are doing work on your own home or on a family member's home for no fee, you can still issue a compliance certificate. If you are a plumber, you are not going to call out a licensed plumber to come and do works on your own house, so this recognises that if you are a plumber and you are doing work on your home you can still issue a compliance certificate. The reason that is important is because if you sell your home the new owner will want to have the certificate to say that the work was lawfully compliant and has insurance to cover that work. I did reach out to the plumbers union, and my understanding is they had no issues or concerns with that change.

In relation to the two planning components of the amendment, the first one is the protection of the green wedge and (a) it embeds the objectives of the green wedge into the Planning and Environment Act 1987 – for example, biodiversity, open space, waterways, traditional owner values; all important things – and (b) it requires LGAs to prepare green wedge management plans every 10 years. Now, local governments already prepare green wedge plans, or most of them do, but when we asked about this the department reps explained to us that this makes it a legislative requirement, so that is the change proposed here. The second planning component is in relation to areas declared distinctive areas and landscapes, and I think from memory there are four declared at the moment: Macedon Ranges, Bellarine Peninsula, Surf Coast and Bass Coast. This does two things: it allows a statement of planning policy, and also a statement of planning policy is needed and is required to be endorsed by all responsible public entities in the area. So that is the change that is coming in here. The time limit for those entities to consider it is 28 days. As I understand it, there is no time limit at the moment, and all those responsible entities will have 28 days to do that.

The second part – part (b) – allows the minister to exempt responsible public entities from having to endorse a statement of planning policy. The example that was given to us at the bill briefing was that you might have a committee of management for a mechanics hall in a small township in regional Victoria or, for example, in Bass Coast. If you have got a number of responsible authorities to sign off in the 28-day period, it might not make sense for that committee to have to sign off on a very broad statement of planning policy, so this gives the minister the power to exempt those from that. It basically ensures that common sense prevails. We do not have a problem with that. We think that could work well, and I am sure if some of those committees did want to make a statement, they would not be discouraged from doing so. That was the example there and, as I said, any changes to the architects board in the previous bill have been taken out, so there was no need for concern there.

There were a number of areas of concern, however, or points raised with us. When we get a bill before Christmas we go out to the stakeholders, and the beauty of that is you have got more time to do the

stakeholder consultations. The challenge is of course that a lot of organisations and people are away at that time of year, so you do want to give people the opportunity to make comment or provide feedback on a bill that might impact them or their association. I am pleased to say we did get a bit of feedback from a number of organisations, either supporting or not opposing or raising some concerns, so that process works very well.

The Australian Institute of Architects wrote to us. I will be quoting some of the material from the letter. As I understand it, they have written to the minister as well. They are not about surprises or hiding anything, and I think they have sent the same material to the minister and to us, so there will be no surprises in the matters I am raising. We are really seeking to work cooperatively with the minister to get those changes made and support for the reasoned amendment. I will be interested in the department and the minister's response to those concerns. The Australian Institute of Architects generally support the bill. However, the institute identified two key areas and proposed amendments. In relation to additional fees, the letter states:

Identified risk: Victorian architects may be levied with a second annual fee that is additional to their annual registration renewal.

The second issue relates to maintaining information about criminal sanctions on the register and web publication. The institute identified that:

... There is a risk of a disproportionate measure of making publicly available specified information about criminal sanctions and offending history of an architect for no less than five years that may not be relevant to the public interest.

That is a valid point, and I will come back to talking a little bit more about that.

My colleague in the other place Moira Deeming put forward some suggestions through her contacts in local government and her expertise or knowledge from her own experience around green wedges. She put forward some suggestions in relation to further protections to green wedge zones. If time permits, I will certainly be talking about that, but the green wedge protections are in the reasoned amendment. As I foreshadowed, I think a number of my colleagues on this side of the house will be making comments on the need for further protection of green wedge zones in their contributions to the debate. But I will certainly come back to that.

Finally, I again put on record that we support the requirement to prepare green wedge management plans, and most councils do have a green wedge management plan now. However, it was brought to our attention, I think by one of the institutes – the planning institute it might have been – that whilst there is support for the preparation of green wedge management plans, it generally is taking councils lots of time and resources to prepare green wedge management plans due to the extensive consultation required. Therefore, the stakeholder was querying – or we query – whether the state government will provide support or resourcing for this work to be undertaken for councils that have not got one yet or that need to update theirs. There are few of us in this place who have spent a little bit of time in local government. We know the work that is required and the resources that go into a piece of work like that, so that would be something that the minister might like to take on board in terms of providing resources or support for councils to undertake that work.

With the time remaining, I did want to turn my attention to the Australian Institute of Architects and their letter, their concerns that have been raised with me, and put them on record, and as I said, I think the minister has got a copy of these as well. It says:

The Institute would first like to indicate –

As I said, they emphasise that they:

... broadly support the Bill and have advocated for harmonisation of regulation and accreditation of architects across jurisdictions for many years. The Bill will assist architects (and others in the construction sector) to more easily work in multiple jurisdictions, and ensure appropriate regulation and safeguards without unwarranted duplication of compliance requirements.

So they are all for that.

While we generally support the Bill, there are two proposed amendments we believe require ...consultation with the profession ...

As I said, I will outline the two key issues that the institute raised. The first issue was in relation to additional annual fees, and I will refer to the letter extensively here because it is quite detailed:

Provisions of the Bill: Clause 23 of the Bill introduces a new Section 9A “Proof of required insurance for persons intending to rely on automatic deemed 5 registration” New subsection 9A(3) provides that,

“(3) The person must ensure that the written proof is accompanied by the prescribed fee for the examination of the written proof by the Board.”

Clause 27 of the bill creates a new subsection 15A(2) in the Architects Act which follows on from the existing Section 15A “Proof of required insurance”. New subsection 15A(2) specifies that,

(2) An architect must ensure that the written proof is accompanied by the prescribed fee for the examination of the written proof by the Board.

Section 9 of the Act pertains to application for registration and the new Section 9A specifically pertains to those persons seeking to practice under automatic mutual recognition (AMR) arrangements for the first time.

Section 15 of the Act pertains to annual fees only (... annual renewal)

The new subsection 15A(2) does not distinguish whether the annual recurring fee for examination of written proof of insurance applies only to architects who pay their annual registration in another state and are seeking to practice in Victoria under AMR or if it applies to *all* Architects – including those already registered in Victoria.

So the identified risk is that:

... Victorian architects may be levied with a second annual fee that is additional to their annual registration renewal.

We are just seeking clarification on that or an adoption of support for our reasoned amendment to rectify that. Further:

The Institute recommends that a recurring annual fee for architects from another state to review their written proof of holding required insurances is justified to ensure the Board can adequately execute its functions without unnecessary time delays.

The Institute recommends that as new subsection 15A(2) is unclear as to its application then,

- (a) clause 27 the Bill should be amended to ensure the new subsection 15A(2) leaves no doubt that it only applies ...those Architects who are registered in another state, or
- (b) if the Clause 27 is intended to levy a second annual fee on Victorian architects, for reviewing submitted proof of insurance the Institute opposes new subsection 15A(2). The reason is that submitting proof of insurance is not a new measure and has been a long-standing requirement. There has been no business case provided to justify an additional annual charge on Victorian architects.

So they are the changes we would be advocating for on behalf of the institute in relation to additional annual fees.

The second issue is to do with maintaining information about criminal sanctions on the register and web publication. Again, it is very technical, so I will outline it in detail and then argue for the change:

Provisions of the Bill: Clause 28 of the bill introduces new subsection 16(2).

“(2) The Register may include details of –

- (a) any criminal sanction imposed on an architect; and
- (b) any disciplinary sanction imposed on an architect.”.

Clause 29 of the Bill among other new provisions includes subsections 16A(1)–(3) as follows:

“16A Time for inclusion of information in the Register of Architects

- (1) If the regulations require any details specified in section 16(2) to be included in the Register of Architects, the Board must record that information in the Register as soon as practicable after the prescribed period after the criminal sanction or disciplinary sanction is imposed.

- (2) information about a disciplinary sanction is to remain on the Register of Architects for 5 years after the sanction is imposed or ceases to have effect, whichever is the later.
- (3) information about a criminal sanction to remain on the Register of Architects for 5 years after the sanction is imposed or ceases to have effect –

I think that should be ‘ceases’ to have effect –

whichever is the later.”

Clause 29 also provides for new section 16C:

16C Publication of information on Register of Architects

- (1) The Board must publish on its website the information on the Register of Architects that is required by the regulations to be published.
- (2) The Board may publish on its website the information on the Register of Architects that is permitted by the regulations to be published.

The institute states:

The Minister’s first-reading speech noted the information as necessary to enable the operation of AMR.

“Criminal sanction” has no definition in the Bill, the Architects Act 1991, the Architects Regulations 2015, the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984, the Crimes Act 1958, the Summary Offences Act 1966 nor the Spent Convictions Act 2001.

Therefore what the institute recommends is:

... that a working definition is provided in the Architects Act 1991 for the term “criminal sanctions” that specifies the applicable types of offending for which “criminal sanctions” have been imposed. The applicable types of offending should accord with those already given in subsections 10A(a), 10A(b) and 36A(1)(d) of the act

The Institute recommends the working definition for “criminal sanctions” also distinguishes between the applicable types of sanction such as fines, community service orders, wholly or partly suspended sentences or served periods of incarceration.

The other identified risk that the institute put forward was the risk of a disproportionate measure of making publicly available specified information about criminal sanctions and offending history for an architect for no less than five years that may not be relevant or in the public interest. They gave an example:

This raises a questions as to whether, as an example, an architect with a dangerous driving conviction leading to death or serious injury under the Crimes Act presents a risk to consumers and institutional clients? Similarly, do certain summary offences under the Summar Offences Act pertaining to disorderly conduct or posting bills present a public interest risk?

Just to clarify there: the institute is certainly not suggesting that dangerous driving is not a serious matter. They are just basically picking an example of a criminal conviction and asking whether that would be relevant to an architect performing their duties, which I think is a valid point. There are probably better examples you could put forward, but that is the one that they identified and put forward. Yes, they have done wrong; yes, they have been tried and found guilty and have a criminal record, but it is about whether that is going to affect them carrying out their or their institutional clients’ duties. As such:

The Institute also recommends that current Section 10A(a) and 36A(1)(d) offences should be broadened to include serious sexual offences, offences relating to child abuse material etc. as per the Crimes Act 1958 that are relevant to the public interest.

As outlined, I think these matters that have been raised are quite detailed, quite technical and quite thorough. There has been a lot of thought and obviously work put into the submission from the Australian Institute of Architects. The minister does have a copy of it. They raised this with us, and I gave an undertaking to put it on record here. I thank the institute for raising this. I think they are reasonable amendments. With credit to the institute, they have not just raised concerns but they have made solid recommendations for a sensible way forward.

I had better finish off; hence I have moved the reasoned amendment. I know the government has the numbers to push this through the house, but I firmly believe the government is prepared to listen. This bill will be improved and be a better bill if it satisfies the concerns raised.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:01 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Small business support

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Minister for Small Business. Steam Coffee Co, a small business in Surrey Hills, is struggling to stay afloat as a result of ongoing delays to level crossing removal works. The small business has not yet received payment from the state government for the free coffee program. Why has the government failed to pay this struggling small business?

Jacinta Allan interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:02): Thank you very much for that question. As many would know, on this side of the house we are committed to insuring the cost of doing business in Victoria and we are absolutely committed to supporting our small businesses across Victoria. That is why we provide not only the billions and billions of dollars of COVID support but also \$6 million in grant programs just this year for small businesses –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to standing order 58. We have asked a direct question in relation to a small business not being paid, and the minister has not gone anywhere near explaining why this small business has not been paid. Outrageous.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, the minister is being entirely relevant to the question. She is outlining the number of programs and support that the Andrews Labor government has provided to small business and continues to provide.

The SPEAKER: The minister had only just commenced her answer, and she was providing some context. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Natalie SULEYMAN: I was explaining our support for small businesses in Victoria. Let me say we are also rolling out \$47 million worth of business programs, which will provide a rebate for solar system installations, and the Better Approvals for Business program is cutting red tape –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, solar rebates had nothing to do with the question. Can I ask you to draw the minister back to the rebates at issue in the question?

The SPEAKER: Minister, I ask you to be relevant to the question that was asked.

Natalie SULEYMAN: Let me say small businesses in Victoria are an integral part of our local economies, and I am actually quite committed to making sure that we continue with the right programs and support. Let me say that businesses have been paid, and we will continue to talk to relevant businesses that may be affected. The supplementary question to that was I think directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Steam Coffee Co has stated:

We are struggling enough because of you, let alone to give out freebies so you can look like heroes.

Will the minister visit this business and apologise?

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:05): Thank you very much for that question. Let me say that I have already answered the question by saying that the question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. But I, as the minister, am committed to visiting small business, and I am very happy to do so –

A member interjected.

Natalie SULEYMAN: Exactly. Across the state.

Ministers statements: Footscray Hospital

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:06): This morning I was delighted to visit the site of the new Footscray Hospital, currently the largest health infrastructure project in the state's history at \$1.5 billion. That will of course be superseded in size when the government proceeds with other commitments that we have made, and important projects –

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, no, the West Gippsland Hospital will not quite be \$1.5 billion, but it will be delivered, no thanks to the muttering one over here. If you want a briefing on how to build a hospital, I will get one organised for you. Have you ever been to a hospital opening? I doubt it. Sold a few, though, didn't you?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to cease interjecting across the table, again.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, can I refer you to standing order 108. The Premier makes a constant pattern of talking about members in titles other than those which they should be referred to. It is disrespectful and it is rude.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am very pleased that the Manager of Opposition Business has familiarised himself so well with the standing orders, and I would encourage all members to do so. I also would encourage all members to refer to other members by their correct titles.

Daniel ANDREWS: My deepest apologies to the honourable member, my dear honourable friend, the member for Brighton. I am sorry to have offended his delicate sensibilities on these matters.

At the end of the day, we were out at Footscray Hospital this morning. It is a fantastic example of a partnership between unions, workers, builders and a government that has got a clear agenda to make sure that we provide the very best thankyou to our nurses, doctors and ambos and all our team for all the work that they do, most particularly in these most recent years – very difficult and challenging years for our health system. That is, by giving them the facilities and the infrastructure that they are entitled to, and of course making sure that we create jobs and embed skills along the way and set up a catchment of almost 1 million people with the world-class hospitals that they are entitled to – 15,000 additional admissions a year and 20,000 additional emergency department presentations, 200 new beds, a partnership for teaching, training, research and care with Victoria University and so many others. I was very pleased to be joined by the chancellor of Victoria University, Steve Bracks, at this announcement as well, someone who knows and supports the west, just as every member of this government does.

Justice system

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:09): My question is to the minister representing the Attorney-General. Minister, in March 2022 Parliament's Legal and Social Issues Committee tabled its report into Victoria's criminal justice system. Has the minister read the report?

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:09): I thank the member for his question. I point out to the member that the Attorney-General is the responsible minister, and I will ensure that the Attorney responds to any particular queries that the member has in relation to the report and its findings. I welcome the report and the work that has been done, and I would say to the member that if he has any specific inquiries in relation to the details of the inquiry, I am more than happy to raise those on his behalf with the Attorney in the other place.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:10): Minister, under the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the government has six months to formally respond to inquiries once tabled. More than 10 months later, this inquiry has not been responded to. Why has the government failed to respond to this important inquiry?

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:10): I thank the member for his question. Can I say further that not only have we seen a significant investment from the government – over \$100 million already in investing in some of the elements that have been described in that report and outlined in that report – but also we have had an election. A lot of us would be very familiar with the election and the result of that election – the affirmation of the community from that election – and part of that is –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, again on standing order 58, we are now two questions in, we are halfway through the second question and the minister has not been even remotely direct in relation to why there is such a long delay – in breach of legislation – to the government's response.

The SPEAKER: The minister was just getting to that issue, I believe.

Anthony CARBINES: I thank the member for their point of order. Can we just be very clear here that matters in relation to the report, and any matters that the member would like to raise, I am happy to refer to the Attorney-General in the other place. I commend not only the work so far that has been done and our investment in relation to the report but also the fact that with an election and a range of other significant events, it is no doubt that the government has already moved quickly in its investment in relation to some of the outcomes in that report.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I ask you refer to members by their correct titles, even across the table.

Ministers statements: Victoria Police

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:12): Good to be back. I rise to update the house on the Andrews government's very significant investment in Victoria Police, giving them the powers and the investment they need to keep Victorians safe and guns off our streets. We have been busy, we have been very busy – a \$4.5 billion investment in Victoria Police, and more than 3600 additional frontline police under our government have been funded. We have also seen new stations funded in the past budget in Point Cook and also in South Melbourne in the Albert Park electorate. I want to thank the efforts of our Victoria Police, because we have seen already a 4.3 per cent decrease in the latest crime stats in the rate of criminal instances. What we have seen is police numbers up and crime down. We see that of course because of the hard work of Victoria Police, and I want to thank them on behalf of the house for the work they do every day and the families who support them to keep us safe. We also know that under those opposite recorded offences went up 20 per cent during their time in office. We know that the Victoria Police

budget was slashed by \$100 million and not one additional police officer was funded during their time in office.

Our commitment to a national firearms register builds on the work we have already done here in Victoria. We have seen firearm protection orders that are prohibition orders be introduced. Those firearm prohibition orders – some 2000 orders to violent offenders to outlaw motorcycle gangs and counterterrorism persons of interest – you cannot enforce the orders, you cannot deliver on any of those orders and you cannot put them in place unless you invest in Victoria Police. The chief commissioner himself has made the point that firearm probation orders have been a game changer in disrupting and dismantling organised crime in our state. Those opposite sought to water down those laws when they were before this Parliament. Those laws have allowed Victoria Police to seize a record number of illicit firearms in the past year alone. Only Labor can be trusted to invest in Victoria Police so they can keep us safe and have the laws and the powers they need to look out for all Victorians.

Vocational education and training

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:14): My question is to the minister representing the minister for training. The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* has revealed that the Andrews government has slashed more than \$55.7 million in funding from vocational education and training in 2021. With Victoria facing a skills crisis –

Daniel Andrews interjected.

Bridget VALLENCE: Are you speaking over me because I am a woman?

Daniel Andrews: It is not because of that at all.

The SPEAKER: Premier! I ask the member for Evelyn to restate her question in silence.

Bridget VALLENCE: My question is to the minister representing the minister for training. The Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services* has revealed that the Andrews government slashed more than \$55.7 million in funding from vocational education and training in 2021. With Victoria facing a skills crisis, why has the Andrews government cut VET funding?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will come to order!

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:15): The only thing that has been slashed in TAFE by this side is TAFE fees. They are the only thing that we have cut. In fact we have invested –

Bridget Vallenge: On a point of order, Speaker, on the point of being accurate and succinct, I would ask you to refer the minister to the actual data in the Productivity Commission report. She might be misleading the house otherwise.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Frankston can leave the chamber for 1 hour – quietly and effectively.

Member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

Nick Staikos interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Bentleigh is warned. The minister had only just commenced her reply and her answer to the question.

Natalie HUTCHINS: I am happy to take the question to the minister in the other house for a written response, but I can state for the house that our commitment to TAFE has been absolutely extraordinary. We did not put padlocks on gates, and we have reopened those facilities that that side had closed.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:17): The Productivity Commission's report also revealed that Victoria spends less VET funding per student than any other state or territory. Why has the Andrews government so chronically underfunded vocational education and training?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Evelyn, you have asked your question.

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:17): I refute the premise of the question. This side of the house has invested more in VET, more in TAFE. We are rolling out our commitment of six new techs across this state after many years of neglect from those opposite when they were in power. We are very proud of our achievements in this space.

Ministers statements: member conduct

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:18): It is the first sitting week in 2023 of a new parliamentary term, and recent circumstances have compelled me to remind the house of the code of conduct that guides us as members of this place. The statement of values in part 2 of the Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978 tells us that members should demonstrate the following values in carrying out their duties: serving the public interest, integrity, accountability and leadership. It goes without saying – or it should go without saying – that these values reflect public expectations given our roles as representatives and leaders in our communities. Section 9 of the code of conduct says:

A Member may engage in employment, business and community activities outside of their duties as a Member but must avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest that might arise from those activities, including where the activities compromise the Member's ability to fulfil their public duties.

Section 10 of the code of conduct states:

A Member must not accept any gift, hospitality or other benefit which –

...

(b) might create a perception of an attempt to influence the Member in the exercise of their public duties.

I would also like to remind the house that the code outlines the expectations regarding the use of public resources, and a member must be responsible and accountable for their use of public resources.

Can the Leader of the Opposition explain how the values of integrity, accountability and serving in the public interest are demonstrated by dining with people caught with fully automatic military-style assault rifles? In the lead-up to the 2022 election the Leader of the Opposition talked a lot about integrity and accountability, but it is not what you say, it is what you do.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister would know that under standing order 118 it is unparliamentary to make a personal reflection on a member other than by substantive motion. With a member of this place inviting John Setka onto the floor of this chamber last night, that is outrageous.

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

Member for Brighton withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: Members will be reminded that when I am on my feet there is to be silence in the chamber.

Danny PEARSON: First it was lobster with a mobster. Now it is calamari –

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, before the member for Brighton was removed from the chamber he made a point of order. You have not ruled on that point of order.

The SPEAKER: Indeed I have not. I believe that the minister was quietly stepping over a line there, so I ask the minister to come back to his ministers statement.

Danny PEARSON: First it was lobster with a mobster. Now it is calamari with a criminal and drinks with finks. It is time for the Leader of the Opposition to act.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, why are you allowing the minister to get away with that?

The SPEAKER: I ask you not to reflect on rulings from the Chair, Leader of the Opposition. I do ask members to be mindful of how they are reflecting on other members in this place. You are making a ministers statement on integrity. I expect all members to uphold that integrity.

Timber industry

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty. Opal Australian Paper's Maryvale mill has stopped white paper production due to the lack of timber supply. Why are Victorians being forced to buy imported white printing paper instead of supporting 200 regional jobs and a locally made product?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:22): I thank the member for his question and for also asking an important question on manufacturing and the timber industry, and we are supporting them right through as part of our manufacturing statement. That is why we have put through some \$200 million in business support and community support, making sure as part of our manufacturing strategy that we help communities and help businesses transition to low-carbon facilities and low-carbon manufacturing. Just last week I made some very important announcements around supporting manufacturers like that one in question. We are going to continue to support manufacturers. We know manufacturing, whether it be in Melbourne, the suburbs or regional Victoria, is a key component of our economy, and we will not stop supporting. That is why we have been through a pandemic, and under this government \$13 billion has gone to supporting businesses and workers and keeping people in jobs. It is why the minister for the SEC is doing such good, important work right across regional Victoria.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Ripon is warned. Actually, the member for Ripon can leave the chamber for 1 hour. I am on my feet.

Member for Ripon withdrew from chamber.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very simple to the Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty: why are people being forced to buy imported paper when there is a manufacturer here that creates 200 jobs? If he is going to be a Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, I would ask you to actually bring him back to answering the question he has been asked.

The SPEAKER: I think the minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Ben CARROLL: I will go back to answering directly, as I was. It is very clear that this is a community and an industry in transition. We have made it very clear, on the back of a range of court rulings, that this is one mill. They are still continuing to produce brown paper, recycling paper and cardboard, and we are actively working with them and supporting them. If the shadow minister would like a briefing and to get further facts and details, I would be happy to take her through our forestry plan. I would be happy to take her through our advanced manufacturing plan and how we are supporting business not only in Melbourne but right through our state, including right through regional Victoria.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (14:25): Will the government continue to provide support payments to Reflex paper-line workers until the supply of timber recommences at the Maryvale mill?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:25): We will continue to work with that business like we work with every Victorian business right across our state, whether it be a small business, a small to medium enterprise business or a large business. On this side of the house we are trying to support businesses and make businesses grow and prosper. We know what you stand for on that side of the house: smaller businesses, smaller jobs, the party of –

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, as you have ruled a number of times, question time is not a time to attack the opposition. The question was very clear: will the government be providing support payments for those workers to keep the mill open, yes or no?

The SPEAKER: I remind members that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister will come back to answering the supplementary question.

Ben CARROLL: Thank you, Speaker. Everyone knows when it comes to forestry the product is timber. It is the timber that goes into our basketball courts, it is the timber that goes into our hardwood floors and it is the timber that goes into our paper. Every industry under the Andrews Labor government is supported, whether you are a timber industry, whether you are a manufacturing industry or whether you are a low-carbon industry, and that is what we will continue to do. Those opposite know under this government we are pro business and pro support. It is why we have a manufacturing statement, it is why we have an innovation statement and it is why we are doing everything we can, particularly for businesses that are going through a transition, to support them every step of the way – and a professor should know that.

Ministers statements: major events

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:27): Victoria is leading the nation. In the last 100 days of Australia's top-10 attended events, all 10 were in Victoria. With so much to do in Victoria, why would you be doing anything with the failed Liberal candidate for Mulgrave? We had huge crowds at the MCG, with over 80,000 for England's win over Pakistan in the T20 World Cup final. We have just had a record-breaking Australian Open, smashing records globally – 839,192 fans – beating by a country mile the next biggest tournament in New York. All these sold-out events have made a huge impact on our hospitality sector. The city is buzzing, restaurants are booked out, bars are packed, and apparently the Liberal candidate for Mulgrave still has not conceded the election.

Our ability to put on world-class events is due to our continued investments. The Victorian government has invested nearly a billion dollars in a 10-year redevelopment of the Melbourne and Olympic parks and boulevard. I was at John Cain Arena on the weekend for the largest ever WNBL crowd, an opportunity to honour Lauren Jackson, the famous basketballer. There were more than 123,000 people heading to the city for the first weekend of Midsumma and the Pride event led by the Premier, and more than 80,000 visitors have attended Alexander McQueen at the NGV since it opened in December.

There is so much more to look forward to. Melbourne is the culinary capital of Australia. In September 2021 *Time Out* magazine globally listed Melbourne in the top 10 best cities for eating and drinking in the world – the only Australian city to make that list. In March the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival – so next month – will feature international and local chefs and our much-loved restaurants like Vue de Monde, Smith & Daughters and Embla. Get along to the festival, and you might want to think about who you take with you, who you invite to lunch, unlike those on the other side. All these events contribute \$2.5 billion to our economy every single year.

Prime Minister

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. Was the Australian Prime Minister enjoying the hospitality of the Andrews government at the Australian Open when he should have been addressing the crisis in Alice Springs?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:30): A very good point my colleague has made is ‘How is this a government responsibility?’ While I am on my feet I might just educate the Leader of the Nationals. We may invest in blockbuster events –

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, I have repeatedly asked you to refer to members by their correct titles. I have also repeatedly asked you to cease the interjections across the chamber directed specifically at those on their feet.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: I might educate the Leader of the Nationals that we do support these events, but they actually have a remit of their own. Tennis Australia are an independent body that run the tournament, and they can invite who they like to their tournament.

Daniel Andrews: They had Josh Frydenberg there.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: They had Josh Frydenberg there. They also decide who participates in the tournament, what the criteria for participation is, who attends the stadium, what special guests attend their rooms, and there are also corporate partners who invite other guests to their rooms. The exclusivity of that event is not only for politicians or the Prime Minister. Global personalities, business people like Bill Gates and many others came to this event. It was not just the Prime Minister.

Daniel Andrews: It is up to Tennis Australia.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: It is Tennis Australia’s remit, and it is also the corporate sponsors’ remit.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:31): Minister, is it appropriate for the Prime Minister to get on the beers at a Victorian government sponsored event while alcohol is the cause of so much community harm in Alice Springs?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a question that has no relevance to the minister’s portfolios or to government business, and I ask that you rule this supplementary question out of order.

John Pesutto: On the point of order, Speaker, the supplementary is important because the minister failed to address the kernel of the question in the substantive, and the Leader of the Nationals is probing that further to ask: is it appropriate? I think it is entirely in order, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is a state-sponsored event. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:33): What is appropriate is that this event is a global event – there are only four on the planet and the best one is right here in Melbourne. It is a global event, and let me just remind those on the other side that it is the Australian Open, not the Victorian Open. I think the Prime Minister has every right to attend an event in Melbourne, as others have. If we are talking about alcohol consumption, I think those on the other side, particularly in the other chamber, need to worry about alcohol consumption – like my predecessor. I welcome –

Brad Rowswell: On a point of order, Speaker, imputations against members of the other place as were just articulated by the minister –

Nick Staikos interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bentleigh can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for Bentleigh withdrew from chamber.

Brad Rowswell: may not be made in this chamber unless by substantive motion. I would ask you to address the matter just raised by the minister.

The SPEAKER: I ask the minister not to reflect on members in the other chamber and to return to answering the question.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Speaker, I have completed my answer. It is an Australian event. Everybody is welcome, and Tennis Australia decides who comes. And we are very proud of it.

Ministers statements: government agenda

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:34): I am very pleased to be able to update the house on the government's agenda across so many different portfolio areas. We have heard a number of very impressive first speeches this week that have gone directly not only to people's pathways into this place but the government's agenda for these next four years.

We have seen people speak about their life experiences – for instance, the member for Pakenham, a stroke survivor and CFA volunteer who fought many hard battles to be in this place. For people like the member a \$12 million investment in a second mobile stroke unit for Melbourne's south-east will have a huge benefit and is very personal and just one part of our agenda in the health sector. The member for Point Cook, who as a teenager volunteered in disability care and later worked as a cleaner, knows only too well and understands clearly that it is very important that we have committed that \$207 million, a comprehensive package to transform our specialist schools, including expanding our successful outside-hours care pilot to an additional 25 schools from 2024. Parents of kids with disability wrote that policy, and we are proud to have engaged with them and very grateful. That will be rolled out – that and many other programs – across our specialist school network.

The member for Kororoit raised a number of important personal issues, particularly her single mum escaping family violence, and she brings that unique perspective to that work in this chamber and as a member of this government. The member for Greenvale, who taught in regional Victoria, knows only too well the importance of properly funding our schools, both capital and recurrent, and supporting our teachers and staff – just how important that is. Finally, the member for Pascoe Vale, in an inspired contribution – it is great to see him here; he comes here very well credentialed, not least of which is as the 2005 junior Mr Victoria –

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: A bodybuilding champion in every sense.

Constituency questions

Benambra electorate

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (14:38): (11) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing. When will the local maintenance repair crews earmarked for Wodonga start work? The government's 9 January press release talked up the importance and necessity of these teams but provided no start date. The people of Wodonga have watched the deterioration of public housing while the cost of private rentals soars out of reach. In June last year 17 of the 19 vacant three-bedroom properties in the district were in limbo because they needed major work; five of the six vacant two-bedders and all five of the one-bedroom properties were in the same boat. At a time when rental properties are as rare as hen's teeth, we need every property tenanted.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:39): (12) I am so proud to have backed in local schools for the last four years, and I am stoked that I will not be slowing down anytime soon. My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. What are the next steps for the election promises we made to provide major upgrades to Bayswater South Primary, Kent Park Primary and St Joseph's Primary? In the last term, I was stoked to deliver over \$70 million in upgrades to our local schools to ensure kids and the teams there had the very best facilities to learn and grow in. And with the commitments the Andrews Labor government made last November, we will bring that total to around \$90 million in upgrades. At Bayswater South Primary we are upgrading every classroom; at Kent Park Primary we will deliver a new playground, a synthetic running track and a new oval; and at St Joseph's we will provide a major upgrade. I know locals and families are keen to further understand the next steps in delivering these projects, and I cannot wait to do exactly that.

Ovens Valley electorate

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:40): (13) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, Moyhu Primary School is located on the very busy and very dangerous Wangaratta-Whitfield Road, which I have spoken about many times in this place. The speed limit is 100 kilometres an hour, except of course right at the school. The school is also located on the junction of Boggy Creek Road, and I am seeking the minister's indulgence and advice as to how we can make this school safer – possibly a reduction of the speed limit or other options. On the last day of the 2022 school year an accident occurred that wrote off both cars, and recently a car travelling down Boggy Creek Road overshot the T-intersection and actually crashed into the school. Carole Breust is the business manager at the school and is desperate for support and changes to ensure a safer environment for the students and parents of this wonderful school, the Moyhu Primary School.

Narre Warren South electorate

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (14:41): (14) My constituency question is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place and concerns early childhood services. Minister, how will the Andrews Labor government be supporting young children and families as they return to kindergartens in my electorate of Narre Warren South? As the new school year begins, 30 early learning centres in my electorate will now provide three-year-old and four-year-old kinder up to 15 hours per week. As families combat cost-of-living pressures and women need more options to return to the workforce, it really is great to see the free kinder initiative being delivered across the state. This delivers further savings, flexibility, opportunity and of course choice for local families. I would appreciate any further information that the minister can provide on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting early childhood learning in my electorate, and I look forward to sharing that response with my community.

Sandringham electorate

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:41): (15) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: when will the government commit to delivering \$10 million to build stage 2 of Sandringham College? During the 2022 election campaign I was proud to be the only Sandringham district candidate to commit \$10 million to the stage 2 redevelopment of Sandringham College. Having advocated for \$10 million for stage 1 funding in 2018, Sandringham College is now on track to complete that first stage this year. Stage 2 plans include the demolition of tired, old and possibly dangerous school facilities to make way for a new state-of-the-art scientific and technology wing as well as the complete refurbishment of the historical 1930s building at the Holloway Road campus. Students, teachers and parents deserve certainty that stage 2 will be funded to ensure modern and purpose-built facilities for Sandringham College.

Ripon electorate

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (14:42): (16) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. Would the minister please provide me with an update on the Andrews Labor government's massive \$100 million redevelopment and expansion of the Maryborough and district hospital? I knocked on hundreds of doors across Maryborough last year, and every single person was excited about this project. It will be a game changer for the Maryborough community and will deliver a new urgent care centre, a 32-bed inpatient unit, two operating theatres and recovery spaces and a day medical centre with imaging and pathology services. The redevelopment will also add new birthing suites to make sure more local women can give birth close to home. When complete, the Maryborough and district hospital will be able to treat an additional 4000 patients every year and will help take pressure off the Bendigo and Ballarat hospitals. It is just another example of how the Andrews Labor government is putting patients first in our rural and regional communities, and I cannot wait to see it complete.

Richmond electorate

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:43): (17) My constituency question is for the Minister for Housing. Last year public housing residents at 240 Wellington Street in Collingwood were told that their open space, basketball courts, playgrounds and picnic tables were going to be bulldozed and built over. Up the road, 800 metres away, is the Fitzroy gasworks site – 3.9 hectares of public land remediated at taxpayers expense. It is vacant. The vast majority of this will go to private developers for private housing. The small portion of it put aside for subsidised private housing is only guaranteed for 10 years. Residents of Collingwood's public housing want to know: since public land is so scarce and the public housing waiting list so long, why is the government not building a significant amount of public housing at the Fitzroy gasworks site and instead allowing private developers to build over public housing residents' communal spaces?

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:44): (18) My question is to the Minister for Education. Minister, what is the latest information on the Andrews Labor government's \$10 million upgrade at Goonawarra Primary School in my electorate? This is a fantastic local school where teachers, students, parents and friends all work incredibly hard to teach and learn and of course to be their best. We on this side of the house know and understand the importance of high-quality education and the power and importance of education. That is why we are investing in and building the Education State. This is all about making sure that our youngest Victorians have the opportunity to be their best, and over these past eight years now we have continued sustained investment within our local school community. As you would imagine, the local school community around Goonawarra Primary is incredibly excited about this upcoming upgrade, and again I ask the minister for the latest information on this important project.

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:45): (19) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the Premier admit he got it wrong about crime in my community and permanently commit to increasing local police services? Victoria Police has confirmed the depth of the crime problem, recently uncovering that 324 vehicles have been stolen across four months during aggravated burglaries in homes across local municipalities. A Hampton resident recently had both of their cars stolen, another's young daughter was assaulted during a burglary and in Brighton one woman has had two cars stolen in six months. We also know that September data shows an almost 30 per cent increase in home invasions in Brighton, with 157 incidents in the last financial year. There have been so many call-outs to Kinane Street, which is split by a train line, that the state government has formally requested the street name be changed for ease of emergency services access – another confirmation that there is a problem. The Premier got it wrong by denying crime was happening in my community, and now he should do something about it.

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:46): (20) My question is for the Minister for Environment in the other place. What update can the minister provide on the upgrades at Wattle Park in my electorate of Box Hill? Wattle Park is a much-loved park in Melbourne's eastern suburbs with significant natural and cultural heritage. The park contains natural bushland, including remnant indigenous flora and fauna. It is well known and indeed named for its plantation of 12,000 wattle trees within its boundaries. Of course no mention of Wattle Park would be complete without a reference to the tramways, which originally established the park in 1917, and this link continues through to the present through the monthly performances of the Melbourne Tramways Band, and of course the iconic W-class trams in the middle of the park. Thanks to the strong advocacy of my friend the former member for Burwood and current member for Ringwood, the Andrews Labor government is investing \$4.3 million in a new all-abilities playscape and an upgraded walking and running track at Wattle Park as part of our \$315 million suburban parks program. The residents of Surrey Hills, Burwood and Box Hill South are eagerly awaiting completion of the works, and I look forward to an update.

Bills**Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022***Second reading***Debate resumed.**

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:47): I rise to make a contribution on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This bill will amend a number of other pieces of legislation: the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Surveying Act 2004 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The purpose of this legislation that we are debating today is to strengthen legislative protection of Melbourne's green wedges, to streamline the endorsement process for a distinctive area and landscape, to support the implementation of a national automatic mutual recognition – which has the acronym AMR – scheme and to clarify the power of the Victorian Building Authority to issue restricted plumbing licences for private plumbing work.

I will mainly concentrate my contribution around the green wedge legislative change, but just quickly, the other aspects are really to allow, for example, a registered plumber to do work on their own home or a friend's home so that they are not required to get in another plumber to provide the compliance certificate. Really this is about, often, legislation changing and defects arising due to different experiences of that legislation. This government of course is always there to ensure that legislation is the best and most effective it can be, and that often means making amendments to it where a particular unintended issue arises.

In terms of the national automatic mutual recognition scheme, this is a scheme whereby architects and other trades can get recognition in another state to practise. I suppose this was particularly of interest to me as my son is in his third year of architecture at RMIT. This program is about ensuring that we really act as one country, unlike what the Morrison government tried to do during the pandemic, to force all the states against each other. This is about making sure that we really are a federation and working in unison, making sure that if you live in one state, you can also practise and have your qualification recognised in another.

So just going back to, as I said, the green wedge, the electorate of Thomastown. While there is only a tiny amount of green wedge in the actual electorate, the City of Whittlesea – the local government area which the electorate of Thomastown is in – certainly has quite a considerable amount of green wedge, and of course this provides for protection of the natural environment as well as protecting biodiversity and endangered flora and fauna. I just thought I would step back and talk about where the green wedge came from. The concept of green wedges actually came out of Europe, when you had populations in built-up areas around the cities, and the idea was to build into or factor into the planning scheme areas of open space and green public space in order to ensure that there was a better quality of air with less

pollution and to provide for the population an area where they could go of public space that also supported wellbeing and recreational activities. It was in the 1970s that we then adopted that concept, and I will quote the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, a very old institution no longer in that form, on what the green wedges were for:

Land use, resources, terrain, vegetation and habitat vary extensively throughout the non-urban areas. It is intended that the basic attributes and resources contained within the areas shall be preserved to a maximum degree, and that environment management policies shall be specifically oriented towards this objective.

So the idea is to protect areas alongside our urban areas, and the Andrews Labor government wants to protect and enhance Victoria's best features with strong protections for things such as heritage buildings and new protections against overdevelopment across Melbourne, including in important landscapes in regional areas. So the government has streamlined the planning process, cutting red tape to ensure that there is the ability to increase Victoria's house supply and create jobs. But this bill is also about delivering on our 2018 election commitment to strengthening legislative protection for Melbourne's green wedges. While one might say 'This was a 2018 election commitment', the reason that we have now introduced it here in 2023 is that the bill lapsed and was unable to be fully passed prior to the caretaker period of the 2022 election.

There are 12 green wedge areas surrounding the metropolitan Melbourne area, and this legislation is to further protect, enhance and promote those areas. As I said, the Thomastown electorate is part of the Whittlesea wedge – only a small amount of it, but this Whittlesea wedge also supports the upper catchment areas of Plenty River, Darebin Creek and Merri Creek and the water storage catchments of Toorourrong and Yan Yean reservoirs, and we just want to make sure that of course those areas are protected.

One of the things that the Whittlesea council are required to do as part of legislation like this – and all councils in fact – to protect green wedges is to ensure that they have proper management plans and they have strict controls to prevent any overdevelopment of those areas. There have been some very innovative programs and initiatives in these areas. For example, the Whittlesea Community Connections organisation has developed a Whittlesea community farm and food collective within the green wedge catchment area, and this is a program of a not-for-profit organisation developing a farm, growing fruit and vegetables and having community members be part of that collective, if you like, in terms of growing fruit and vegetables for themselves and others and providing very important skills and qualifications that those people involved can use in other aspects of their life and perhaps use to gain employment opportunities.

I do not think the opposition is opposing this legislation, although I believe that there are some reasoned amendments. Whilst some of the proposal is accepted, they did raise two aspects of the legislation that they are questioning. I think one was the idea that, in terms of the mutual recognition aspects of the legislation, somehow or other individuals would have to pay greater or double registration fees. I think we can advise that that is not to be the case, because these additional fees are cost recovery fees rather than registration fees and ought to be absorbed within the scheme. The other one that I think was raised when I was here in the chamber when the Shadow Minister for Planning was talking on this legislation was the fact that you have to disclose criminal prosecutions as part of the registration process and that this somehow or other would mean that disclosure of those things would get onto the public record or prevent registration. Again, that is not the case. It would be confidential information, and in terms of the architects, it would go to the architects board, and they would then of course determine whether that particular prosecution or criminal offence has any bearing on the actual recognition of the registration in another state. For example, if it was a case of fraud, then that would more than likely have a bearing on whether that person could operate in the state of Victoria, but if it was an unrelated criminal offence, then it would not.

In terms of the concerns about local government and the impact on them having to do more, that is not the case. Really, all local governments ought to be providing proper management plans. We have to protect these very important areas, whether they are for producing food for the state or they are

protecting local flora and fauna. It is incumbent on all of us, including local government, to have the strongest protections in planning and also to consult Indigenous people.

Ryan SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:57): I rise to speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Although the bill covers a number of aspects, I will be concentrating on the issues relating to the green wedge, the distinctive areas and landscapes as well as a matter that is raised in the second-reading speech which I would like to address as well.

I will take any opportunity to rise to recommit my view that the green wedge should be protected. Our opponents sometimes like to propagate the myth that we are not supportive of the environment here; in fact, the green wedge was born of Liberal ideals from former Premier Rupert Hamer when he was the Liberal Minister for Local Government. He created the idea that these areas should become the lungs of Melbourne and indeed should be protected. It is pleasing to know that since those conservation zones, now called green wedges, were put in place successive governments have indeed recognised their importance. Be it Liberal or Labor, both sides of the chamber have supported that ideal. It is an ideal that I am very proud of. It is an ideal that is certainly important to the people of the Warrandyte electorate, and I am very pleased that the government is in fact putting extra protections in to protect that green wedge area, because it is very important.

It has been mentioned that local government, as the legislation says, will have a responsibility to put management plans in place. From my quick research it seems to me that most councils are already doing that, so I am not sure how much more onerous it will be. From what I can see, certainly in Manningham, which looks after the Warrandyte green wedge, they have a pretty comprehensive management plan. I think Mornington Peninsula also have a pretty good one. I think local governments are doing a pretty good job in that regard anyway, although it is clear in the legislation that the government can in fact intervene at any time and take responsibility back from councils. I am not sure that would be a great idea. I think local government actually is doing a pretty good job in that regard.

I commend the government for actually putting this in place. Although I am not a fan of an overabundance of commissioners being appointed by the government, I do put forward the idea that maybe a green wedge commissioner would be appropriate – someone who could review any planning decisions that are made by this government or even successive governments over the course of time. I think that might be a good idea going forward.

Just to touch on the distinctive areas and landscapes, I do acknowledge that the government has recognised that the processes around defining a distinctive area and landscape have been quite cumbersome and onerous. I think it is good that the government has recognised that. Too often we come in here from our side of politics and say, ‘The government is putting more red tape in place, more regulation and more legislation’, but streamlining this whole process I think is a positive step. I am not sure, still, that we have got the process exactly right. Although I can understand why some of the local community groups and authorities are being taken out of the process, when we are talking about these plans that are in place, I think that perhaps we have got to be careful who we remove or who the government removes from that process. These statement of planning policies that pertain to the distinctive areas and landscapes are supposed to be 50-year plans, and it is important that the government gets input from everyone who is relevant, because those statements will be what we look to for a very long time, certainly in years to come. So I certainly, as I said, support the government’s view that they are streamlining this, but I also want to make sure that those who do want to get involved in the statement of planning policy actually have the ability to do it.

I have to say that we do have as Victorians just a fantastic state in terms of distinctive areas. The ones that have been designated as such, the Macedon Ranges, the Bellarine Peninsula and other areas, certainly are beautiful. As a former environment minister I have had the privilege of being able to visit so many of these fantastic areas right around the state and, for a short time – all too short, may I say – being the custodian of those. I think that it certainly gives you an even greater appreciation. Many Victorians do not get the opportunity to see such a wide selection that we are fortunate to as broadly

as MPs. When you do have that role, you do get that extra opportunity to look at it, protect it, visit it and make sure that legislation and regulation continue to protect it.

I do want to go to the second reading, and I just want to highlight basically the first line of the second reading, which says:

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the efficiency, clarity and operation of the building and planning systems.

I commend that view going forward, because it is true that in the past there has not been a lot of efficiency and clarity in the operation of the building and planning system. Former planning minister Richard Wynne I have a lot of respect for – I think he is a great guy – but the feedback I had when I was shadow planning minister was that largely the planning system was very inefficient. The feedback that I had from various different groups around the state, residents and the like, was that the planning system was cumbersome, it was onerous and in fact the government indeed was not doing a lot of consultation in regard to some of the planning decisions that were being made.

In Ashburton the Markham estate is being developed for social and affordable housing. That has been a long process, and the community in that area has been very unhappy with the outcome and has been very unhappy with the communication, or lack thereof, that they have had with this government. In areas like Bass there is an inconsistency in quarrying versus environmental protection with regard to planning in that area. South Barwon's Highton Village shopping centre – the council out there is looking to make some significant changes, and the government could step in but has chosen not to. In the seat of Clarinda there is a very active group out there who are very against the Australian Super plans for the Kingswood golf course, plans that would bring in a huge amount of population to an area that really just cannot sustain it in terms of infrastructure in that Dingley Village area. In Mildura there has been a lack of planning around the railway reserve and the riverfrontage. In Monbulk there are still residents who have not been able to rebuild following the storm. In Narre Warren North there are roadworks that have been really poorly planned. The residents have made it very clear that the planning around those roadworks has been very inadequate and they are actually going to cause a lot of problems. In Narre Warren South there are tip buffers that have to be addressed that the government is just refusing to address. I met with residents in Pascoe Vale, where the local Merri-bek council wants to remove open space in favour of residential areas, again an area that the government could step into. In St Albans there is the Development Victoria development there at Cairnlea estate, where in the seventh stage of that particular development they are now cutting down trees that the government actually planted in the first stage. Obviously residents there are very upset, and the member would know the residents are very upset in that area, ably led by Graeme Blore and his group of people. I have met with them and I have spoken to them, and you can see them online actually saying that they are very unhappy about it. Maybe the minister should get across the detail in that particular regard.

In the seat of Morwell the *South East Traralgon Precinct Structure Plan* and the Latrobe planning scheme amendment C134 have brought uncertainty for landholders, who are going to find themselves in a proposed expanded buffer. In Box Hill there has been a significant lack of transparency with regard to the amalgamation of Surrey Hills and Mont Albert station at the new Union station. Even in Hawthorn – I spent a lot of time in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate talking to people about heritage issues out in those areas. It did not do me so much good, I guess. There is a whole range of issues that Victorians – Melburnians – are seeing with regard to planning, and if the government really wants to embrace them, there is a new minister. So I look forward to some focus on these issues. But if the Victorian government really is committed to improving the efficiency, clarity and operation of the building and planning system, then there is a whole range of issues right across metropolitan Melbourne seats as well as ones in regional areas that the government could address and needs to address.

While the election outcome is clear for all to see, and it was comprehensive, there are still disaffected groups of people who are finding it increasingly difficult to speak to their local member. Their local members did not support their advocacy over the previous four years. It would be incumbent on those

local members to actually listen to their communities. I often say: Labor members are not here to apologise for the government's actions in their electorates; they are in this role to bring their communities' issues here to the Parliament and to the government and to make sure that they are dealt with. They can either explain to residents why the government will not do what they want or they can actually make the changes that people want. As I say, a really important part of the role that we do here is to make sure that there is sufficient and adequate advocacy for these issues. The government has dropped the ball on planning issues; it needs to pick it up. These words in the second-reading speech say that they will. I look forward to that happening.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (15:07): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, and I have to say it is great to be back on the floor of Parliament debating legislation again. It feels like just yesterday we were here. Five months since Parliament sat before the election, we are actually getting on and delivering with our legislative agenda. The bill we are debating today really does build upon our government's commitment to strengthen and, really importantly, improve our planning system, continuing to strengthen protections in the building industry for Victorians. It is also about giving clarity on how the building and planning system works, which can be quite a complicated, interconnected system. Victorians have seen time and time again in this place that our government is committed to improving planning protections and our building sector, and I will talk a little bit about that later on in my contribution. This is a really important sector that plays an integral role in Victoria's economy.

Last year the Victorian Building Authority approved nearly \$100 billion in developments, of which 90 billion were our government's Big Build projects, and I know that everyone on this side of the house is extremely proud of our government's Big Build projects. Indeed last term we passed legislation that would increase the penalties for developers who would otherwise wear the cost of demolishing heritage buildings. We made a record number of changes to our building system to adapt to the lessons of the very, very tragic Grenfell Tower fire that happened overseas, involving combustible cladding, along with a number of reforms related to building regulations and oversight to the sector to make it more accountable.

Another achievement that this bill relates to is our Parliament establishing an automatic mutual recognition system to create a drivers licence system of qualification for certain workers, making it easy for Victorians to work interstate and vice versa. Whilst this bill I think is not as visionary as that, it continues the work of making these systems work as well as they can for all Victorians.

I want to take a bit of time and talk about the green wedge as part of this bill. A key part of what the bill does relate to is Victoria's planning system, specifically building upon our government's commitments to preserving green wedge land. Green wedge land is something that my community in the Laverton electorate, whether it falls within the Wyndham LGA, the Brimbank LGA or the Maribyrnong or Hobsons Bay LGAs – I know that constituents in both the inner west and outer west feel very strongly about green wedge land and protecting it. Our government's commitment to preserving that green wedge land was a 2018 election commitment, and whilst that was indeed an election ago now, we continue to deliver on our promises. Our green wedge areas serve as important natural barriers around metropolitan areas, particularly in Melbourne's north and west. Areas like Werribee South and the Western Plains, which are situated in my community of Wyndham, are home to a major agricultural area, which I call really a fruit bowl of metropolitan Melbourne. These areas provide major economic benefits of up to \$5.79 billion in economic activity and support over 16,500 jobs. We have some of the world's best wine destinations – Shadowfax winery – and parklands and wetlands along with some of our beautiful natural grassland reserves.

We actually have a segment of this grassland in Truganina, at Forsyth Park reserve, otherwise known as the Truganina South Nature Conservation Reserve. In the previous term of Parliament I got to know the people living in and around Forsyth Park reserve very, very well in relation to this grassland and some of the issues and challenges that they were facing as a community with having conservation land set aside and protected. It actually became infested with a weed – that weed has already been

mentioned here today, I think by the member for South-West Coast – called serrated tussock. It was something that previously I did not know anything about, but thanks to the minister for the environment at the time, who jumped on the issue straightaway, we were able to secure some really great outcomes for the community and the neighbourhood that makes up Forsyth Park reserve. I will never forget seeing the photos and the video footage – I think video footage that made it to the media and certainly to my office – of what can only be described as some kind of really fine hair, and when you have millions and millions and millions of those weeds in the air and there is a high wind, they gather together and they form these huge barriers to people's homes, barriers in their backyards, to the point where their dogs would almost suffocate when getting stuck inside them. I am talking about way up here. This stuff was phenomenal. You almost had to see it to believe it.

The minister looked at the footage and jumped on it straightaway. We found out that during COVID, being able to conduct some of the serious weed treatment that was happening on that conservation reserve to reduce the serrated tussock – which is not an easy job, and there is a plan of about five years to entirely eradicate it – was really difficult due to lockdown for two years, and the weed increased dramatically. We were able to jump on that very quickly and we were able to reduce it so residents were not having to fill up their bins with these types of weeds and their kids and animals were kept safe. It was truly a horrendous situation. I recently spoke to some of those residents and asked how it was going. There is a particular time of year when it is at its worst, and they said it was remarkably better, so I want to thank the then minister for the environment, who took very good care of my community.

The Forsyth Park that I am talking about was preserved amid the development of this part of Truganina. It is really important that areas like these continue to operate as natural boundaries around our city and protect the natural environment in these locations against suburban encroachment and of course overdevelopment. This bill helps achieve that by introducing a legislative requirement for local governments to go ahead and implement and review green wedge management plans. This will be informed by guidelines that the Minister for Planning will be able to issue, which will help set out the structure, the form and the content of these management plans. We do not want to see these areas receive inappropriate development, and this bill really importantly prevents just that.

Further to this, the Planning and Environment Act 1987 will also be amended to simplify the process for categorising areas as a distinctive area and landscape. We have already seen this under the current legislation. It has been used to designate areas like the Macedon Ranges, the Bellarine Peninsula, the Surf Coast and the Bass Coast out east. What we know from these processes is that they are lengthy and complex, with lots of work on preparation and consultation, not to mention the planning review process that leads up to the designation. Under the current legislative framework public entities such as water corporations are required to endorse the special planning permit for these designations. There is, however, no time frame for this endorsement process, so what this bill is going to do is streamline the process and make it a much more efficient procedure.

In the time I have got left I just want to talk about the second part of the bill, dealing with the further changes to our government's mutual recognition scheme. This is something we implemented last year; I remember speaking on this. The mutual recognition scheme allows for Victorian workers to carry out their work in another state without having to obtain additional licensing, just like a drivers licence allows Victorians to drive in other states. This bill builds upon that scheme by entrenching consumer protections for services carried out in Victoria under this scheme. Interstate workers in Vic are also covered by the mutual recognition scheme. It is important that they are able to operate under the same obligations as Victorian workers. We cannot have a situation where a builder or a plumber does shoddy work – and I think we have all been in that situation – but because they are an interstate worker they are not covered by the protections that Victorians expect to apply in that situation. This is something that is very important that is in this bill.

This bill may be relatively small, but it makes a number of important changes to the regulation of our planning and building laws. These systems are really important when it comes to the development of our state, and we need to get it right. It can be really costly to fix these things. Victorians do not want

to see overdevelopment in our green wedge space, and they do not want scenic destinations like the Surf Coast and Bass Coast to have their natural heritage lack the necessary protections.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:17): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. When I first saw that this bill was being earmarked to be debated very early on in this term I was actually quite excited because – this is something that many in this Parliament will be well aware of – it has been very close to my heart in terms of ensuring appropriate development, protection of green wedge areas and environmental protection. So it is very, very pleasing to see that we are talking about this. I do say though that, upon reading the details of this bill – and heritage protection is certainly where this bill does go to – it does fall short of actually delivering on some of the areas, particularly in overdevelopment protection in not just areas of the green wedge but areas across the state, particularly in my area in the electorate of Caulfield.

I was actually hoping that we would see some certainty, that we could ensure that councils could have that certainty, so we do not have the merry-go-round that we continue to have where planning decisions are flicked off to VCAT and it is a lucky dip in terms of what residents ultimately end up doing. I do draw to the house's attention that during the election campaign we in fact had the former Minister for Planning attend my electorate in October and visit Ripponlea and at the same time meet with the Stop the Elsternwick Towers group, which have been very strong advocates about appropriate development and certainty in the area. Again, that was one of the reasons why I thought that maybe within this bill – looking at protections, looking at certainty and looking at specifically the area of heritage protections – we would see something in regard to this, and we do not.

I will just restate my position for the house and ask the government to certainly reconsider this, if not in this bill, in future bills – that is, to look at certainly impacts of unsustainable development in areas where there is what one would call overdevelopment, not just in my area but in Kew, Hawthorn or Burwood. We see it in a number of inner-city seats, where people have just been jammed in with disregard for what that does with the environmental impact, the traffic flows and the urban heat island effect. These are all really keen issues.

I know we talk a lot about the environment, and today we are talking about that certainly with the green wedge. It is something we are very, very proud of, that on our side of the house former Premier Hamer was a strong advocate for and championed very much the green wedge philosophy of protecting those lands and ensuring that the environmental element of this is in the forefront of those areas. So you will have no argument from me when we are talking about protection of the green wedge, but as I say, we have also got to get development right across the board. I am very happy to take the cause up for the Stop the Elsternwick Towers group, the Glen Eira group and also other groups that have been working in advocacy here to ensure we get some of this considered, as well as heritage homes – some 100-plus years old – that, without having that heritage protection, we are seeing at risk and bulldozed.

Can I say in regard to some of the other details within this bill I know that, with the consultation that the member for Croydon, the Shadow Minister for Planning, has done, there has been general support for this bill. The Australian Institute of Architects have raised the issue particularly around the annual fees and the risk of architects being levied with a second annual fee in addition to their annual registration renewal. We know costs of business continue to rise. We know that when you have got a business – and you are talking about building homes, building new homes, in many instances a first home for a family – and when you are building that new home, and there are additional costs that an architect would have to effectively pay, those costs ultimately will get passed on to that home owner. Cost of living is a huge issue – we talk about that all the time – and if businesses are charged that, then ultimately it is going to be the consumer that will have to pay it. So I do raise that issue particularly for the Australian Institute of Architects. I know there are some great architects in my electorate of Caulfield who do fantastic work. I am engaging one myself, David Roth, that is doing some great work at the moment for our own home, our dream home that we are ultimately looking at building. He is

very keen; he does a lot of work in the environmental and sustainability part of all of this. But again I would just say we have got to get this stuff right.

Can I also say I support the amendment that the member for Croydon has submitted to the house, particularly around some of the green wedge protection. It is about ensuring that the councils effectively have some standardised wording around the management of the green wedge across the state to give clear guidance and certainty regarding issuing of permits and that there is not another layer of bureaucracy when it comes to landowners and businesses interacting with part of this planning scheme. Again I just talk about cost. If we make things easier, if we can streamline it, then that is certainly something that is helpful for everybody across the board. So I support the reasoned amendment that the member for Croydon has moved, and I hope that the government would get on board with that.

Can I also just raise the government's hypocritical conduct with Heatherton Suburban Rail Loop stabling yards.

Tim Richardson interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I hear the member for Mordialloc interjecting.

Tim Richardson: Did you go down there?

David SOUTHWICK: Yes, I did. I did go down there, member for Mordialloc, and I do understand that the government are very happy to take what was and what has been promised. We have certainly seen council and we have certainly seen the City of Kingston have been strong advocates of this green wedge zone identified for public park – something that I have heard championed for a number of years. In fact even the former member for Sandringham Murray Thompson brought a delegation into the Parliament, and we looked at this with government and at the time with the Labor opposition, who were very, very supportive of the idea of protecting that land. They saw, particularly for many of those homes that were there, that because of the lack of open space and because of the ability to create these parklands this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that was supported by both sides of Parliament to actually get done. It became a huge surprise –

Tim Richardson interjected.

David SOUTHWICK: I constantly hear the interjections from the member for Mordialloc, and I suggest he goes down and actually meets with many of those residents that are absolutely distraught about the future of that area and have been raising so many concerns. There were thousands of people that attended a number of protests during the election campaign. Again, they moved the train yard. And this is not a group that was even objecting necessarily to the project; it was about the location of this stabling yard. We have heard that residents' homes are again losing value, amenity and local livability. There has been a huge response from this local community group. Again, in August 2022 the acting Kingston mayor Jenna Davey-Burns said the site was a key part of the Kingston green wedge plan and that it was going to be hard for the council to accept and for our community in terms of these changes. This is really, really important. It is about protecting the green wedge. It is about creating that certainty. What the government has done is hypocritical because they have taken what was a green wedge area destined for parkland, destined for environmental protection, and effectively carved it up for a stabling yard – something that the residents certainly were not consulted on, certainly did not expect and have been already let down by the Andrews Labor government on. That is something that I am very, very concerned about in terms of the hypocrisy this government continues to show.

Overall, I think heritage protection and certainly green wedge protection is really, really important. We have got to protect and get certainty, we have got to get appropriate development and we have got to be listening to the many residents that have to grapple with these issues each and every day.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:27): Perfect timing. Goodness me, there is a bit of revisionist history from the member for Caulfield. I will be honest: I was a bit underdone for this bill,

but I reckon just with a bit of rebuttal I will be able to cover this one off. To suggest that there is opposition to the Suburban Rail Loop is revisionist of what was put forward by the Victorian Labor government. The suggestion that they are different things – this is the lack of understanding in transport planning policy. Those legends are on that side because they do not invest in rolling stock and because they do not understand how to run a modern transport system – privatise, cut and the like – and they took away services all through my community back in the 1990s. They do not realise that you need train stabling yards to run the service, just like we had out at Kananook and just like we will have at the Delta site as well.

For the member for Caulfield to come in here and suggest that suddenly they are all for protecting open spaces and are against overdevelopment took me back to the roundtable discussion for Ventnor, where protected green wedge open space was pushed away on the whims of donors and supporters and then backflipped on straightaway. Those that rezoned Fishermans Bend for their mates then turn around and want to say that they protect open space – come on. On the hook, this legend – on the hook.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I would ask you to bring the speaker back to the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It has been a wideranging debate, from observation of both sides, and –

David Southwick: On a further point of order, Deputy Speaker, I understand it is a wideranging debate, but the member was seeking to cast aspersions on a member of Parliament, and therefore I ask you to bring him back to actually debating the bill and not attacking –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would ask the member to wait. I have not ruled on the first point of order yet, so maybe I should do that. On the first point of order, wideranging debate, the member was relevant to the bill, and I would ask him to return to it. Secondly, I do not believe I heard any personal reference. There is no point of order.

Tim RICHARDSON: Unless the member for Caulfield wants to declare whom he thinks I was referring to, but I think he has got a sense of that one.

The notion of protecting green wedges is well established in the City of Kingston under the Andrews Labor government. It was one of the first events that I attended with the former Minister for Planning Richard Wynne and the then member for Clarinda and former member for Clayton, Hong Lim. C143, the rezoning of land to green wedge A, was such a significant time. If those opposite really cared about Kingston, their Liberal-majority council in the City of Kingston would not have tried to put forward the equivalent of low-density housing in the Kingston green wedge under what they called the rural living experience in Kingston. When we did the numbers of the actual lots and plots – and I must admit I cannot do that as the member for Mordialloc; I am married to a town planner – we did the square metreage and we worked out, ‘Hang on a sec, this isn’t like Yarra Ranges or Mornington Peninsula or other beautiful parts of our community that have a rural living zone.’ When you did the numbers, it was low-density housing in our green wedge. We called out the con and we knocked it on its head. So that is the experience that we have seen through the Kingston green wedge.

When they talk about the Suburban Rail Loop and the stabling yards, the Delta site is one of a number of remediated sites throughout the City of Kingston. Of course our journey was of landfills, of tip locations of significant contaminated land. Some of those will take 15 to 20 years to remediate. But the member for Clarinda, the former member for Keysborough, the member for Bentleigh, me, the member for Carrum and the federal member for Isaacs, Mark Dreyfus have been dedicated to supporting Kingston’s vision for the chain of parks in green wedge. It is not just that site. As important as that discussion was and acknowledging the concerns of those directly impacted, the member for Caulfield talked about thousands. There are about 2500 people that live in Heatherton, and the people of Heatherton made their views very clear in endorsing the member for Clarinda. But those that were directly impacted should be cared for and supported, and they fronted up to the substantial environment effects process that was undertaken as part of the Suburban Rail Loop. Part of the focus

was on the train stabling yard, so the buffer zones of over 100 metres and the environmental and planning outcomes that needed to happen. There is no doubt that there is an impact on those residents.

That is the challenge of some of these major infrastructure projects when you are working through the *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* program and when you are trying to set our state up for the future, when you are trying to manage growth in infill areas so people do not have to live so far from their area of community; they can work and play and interact and be educated and support their families in their local communities because they are not spending 2 hours on the road to get to their place of employment or work. Those are the fundamentals of *Plan Melbourne*. It should be bipartisan policy – it should not be at the ebb and flow of different planning ministers and outcomes – that we set a long-term ambition for our community, an agenda that creates that certainty into the future. That is what green wedges are all about.

With some of the significant development challenges that will come as part of the Suburban Rail Loop, more than ever the green wedges in the south-east are so very important. The Kingston green wedge is over 2000 hectares. Two-thirds of that is privately owned. We had a commitment in the 2018 election that is being fulfilled and worked through right now to deliver hundreds of hectares of open space, from Karkarook Park in the north all the way through to Braeside Park in the south-east. Of course Braeside Park was an absolute treasure during some of the restrictions we saw in 2020 and 2021. It is a great place of refuge for local residents and for native wildlife and birds and various species as well. If anyone is out in the south-east and ever wants to do a night tour of some of the pristine green wedge areas, the Friends of Braeside Park will give you a shout-out and look after you. More than 1 million visitors interact with this beautiful park of south-east Melbourne. The Andrews Labor government is protecting that because we understand the ecological and environmental values for the future, and it is important that we strengthen those protections.

Kingston's green wedge management plan has been an evolving story and journey. The 1994 document outlined some of those ambitions and the phase-outs of our heavy polluting landfill facilities, the 2012 document updated that and now that has really been superseded by the vision and aspiration that has been put forward. It is a credit to a large part of council that their consistency in policy has been the same since I have been working with the federal member for Isaacs and then proudly servicing my community now into a third term.

There has been a good consistency of policy. It requires a long run-up, especially when you have got the complexities of land usage and you have got rehabilitation and sensitivities of land. We saw that where the Mordialloc Freeway cut through green wedge and open spaces as well, how sensitive some of the land is and how unstable some of that land is. So I am really proud of that part of the bill, that we have got so many diverse usages. Our transition to open space and parklands is in contrast to, and I think the member for Point Cook had a wonderful reference to, some of the amazing food outcomes for Victorians that come from his electorate and around there. Where I grew up out in Berwick and the outer south-east, Clyde and all the way to Koo Wee Rup was one of the most pristine areas for food and growth through there, with some of the best soil that you will find as well. So the importance of protecting land into the future is really critical going forward. The diversities across those nine areas are really important, and we need to acknowledge that going forward.

The final point I would like to make on the bill is on the important section around distinctive areas and landscapes. I think this is really important. If you reflect back on one of the contributions, the member for Bellarine did an absolute ripper of a speech and gave a great perspective of her community. That is one of those distinctive areas that needs protection and support – which include the Macedon Ranges, the Bass Coast, the Surf Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula – with a statement of planning policy and that 50-year plan for protecting the unique features that so many people come to love and appreciate. When you see the images, you know that you are looking at Victoria. When people come through Tullamarine airport looking for some of the most amazing destinations, they know where they are going. Victorians and people interstate also want to connect with those communities. We have seen some of those areas take in so much more population as well. That requires management of those

expectations, it requires the support of those communities and those that love, live in and cherish those areas and that we support them into the future.

So I love some of these planning outcomes, creating that certainty and those protections and making sure there is a shorter time frame required for endorsement – within 28 days – a streamlined process for endorsement by those responsible entities, so that we have that certainty ongoing as well. On this side we protect green wedges and open spaces. We are investing in our environmental outcomes. We will not be lectured by those opposite, who have turned their backs time and time again on these areas. That is why the Andrews Labor government was resoundingly endorsed in those communities.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:37): I am pleased to rise to speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022, which is largely about the issues with respect to registration and automatic recognition of building practitioners, namely architects and various others –

A member: Plumbers.

Danny O'BRIEN: plumbers, and green wedges. I must say, particularly after listening to the last two opposition speakers, the member for Mornington and the member for Caulfield, I feel a bit like a city MP getting up to speak on a timber or a water irrigation bill, because it is not really my area of expertise or interest.

Ryan Smith: What!

Danny O'BRIEN: Yes, it is a surprise, member for Warrandyte, as I normally know a fair bit about everything of course, but no, not on this one. But genuinely there are some important issues at play in this. As I alluded to, I do not pretend to understand some of the planning and political issues that go with green wedges, although I did take issue a little bit with the member for Mordialloc's description of pristine green wedges in his patch. I mean, I spent a bit of time in the electorate of Mordialloc, during the election campaign actually, and 'pristine' is not a word I would use. As someone who has got Wilsons Promontory National Park in their electorate, I can talk about pristine, but I think I know what he means.

When it comes to food production but also the so-called lungs of Melbourne, that is where our green wedges are so critically important for the state. It is a difficult problem, so I am not surprised that there is debate, that there are political concerns and that there is argy-bargy on both the planning and the issues with respect to maintaining our green wedges. We see it at the other end, I guess, in regional Victoria, including in Gippsland of late, the areas that are not green wedges that have recently been built on, and I know the member for Bass is going to be following on from me, and she will have seen it in particularly her former electorate but also in the current boundaries of Bass, where that massive growth through the south-east has pushed out many of the food producers in that area.

I do not celebrate it necessarily, but Gippsland South has been a beneficiary of that, with people like the Schreurs family moving large parts of their celery production to Middle Tarwin in my electorate. When I say I do not celebrate it, I certainly welcome the Schreurs and any other farms and businesses that wish to come to Gippsland South. But my concern is that sometimes we are seeing good farmland, particularly good horticultural land, going under more houses in the south-east, in the west, in the north and in other parts of the city as well. It is an issue that comes to me regularly. Again, in a planning context, for every one person that comes to me and says, 'Why can't I get a permit to build a house on this 30-acre property that I've got?' there is someone else who comes to me and says, 'Why are we letting people build more houses on good farmland?' That occurs in rural areas of the state, like mine, but also a particular concern is in some of that very fertile land that the member for Mordialloc was referring to: in a wedge from Mordialloc through Koo Wee Rup and then again down into South Gippsland. It is important that we do protect those green wedges – that we make sure that both the lungs of Melbourne and the food bowls of Melbourne are looked after – because they are not making any more of it, as the saying goes, and we need to make sure that we protect that, although of course I do think of that quote sometimes and see what the Chinese are doing in the South China Sea. They are

literally making more land. But we do not have the luxury of that here in Victoria, and although we are the food bowl of the nation and certainly the nation's biggest food and fibre producer, and certainly one of its most important exporters as well, we do not have arable land ad infinitum.

I actually had a conversation this morning with some people looking at biomass and discussing issues with respect to forestry and plantation forestry. It is an issue that is not as simple as some would make out. I note the Greens were meant to be speaking on this bill right now, but they are a no-show, Your Honour. They forever say, in terms of timber production, 'We should just go to plantations.' It is not as simple as that because we already use much of our land for food production, and of course you still need half-decent land with half-decent rainfall to put in plantations. So you have got to be able to find the land, it has got to be affordable and it has got to be the right type of land, and that is why this is a difficult proposition: to manage the conflicting land uses that we seek for both our green wedges here in Melbourne and planning more broadly.

I note the legislation makes some amendments to the Building Act 1993 in relation to automatic mutual recognition of building practitioners, building employees and plumbers who are registered or licensed in other jurisdictions. This is an ongoing process of mutual recognition across the state and territory boundaries and something that I have spoken about in this place before. I have welcomed the fact that we do that as a nation. Yes, we have our autonomy as individual states, but when it comes to these sorts of cross-border recognition issues, I am very strongly in favour of making sure that as best as possible and as long as we can do things safely we recognise each other's capacities at state level – that we do make sure that it is easier for people to come across borders and continue to work in their particular professions.

I mentioned plumbers, and it has been a pleasure this week to have the member for Morwell deliver his inaugural speech. He probably should be speaking on this particular bill, with some more authority than I have, but he has had a big week. He has had his inaugural speech. He has had a members statement and a question in question time today. The member for Morwell would know more about this legislation probably than I would, but he has had a big week and we will let him off.

There are also elements of the legislation with respect to architects, and this is where the member for Croydon has raised his concern and moved the reasoned amendment that he has already circulated, which basically say the government should go back to the drawing board and address the concerns that have been raised with us by the Australian Institute of Architects. That relates to potential second fees having to be paid, and they are seeking clarity on the range of criminal sanctions that would be considered in assessing registration applications. I support that.

This bill is in fact similar to a bill that was before us in the last Parliament but lapsed. In the time since then, while this one has been amended and some of the more contentious parts taken out of it, there are still those concerns that have been raised. Likewise, the colleagues who spoke before me have raised concerns about the green wedge aspects of it, in particular in relation to landfill and dumping of soil and the like. Again, I support the reasoned amendment put forward by the member for Croydon for the government to go back and consult with those green wedge groups that were mentioned and the Australian Institute of Architects to address some of the concerns that they have with respect to this legislation.

I will leave it there. I think there are some good things in this legislation and some appropriate attempts to ensure that our green wedges are looked after and that we do improve recognition across state boundaries, but I do support the reasoned amendment as moved by the member for Croydon.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (15:46): I also rise to speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As many in the chamber would know, my electorate of Bass changed quite significantly with the redistribution prior to the last election. While we now have just under 50,000 voters from a previous 76,000, our council representation remains the same, although a tad of

a shrink for Cardinia rejigging Casey, with Clyde North swapped for the beautiful coastal villages around Western Port and the entire Bass Coast as is.

Our 1357 square kilometres still takes in our growing suburbs in outer Melbourne. This is where this legislation becomes so important, because it is a key piece that deals with green wedges – a legacy of the late Liberal visionary Mr Hamer – farmland and open space to act as the city's green lungs, and 'green lungs' have been referred to quite a number of times thus far. It was an enduring reform which sits alongside Mr Hamer's abolition of capital punishment. Melbourne has 12 green wedges covering the areas just outside Melbourne's urban growth boundary, and these wedges are critical for our food production, contributing just under \$6 billion to our economy and also supporting around 16,000 jobs. They also provide, as I said, that open space, that green space and that visual break moving from interface council areas to the peri-urban ones.

If anyone watched Magda Szubanski's *Big National Health Check* on our wonderful ABC last year – and I did get to it post election in that limbo period of two weeks – something she said when she met with the Australian Urban Observatory resonated. It was the importance of our postcode in determining our health outcomes: up to 50 per cent. Contrary to what we may think, the inner city has more open space than the outer suburbs, and it was stated that some Melbourne outer suburbs have no formal open space at all. But this legislation will protect our green wedges from inappropriate development and overdevelopment, enshrining the open space in legislation, as we committed to in 2018.

Councils are to prepare green wedge management plans in accordance with the Minister for Planning's directions, identifying a vision, objectives and actions for sustainable development while providing improved guidance to councils on the structure, form and content of the plans. Whilst most outer-metro councils have prepared plans for their green wedge area, it has never actually been mandated, and there has been no consistent format or requirement to update the plans at regular intervals. This legislation redresses these issues and ensures that all green wedge values are encompassed in each plan, and it strengthens this through the legislative protections.

This proposal was first canvassed in late 2020 with the release of the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land* discussion paper, and it was widely supported by both government and community – all part of *Plan Melbourne*, all part of ensuring that Melbourne can grow but grow sustainably and with the open spaces that are so needed. As I mentioned, 12 green wedges are being nominated in areas bordering the urban growth boundary. The Western Port – Warrnambool in Boon Wurrung – green wedge takes in the southern mostly rural part of the City of Casey and includes a mix of land uses, such as very rich agricultural land, cultural heritage sites, parks, biodiversity, conservation areas, Ramsar wetlands, horse and greyhound training land, townships and rural lifestyle lots. There are always pressures given that it is between the urban growth boundary and Western Port, and I want to acknowledge the City of Casey for the immense body of work to get to their 2019 management plan, which was quite a comprehensive 76 pages, structured around theme-based and precinct-based strategic directions.

Due for review in 2023, well before the 10-year requirement, there are six guiding principles outlined in the plan, including the requirement that sites of environmental significance – including our Ramsar wetlands and the habitat of noted fauna such as the southern brown bandicoot and the growling grass frog – will be protected and enhanced, and their contribution to the biodiversity of the Western Port green wedge will be recognised in decision-making. The wedge is also home to other nationally significant indigenous species, including the swamp skink and the common long-necked turtle.

One action in the plan will be to conduct further research to also clearly identify cultural heritage values of our First Nations people. A large portion of Warrnambool – or Western Port – coast is designated Ramsar wetland, as I have said, and this will be preserved. The coastal villages of Blind Bight, Warneet and Cannons Creek and the township of Tooradin now included in the Bass electorate will play an important role in the green wedge, both in terms of livability and their tourism potential

as well. The bill lists as examples of benefits tourism and recreation linked to natural environments, cultural heritage and agriculture.

We also in the Bass electorate have the Bass Coast distinctive area landscape – along with Macedon, Surf Coast and Bellarine – which is also contained in this bill, with changes to streamline that process. So we are currently going through our statement of planning policy (SPP) process in partnership with our traditional owners and local council. It was a 2018 election commitment; the following year we formally declared the Bass Coast a distinctive area and landscape within the Planning and Environment Act. It was at Kilcunda, with our much-loved former Minister Wynne, and so began the journey to protect this iconic region from overdevelopment by strengthening the planning scheme and developing a 50-year vision of wetlands, the Bunurong marine and coastal park, surfing reserves, penguins, inlets, rivers, health, farming land, small towns and more. Long-term settlement boundaries and balanced growth are protecting our cultural, rural and environmental values. We want to make sure that this beautiful part of Victoria continues to be a great place to live, work and visit and ensure we make the right decision to preserve what we value here – or there, because I am not there at the moment.

Phase 1 – there were three phases, and we are in this process – was understanding the community's values, what they value most about the Bass Coast and setting the vision for the future, and then phase 2 sought feedback on the 50-year vision and policy directions, and phase 3 of the public consultation saw the draft statement of planning policy and proposed landscape planning controls released. Written submissions were requested, and they very much flooded in. A former minister, now in the other place, referred it to the expert standing committee in October last year, and such is the wont of the Bass Coast community – both resident and visitor – to do this well, we heard an ad there on the ground, local knowledge. We have 745 local submissions and 42 group submissions now before the expert standing committee. As I said, we are in that process and the end result really needs to be a reflection of community views and landscape values. Public hearings will now take place, and we expect the final SPP to be decided by the Governor in Council later this year. Once approved it will be operational – it will kind of happen very quickly – and provide the highest level of planning protections for the declared area.

I really want to take this opportunity to thank the community for their very active participation in this process. The lack of set time frames for public entities to obtain endorsement has led to delays in finalising SPPs across the ones that I mentioned earlier, and this bill streamlines the process requiring endorsement within 28 days and removes barriers to finalising it.

Both these amendments relate to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, and I thank the Minister for Planning for continuing the important work done by those before her and working collaboratively with the Minister for Environment in the other place in conjunction with our Minister for Climate Action in this place. Our Minister for Local Government will also be involved, all with the goal of making Victoria a better place to live. So there are four ministers, four women – four of the 14 women in our current Labor cabinet – working on this.

There are other parts of the legislation that time clearly does not allow for, but in summary the bill amends the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Surveying Act 2004 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to strengthen our legislative protection of Melbourne's green wedges, streamline the endorsement process for a distinctive area and landscape, support the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria and clarify the power to issue restricted plumbing work licences for private plumbing work. And in my 8 seconds left, I commend this bill to the house.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:56): It is my pleasure to rise to contribute to debate on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 and to restate my commitment to issues of enormous relevance and importance to those people down in my electorate of Nepean. While the bill covers issues relating to the building sector, my focus will be on provisions relating to the green wedge and to distinctive area landscapes. Of course the importance of the natural environment down on the Mornington Peninsula cannot be overstated, and I am sure many members of the house can agree with

me that when there are environmental issues being spoken about or debated in this chamber, it is disappointing not to see any members of the Greens speaking.

As I met with the residents during the campaign period, it was made abundantly clear that my community has a deep-seated belief that we live – and obviously I am biased on this point as well – in the best part of Victoria; that is for sure. It is our natural environment that draws people to live in Nepean and why so many come down to spend their holiday periods there. It must be protected, and I am committed to ensuring that. While ever I remain in this place, it will always remain front of mind. Of course the green wedge is an important Liberal legacy, and one that I am pleased to say in this place all governments have embraced since it was introduced by Sir Rupert Hamer as part of a then Liberal government in the 1970s. I am committed to its preservation. The unfounded comments by my predecessor during the campaign, the accusation that I or my party would ignore the will of the community in regard to these areas, were wrong then, are wrong now and will be wrong so long as I serve in this place.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is already ahead of the game in terms of establishing protections for these areas, and I thank them for that important work. Back in April 2019 the shire released a comprehensive green wedge management plan. The 150-page document details a snapshot of the green wedge as well as issues around appropriate dwellings, tourism and agriculture as well as recreation. Importantly, there is a stated action plan, with a broader plan which holds the shire accountable and gives the community a clear understanding of what to expect from the shire moving forward. Moving on to protections or provisions regarding the distinctive areas and landscapes, I broadly support the government's approach to streamlining the processes around this policy, but what I would say is that in recognising the Macedon Ranges, the Bass Coast, the Bellarine and the Surf Coast as areas under the policy, the government made an important omission, and that is the Mornington Peninsula and Arthurs Seat. While there is a localised planning statement for the Mornington Peninsula, the first of its kind and introduced by the Liberals in 2014, the additional recognition and protection to safeguard my electorate should be afforded to such an ecologically irreplaceable region. Had those protections been in place, my community would not have had to go through the stress and worry of fighting off a quarry expansion up on Arthurs Seat and also, nearly 10 years ago, thankfully because of the work of the member of Warrandyte, fighting off a big tip going onto that quarry site. Thankfully that proposition was overturned by a Liberal government at the time, so I thank them for their work on that.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many groups that have worked on keeping this area protected, particularly the Peninsula Preservation Group and the Save Arthurs Seat campaign, and especially the work of Mark Fancett with both those groups. Mark and his team have done a fantastic job highlighting the absurdity of destroying an iconic part of not just Victoria, not just the peninsula, but the world – the native wildlife, the fauna and everything that goes with that area – just to put a quarry on the site. Their work eventually led to that proposition being withdrawn. I had the pleasure of meeting Mark and his group at his home in Red Hill during the election campaign. They have put up a fight to allow that native vegetation. What will happen if we do finally lose the quarry, which many in the community would love to see, is the creation of clear movement paths for the natural fauna through that green wedge. Adequate and extra protections would make these sorts of proposals, like the quarry expansion or tip, dead on arrival in the future, and I am sure my community would welcome that.

Again, for me this is just an important opportunity to restate my commitment to the preservation and protection of Nepean's natural environment and also to publicly thank those amazing volunteers who have committed themselves to that campaign. I support the reasoned amendment put forward by the member for Croydon, and that is all from me.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (16:01): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This is another important bill that delivers on the government's 2018 election commitment to strengthen the protection of Melbourne's green wedges.

Clarinda has a strong and proud history of protecting and expanding our green space, particularly the Kingston green wedge. We have some amazing community groups in the area, such as the Defenders of the South East Green Wedge, a group of passionate advocates for maintaining and strengthening the existing green wedge protection provisions. There are also some strong advocates in the City of Kingston itself. My good friend Cr Steve Staikos has shown absolute dedication to our parks, our environment and our green open space, and it has been a privilege working together with these groups of individuals to make the sandbelt chain of parks become a reality. For many years residents have lived with historic landfill sites in the City of Kingston, and together we have worked towards a vision of transforming land into a series of linked parks. It is an ambitious vision – some 355 hectares of parkland that offers a wide range of recreational facilities and open space within our green wedge, creating a network, or chain, of parks – but it is one that the Andrews Labor government proudly committed to in 2018. It was an amazing commitment – 355 hectares from Warrigal Road in Moorabbin to Braeside Park near Dingley Village, with walking and biking trails and an adventure play area for our local kids. It is an amazing commitment that we are delivering, as the member before me already alluded to.

An update: last year we acquired 83 of the remaining 118 hectares. These parcels were acquired in Heatherton, Clarinda and Clayton South and will be protected from development. Once rehabilitated, the parcels will form a connected chain of parks, with trails and open space through the Clarinda district and into the neighbouring districts. There are only 35 hectares of land that still need to be acquired, which will be delivered as replacement land for the Delta site acquired by the Suburban Rail Loop, as specified in last year's environment effects statement. So this is an amazing result for the community – hundreds of hectares of connected parkland for families to enjoy and explore. Bike trails and walking trails – so even more opportunities to get active together.

Also related is the recent commitment to the Kingston fields, and that is a \$1 million commitment towards the master plan for a sporting precinct in Kingston, delivering new sports and recreation facilities that the whole community can be proud of. Sport is the lifeblood for so many, bringing families together and neighbourhoods together, and in Clarinda we have delivered better courts and grounds, new scoreboards, lighting upgrades and changing facilities for clubs across the electorate, and now we have another exciting vision for Kingston fields.

There is a lot happening here locally. We are protecting and creating open spaces and delivering on our election commitments, and this bill is another example of that – one that delivers on the government's 2018 election commitment to strengthen the protection of Melbourne's green wedges. The relevant changes will provide greater protection for metropolitan green wedge lands by introducing objectives for green wedge land and a requirement for councils to prepare and review green wedge management plans. The bill will also provide the mechanism through which this election commitment can be implemented.

As I mentioned, Kingston council and in particular the former mayor Cr Steve Staikos have been great advocates for green wedge protection and expanding open space in the Kingston green wedge, which forms a major part of the south-east green wedge. The Kingston green wedge is an amazing piece of land – over 2000 hectares, which essentially runs through the electorate of Clarinda from Karkarook Park in the northern part to Braeside Park in the southern part. It is home to agricultural and horticultural areas, open spaces, natural habitats for plants and animals, and recreation opportunities. Karkarook Park alone is an amazing open space and an amazing community asset, and I am proud that the government has invested in this amazing park through the urban parks active wellbeing program. Recycled plastic picnic tables have been installed, and there is a great deal of work being undertaken at the Dragonfly picnic area, which includes upgrades to barbecues and barbecue shelters, upgrades to the playground, repairs on the Dragonfly tower boardwalk, upgrades to the public toilet interior, replacement of trail seating and repairs to the boat ramp boardwalk and the drainage along the lake path.

It is an amazing community asset, and I would encourage anyone in the area to go and check it out. In fact we had the Minister for Outdoor Recreation out to the park last year for the rainbow trout fish

stocking at Karkarook Lake itself in Clarinda. So this is another fantastic government initiative, and the stocked lake is a great opportunity to get kids off screens for a few hours, spending quality time together with friends and family. It is just another example of the many amazing activities that are possible in our green wedge.

The City of Kingston has seen great success in its green wedge management plan. The original green wedge management plan was adopted by the Kingston City Council in 2012. It is an impressive document that identifies the values and features of the green wedge, the preferred land uses, environmental and natural resources that should be protected and the needs of the local community. It is a 20-year master plan and one that has held the council and the community in great stead over the past two decades. Of course a lot has changed over the last 20 years, and the plan is now being refreshed. It has been through consultation, evaluations and review throughout 2021–22. The draft of the new plan is available on the Kingston website for anyone interested, and I commend the council for their forward thinking and their commitment to our green wedge space.

Again, the bill requires local governments to prepare a green wedge management plan in accordance with the Minister for Planning's direction – a proposal which was first canvassed in late 2020 with the release of the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land* discussion paper. Importantly, this proposal was widely supported by local governments and the local community. As part of the preparation of the green wedge management plan, local government will be required to consult with a range of government and non-government stakeholders, including traditional owners. So, as I mentioned, we have seen great success with our green wedge management plans locally, so I am very happy to see these changes here today, and I am happy to support them.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (16:10): I also rise to address the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. In doing so I commend to those reading *Hansard* and those listening at home – poor people – the contribution of the member for Croydon, my colleague the Shadow Minister for Planning, which he made earlier today.

I want to draw particular attention to a portion of this bill, because as we have heard from other speakers, the bill is about providing greater protections for metropolitan green wedge land by introducing objectives for green wedge land and a requirement for councils to prepare and review green wedge management plans. I think this is a wonderful opportunity to make the point, as the member for Nepean made quite eloquently in his contribution – his first contribution to a bill in this place, actually, earlier – that it was in fact the Hamer government of the 1970s that established the green wedge in this state – visionary policy by a measure. The green wedge itself has often been referred to as the lungs of Melbourne. It is something that we on this side, and I trust those on the other side, wish to do everything we possibly can to defend and protect.

I also note the member for Clarinda's contribution just made. I have great personal regard and respect for the member for Clarinda. It is an electorate that is on the border of the Sandringham district. We see each other at many a function, often council instigated. But there was something that the member for Clarinda failed to mention in his contribution, and that is the effective adulteration of the green wedge under plans by the current government as a result of placing train stabling yards, in relation to their Suburban Rail Loop project, within the district of Clarinda, within the Kingston green wedge. This is an important point to make, because on the one hand the government is proposing legislation in this place that provides greater protection for the metropolitan green wedge, and yet through their actions, when it comes specifically to the member for Clarinda's seat and the Kingston green wedge, there are plans by this government to concrete a large part of the green wedge.

We do not think that is a good idea – we have never thought it was a good idea – and I am grateful to the City of Kingston, actually, for taking significant leadership in articulating not only to government but also to the community why this is a terrible idea. In fact I have a media release of 30 September 2022 from the Kingston council that reads:

The Victorian Government has failed to deliver the Sandbelt Open Space – Chain of Parks despite promising \$25 million at the election four years ago.

Kingston Council calls on Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio to take urgent action to live up to that promise before the 2022 November election now less than two months away.

Kingston Mayor Steve Staikos –

not to be confused with the member for Bentleigh –

said Council and the community were delighted when the Andrews –

Labor –

government promised \$25 million to purchase the remaining land for the long-awaited Chain of Parks on 5 November 2018.

...

'Sadly –

Cr Staikos goes on to say –

four years have passed, and we are yet to see what was promised to our community ...

So it is one thing to say that we value the green wedge, that we want to develop the green wedge in an appropriate way – with a chain of parks, multi-use sporting facilities, multi-use ovals, but keeping the green characteristics of the Kingston green wedge intact – versus what the Labor government currently has planned, and that is rail stabling yards at the Kingston green wedge in Heatherton. Again, the Kingston council have been great advocates for the preservation of this green wedge for green purposes. I have worked with Kingston council on this, and I commend them for their strong advocacy.

I have a further note in front of me: a letter sent in fact to the Premier by the then mayor, Cr Staikos, dated 24 February 2021. The mayor in his correspondence to the Premier on this occasion outlined a number of requests – legitimate requests – which I support. He asked, on behalf of the City of Kingston, for the decision to effectively, as I have said before, adulterate the Kingston green wedge to be revisited in partnership with council and the community. And that is the point – if you speak to community members within the Kingston community, whether they are in Heatherton or just out, if you speak to sporting clubs within the Kingston community or just out and if you speak to environmental groups in the Kingston community or just outside, they will tell you time and time again that the green wedge must be preserved. But the government has not heard that news. The government has not heard that advocacy. They may have listened, but they certainly have not heard, and now we are in a position where the Kingston council is doing what the government, in my view, should have done, and that is engage comprehensively with their community to understand what their community needs and what their community is asking for in relation to the Kingston green wedge. The Kingston council themselves, again to reiterate, are asking for the government to revisit the decision they have made to, again, adulterate the Kingston green wedge in Heatherton.

We have a problem in this state, and the problem is that we are not making any more land. So the decisions that we make in relation to the land that we have are lasting decisions and, by one measure, irreversible decisions. The land that we have is precious land, and the land in the Kingston green wedge is no different. I have sporting clubs in my own electoral district who come to me, time and time again, and say, 'We would love to put on more sporting teams, but there aren't enough grounds in order to cater for new sporting teams.' The effect of that of course is that there are young people within our communities who do not have the opportunity to participate in team sport because there are not the ovals and the facilities available for that sport to be undertaken. The vision of the Liberals and Nationals, now at two elections, both at the 2018 and the 2022 election, was for the Kingston green wedge to be developed appropriately, with multi-use sporting facilities, and yet the opposing view is that that green wedge be used in a completely different way by the Andrews Labor government.

I want to further commend the Kingston council, because the Kingston council did not just do what the Andrews Labor government should have done, and that is consult with their community before

making a decision on the future of the Kingston green wedge, specifically in Heatherton; the Kingston council actually went to quite a lot of trouble to put together a proposal, which I understand they have given to the government, for a better use of that land. Kingston council are quite realistic. They know that if the government want to put train stabling yards for the Suburban Rail Loop in Heatherton, within the Kingston green wedge, they can do that tomorrow. They know that; they understand that. If they are to do that, how can a terrible proposal be made a less terrible proposal? That is what Kingston has actually gone comprehensively about doing – working with a number of consulting groups to put together a proposal, which I understand has been given to government for their consideration, but no response has been received on that proposal. At the moment the plans for that area are effective concreting as far as the eye can see. You can imagine train after train after train lined up against each other – one train and the next train et cetera; lots of concrete, lots of wires. From what I have seen, the Kingston proposal is to in fact green the top of it, which would have an environmental benefit of course because the heat would not be absorbed into the concrete. The area would be greened. There would be less visual pollution as well.

I mention all these things because I still think there is an opportunity. The government says it wants to better protect the green wedge. Well, in the Kingston green wedge at Heatherton there is an opportunity for them to revise their decision.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (16:20): I am pleased to rise today in support of the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. As someone who has grown up in, lives in and represents an inner-urban area that has changed dramatically over the last three decades, I know my community take an acute interest in building and planning matters. Densification has had a real impact on our suburbs. Currently over 67,000 people reside in Northcote across an area making up just 21 square kilometres, and while the footprint has not changed, the population has increased by about 10,000 people over the last decade. As we have grown and welcomed new families, it has also put pressure on services, public infrastructure and, critically, open space.

It is safe to say that we are pretty proactive and protective of our inner-north patch. We will push back on inappropriate development and we will fight fiercely for our unique natural assets, like the three waterways and parklands which border our suburbs. Indeed this is something that I have had to do right here in this place, calling on Yarra council to do the right thing and work with the state government to protect the Yarra riverfront from degradation at a site down in Alphington. Disappointingly, the Greens council, including the Greens member for Richmond during her time as a councillor on Yarra, have refused to work collaboratively with the state on this issue. The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action has a standing offer to turn the site over to Crown land with council as committee of management. This would put it in public ownership and protect it into the future, but true to form, the Greens are all words and no action. Well, actually, today it looks like they are not even words, because they have not been here. Where are they? It is a bill on protecting our green wedges and they have not even rocked up. The riverfront down in Alphington remains at risk, and I do wonder whether the member for Richmond will now use her position in this place to finally put her virtue signalling into action and lobby her Greens friends on council to come to the table and protect the Yarra River. I raise this issue because that sense of protectiveness does not stop at our electoral borders. It extends right across our state, and that is why this bill is of great interest to my community.

The bill will not only provide critical improvements to how the building and planning systems in Victoria work but will also deliver on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to strengthening legislation protections for Melbourne's green wedges. Melbourne is surrounded by a ring of 12 green wedges that provide a precious barrier between the bustling city and the landscapes beyond. These are not just pretty sites but play a vital role in supporting our economy, feeding our growing city, supporting approximately 16,500 jobs and, critically, preserving biodiversity habitat. From world-renowned wine regions to precious wetlands and protected habitats, these wedges serve as critical preserves of biodiversity and give balance to our outer-urban ecosystems. In a way they are the vital valves of our city. They regulate hydrology, purify air and water and nurture life. Melbourne's green

wedges also play a pivotal role in mitigating the impacts of urbanisation, like heat island effects, soil erosion and stormwater run-off, while providing essential functions like carbon sequestration and air purification that benefit both the environment and our health. They are critical to maintaining the character and quality of life in Melbourne, including our famously tasty drinking water, and it is imperative that they have strong protections against overdevelopment.

Northcote is of course not within a green wedge, but we are nestled between two important waterways, the Merri Creek and the Darebin Creek, which highlights the interconnectivity of our ecosystems and the need for upstream protection which ensures downstream benefits and a resilient urban environment. This is something I have spoken about at length with our local environmental groups, including with passionate advocates like Nick Williams from the Friends of Merri Creek and Graeme Hamilton of the Darebin Creek Management Committee. Our waterways are continuous living, breathing, flowing ecosystems that should be seen as such in our regulations and our legislation. That is why it meant so much to me and my community when the Andrews Labor government announced that we will be introducing vital planning controls to permanently safeguard our creeks from inappropriate development.

This is something that local advocates have been calling for. It will ensure our creeks remain thriving wildlife corridors for generations to come. Not only that, it is backed by a \$10 million Green Links fund to support revegetation along Victoria's creeks, waters and riverways. I mention this because I firmly believe that we must do more to protect our state's habitat and biodiversity, and that is exactly what this bill will do. I think it is important to emphasise that the protection of our green wedges is not just crucial for the urban fringe but for the entire state. The bill introduces a legislative requirement for local councils to prepare and review green wedge management plans. The bill will empower the minister to ensure important directives to councils in relation to the preparation and content of these plans, adding another degree of oversight and accountability in protecting Melbourne's green wedges against inappropriate development decisions by councils.

We all know that across our fair state there are also distinct regions of breathtaking environmental, cultural and economic significance – places like the Macedon Ranges, the Surf Coast and, as Acting Speaker Crugnale knows, the Bass Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula. The newly appointed member for Bellarine articulated this quite beautifully yesterday in her inaugural speech in relation to her local community and its importance. These distinctive areas and landscapes hold a special status and now require a statement of planning policy, or SPP, which is a 50-year plan to safeguard the unique qualities of these areas while balancing housing, tourism and infrastructure. SPPs have already come into effect for the Macedon Ranges, while other distinctive areas, including the Bellarine and Bass Coast, are going through the development of those as we speak. What we have learned through the experience so far, however, is that the process can become unnecessarily slow because there is no time frame specified to obtain the requisite endorsements for these SPPs. This bill changes that and streamlines the process, requiring endorsement from responsible entities within a time frame of 28 days.

The bill also makes some changes and supports the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria such that building practitioners, licensed plumbers, land surveyors and architects working under AMR are protected by the appropriate insurance required by Victorian laws and making registration details of practitioners working under AMR available to the public. This bill ensures that we are moving towards meaningful changes to our legislation to improve our planning and building systems. It provides purposeful protections for Melbourne's green wedges, distinctive areas and landscapes. It also promotes greater consumer protection.

As we debate this bill in the next couple of minutes and consider the impact of population growth on our state, the need to support jobs, housing and transport, the imperative to protect Melbourne's legacy of livability, sustainability and cultural heritage significance, I am reminded of an incredibly moving documentary which I watched last year. It is called *The Lost City of Melbourne*, and it was produced and directed by Gus Berger, who is the owner and operator of our very awesome independent cinema, Thornbury Picture House, in the electorate of Northcote. Back in September last year I had the honour

of joining Gus and speaking at one of the first screenings of this outstanding film. Gus uses rare footage and photography to weave a truly captivating history of Marvellous Melbourne and the property boom of the 1850s onwards, which saw Melbourne propelled onto the world stage to become an epicentre of film culture, theatres, restaurants and hotels. It also covers the tragic demise of some of our significant architecture from that period. Many old theatres and picture houses were destroyed in a wave of modernisation that saw grand structures like the Padua Theatre on Sydney Road in Brunswick demolished. I learned so much about our city watching this film. It was a stark reminder of how much evolves over time, how taste, circumstances and economics can lead to irreversible decisions and the responsibility we have to preserve and protect our city and our state for future generations. I am thankful that we still have establishments like the Princess Theatre on Spring Street and the Regent Theatre on Collins, and closer to home in my electorate the wonderful Westgarth theatre. I have run out of time, but I would like to commend this bill to the house and thank the minister.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (16:30): It too gives me pleasure to rise to make a contribution this Thursday afternoon to the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. It is good also to be back on my feet in the 60th Parliament and debating bills, with the obvious subtle changes that are about the place, including seeing you in the chair, Acting Speaker Crugnale, and good to see so many new members across that side of the house and this side of the house as well.

In terms of the background of this bill, the purpose of the proposed bill is to deliver several legislative changes which were first proposed in the Building, Planning and Heritage Legislation Amendment (Administration and Other Matters) Bill 2022. That came before the 59th Parliament I think around about August of last year, but it did lapse as the 59th Parliament came to an end. The amendments acquit this government's election commitment to improve the clarity and operation of the building and planning systems. The bill itself will amend the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Surveying Act 2004 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987, and it has four key purposes: to strengthen legislative protection of Melbourne's green wedges, to streamline the endorsement process for a distinctive area and landscape, to support the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria and to clarify the power to issue restricted plumbing work licences for private plumbing work.

It does support the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in this state by ensuring that building practitioners, licensed plumbers, land surveyors and architects working under the AMR scheme are covered by insurance required under Victorian laws and making the registration details of practitioners working under AMR available to the public. The changes in the bill will also minimise the risk of plumbers undertaking unlawful plumbing work on their own or a family member's home by providing certainty regarding the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) and its continuing ability to issue restricted plumbing licences for private plumbing work. The bill also introduces amendments that give effect to the government's commitment to providing better protection for Melbourne's metropolitan green wedge land by requiring councils to develop and review green wedge management plans and to increase protection of areas declared as distinctive areas and landscapes.

In terms of the green wedge areas, what are those green wedge areas? Well, as we all know, surrounding our Melbourne metropolis and in those peri-urban areas which my constituency is also in there are 12 green wedge areas designated in order to protect, enhance and promote non-urban values and non-urban uses that support our city and the environment, and these areas make a considerable contribution to the sustainability, the prosperity, the health and the wellbeing of Victorians. They support primary production, contain areas of biodiversity conservation and infrastructure and include a wealth of water resources, extractive resources and other natural resources.

The member for Northcote, before me, spoke about the fantastic water that we enjoy in Melbourne and in Victoria, and indeed if you speak to any master brewer in this state – yes, I am making the leap from building and planning to brewing, on a Thursday afternoon at 4:30, to make the point that because Melbourne has one of the best water supplies, any master brewer will tell you that one of the best reasons we have great beer in this state is because of the water supply, water of course being a key ingredient in the beer products that we make here. It is indeed why we have such a terrific

microbrewery industry in this state; it is because of that very, very clear water. So if you like beer, you will obviously support this bill.

Green wedges also contribute to energy generation, transmission and storage and are important for tourism and recreation linked to natural environments, cultural heritage and agricultural activities. The 12 green wedge areas are well noted, but I would like to put on the record that the southern ranges and Western Port green wedge areas fall within the City of Casey, where my electorate of Narre Warren South sits.

When it comes to putting a bill of this complexity to the Parliament, stakeholder impacts are obviously very important, as is what stakeholders have to say. The bill is actually expected to produce benefits for the planning and building sectors and the community more broadly. Anticipated stakeholder benefits are as follows. In terms of the restricted plumbing licences aspect of the bill, the plumbing industry has for the past 20 years recognised restricted plumbing licences as a path to authorising some practitioners to undertake lawful plumbing work on their homes and the homes of their relatives, but the bill will clarify elements of the legislative framework to provide the industry and the VBA with more legal certainty and ensure that the VBA maintains the ability to continue issuing these licences. As aforementioned about the automatic mutual recognition, the Victorian building and plumbing practitioners and industry bodies are supportive of the amendments. The amendments ensure practitioners working under AMR in Victoria meet certain consumer protection requirements, such as having the relevant insurance coverage and having their details listed in a publicly available register of practitioners, which apply to Victorian practitioners. If the bill is not passed, practitioners working under AMR may not be held to that same level of accountability as Victorian practitioners, with the potential to adversely impact consumers and unfairly disadvantage Victorian practitioners who go and do the right thing.

In terms of distinctive areas and landscapes, the bill will streamline the process to gain the endorsement of responsible public entities with regard to statements of planning policy for declared distinctive areas and landscapes, ensuring the protection of these valuable parts of Victoria. A statement of planning policy includes a long-term vision of at least 50 years, policy objectives and strategies to achieve that vision, a strategic framework plan for guiding the future use and development of land in the declared areas and the protection of landscape, environmental, cultural and other values within the area.

Finally in terms of green wedges, the bill requires local governments to prepare green wedge management plans in accordance with the Minister for Planning's directions. Many councils have indeed already done that or well and truly have them on the way, as this proposal was first canvassed in late 2020 with the release of the *Planning for Melbourne's Green Wedges and Agricultural Land* discussion paper, and the proposal was widely supported by local government and the community. As part of the preparation of green wedge management plans, local government will be required to consult with a range of government and non-government stakeholders, including the traditional owners of the land as well.

In summary, this bill does strengthen the legislative protection of Melbourne's green wedges. It streamlines the endorsement process for distinctive areas and landscape. It supports the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria. Finally, it clarifies the power to issue restricted plumbing work licences for private plumbing work. It is the product of some very long and difficult work by the Department of Transport and Planning and a very hardworking ministerial office. It is a good bill, and it should pass this house. I indeed commend the bill to the house.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (16:40): It is a delight to get back on my feet for the first time in the 60th Parliament in a contribution on a bill that is very interesting and very important to me. I am very pleased to see that the Minister for Planning has reintroduced this bill because of a commitment that we made back at the 2018 election in relation to protecting the green wedges, and I do want to spend a bit of time on the green wedge legislation and the history of the green wedges, because it is a really fascinating history of Melbourne.

The bill will make a number of other important amendments, which include supporting the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria and clarifying the power to issue restricted plumbing work licences for private plumbing work.

Getting back to the green wedges, I had time to contemplate this over summer, reading one of my favourite texts, which is *Great Cities and Their Traffic*. I know a few people, a few members –

Ben Carroll interjected.

Paul HAMER: It is very well-worn. You are welcome to borrow it, Minister. It is showing its age after 50 years, but it has some very interesting concepts.

A member interjected.

Paul HAMER: Melbourne is definitely in it. The author, who was neither an urban planner nor an engineer, is an economist, but he wrote extensively on transport and looked at how various cities had developed and how they were developing. It was a very interesting point in time in the 1970s, looking at how the cities of that time were developed. It is interesting, because that was not that long after the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works at the time had put out their own urban strategy which, really for the first time, had actually talked about these green wedges and talked about the lungs of Melbourne, which have survived largely intact to this day.

But I do actually want to take you even further back to a part of Melbourne's history, to the 1929 metropolitan plan; I think it was called the *Plan for General Development*. It was put out by the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission back in 1929. It included some beautiful maps, and I am sure at the time they were hand coloured and hand drawn. The level of detail is just amazing. You can see on those maps the starting point for the green wedges – and looking out at the parkland that surrounds the city and then spreading out its tentacles along the creek valleys, along the river valleys. Even though Melbourne's metropolitan suburban area certainly did not cover most of my electorate in Box Hill – the city of Box Hill had only just become a city council; it had separated from I think it was the shire of Nunawading before that time – that was about the edge of the metropolitan area at the time, but you could see the starting points, the buds, of the green wedge along the Yarra Valley, along the valley of the Koonung Creek, along the valley of Gardiners Creek, or Kooyongkoot Creek. I want to read into the record just some quotes from the commission's report. It says:

It would be possible and desirable in the planning of a new city to set aside an amount of park lands equal to any maximum standard or ratio considered necessary. This area might be supplied by large wedges radiating from the centre, or by a series of large and small parks, or by the planning of belts of open country on the outskirts of the areas reserved for city and suburban development.

Then it goes on a couple of paragraphs later:

Melbourne has, however, certain natural physical features suitable for the formation of a system of park lands which could hardly be excelled. If full advantage is taken of these natural conditions, and the system outlined is developed systematically, this City will be in the forefront, by comparison, with cities of equal or greater size.

This was written, as I say, in 1929, so almost 100 years ago, and I think we have to be grateful to those who were involved in urban planning at that time for recognising the importance of setting down green wedges and the access to green space that is provided to people in the community, particularly as those communities expanded along the radial rail lines. It makes an interesting comment about the decision – whether there should be green wedges or whether there should be a green belt, which was quite a point of debate in late Victorian times, certainly in England and other European countries – about what was the best way for city folk, people living in the city, to be able to have that pleasure of contact with the natural environment. There were some strong proponents for the green belt system, which effectively put a collar on the urban growth but meant that people who were in the inner city were not actually that close and that proximate to their urban environment. Proponents of the green wedge in those academic discussions certainly pushed for a concept that allowed the maximum number of

people to have ready access and proximate access to green space and natural bushland, and I think we can all be very thankful that we now live in a city where the concept of those green wedges has now over many decades been part of the psyche of Melbourne. Even in Box Hill we are obviously not in a green wedge zone, but we do live in proximity to the green wedge in Manningham, so the bushland around Warrandyte and Donvale, and of course it is only a train ride away down to the beautiful Dandenong Ranges.

Going back to just the history of the green wedge implementation, obviously, as I was mentioning earlier, in the 1970s this solidified around certain distinct regions and protecting regions because of their environmental value, particularly around places like the Yarra Valley and the Dandenongs and down through the Mornington Peninsula. This had been reinforced through the 1980s and 90s through various Melbourne planning documents, but it was really only in the document *Melbourne 2030*, a seminal document that was introduced by the Bracks government, that green wedges were formally recognised and were finally enshrined into law and enshrined into our legislation and an urban growth boundary was established – so still allowing those growth corridors along those radial infrastructure routes, but enshrining for all time those green wedges for everyone to enjoy. Now we come to this point in time where we are putting in place those green wedge management plans which will give councils in local government areas that do have green wedge that extra guidance that they may need to make sure that the green wedges continue to be protected and continue to be that natural outlet that so many people in Melbourne have come to love and enjoy.

Just very briefly I want to also touch on the mutual recognition provisions in the legislation. The legislation will ensure that practitioners have the insurance required under Victorian building laws and make the registration details of practitioners working under the automatic mutual recognition available to the public – another step forward in making sure that we are a federated system and it works very well for everyone.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (16:50): Acting Speaker Crugnale, it is great to see you in the chair – congratulations. I rise today to also contribute to the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for Planning and her staff for the introduction of these very important reforms to this house that update and improve the clarity, operation and efficiency of our vital building and planning systems. We continue to deliver and improve upon the government's 2018 election commitments, strengthening protections and recommitting to our green spaces around the city. Planning made a significant contribution to the Victorian economy in 2022, with \$3.6 billion worth of projects recommended through the development facilitation program, which streamlines the assessment and determination of projects, injects investment into the Victorian economy and keeps people in jobs. There were approvals of over 1000 homes as part of the Big Housing Build program, \$90 billion worth of Big Build project approvals, \$5.6 billion in construction activity approvals and of course we powered nearly a million additional homes through our renewable energy permits.

By amending the Building Act 1993, the Architects Act 1991, the Surveying Act 2004 and the Planning and Environment Act 1987, we are creating the following reforms: we are strengthening the legislative protection of Melbourne's green wedges, we are streamlining the endorsement processes for a distinctive area and landscape, we are supporting the implementation of automatic mutual recognition in Victoria and we are clarifying the power to issue restricted plumbing work licences for private plumbing work. We remain committed to improving the efficiency, clarity and operation of the building and planning systems.

I have got one beef with building and planning, and it is actually with developers. I am sure we have all experienced it in our own electorates, and that is where developers are selling land off, promising the world to the buyers of the land and promising infrastructure builds that they never will commit to – and they do not have to commit to because they are either state or federal infrastructure builds. So they promise these things, they sell the land off and people buy into these developments; five years or 10 years later, they still have not got that infrastructure that they have been promised by these developers. I think it is about time that local councils and we start to go harder on these developers so

that when they sell this land off they need to stick to those commitments that they are promising. You cannot promise a railway station. You cannot promise overpasses on the freeways – you cannot do those sorts of infrastructure builds without consultation with other levels of government. Developers have been getting away with it for years, and it is a damned disgrace. It is leaving people in places where they thought they were buying into a great community and a great development and having all that infrastructure, and they do not. So it is not good enough, as far as I am concerned.

I also want to take the opportunity to talk about the immense pride that the Melton residents have in their green and open spaces that surround our electorate. Melton is a very open space. As a kid growing up in the western suburbs, you could almost see Melton from Braybrook. Now you cannot; all you see is rooftops. But we still have a lot of space – open space and green space – around that Melton electorate.

Melbourne's 12 green wedges cover the areas that sit just outside Melbourne's urban growth boundary and provide an essential break between the intensive urban development along the growth corridors, and it is one of the major reasons that people are moving into my electorate. As a city fringe locality – I think it is 30 to 31 kilometres from the city centre – we are incredibly lucky to have deliberately considered protection of these green wedge spaces, which vary in environmental diversity even just among the three that Melton sits across and is surrounded by – the Western Plains south green wedge, the Western Plains north green wedge and, further north, the Sunbury green wedge. We are enshrining protections for Melton and Melbourne's cherished green wedges in the legislation, which is of course welcome news for many, including the 'friends of' groups across the state and, in particular, in my electorate.

Green wedges contain a mix of agriculture and low-density activities like the major infrastructure that supports urban areas, which includes the Melbourne and Moorabbin airports, the eastern water treatment facility and the western water treatment facility down in Werribee, which my good friend the member for Werribee represents. It is home to major quarries used in building industries, and roughly one-third of the total green wedge area is public land, including national parks, other parks and reserves. Melton has open basalt plains, cultural heritage sites, vital water catchments and biodiversity conservation sites, like our stunning Victorian volcanic plains. The Victorian volcanic plains is Victoria's only biodiversity hotspot and is one of only 15 in Australia, making it an area of national and global biological significance, and it supports many species of native plants and animals that are protected under Commonwealth and our state laws. Over 150 years of agriculture, grazing and urban development has radically transformed the Melton landscape. As little as 1 per cent of the former extensive grasslands and grassy woodlands of the Victorian volcanic plains survive.

These features of our green wedges contribute immensely to making Melton such a dynamic and enticing place to live and to work, and the contribution that green wedge land makes to our economy is substantial. The land is critical to our economy and Melbourne's food production, contributing around \$5.79 billion in economic activity and supporting roughly 16,500 jobs across a range of industry sectors. We are home to some of the world's best wine destinations, parks and wetlands, and as the population grows in Melbourne our green wedges ensure that the character and landscape of communities along the urban growth boundary are going to be protected. We are protecting Melbourne's green wedges against inappropriate development. By passing this legislation we are committing to protecting Melbourne's green wedges for current and future generations.

The bill details the government's objectives for green wedge land and also creates a requirement for preparation and review of green wedge management by the local councils. It also gives the ability for the Minister for Planning to issue instruction as to what the council management plans need to include. That provides structure, guidance, form and consistency across the board. The process as it exists is difficult, and for a document as important as a strategic plan that will guide the future use and development of the land in a declared area for the next 50 years, it is important that we make it easier and quicker to get endorsement and declaration. Streamlining the endorsement process removes the barriers to finalising the statement of planning policy.

Victoria is home to such a large number of unique and sensitive landscapes and distinctive places that are highly valued for their environmental, social, cultural and economic assets. We know these areas are vital to the functioning of our urban areas, providing people with clean air, drinking water, food, resources and recreational opportunities. These areas are under increasing pressure for development because of their attractiveness, accessibility and proximity to our cities and because of environmental factors like the impacts of climate change.

I will quickly go to the automatic mutual recognition. The Commonwealth's Mutual Recognition Act 1992 was amended in 2021 to introduce an automatic mutual recognition scheme to be adopted by all states and territories. It makes it easier for hardworking registered licensed workers to work across state and territory borders but be qualified and licensed in Victoria. A drivers licence-type model for occupational licensing will be adopted as part of the automatic mutual recognition scheme and is intended to enable a person to use the occupational licence issued by their home state to carry out the same activities it authorises in other participating Australian jurisdictions. This brings Victoria into line with the rest of the country, and in the case of Queensland well ahead.

This is an important bill, and as I said before, my only disappointment with building and planning in the state is allowing developers to get away with the promises that they put forward and never deliver on in regard to infrastructure build, and that should not be allowed. I think we need to put more pressure on the developers in regard to what they offer and what they end up delivering. Local councils need to hold them to account and we need to hold them to account. This is an important amendment bill. I do commend the bill to the house.

The SPEAKER: The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The house is considering the Building and Planning Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Croydon has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. He has proposed to omit all the words after 'That' and replace them with the words that have been circulated. The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Those supporting the reasoned amendment by the member for Croydon should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (57): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Danny Pearson, Tim Read, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Ellen Sandell, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (21): Brad Battin, Roma Britnell, Chris Crewther, Sam Groth, David Hodgett, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ryan Smith, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Bill 2022

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (74): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Brad Battin, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Danny Pearson, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Michaela Settle, Ryan Smith, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Noes (4): Gabrielle de Vietri, Sam Hibbins, Tim Read, Ellen Sandell

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Southern 80 event

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (17:11): (31) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Environment in the other place, and it is on behalf of the Moama Water Sports Club and particularly

Steve Shipp, their president. The Moama Water Sports Club run the Southern 80 boat race at Echuca, and what they would like the minister to do is instruct the department to do the work so that the riverbank can be opened between Torrumbarry and Echuca so when the Southern 80 boat race happens on 24 to 26 March – it is later this year than it normally is; the traditional weekend is in early February but they put it back this year because of the floods – they will have the river camping areas and the viewing areas along that stretch of river between Torrumbarry and Echuca open to the public so that people can actually go to the Southern 80, can come to Echuca.

Not only is Echuca an agriculture-based town, it is a very important tourism town. The hospitality industry there and the accommodation industry rely on business coming to the town, and the Southern 80 is one of the flagship events on the tourism calendar of Echuca-Moama. So that river needs to be open so people can come. They come in the tens of thousands to watch the Southern 80. The Southern 80 is the premier boat race in Australia, if not the world, where you have got boats with two skiers up. They can do the 80 kilometres from Torrumbarry to Echuca in sub-30 minutes if they are the top-class boat, so it is quite exciting for those that camp and go along the river to view the race to actually be able to see those boats go past.

For those three days of racing they have asked that I raise with the minister that the work be done by Parks Victoria to make sure our side of the river is open. They hope that NSW forests do the work on the New South Wales side. The Victorian government chooses not to be a sponsor of the Southern 80. They were for quite a few years. They are no longer a sponsor of that race. Destination NSW do put significant sponsorship money into the race, but I would like to think that the Victorian government could do their bit this year by actually making sure the river is open so that visitation can come back to Echuca for the race.

Melton electorate bus services

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (17:13): (32) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Public Transport, and the action that I seek is an update on the new bus services from Eynesbury in the Melton electorate. Melton was excited with the news during the election campaign that we are delivering a new bus service for passengers in Eynesbury, connecting them with Melton by public transport. This is of course in addition to the already delivered FlexiRide bus service for Melton South connecting passengers to key destination hubs like Cobblebank station, Melton station, Woodgrove shopping centre, Melton bus exchange and schools in Melton South and Thornhill Park. We have delivered extra services and cleaner and smarter buses and improved accessibility for bus passengers, giving them more options to travel to the shops and essential connections to health care and education.

A new service for Eynesbury makes it easier for locals to use public transport, helping them to get where they need to go – helping students to get to school, helping hardworking Victorians to get to work. It creates jobs for locals, improves environmental outcomes and has direct cost-of-living benefits. This investment builds on the Labor government's announcement that Melton will be level crossing free by 2028, with the investing of up to \$650 million in the Melton line upgrade, increasing passenger transport capacity for the community and working to make our bus network more environmentally friendly as well as cutting carbon emissions. Leaving the car at home will be a greener choice because by 2025 every new bus added to our fleet will be a zero-emission vehicle.

Clyde North mobile phone coverage

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:15): (33) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Industry and Innovation, and the action I seek is for the minister to attend a community meeting with residents who are fed up with the spin from Labor about fixing mobile reception in Clyde North when they know all too well that the best way to fix this problem is not just cash but a policy and a change in planning to allow more towers to be built as a priority. Residents in Clyde North have been approaching us for a long period of time in relation to the issues they have faced around reception with their mobile phones. Obviously, that includes data as well. It is one of the fastest growing areas in the south-east. Tens of thousands of people are moving in, and as well as the roads, the rail, the schools,

the education facilities and the hospitals, one of the things that would be seen as a necessity these days is mobile phone towers to ensure people can have access at home.

One of the concerns is that when Telstra or the major companies have put in applications to put in mobile towers in sportsgrounds, they have gone through a process with the council and the council has knocked them back on multiple occasions. The sportsgrounds would be willing to accept them, and the community is willing to accept them at sportsgrounds. It appears that because of the legislation the council has made a choice to not accept them at those grounds, and that is impacting the lives of people living in those areas. Whilst it impacts people who are doing education at home and working from home, one of the greatest impacts in those areas is the access to emergency services. With calling 000, we have seen cases down there where people have tried to ring the fire department or where people have tried to ring an ambulance, including on a bowls green where they had to walk back inside the building to use a landline to call 000. The one that would break most people's hearts is a lady who had to call 000 from outside her house, knowing her husband was not going to survive but not being able to spend the last couple of minutes with him because she was outside trying to call 000. These are circumstances that should not happen in a First World nation, these are circumstances that should not happen in the growth corridor of Casey, and I am calling on the government to talk about not just the funding that goes in there, which we know is important, but more importantly how we update the planning legislation and ensure that the towers can be built when these areas are getting constructed and that they are taken into consideration as a priority, the same as when we put in our precinct structure plans. We have got sportsgrounds, sewerage and phone connections through the ground; we also need to make sure we know where mobile towers are going, and therefore we would not have the issue of people saying, 'I want a mobile tower – just not in my backyard'.

Monbulk electorate road safety

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (17:17): (34) My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister join me in my electorate of Monbulk to view the road safety concerns of residents. I would first like to acknowledge the outstanding work currently being done by crews working across the ranges and particularly on Monbulk Road, where a landslip occurred late last year. I am very happy to say that stretch of road is now open in both directions. I thank the community for their patience, and I thank the minister for her continued updates on this project. A growing number of constituents have raised with my office issues concerning road safety across the Dandenong Ranges and surrounds. After large amounts of rainfall throughout 2022, our roads are in need of some repair, rehabilitation and maintenance. Increasing volumes on our roads are also making several intersections without traffic controls more difficult to navigate. As our communities continue to grow, these once rural roads are now major thoroughfares for families driving to work and school and accessing services across the hills. I welcome the chance for the minister to inspect and discuss these local roads identified by my constituents.

Child sexual abuse

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (17:18): (35) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Premier to immediately announce a dedicated parliamentary inquiry into child sexual abuse within the Victorian government school system. Sexual abuse of children was rife in the 1970s, with schools in my own electorate recognised as where some of the worst offending in the Victorian government school system occurred. Given the trauma that many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Victorians have experienced whilst in the care of the Victorian government school system, it is so critically important to understand the scale of abuse and to hear of these harrowing stories directly from victim-survivors themselves. Over the past months I have heard, myself, the traumatic stories and met with several victim-survivors.

After months of lobbying, it is an important first step that the Premier has now met with these victim-survivors and has vowed to apologise for the crimes committed. But the point I make is this: how can the Premier apologise for something where the scale of abuse is largely unknown? Now is the time for

the Premier to go further and recognise the pain and suffering of these victim-survivors by launching a dedicated parliamentary inquiry into systemic sexual abuse of children in Victorian government schools. Past inquiries have distinctively excluded investigating abuse in Victorian government schools, and it is my strong view that the Victorian government need to do more to recognise what has occurred under the Department of Education's watch and that they begin with launching this dedicated parliamentary inquiry. It is my view that the Liberals and Nationals will be supportive of this, and we believe that it is an important and necessary first step in the healing process for those who have suffered.

Sick pay guarantee

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:20): (36) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Employment regarding the Labor government's \$245.7 million sick pay guarantee, which aims to reduce workplace illnesses and injuries and keep businesses safer and more productive. The action I seek is for the minister to provide me with the number of Victorian workers living in my electorate who have been supported through the sick pay guarantee program in 2022 and how this investment has benefited them. Many residents of the Thomastown electorate are employed in industries across manufacturing, retail, health and social assistance, with a significant proportion employed on a casual basis. These are all occupations which are included in the first phase of the scheme and represent the highest percentage of workers who are registered for the program. This Australian-first initiative was launched in March 2022, and after only four months more than \$6 million had been paid to workers in frontline jobs. Recently the minister announced that the program has so far supported more than 80,000 claims from Victorian casual and contract workers who do not have sick leave entitlements. I have spoken to many casual workers who have told me how important this program has been in both recognising the important contribution they make and ensuring that if they do have time off due to illness they can still feed their families and pay their rent.

Defamation legislation

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (17:22): I wish to raise two issues. First, many local social media pages like WTF Mount Eliza, Mornington Peninsula NoticeBoard and Mount Martha Community Grapevine Noticeboard and their voluntary admins risk defamation suits for third-party comments. Current defamation laws only leave admins the option of disabling or constantly monitoring social media comments, stifling free speech. Media also face this issue. A key example is Cameron Howe, now a councillor at the City of Kingston. At 16 he set up the Carrum & Patterson Lakes Forum on Facebook. He recently faced defamation action over third-party comments, with a court ordering Howe to pay \$205,000 in damages. He is now applying to the Supreme Court for leave to appeal, which in my view is in the state and national interest, to hear a Broadcasting Services Act 1992 defence at Victoria's highest court, but it should never have got to this point. While people need protection from defamatory comments, there also needs to be greater protection for administrators, often volunteers, for third-party comments. Indeed the Standing Council of Attorneys-General support changes to protect admins from defamation over third-party comments, supporting a new 'innocent defamation' defence for internet intermediaries, subject to a simple complaints process. I strongly support Victoria's Defamation Act 2005 being changed asap to implement these changes.

Kunyang Road, Mount Eliza, development

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (17:23): (37) Second, many thousands of residents have been concerned about the Ryman development involving Reg's Wedge, the land formerly owned by Reg Ansett involving Moondah mansion, which is a development beyond the urban growth boundary, right next to Kunyang Primary School. I wrote to the former Labor Minister for Planning and received a departmental response during caretaker mode in October which said little. In late December VCAT ruled that Ryman's amended planning application can go ahead. After that I wrote to the new Labor Minister for Planning, the member for Carrum, at the end of December, asking that this project be called in, noting that the state Labor government could look at alternative boutique uses, similar to

Werribee mansion within Werribee Park, as I suggested even prior to my preselection in December 2021.

I also asked the minister to save the neighbouring decommissioned South East Water reservoir site, asking her to keep it in state hands and to rehabilitate it as a public wetland instead. So far I have received no response. Recently the majority of Mornington Peninsula Shire councillors decided not to appeal the VCAT decision, which might have delayed the project, allowing further time for the minister to make a decision to call it in. This basically now leaves this project in the hands of the minister, so I urgently ask the Minister for Planning: will you call in this project?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I gave the member for Mornington the full opportunity to enable his contribution to meet the forms of an adjournment in this house. He did not direct his adjournment to a minister, nor did he ask for an explicit action, so I ask that you rule it out of order. I understand of course it is the first sitting week for the member.

The SPEAKER: The member for Mornington did ask for an action at the end from the Minister for Planning. You did leave it to the last minute, and I was wondering if you would actually get an action out. I just remind members that if you are doing an adjournment, at the start of the adjournment it is a really good idea to tell us who your adjournment matter is to and what action you are seeking. I will rule this one in this time, but I remind members to be very careful about how they phrase their adjournment matters.

Early childhood education

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (17:26): (38) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the Andrews Labor government's Best Start, Best Life reform and what this historic reform means for my constituents in Clarinda. Last week thousands of kids across Clarinda and across Victoria started their early childhood education. What a wonderful and exciting time for all of those children and all of those families, and I wish everyone the best for the school year.

I am extremely proud that so many families will benefit from the Andrews Labor government's free kinder initiative in its first year. The Best Start, Best Life reform will see children enrolled in three-year-old kindergarten receive between 5 and 15 hours of funded learning each week this year, and those in four-year-old kindergarten will receive 15 hours per week. With the rising cost of living, we know childcare fees have been crippling family budgets, and for so many families in my electorate these are game-changing reforms. What is more, they will help each child reach their full potential and give every child the best start in their life. The minister has also announced the rollout of the schedule for pre-prep, a universal 30-hour-a-week program for play-based learning available to every four-year-old child in Victoria by 2032. I am excited to learn more. I thank the minister for delivering these incredible reforms, and I look forward to her response.

Water policy

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:28): (39) My adjournment is to the Minister for Water in the other place, and the action that I seek is that at the upcoming Murray–Darling Basin Authority ministerial council meeting the Victorian Minister for Water does not sell us down the river by agreeing to more buybacks. Further buybacks of irrigation water are just not on.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority have traditionally used buybacks of irrigation allocation to solve many of the environmental problems throughout the eastern seaboard of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority. There was provision in the original plan for a clawback of a further 450 gegalitres, which will be debated at the coming MDBA ministerial council, which is scheduled for 24 February. However, this decision was to be made in conjunction with the knowledge that regional communities would not be compromised or jeopardised if any further water were removed from the irrigation pool.

Let me be clear, further water buybacks from the southern basin will have a detrimental effect on local economies of regional communities and must be stopped at all costs.

I have grave fears that the federal minister for water may be using the upcoming New South Wales election to push back the MDBA ministerial council meeting in the hope of a new water minister in New South Wales that could be more amenable to the federal minister's thinking. I am not sure whether there is substance to that rumour, but if this is the case, it is a shameful manipulation of power. My suspicions are compounded by the absence of the promised strategy for consultation on buybacks of irrigation water. When you see fluffy lines rolling out like 'bridging the gap', you can be sure that the spin has already begun. Minister Shing must say no to buybacks and give that guarantee to Victorians.

Early childhood education

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:29): (40) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the Labor government's Building Blocks partnership with Merri-bek City Council and what this partnership will mean for my constituents of Pascoe Vale.

In my first speech last night I spoke about how I am the proud product of local public education, having attended Coburg West Primary School. However, I was also one of the many children at that time – namely, from non-English-speaking migrant families – who simply were not in a position to afford, let alone understand, the benefits of sending their children to a local kinder. Today as the local member and also as a local dad I know just how much local families value the quality of local kinders, because it is local kinders that first shape and inspire the minds and future life chances of what we value and care for the most: the most precious assets, our children and young people. With 90 per cent of a child's brain developing before the age of five, early education has a profound effect on the way our kids develop. That is why as the new local member I will be doing everything I can to ensure we invest to support the rollout of free three- and four-year-old kinder across the community, so that regardless of background or circumstances all families and children will have the chance to access a quality kinder while saving families \$2500 per year.

That is why I was delighted to join the minister back on 22 August last year to help announce that an Andrews Labor government will be investing a record \$10.7 million to expand and upgrade 11 kinders across Merri-bek. Starting with \$500,000 towards upgrading the Turner Street kinder, this infrastructure pipeline will support the creation of a massive 329 extra funded kinder places across Merri-bek by 2029. This landmark partnership between the state Labor government and council will help families in Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West to access high-quality early childhood education that is closer to home. As of 2019, 89 per cent of eligible local children were participating in four-year-old kinder, and these investments will go a long way, along with free kinder, to helping us increase that take-up rate even further. By 2036 it is anticipated that a further 3000 zero- to four-year-olds will call Merri-bek home, and so this local Building Blocks partnership will provide a strong foundation for future investments that will be required for even more demand down the track.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all the early education childhood workers from across my electorate for their good work, including those that taught my two daughters Raffaella and Cleopatra for their local kinder and childcare years. I am proud to be part of a Labor government that is championing early childhood education and look forward to the minister's response.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:32): The Leader of the National Party, the member for Murray Plains, raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment in the other place seeking action to ensure that the Murray River is open to enable the Southern 80, conducted by the Moama Water Sports Club, to take place – well, to ensure the spectators can observe the Southern 80

at Echuca-Moama. The member for Melton raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport seeking an update on new bus services that will be provided for the people of Eynesbury in the member's electorate. The member for Berwick raised an issue for the attention of the Minister for Industry and Innovation specifically concerning mobile reception in Clyde North and the need to work with local government and indeed planning authorities to enable more towers to be delivered in his community.

The member for Monbulk requested that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety provide her with an update on local roads in her community. The member for Sandringham had a matter for the attention of the Premier seeking an inquiry into child sexual abuse in government schools. The member for Thomastown raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Employment seeking to understand the number of constituents in her electorate who have benefited from the Andrews Labor government's investment and leading reform in the delivery of the sick pay guarantee. The member for Mornington found an action – eventually – for the Minister for Planning. The member for Clarinda raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place looking for an update on the way in which Best Start, Best Life is meeting the needs of his constituency. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water with regard to an upcoming water ministers meeting, calling on the minister to reject buybacks. The member for Pascoe Vale, similarly to the member for Clarinda, raised a matter again for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place for an update on the Andrews Labor government's significant investment and reform in this area and specifically how the Building Blocks program is going to deliver for his community. I will refer these matters to those ministers for their attention.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:35 pm.