



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 21 February 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly

60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

Juliana Addison, Christine Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Paul Edbrooke, Bronwyn Halfpenny,
Paul Hamer, Michaela Settle, Meng Heang Tak and Jackson Taylor

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

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	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	South Barwon	ALP	O'Keefe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleland, 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	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will	Ringwood	ALP	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Home, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
Wayne Farnham	Narracan	Lib	Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

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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Tuesday 21 February 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 12:03 pm, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

*Members***Member for Narracan***Swearing in*

The SPEAKER (12:04): I have to announce that I have received a return to the writ issued on 19 December 2022, which states that Wayne Farnham has been elected for the electoral district of Narracan.

Wayne Farnham introduced and sworn.

*Bills***Heritage Amendment Bill 2023***Introduction and first reading*

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:06): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Heritage Act 2017 to provide for exclusion determinations and to make other amendments to improve the operation of the act and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:07): I seek a brief explanation of the bill.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (12:07): The Heritage Amendment Bill 2023 will deliver operational improvements to the Heritage Act 2017, including providing for online access to notices and inspection of documents and hearings, allowing applications for exclusion from the Victorian Heritage Register and resolving technical issues to clarify and improve the operation of the Heritage Act.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023*Introduction and first reading*

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:08): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, the Social Services Regulation Act 2021, the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012, the Magistrates' Court Act 1989, the Health Services Act 1988 and the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, to make minor and consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:08): I request a brief explanation of the bill.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:09): The Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-Determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023 will progress Aboriginal self-determination in child protection by introducing a statement of recognition and

recognition principles, expanding the functions that Aboriginal-led organisations can be authorised to perform and legislating all five elements of the Aboriginal child placement principle. The bill also introduces a statement of recognition and non-binding principles to the health system and makes updates to improve the functioning of the Children's Court, the reportable conduct scheme, the worker and carer exclusion scheme and the functions of the Commission for Children and Young People.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 – Order under s 17B granting a licence over Birrarung Park

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 – Notices under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to:

Statutory Rule 120/2022 (Gazette G5, 2 February 2023)

Statutory Rule 171/2021 (Gazette G7, 16 February 2023)

Ombudsman – Good Practice Guide: Complaint handling in a crisis – released on 16 February 2023

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Benalla – C44

Boroondara – C389

Brimbank – C236

Greater Bendigo – C277

Greater Shepparton – C240

Hobsons Bay – C114

Kingston – C211

Moorabool – C100

Moreland – C225

Stonnington – C328

Statutory Rules under the *Road Safety Act 1986* – SRs 7, 8, 9

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 97/2022

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Essential Services Commission Act 2001*:

Electricity Distribution Code of Practice (Distributor Reporting Obligations) Amendment 2022

Gas Distribution System Code of Practice (Unaccounted for Gas Benchmarks) Amendment 2022.

Bills

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (12:10): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purposes of the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023.

*Business of the house***Program**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (12:11): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on 23 February 2023:

Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023

Human Source Management Bill 2023.

Once again, in the second sitting week of the 2023 parliamentary year, it is great to be back with two very important Labor government bills. The Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill is my own bill, and I am very pleased that it is back in the house and will be debated. This is a bill that will save lives, so it is very important that it be given due consideration in this place. I know that on this side of the house we will have many speakers. Many of our members will take the opportunity, including those that are newly elected, to get up and speak to this bill and the importance of this enabling legislation that will enable our health service clinicians to share information. It is already shared, by the way, by a range of mechanisms, but this is an enabling piece of legislation to ensure that we do not take a step backwards but in fact make sure that we make it as easy as possible for our healthcare workers to have the information in front of them that they need in order to make decisions in a timely way to ensure the very best treatment for people under their care. That is, as I said, a very important bill, and I look forward to hearing the debate. Again, I know that members on this side will be up on their feet, and I encourage those across the house to get up and take the opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation.

The other bill that is on the program is the Human Source Management Bill. That is a bill that seeks to regulate Victoria Police's registration, use and management of human sources. The bill itself responds directly to the royal commission's findings and seeks to implement those to ensure that human sources are only ever used in ways that are ethical and justifiable. It delivers on the 25 recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. That final report was delivered on 30 November 2020. I congratulate the Attorney-General in the other place on all the work that she has done in being able to bring this bill to the house.

We have got a busy program this week. We have got these two bills. All of our members are ready and itching to get up and speak to them. Not only that, we have got the opportunity to continue our address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, and we will still be hearing from new members this week. Inaugural speeches are always something that we enjoy listening to – we know how important they are to members and to their families – and this week we will hear from two more Labor members.

We also take the opportunity from this side of the house – and as the Leader of the House – to welcome the new member for Narracan, and he is going to get up on his feet today. Well done. One might say he has had some time to consider his inaugural speech, but on behalf of the house I am sure I can say that we welcome the member for Narracan, and we look forward to his contribution later in the day.

Again, it is an important program and one that I look forward to the house considering – those bills that are before us for debate.

Talking about the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, and we will be spending quite a bit of time on that today: this is a speech that returning members, I know, enjoy very much, particularly returning members on this side of the house, because we have got so much to say in response to the Governor's speech – about all of the election commitments that we have made that we know will be delivered and of course about our record of achievements. Not everyone in this place can lean back on a record of achievement, but everyone that occupies the government benches in this place knows that we have got eight years of achievement under the Andrews Labor government and another four years

ahead of us. We have locked in a range of election commitments. We all look forward to delivering them, and I commend the business program – (*Time expired*)

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:16): I rise to speak on the government business program, and I start by saying the opposition will be opposing the government business program this week.

A member: Why?

James NEWBURY: Calm down. We will get to it. But before I do get to the reason we will be opposing the program, can I start, on behalf of the coalition, by welcoming our newest member, the member for Narracan. It is wonderful to see the member for Narracan enter this place. What he went through is quite extraordinary. It was an extraordinary election that many of us would never see, a terrible circumstance in his electorate throughout the election day and a shock, I am sure, for the community and people in the broader area in terms of those events – terribly sad. But the now member for Narracan worked his tail off up until election day. I know that on our side of the chamber we would all endorse that he worked his guts out in his seat, and he, I am sure, would have been elected handsomely on election day. So to go through that twice –

Sam Groth interjected.

James NEWBURY: I do not want to take up the member for Nepean's interjection. I will ignore that one. But the member for Narracan effectively ran two election campaigns. Those who have gone through an election know how difficult it is – how incredible it is to meet the community but how much you throw into that campaign. By election day, I am sure, every member of this place had given 100 per cent to that campaign, so to go through that twice is a significant ask of anybody. To see him walk in today: he is very welcome in this place, and certainly we are very happy to have him on our side of the chamber. We are very happy to see him here, and we are very much looking forward to him giving his address-in-reply later this evening, just before 5 I would expect. I hope that all members come in and see his first speech. It is going to be a terrific speech, I am sure. I know he has been putting his heart and soul into it. On behalf of the coalition, welcome, and we look forward to seeing that speech later today, member for Narracan.

In terms of the government business program more broadly, other than the address-in-reply, the Leader of the House did speak about two bills the government is considering this week – the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023 and the Human Source Management Bill 2023. Both of those bills are not new, as the Leader of the House pointed out. They are bills that were part of or seen by the last Parliament.

In relation to the health legislation bill, it was introduced in the last Parliament with a sense of urgency from the government, an absolute need to get that legislation passed – so much so they did not pass it. They had the capacity to move that bill forward and chose not to. There were issues with that bill, and I do not want to pre-empt the debate other than to say there were concerns and those concerns will remain. That is not to take away from the comments the Leader of the House made in relation to the importance of sharing information and making sure that our health system has the capacity to share information. That clearly is an important feature of the way our health system should work in best practice, but making sure that that information is used appropriately, accessed appropriately and shared appropriately are genuine issues. I think that every Victorian would have concerns about making sure that whichever framework we put in place is one that properly takes those issues into account, and the shadow minister will certainly lead that debate.

The Human Source Management Bill – I know the Shadow Attorney-General is going to speak strongly on the bill, has consulted very widely on the bill and has a lot to say about that bill. So we have two bills that there are a number of issues with, and we will have a vigorous debate. The opposition did seek the opportunity to take the Human Source Management Bill into committee, and unfortunately that was not made available, so on the basis of that we will be opposing the government

business program. Other than a division on that issue, we do look forward to seeing the member for Narracan's speech later today.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:21): Look, I listened to that speech for 5 minutes and I still do not quite understand why the opposition are belligerently opposing the government business program. They are opposing progress, they are opposing looking after Victoria and they are opposing looking after Victorians. Maybe it is just opposition for opposition's sake. Maybe it is just that they are a little esoteric group that no-one is really listening to, as we saw at the election. You can sit there in a pious kind of way and talk about how we should take this to committee, but as the member for Brighton said, this bill is not new. It has been considered, and I think it is time to put it through this Parliament. I would like to thank the minister at the table, the Minister for Health, and also the Attorney-General for the hard work that they, their teams and their departments have done on these bills. I would also say welcome to the member for Narracan. You know, it is a hard position you are in, and welcome to the chamber. It would be great if we had you voting for the government business program – sorry to put you on the spot already – so we could actually get you up and speaking about these bills that are so important to your community. They are important to your community.

The SPEAKER: Member for Frankston, through the Chair.

Paul EDBROOKE: Thank you, Chair, for bringing me back to you. So we have inaugural speeches. It is always interesting to hear different members, whatever their politics, speak about where they have come from, what they have done, what their values are and what they would like to achieve for their local community and the state of Victoria in Parliament, but also we have got the address-in-reply. It is amazing to come back and have one more member in this house post election to do an inaugural address-in-reply, and of course address-in-reply is very important for local communities. It sets out what local members believe are important in their local communities, what their aspirations are, what their commitments in the electorate were and how they wish to improve their local community and the lives of Victorians as well.

As far as the government business program bills go, as we have heard, we have got the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023. Essentially, as the minister at the table said, this is about saving lives. This is about bringing a process that is in some ways archaic into the present and into the future as well and making sure that information can be traded safely between hospitals and doctors, doctors and specialists, and that people's private information is secure and they can have confidence in that process.

We have also got the Human Source Management Bill 2023, which, as we have heard, responds to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants and its findings and recommendations on how to utilise human resources from Victoria Police's perspective in an ethical way, a way that can be justified legally. We saw the royal commission and the recommendations that came out of it and what has happened since then. I think this bill – we have heard the opposition might want to say a lot on it. I am sure people on this side of the house will have a lot to say in deep support of this bill.

The government business program again really shows how busy this government has been for the last eight years, and we are starting off on the front foot in 2023. It has been an amazing start by this new government, and I think this government business program really shows Victorians what we stand for. We stand for hard work. We stand for improving their lives. We stand for representing them. We stand for listening to them and acting on their concerns. And when you have something like a royal commission and recommendations from that royal commission come out, it is the responsibility of this Parliament to see that those recommendations are put through Parliament, are passed and gain royal assent on behalf of our communities.

In regard to the health legislation amendment bill – which, of course, is about information sharing – we have seen this bill before. We have seen the strategies of, 'Oh, we would like to see a consideration-in-detail process.' I totally disagree with the fact or any thought that we need one. Again, this is a bill

that improves the lives of Victorians, and we are here to do that, not hear people argue about why we should not. No-one in this chamber is in here to stop progress and stop the lives of Victorians becoming better, and this bill will do that. So I commend the ministers involved and would like to see the government business program passed.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (12:26): Yes, it is another busy program this week, and there is plenty of room, as the Leader of the House stated, for everyone to contribute.

Juliana Addison interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Wendouree!

Jade BENHAM: Wouldn't it be nice, though, if we could contribute and debate these bills in their entirety, clause by clause. Careful consideration – wouldn't that be nice. We have all been elected to this place to be a voice for our communities and, collectively, a voice for the state, and together we form a loud voice. Having said that, the need for robust debate is hampered by our inability to consider these bills in detail, clause by clause. I have been contacted, particularly about the first item, the Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023, by several people over the course of the last week. They agree the concept of this bill will save lives; however, good concepts can become very, very flawed when we do not have the ability to scrutinise and go through each of the clauses – such as an opt-out clause, such as the FOI.

Regarding the second bill on the program this week: again I was contacted by many people throughout my community and my electorate, and yet we will not be able to debate each clause and consider it all in detail, which is what I thought this place was all about. This is where we come for robust debate and to be a voice for our community. This bill will enshrine a wrong in legislation, and it could be avoided if the government's program took into consideration that they are to govern for all Victorians. Victorians should get a say via us, their representatives; by not being able to consider these bills in detail, you are taking that away from Victorians in our electorates on this side of the table.

A member: Excellent points.

Jade BENHAM: Thanks. So I would also like to welcome the member for Narracan. I cannot wait to hear his address-in-reply and see him get animated throughout his term. I am sure the member for Narracan would also like to contribute more to robust debate and consider all of these bills in detail, if the government would let us consider them in detail. So I welcome the member for Narracan and look forward to his address-in-reply as well as the addresses-in-reply also to come from other members this afternoon – mostly yours.

So all in all, yes, there are great concepts within the bills that are on the program this week; however, they are ruined by horrendous flaws. By refusing consideration in detail, as I have said, of the bills on the business program this week we are robbing my community and yours – not just mine, yours as well – of having their say on every aspect of business, which in turn affects every Victorian. I plead with the government to allow us to have consideration in detail of these bills and of every bill going forward so that every Victorian – they profess to govern for all Victorians; take that into consideration – can have their say in detail on every bill that is on every program in this place. It is the only way we can give every single Victorian – that, again, they profess to govern for – a voice through us. That is our job. That is what we have been elected to do, and that is what I plan to do if we have the opportunity to debate in this place.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:31): We heard some interesting words being used across the aisle there – concepts ruined, horrendous flaws. That kind of embellishment makes one consider the credibility of the arguments being put forward, does it not? I appreciate certain points and underlying aspersions that are being sought to be cast. However, I wish to allay those concerns, because I can assure you that if you want to get up in the chamber and let it rip, you will be given sufficient opportunity within the ambit of the rules of the chamber.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: No, no, no, I can see you are embellishing once again. What I am saying –

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Albert Park, through the Chair.

Nina TAYLOR: Sorry. You will be free to debate in the chamber. That is what we are doing. That is what debate is. You are discussing each of the matters and each of the elements of the bill. And let it be known: it is live streamed. Your community can watch this debate as you speak, can they not? Pardon me; my greatest apologies to the Chair. I had directed that in the wrong direction; I shall now redirect it to you. I am greatly concerned about the aspersions being cast about what are some fundamental reforms that are very much needed when it comes to what has already been said in the chamber, saving lives and also regulating the management of human sources and responding to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. These are very serious issues. I think – I am just putting it out there – one should be very careful when using rather exaggerated language or language which serves to diminish the significance of the legislation that is being put forward and also undermines the premise of the rigour with which this legislation has been drafted and the significant consultation that has been undertaken to ensure that the legislation actually delivers on what it is intended to deliver on and has appropriate caveats in place. Again, concepts ruined, horrendous flaws – not credible. I suggest that you might wish to take a different perspective. And by all means, when we debate you can speak to the bill. You can absolutely speak to the bill.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, I note that the member for Albert Park continues to refer to ‘you’. I would like you to bring her back to referring to you in the proper way.

The SPEAKER: Yes, member for Lowan. I did notice that. I ask all members to not use ‘you’ in the chamber. It is a reflection on the Chair.

Nina TAYLOR: My sincerest apologies. No offence was intended in any way. Let us go to a little positive now. We have some brilliant inaugurals coming, and I am sure we are all very much looking forward to those. We have John Mullahy, the member for Glen Waverley; Belinda Wilson, the member for Narre Warren North; and Ella George, the member for Lara. Are we not excited? Yes. I would also like to welcome the member for Narracan. You are very much welcome in this chamber. I have got a little more time; that is excellent.

Further to the issue of the address-in-reply, the reason we have so much to say is because we are delivering on every front, so there is no embellishment on that account either. We are speaking to the facts. Whether it is delivering on school upgrades, whether it is level crossing removals, whether it is upgrading our roads, energy efficiency, the power saving bonus – you name it – we are delivering on all fronts, and hence there is so much to talk about. And talking about our community, they want to know what is happening as well, and this is a perfect opportunity, I say, for this side of the chamber and for the other side of the chamber, to speak to all that is happening in their communities, because this is the place of democracy.

So I hope that with the debate today no-one would be intending to in any way infer that democracy is in any way being diminished. We can see for ourselves that we all have the opportunity to debate each of the bills and speak as we see fit within the ambit of the rules of the standing orders. On that note I am very much looking forward to the government business that we shall be transacting this week, and I am assured that we shall be undertaking it with goodwill but making sure that we are cautious, careful and prudent with the language that we use when speaking to the respective bills.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:36): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the government business program, and as my good friend here the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Brighton, said, we will be opposing the government business program for this –

Members interjecting.

Sam GROTH: I know. I know it is disappointing for the member for Frankston. We have already heard that the member for Frankston is very, very disappointed that we will be opposing his government's –

Members interjecting.

Sam GROTH: It is a good question.

I want to first welcome the member for Narracan to the chamber. I was lucky enough on the opening day of this Parliament to be able to deliver my inaugural speech in the address-in-reply to this chamber, and I know, having spent a lot of time down in Narracan during the two election campaigns that he had to run – he actually had hair at the start of the first one – it has been a very stressful few months for the now member for Narracan. It has been a very, very stressful few months, but he has done incredibly well to earn his place in this chamber and to win the respect of those constituents in Narracan that have put him here. I welcome the member for Narracan. I look forward to your inaugural speech. I am sure that for members on our side of the chamber and the others there will be a few zingers in there for them to be able to listen to. For me it was a pleasure to be able to deliver my inaugural speech, to speak about what is important to the people of Nepean.

I notice that another health bill comes up, and once again the Minister for Health, the Leader of the House, has had the audacity to actually speak across the chamber and say that this is not about me. But it is about my community as well, and the health minister has not been to my electorate in over five years, so it would be lovely if she would come down and have a visit.

Members interjecting.

Sam GROTH: Maybe for holidays, sorry. I know they only visit my area –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Melton!

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, not only is the member for Nepean being disorderly, he has strayed very far from the debate, which of course is a rather simple proposition. It is the government business program debate, and I ask you to bring him back to talking about the bills that are to be debated on the government business program.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, a number of new members have taken the opportunity to speak on the government business program. The opposition chose to go nowhere near the mess that was the member for Albert Park's contribution. It is a wideranging debate, and so therefore it is an opportunity for members to get up and speak, perhaps a little bit broadly, led by the Leader of the House earlier today. It has been a broad debate.

The SPEAKER: A couple of things: it is not a wideranging debate. The government business program motion is on the government business program, and I ask members to stick to the government business program. A little bit of information for new members who are speaking: it is inappropriate to respond to interjections across the table. The member for Narracan had strayed somewhat from the government business program. I ask him to come back to the government business program.

Sam GROTH: My apologies. I am new, and I am the member for Nepean. I am proud to represent my electorate.

A couple of bills are on the government business program. For me, as a new member of this chamber, I would hope that I would get the chance to come in and debate new legislation. We are getting a bill that is being recycled for the third time I believe in this chamber. I am hoping that the government have it correct this time with what they have put forward. The Health Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2023 that we will be debating is a very important bill. We understand that health information sharing for the Victorian community will save lives, but these things need to be

debated properly, and I look forward to that debate. The Human Source Management Bill 2023 that the Shadow Attorney-General will speak to – we wish this one could be consulted on properly and we could go into consideration in detail to debate it clause by clause. Unfortunately the government has denied us that opportunity. But other than that, it is going to be another big week in here, my second full week.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (12:42): (*By leave*) I just want to briefly outline why the Greens will be voting against the government business program. It is because we strongly support the argument that we should be going into consideration in detail for this legislation. We think that considering legislation in detail should be the work of this place, and we look forward to that happening during the life of this Parliament.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (51): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (28): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Cost of living

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:49): The cost of living has become a huge issue, as we know, across the state and particularly down through the growth corridors. People are – I would say coming into our office, but I have not got an office at the moment – through emails, phone calls and meeting up with them in cafes complaining about some of the issues they are facing as energy prices go up and gas prices go up, the things that are affecting everyday life that they have to pay for.

Interest rates are also increasing. All we have seen as a response so far, on top of the interest rate increases, is more taxes in this state. We want to see a position where more and more people have an opportunity to own their own homes, not windfall taxes that are making sure that people cannot get into their own homes. We want to see a position in Victoria where people living in our area do not have to choose between paying their gas and electricity bills and putting food on the table. We cannot afford to be in a state where we are continuing to see the cost of education skyrocket even in our government schools, which is putting pressure on families who want to buy school uniforms, go on excursions or have a weekend where they can go to McDonald's to have a night out with their families but who are struggling to do that because of the pressures that are being put on families at the moment.

We continue to hear the government talk about trying to bring down the cost of living – the cost of gas and the cost of electricity – but we are continuing to see it increase. The communities out in the growth corridors are facing enough pressures, whether they are stuck on roads or stuck on public transport; they cannot get where they need to go and they are having trouble getting to and from work. What

they are asking for from this government is a bit of support and for it to make sure it can reduce taxes in our state to give families the benefits they need.

Solar Homes program

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:50): I rise to update the house on the thousands of households in my electorate who have installed power stations on their roofs and are saving thousands of dollars through the Andrews Labor government's Solar Homes program. South Morang, Wollert, Epping and Mill Park are charging ahead in switching to solar, with more than 5500 households installing solar panels through Solar Victoria since 2018. These families are instantly reaping the benefits through our \$1400 rebate and \$1400 interest-free loans. That is money staying in their pockets when we know that they are doing it tough. And we are helping Victorians save along the way, with customers saving, on average, \$1000 on their energy bills every year through Solar Homes. We have seen nearly 230,000 families in Victoria install solar panels, batteries and new solar hot water systems and replace their old heaters with energy-efficient reverse-cycle split systems. We have made switching to renewable energy more accessible than ever.

Our government's commitment to lower energy bill stress does not stop there: 1.7 million Victorians have also taken up the \$250 power saving bonus, with more than 20,000 people in my electorate having received the bonus, and there is a new one coming up very soon. We know many Victorians are doing it tough, and we are committed to supporting families through programs that ease the cost of living and make it easier to stay on top of bills, grow renewable energy and reduce our emissions.

Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:52): I want to raise the issue around the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action's changed office hours. The department of name changes seems to have gone mad in my area. The DEECA – formerly the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning – office in Bairnsdale recently published its new opening hours. They are to be closed on Friday, the day when people coming into our area want to get camping information and maybe fishing licences and see what areas of national parks are open or closed. The office is closed on Friday, and on the days that it is open it is closed between noon and 1 pm and then after 3 pm.

If you think that is crazy, just down the road at Orbost they have decided to close all day Monday and all day Friday and have reduced hours on the other days. Why are we decreasing the public's access to our government offices? Orbost is in one of the three most fire-prone areas in the world, but the DEECA office is closed four days a week. The local staff are generally very good and generally very professional; this is not a slight on them. This has obviously come from above, and it needs to be fixed.

Buchan swimming pool

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:53): I also want to raise the issue of the Buchan swimming pool. Two and a half years ago the then environment minister said a plan was being developed to have the pool reopened, and then early last year she said it would be open for the September school holidays. We are now in February 2023 and it is not open. I ask the minister to please provide a date.

Dandenong High School

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (12:53): I rise today to share with the house my joy at being able to join the Minister for Education to officially open the final stage of the Dandenong High School redevelopment. Minister Hutchins and I were joined by students, teachers, the school's principal Susan Ogden and former principal Martin Culkin, who have overseen the transformation of the school into a state-of-the-art learning facility.

The final stage includes brand new STEM and food tech areas, a new canteen and a refurbished library, with a new senior visual arts space. It was really great to tour the facilities and see and hear firsthand

from the students about the monumental impact that these upgrades are having on their learning. The students also talked about the new opportunities for learning and pathways to higher education and employment that the new STEM program has offered them in particular. I would like to thank Andy, Ruba, Ronan, Keely and Shukriya for their presentations at the opening – all incredible young people with big futures ahead.

Over the past eight years the Victorian government has invested some \$12.8 billion to build and upgrade schools across this state. This investment will ensure that Victorian government schools are well equipped to prepare our students for the future, and buildings like these enable new models of learning and add to the toolkit available to our incredible teachers. Our investment will ensure our education system remains dynamic and supportive while providing world-class teaching environments for both students and staff. Only Labor is delivering it.

Polwarth electorate roads

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:55): I rise to echo the comments in the Warrnambool *Standard* on Saturday 18 February which called on this government to come clean on what is or is not happening with the Princes Highway west of Geelong. The new dual-lane carriageway, which has not even been officially opened yet, is absolutely crumbling to the point where most motorists can no longer travel in the left-hand carriageway because it is in such poor condition. People are finding they have to travel the whole time in the right-hand lane rather than the left-hand lane as they should do safely. This road is becoming perilously unsafe. On top of that of course the Warrnambool *Standard* is advocating big-time for the fixing up and the provision of overtaking lanes and better road services west of Colac, where it is still a dual-lane road. This government promised to the Warrnambool *Standard* only last year that it had funds put aside and it was going to improve road surfaces and passing opportunities for motorists. In correspondence to the Warrnambool *Standard* in the past month they have reneged on that, saying it is not their responsibility and they are in fact waiting for the federal government.

We know the Albanese federal government has in fact withdrawn tens of millions of dollars from western Victorian road funding and of course is now trying to give the Andrews government an out on why they are not going to fix the roads up. The roads have been left in a perilous state after the last winter. We are going into another winter shortly. Not one cent has been spent, and the motorists of western Victoria deserve much better.

International Mother Language Day

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:56): I rise to update the house that this weekend I will be celebrating International Mother Language Day at the Julia Gillard Library in Tarneit along with my local community. How good was our first female Prime Minister at advocating for education, equality and language diversity – and indeed she is still doing so on the world stage. International Mother Language Day is a global observance that takes place in February each year to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. The day was first proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999 to raise awareness about the importance of preserving and promoting the many different languages and cultures that make up our world.

I take great pride in our multicultural society, heritage and histories. Australia is a wonderful country focused on achieving the best outcomes for all Australians. This celebration is particularly significant in my electorate of Tarneit because of the role that language plays in defining our identities and shaping our relationships with others. For my constituents mother language is an important part of their cultural heritage and a key factor in their sense of belonging and connection to our community. Indeed the reason that festivals like this are so important to my community is so that those languages transfer through generations in the community of Tarneit.

Lions Club of Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:58): The Lions Club of Brighton are dedicated volunteers in our community. They recently teamed up with skin experts to run a skin cancer screening program on Brighton Beach. 105 people were tested and 30 referred for medical follow-up, and 22 met the criteria for melanoma. Congratulations to President Kim Low and the club on providing an important service to our community.

Rotary Club of Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:58): The Rotary Club of Brighton recently hosted their 13th Great Australia Day Swim at Middle Brighton Pier. This year saw 900 swimmers register. Thank you to the 75 Rotarians, family members and friends and 70 lifesavers from the Brighton Life Saving Club who volunteered their time to make the event happen. The event raised a whopping \$50,000 for charity. Congratulations to Stuart McIntyre and the Rotary team on another significant event.

Wishart Reserve, Hampton East

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:59): With increased demand on open space, government must be more mindful of the need to share space. Bayside council's proposal to enhance Wishart Reserve dog park in Hampton East is causing concern for local residents because of both the increase in usage of the site over time and the proposed council design not accounting for accessibility for the disabled or parents with young children.

Hampton Life Saving Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (12:59): Hampton Life Saving Club recently held its first Pride Patrol, an opportunity for Victorian lifesaving clubs to let the community know that everyone is welcome. This builds on recent green and pink patrols on behalf of the environment and to celebrate women's participation. Congratulations to Andy Lawrence and the whole team on their exceptional leadership in Bayside.

Wendouree electorate health infrastructure

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:59): The Andrews Labor government is delivering world-class health care at Grampians Health with a \$6.5 million investment in robot-assisted surgery. This is only the fourth surgical robot in a public hospital in Victoria, with the other robots at hospitals in Melbourne and Geelong. What this means for my community is that we have better treatment closer to home. This significant investment means that patients from Ballarat and across the region will have access to the world's best innovative technology, which will improve recovery time and deliver better surgical outcomes with less scarring and blood loss.

Recently I had the opportunity to scrub in at Ballarat Base Hospital to watch colorectal surgeon Dr Carolyn Vasey use the surgical robot to undertake a complex procedure, with the support of a great theatre team. I saw firsthand the benefit the robot provides the surgeon, with four arms instead of two and 360-degree wrist movements. It was wonderful to meet Lisa, who has recently had rectal surgery performed by Dr Vasey using the surgical robot. Lisa's recovery time was greatly reduced, as was her length of stay, being discharged after two days rather than eight. This meant that she was back at home sooner with her family and a hospital bed was available for another patient – a great outcome for the patient and the hospital. Ballarat patients like Lisa deserve excellent health care and the best health outcomes. That is why we are strongly supporting our health workers and investing in state-of-the-art medical technology to deliver the best-quality treatments right in the heart of Ballarat. Thank you to the Premier and the Minister for Health.

Horsham-Lubeck–Murtoa-Glenorchy roads, Lubeck

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (13:01): I continue to be contacted by constituents concerned at the ongoing safety risks at the Horsham-Lubeck Road and Murtoa-Glenorchy Road intersection near Lubeck. There have been numerous collisions at this dangerous intersection, resulting in a fatality in 2016 and a serious accident in December 2020. I raised this issue in Parliament in December 2020, which resulted in the installation of rumble strips and vehicle-activated electronic warning signs. However, I was alarmed to learn recently that those signs have since rusted out and been removed by VicRoads. Tragically, just earlier this month there was a two-vehicle collision involving a truck and a utility at the same intersection, now without warning signage. Fortunately, no-one was seriously injured. However, the dangers of this intersection are clear. I therefore ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to take urgent action to improve safety at this dangerous intersection.

Grampians National Park

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (13:02): I continue to be approached by constituents regarding the lack of action by Parks Victoria in relation to the assessment of identified crags and cliffs in the Grampians National Park for sites of cultural significance. It is now over four years since those bans have been put in place, and we are going at such a slow rate I am concerned that not only are we putting at risk the \$25 million outdoor recreational climbing industry in the region but it is meaning that these sites of significance are being left unidentified and unprotected. It could be 10 years before that is completed. I therefore ask the Minister for Environment to provide additional funding so that these site assessments can be completed by the end of the year, and further, that the sites that have been assessed are released for climbing immediately.

Kolbe Catholic College

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (13:02): The Andrews Labor government values teachers and school leaders. We know that they are the key to providing all Victorian students with a great education. That is why we have invested nearly \$15 billion in building the Education State since 2014 and why we are equipping Victorian schools with the tools and capabilities they need to have the biggest impact with their students. It has been a pleasure to visit schools across the Greenvale electorate and to see the amazing work that is being done to support students' learning and development. Our schools' leadership and culture have a massive bearing on student outcomes. Principals and teachers help set the direction of that culture, but students also have an important role to play.

I acknowledge and congratulate the newly elevated student leaders at Kolbe Catholic College in Greenvale: college captains Grace Elisha and Caitlin Richardson, who demonstrate the school's values and are committed to being role models for the student body; college vice-captains Selafina Akauola and Riley Norrey, who lead whole-school events, such as assemblies; academic captains Noah Gullifa and Caleb Katigbak, who help boost academic excellence by supporting co-curricular events, such as homework club; arts captains Claudine Yao and Norman San Pablo Jr; community captains Chiara Hosking and Ruta Alai; wellbeing captains Mannat Kaur and Ardelina Zinghini, who liaise with school counsellors to promote a healthy mind and body for all at the college; sports captains Abby Cotter and Emmy Graziano, who help run sports carnivals and boost participation in interschool sport; and faith captains Kiara Samtar and Mary Ann Shemiss. Congratulations to all of these school leaders, and I wish them and all the students at Kolbe Catholic College a wonderful year ahead.

Kew High School

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:04): I rise to speak about my recent visit to Kew High School. With over 1000 students and nearly 100 staff, Kew High has provided outstanding education for 60 years. Last year I had the pleasure of meeting with the incoming year 12 leaders. I was deeply impressed by their passion and commitment to important issues like mental health. I thank Kew High's principal and school council president for the tour, explaining how surplus funds from the building of the STEM

centre could be repurposed to ensure Kew High students continue to have the best learning facilities. I commit to continuing to advocate on their behalf.

Giant Steps Melbourne

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:04): Last week I visited a remarkable little school with a giant spirit. Giant Steps opened their Kew campus in 2016. It was originally founded in Sydney by parents who wanted to bring to Australia world's best practice education for children with autism. Today the dedicated staff and teachers, together with occupational, speech and music therapists, have more than 30 students from prep to year 12. Giant Steps is renowned for its transdisciplinary approach to education, working closely with students' families to ensure a unique and rich learning environment is tailored for each and every student.

City of Boroondara Australia Day awards

Jess WILSON (Kew) (13:05): I had the honour of speaking at Boroondara's Australia Day ceremony. In addition to welcoming more than 150 new Australian citizens we recognised those who give back to our community. Congratulations to Kew residents Mike and Ben Zhou, who were jointly awarded Boroondara's Young Citizen of the Year. At six and eight years old Mike and Ben began busking for charity. For 13 years Mike and Ben and their young friends from local schools have played Christmas carols, donating over \$20,000 to international and local charities.

Federation TAFE

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (13:05): Since 2015 the Labor government has invested to rebuild TAFE, refurbish campuses, launch free TAFE for priority courses and support disadvantaged students into training and jobs. Last year the Minister for Training and Skills in the other place visited Federation TAFE in Ballarat to announce that the Andrews Labor government will refurbish Federation TAFE's training restaurant and invest in Australia's first apprenticeship for wind turbine blade technicians under a raft of investments to provide better training options for Ballarat jobseekers.

Last week I attended the 2023 Federation TAFE excellence awards, and it was clear that this investment in TAFE is paying off. It was a star-studded night which saw hundreds of students graduate from a wide range of courses best suited to Ballarat industry. The craftsperson awards were also presented. These awards have been presented in Ballarat since 1956 to recognise people who have successfully completed their apprenticeships.

A big round of applause for the winners of the TAFE 2023 excellence awards: Barbara Muller, Aidan Murphy, Ashlee Colquhoun, Mitch Tierney, Liam Proctor, Alyssa Longridge, Alexander Simmons, Vicki Lloyd, Shane Hartwick, Peter Dawson, Jacob Greenwood, Chantelle Beatty, Joel Lucas, Jason Blue, Niama Jokley, Em Cona, Madison Upton, Lachlan McKenzie, Angus Bigmore, Thomas Creswell, Joe Darbin, India Gaish, Casey Ferguson, Chloe Moorhouse, Matille Disfosa, Sophie Renton, Justin Bisson and especially Jordan Cox. Congratulations to Liam Sloan and his team at Fed Uni.

Professor Will Steffen

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (13:07): At the end of last month we lost one of Australia's leading climate scientists, Professor Will Steffen. Professor Steffen was hugely inspiring to me and to the whole movement of people fighting for real action on climate change. He was an incredibly accomplished chemist, a groundbreaking climate scientist, an executive director of the Australian National University climate change institute – and I could go on. In fact it is impossible to overstate Will's impact on science, and any tribute I make to his work can only really scratch the surface of his legacy. But I also want today to focus on the person that he was.

Professor Steffen had that rare combination of an incredibly sharp mind and also a deeply generous and kind soul. He was also courageous. For many years he demonstrated incredible perseverance, studying and communicating the risks of climate change in a very hostile political and media landscape. When the Abbott government shut down the Climate Commission, Will and his colleagues

did not accept defeat. Instead they crowdfunded \$1 million in a week and founded the Climate Council of Australia, an organisation that endures as a leading independent source of climate advice and communication in Australia. Few people have done more in the fight against climate change than Will, and much of his motivation arose from the concern for future generations. He fought to ensure we have a habitable world, and I would like to send my condolences to his family.

Victorian Heart Hospital

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (13:09): I am very proud and excited the Andrews Labor government has delivered Australia's first specialist standalone cardiac hospital, with the Victorian Heart Hospital open for patients this Thursday. The new \$577 million hospital has been officially opened in Clayton and will deliver life-saving treatment and diagnosis for thousands of Victorians each year. Operated by Monash Health, the new hospital has a capacity of 206 beds and up to 2150 cardiac surgeries, 28,300 emergency presentations and 108,000 consultations and outpatient appointments each year – truly outstanding. The hospital will play an important role in training Australian health professionals, boosting our healthcare workers and the next generation of cardiac specialists. It will also play an important role in research, further cementing Victoria at the forefront of medical research. But most importantly, it will change lives and save lives.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Australia, with recent statistics showing that one Australian dies every 12 minutes from cardiovascular disease. By building Australia's first dedicated heart hospital the Labor government is taking an important step toward ensuring better health outcomes for all. Along with major upgrades to the Monash Medical Centre, we are delivering world-class health care for families in the south-east and across Victoria.

Goulburn Valley floods

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (13:10): I rise today on behalf of the Seymour community to record our heartfelt gratitude to the Seymour Football Netball Club for their selfless work spearheading the town's immediate flood clean-up. This was led by Gerard, Sandra and Lyndel O'Sullivan, who epitomise community spirit. Our community is indebted to them for their tireless work in coordinating hundreds of volunteers who cared for locals while floodwaters were still receding.

Many businesses and individuals deserve a wholehearted thank you for volunteering day after day, week after week, to get the community back on its feet. These include Pro Turf, Tenex Rail, Broadford Bins, Bunnings Seymour, Baracca Lane, IGA Seymour, Kelly's Country Homes, Maeco Builders, O'Sullivan Builders, Lubeck Plumbing, Little Stones, Inari Sushi, Seymour Hardware Group, Ajay Designer Homes, D & M Contracting, Seymour CFA, Hilldene CFA, Sherwood builders, Cox Solid Civil, Welsh Industries, Australian Trenching and Excavations, Brave Goose Vineyard, MC Cabinets, Wine by Sam and my predecessor Steph Ryan.

Frustratingly, many businesses struggled to access emergency support. I spoke to so many businesses across the Seymour, Murchison and Heathcote regions that were at risk of closure as flood payments stalled. Well over a month ago I contacted the Minister for Small Business requesting the most vulnerable grant applications be expedited, and I stand here still without a response. This lack of interest from the minister has been devastating for some businesses.

Geelong sporting events

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (13:12): Across the weekend Geelong was host to several key sporting events, both supported by the Andrews government. The award-winning Geelong Marlins water polo team hosted the tri-state championships, with participants and visitors from across the country. I want to acknowledge the great work of Bec Talbot and Deb Johnson and their team of parents and volunteers for ensuring that the Geelong Marlins is inclusive and accessible to everyone. At the championship I had the opportunity to congratulate the club for their recent national Good Sports Award for Junior Club of the Year – an amazing achievement from the club, who started with five participants five years ago and now have 75 participants. They should be very proud.

Inclusive and accessible sport is a key priority of this government and is on our agenda, which is why we supported the Ivor Burge National Basketball Championships held at Geelong Arena on the weekend. I saw the pride in the teams at the medal presentation, their joy in participating and having fun. Everyone deserves an opportunity to play the sport they love. Supporting competitions such as this one is important to everyone.

Geelong loves its sport, there is no doubt of that, and excitement is building around the 2026 Commonwealth Games and what they will deliver for Geelong. The many athletes across our Geelong region are really excited about this opportunity.

Sri Lanka Independence Day

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (13:13): I recently had the pleasure of attending the celebrations for the 75th anniversary of Sri Lankan independence, hosted by the Consul General of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The event was held at Box Hill town hall. It was really great to be there with Mr Tarlamis from the other place as well as Cassandra Fernando, the member for Holt.

Sri Lankan Independence Day is 4 February, and it celebrates the country's political independence from British rule. My Sri Lankan heritage has made me more than aware of the struggles and challenges that the country has overcome to remain a strong and resilient democracy. The past year has seen Sri Lanka pushed to its limits with the testing of its democratic institutions as it experiences a really harsh economic crisis, but as always Sri Lanka continues to weather the storm. It is weathering this crisis and it is emerging as strong as ever. The country's rich history has developed a very robust people and diverse cultural, religious and linguistic traditions. Whilst independence day celebrations are a time to look back, they are also a time to look forward towards unity, justice and equality for all Sri Lankans regardless of ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status. I would love to thank the Consul General Sandith Samarasinghe and his staff for the invitation and for supporting the Sri Lankan community. (*Time expired*)

Level crossing removals

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (13:15): As Parliamentary Secretary for Level Crossing Removals and also Parliamentary Secretary for Transport. I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand the power of work occurring at level crossing removals right across our state – 67 crossings removed so far, soon to be 70. It has been terrific to be out and about with the member for Box Hill, who I see in the chamber, at Union and Mont Albert roads. The member is excited to get on and get rid of these level crossings, doing Facebook Live down there at the site each and every day – incredibly important work. This is about improving safety and of course reducing congestion and saving lives. Also the member for Ringwood at Dublin Road, the member for Preston at Keon Park, the member for Kororoit at Mount Derrimut and the members for Eltham and Bundoora at Greensborough. These are all fantastic local members of Parliament who know and understand their communities and know and understand how to get things done. The facts are that only the Andrews Labor government is getting on and delivering for all Victorians.

We know the member for Caulfield will be delighted by this reminder that the Glen Huntly Road crossing is actually within his electorate. He will also be delighted to be reminded that there were nine level crossings in the City of Glen Eira before Labor came to government in 2014, and by 2025 there will be zero. We know that removing level crossings is a complex task, and that is why the site prioritisation framework is important. It is about movement, place, safety, delivery – 110 gone by 2030.

Bellarine electorate farming

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (13:16): It was with great pleasure that I recently met with a number of farmers on the Bellarine Peninsula, touring each of their properties to discuss the local concerns and views around agriculture. This was initiated by the Bellarine branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation, and I take the opportunity to thank Fiona Conroy and Graeme Brown for organising this tour. With a proud farming background myself I really enjoyed meeting each of the

farmers and fully appreciate the importance of farming in our regions like the Bellarine Peninsula. The meetings were very informative and provided me with a really good understanding of the issues specific to the Bellarine.

Of course farming on the Bellarine is very different now in 2023 to what it has been in the past. Farming diversification was highlighted at the properties that I visited, from grazing Angus cattle and superfine merinos to grain cropping and the hydroponic production of fresh tomatoes – and on our last stop visiting the wineries on the Bellarine. Numerous issues were raised, including recycled water, the movement of stock and machinery, the protecting of our farmland, the ever-increasing agribusiness costs and climate action, issues that the Andrews government is certainly proud to be proactively taking action on. Many thanks to Fiona and Graeme as the hosts, Don and Janet McDonald, Sandhya Trewari and her family, Nick Norgard and Grant Hines. I appreciate them meeting with me and I look forward to working with them well into the future.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (13:18): February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, and it is a great opportunity to promote the critical need for increased investment in research to improve overall survival. In 2022 over 1800 Australian women were diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and during that same period over 1000 women lost their lives. Ovarian cancer has a poor 49 per cent survival rate to five years. There is no early detection method, screening or vaccine for ovarian cancer. It is the deadliest of all cancers affecting women. Ovarian cancer is not one disease; instead it has five distinct molecular subtypes, adding to the complexity. Women's individual gene expressions can provide a blueprint for targeted treatments, and screening a woman's tumour can provide valuable insight into the best individual treatment. Research into new clinical trials to improve survival is the greatest need that women with ovarian cancer have right now. The ANZGOG – Australia New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group – WomenCan program raises funds for pioneering gynaecological cancer research. During Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month WomenCan runs a Team Teal campaign to raise funds. This Saturday night in Melton at Tabcorp Park there is a fundraiser.

Address to Parliament

Governor's speech

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed on motion of Martha Haylett:

That the following address, in reply to the speech of the Governor to both houses of Parliament, be agreed to by this house.

Governor:

We, the Legislative Assembly of Victoria assembled in Parliament, wish to express our loyalty to our Sovereign and to thank you for the speech which you have made to the Parliament.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (13:19): I am absolutely delighted to be able to speak on the address-in-reply. Certainly there has been a lot in terms of the commitments of this government, building on a really strong track record over the last eight years. Importantly, a third-term term Labor government has been delivered on the back of a growth in new ideas, fresh ideas, building on the commitments that have been delivered over the last eight years.

I do want to take the opportunity to thank the people of Victoria. This election was always about refocusing and delivering on the things that matter. That is no less so for the people of my electorate of Mill Park. I do want to thank them once again for entrusting in me another election to be able to continue to deliver for the community.

I want to thank the many people who helped with the election campaign. Many of those people have been volunteers for many, many years. John Fry, Ray Rosales, Lidia Argondizzo – each one of them

gave many, many hours of volunteer time at all hours of the day and night and weekends to run a really good, solid campaign for the Labor Party. Many other volunteers were involved, representing local party members, members of the Electrical Trades Union of Australia, members of the AMWU and members of Young Labor. When I reflect on the members of Young Labor, it really shows and reminds me every day what a strong future the Labor Party has, knowing that there are many, many young people who value our contributions and what the Labor Party represents to the people of Victoria and who are very much in touch with what the needs of Victorians are. We are representative of their own aspirations for the future for themselves but also for the communities within which they work and live.

I continue to be very proud to represent a diverse and growing community in Melbourne's north. The suburbs of Wollert, South Morang, Epping and Mill Park are all part of the Mill Park electorate. We know that as Melbourne's north continues to grow and change we continue to deliver the services, the infrastructure and the support they need to have a good life – a good life with their families, a good life in work, a good life in education, a good life when the going gets tough and a much better life when they may be at the rough end of economic difficulties or other problems that may confront them from time to time.

Health, education and infrastructure funding and fighting for cost-of-living relief – I am very, very honoured to continue working for my constituents to deliver for our community. In the health space the re-elected Andrews Labor government is delivering an investment of \$855 million to the Northern Hospital in Epping: a new emergency department with up to 70 extra treatment spaces, including dedicated waiting and treatment spaces for families, as well as a new tower for inpatients with more than 100 beds. I was really pleased just last week to join the Minister for Mental Health, the Premier and the member for Thomastown to inspect the new mental health facilities that have been invested in and delivered by this government. The new emergency department, through the investment I just touched on, will include an alcohol and other drugs hub, providing a dedicated treatment space and taking the number of treatment spaces for emergency patients to almost 200.

We have also committed to delivering a new PET scanner for better patient care at that hospital, and that is to ensure that patients have the care and compassion they deserve as close to where they live as can be provided. PET scans are imaging tests used to find and monitor the spread of cancers and diagnose heart disease, brain disorders and other conditions – a very crucial primary care service coming to Melbourne's north. It comes after a number of delivered healthcare projects servicing Mill Park. As I said, we have already invested in the mental health facility, but we have also had \$162.7 million to expand the Northern Hospital with three 32-bed wards accommodating 96 acute inpatient beds, a new ICU and three new operating theatres.

Women's health was a big issue in my community. I spent a lot of time talking with many women across the community, and we listened. Our government spent a lot of time listening to communities about what was important to them, and I am really pleased to say that women's health care was a big feature of the election campaign and the commitments that we made. Far too often women's health issues are left undiagnosed and untreated and often are not treated with the sense of urgency or respect they deserve. That is why we have put women's health at the forefront. We have committed to investing \$71 million to create 20 new women's health clinics at public hospitals, including one at the Northern Hospital in Epping. That will be a new statewide service, and there will be more sexual and reproductive health hubs across Victoria on top. We are also working with Aboriginal health organisations to deliver a dedicated Aboriginal-led women's health clinic. These new clinics will completely change the way women's health issues are treated in Victoria and will provide comprehensive care for Victorians experiencing conditions such as endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, perimenopause and menopause.

This is on top of our commitment to free IVF through a \$70 million investment into public fertility care services, helping up to 4000 Victorians every year to start a family and saving them on average \$10,000 each. These are the cost-of-living questions that confront Victorians every single day, that

determine whether or not they actually do genuinely have a choice to have a family, or try to have a family, or not have a family, because cost of living is more than what some people purport it to mean; it affects every aspect of people's lives. That is why this commitment goes very much to the heart of people's aspirations for family by not allowing costs to be the barrier to them having that opportunity. We will also invest \$5 million into medical research for women's health to ensure better treatment and pain management for diseases that specifically impact women.

Mental health – I did mention of course the visit last week to the new mental health facility that we visited and opened last week formally. One of the key achievements in the last term of this government was, after the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, delivering that and accepting every recommendation of that. Our government will continue to deliver every single recommendation, and we are the only party that is interested in delivering them. We have also funded \$141 million to double the capacity of Victoria's youth prevention –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the minister is misleading Parliament. The Liberals and Nationals strongly support all recommendations of the mental health royal commission. I ask her to correct the record.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a matter for debate. There is no point of order.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Thank you very much. I started mentioning the \$141 million to double the capacity of Victoria's youth prevention and recovery care network, giving more young Victorians access to the mental health care and support that they need.

In terms of schools and education, the good news continues: we are investing \$200 million for mental health practitioners in every single government and low-fee non-government primary school in Victoria. That is what we are doing right now. We have also ensured that all families in the Mill Park electorate have access to the best public education possible. We built the new Wollert Primary School, which services the Mill Park electorate – that opened last year – and the Wollert Secondary College, which opened just two weeks ago, again servicing the people of the Mill Park electorate, giving local families great education close to home. I was really pleased also just two weeks ago to go off and have a look at the new dedicated school bus service that will take people from the eastern part of Epping Road in Wollert to the Wollert Secondary College. That is going to mean a world of difference for a lot of people who live on the east side of Epping Road, to be able to get to school safely and on time without having to get into a car. We have committed to building a new primary school in Wollert – another one – to cater for the needs of a crucial growth corridor.

Further to this, we have invested \$11.6 million for a performing arts centre to be built at Mill Park Secondary College. I visited that school yesterday with the principal and inspected their concept designs. I saw that a number of early works have already commenced with utilities. They are going to be turning the first sod in coming weeks to see that fantastic new performing arts centre built thanks to the support of our government.

I look forward to visiting the newly completed \$3.45 million performing arts centre at Marymede Catholic College – again a college that we have supported. It is great to see such facilities able to be invested in and built to respond to and cater to a whole variety of needs and aspirations that young people have in terms of what they are wanting to get out of the education system. Glowrey Catholic Primary School received \$3 million for a stage 3 expansion, Plenty Parklands Primary School received \$5.4 million to build better facilities, and the Merriang Special Developmental School has received funds to do upgrades. We are also delivering \$270 million for a package to extend outside-hours care to every single specialist school, giving kids the extra learning that they deserve. That is another hallmark of the last election campaign – listening to families, understanding, walking in their shoes almost literally, and then responding, as a government should, to really target investments in the things that matter most to them and will give the best outcomes for the children and for the families.

Education does not start in prep; we know that. Studies have shown that early education has the most profound impact on a child's development and future learning capabilities. I am really pleased that at Meadowglen Primary School and Barrawang Primary School we now have co-located new kindergartens that have already opened up. Starting this year our program of free kinder for three- and four-year-olds will give our young children everything they need to get the best start possible, and it will be a game changer for all families with young children. It is not just about what happens for them and giving them the opportunities now or in the next five years, it helps to set them up on the best possible course that we can for their future well into adulthood. Not only will their children get an earlier education but families will also save \$2500 per child per year. I was very pleased to have visited the Billy Button early childhood centre in South Morang just last week to see the impact and the benefits that this assistance is providing families in the electorate.

Community sport brings Mill Park people together, and our local sports clubs are at the heart of our community. That is why we have made some very important investments for community sport right across the state. For the Mill Park electorate, we have committed \$500,000 towards the upgrade of the Hillsvue pavilion that will provide girls with dedicated change rooms and really make a better environment for girls and boys all round. In addition to community sports projects that we have already delivered to the community, we have also committed a \$1 million upgrade to the Mill Park tennis stadium, \$500,000 to the redevelopment of the Bundoora United football pitch and so on and so on.

In the short time that left I do want to just touch on the fact that we have made significant investments in road upgrades. From the Plenty Road upgrade from Mckimmies Road to Bridge Inn Road in Mernda, we are now moving into the construction phase for the Epping Road upgrades – that is the next major one – which will see it duplicated between Memorial Avenue and Craigieburn Road East.

There is so much more – bringing back the SEC, our Victorian renewable energy targets, creating 59,000 jobs in construction and supply chain, renewable energy targets, emissions reduction targets, all of which would not happen without this government.

Members applauded.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:34): It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand and speak on the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech as the member for Gippsland South. I say a privilege because it is indeed that, and every one of us should remember each and every day that we are in here that we have been given the trust of the 50,000-odd people that elected each of us in our respective electorates to stand up and be their voice. I intend to continue to do that.

I was very pleased to be re-elected, and I thank the people of Gippsland South for placing their trust in me. It was a slightly revised Gippsland South, with the addition of new communities – Yinnar, Boolarra, Boolarra South, Budgerie, Jumbuk, Jeeralang, Toongabbie and Cowwarr. I am thankful for their support as a new MP to them under the arrangements put in place by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and I thank them for supporting me, as did the rest of the electorate. Indeed, whilst the margin came back down a little bit with the new boundaries, we managed to keep it at about 15 per cent, so we increased the notional margin for Gippsland South. Indeed the Nationals won every booth on primary vote and on two-party preferred, and that is a great endorsement of the work that we have been doing.

I do offer my congratulations to the Labor Party for its election victory and to the Premier for a third election victory, as difficult as it is to say that. They do indeed deserve the congratulations for winning the support of Victorians. But I note the Premier's commitment to governing for all Victorians, and I make the comment that whilst the government was returned to government, it did suffer swings in many areas, not least of which were some of its traditional areas in the north and west of Melbourne but particularly in rural and regional Victoria, where the Nationals had an outstanding result. In saying that, the government needs to understand that, yes, it has a mandate, and we acknowledge mandates and respect them up to a point; it also needs to acknowledge that many people in Victoria supported

other parties and parties such as the Nationals and the commitments and the policies that we took forward. I am not suggesting for a moment that the government is obliged to implement those commitments, but it does need to acknowledge that the people in those areas, including in Gippsland South, did back the commitments we made – for example, in my electorate, the commitment that the coalition made for a new Sale College, a new campus and a \$10 million investment to get that underway, to ensure the purchase of an appropriate new greenfield site and to start on stage 1. That is something for which the government, to its credit, has provided \$3 million for the master planning, and I would expect and hope that once the budget comes around there will be funding for the full school rebuild of Sale College. It is certainly needed in the Wellington shire and Sale in particular.

The Leongatha intersection of the South Gippsland Highway and the Strzelecki Highway, otherwise known as ‘kamikaze corner’ because it is dangerous and confusing – again, the government needs to act on that.

The Loch Sport foreshore erosion we have been dealing with now for at least five years and seeking action for from the former minister for environment, who has just spoken and has now left the chamber. I would hope that the new Minister for Environment will actually pay some attention to that issue, because the previous one has presided over reports and consultants and further consultation but not done anything to address it. So we need that addressed.

We committed to a new Sale train in the early morning. Despite years of disruptions through construction of the Gippsland line upgrade and many of the works in Melbourne – Gippslanders have been put through an enormous amount of disruption when it comes to train services – we still need a down payment on that. We need a commitment from the government that there will be additional services beyond Traralgon. We committed to a new early morning service from Sale, and we still need to see the government actually match that and go further.

We committed to completing the rebuild of Foster Primary School, a new netball court for Korumburra Bena football–netball club and a new roof for the Waratah Beach Surf Life Saving Club. I note both the Waratah Beach and Venus Bay surf clubs have been waiting for funding from this government for some time. There have been a significant number of announcements for those along the Bass Coast, but there has been nothing for those in the South Gippsland area, and the government needs to address that. Fixing our roads, implementing a new overtaking lane at Toora on the South Gippsland Highway – these are all things that we committed to.

I would like to extend my congratulations to my colleagues, particularly the Leader of the Nationals Peter Walsh, the member for Murray Plains, for the work that he did; to the member for Lowan, as our deputy; to our headquarters, led by state director Matt Harris; and in particular to the new members for Mildura, Euroa, Shepparton and Morwell and Gaelle Broad in the other place. It is an extraordinarily result – the Nationals’ best result since 1943. I think it is a 78 per cent increase in numbers for the Nationals, and it needs to be recognised by the government.

I really want to highlight the electorate of Morwell and the work of the new member for Morwell in winning that seat. This is a seat that was a 4.6 per cent Labor seat, on the new boundaries. The city of Moe going into the electorate of Morwell made it a notional Labor seat, and for the new member for Morwell to pull a swing of nearly 9 per cent really shows I guess – just like those northern and western suburbs where Labor had a huge margin and had it eroded by swings – and is a reflection of the Labor government’s failure to continue to represent what were once its traditional blue-collar supporters. We can see that through the recent announcements on Opal Australian Paper and indeed the SEC. I know the minister – prior to me – had a fair bit to say about the SEC policy. Well, the idea of bringing back the SEC might have worked in some parts, but the place that knew the SEC best – the Latrobe Valley – saw right through this. They saw that this policy is a failed bit of spin.

Some may have been suckered into what this policy was supposed to be. The Premier tried to sell it as the government bringing back the SEC and basically putting electricity back into public hands. It is

not doing that. There is not going to be a single government retailer. There is not going to be a single government producer of electricity. There is not going to be a government entity that owns the poles and wires. That is not what this is about. That is what the Premier tried to make it about, tried to make it seem like. This was said to be ‘We are bringing back the SEC to bring your prices down.’ Well, it will be five, ten, 15 years before the government actually starts producing any of its own electricity, and we saw that from the questions asked of the minister a few weeks ago when she could not say when prices will come down thanks to the investment in the SEC.

With respect to offshore wind, I found it a bit bemusing that the Premier constantly referred to the privatised producers, these offshore companies, that are leaving, when the biggest single company that produces power in this state, which is leaving in 2035, is in fact AGL – an Australian-owned company, Premier. It is an Australian company.

Annabelle Cleeland: Thanks for the facts, Danny.

Danny O’BRIEN: Well, facts have been pretty light on from the government, but we need to put this on the record. He talked a lot about offshore wind as well, so we would be offshoring instead of offshoring profits. Well, I know in my electorate of Gippsland South, or off the shore of my electorate, there are at least five proposals on the table right now for new offshore wind. I say to the government, with those private companies – and some of them are Australian companies, some of them are some of the biggest renewable energy companies in the world – why do we need the taxpayer to risk our dollars when the private sector is already doing it?

There are so many questions to the government. Will you be co-investing with those companies? Will you be building your own offshore wind farms? Why would you do that when the private sector is prepared to do it? We have this opportunity happening already, but this is part of the spin that the government has put in.

I note that there is a great opportunity for us in Gippsland potentially with the offshore wind farm development, particularly as oil and gas in the area wind down. There are complementarities between that and the offshore wind sector, and there are great opportunities. But the government last year put out an offshore wind farm implementation statement, and it highlighted that its preferred construction port was the Port of Hastings. It went even to the point of a graphic in that document showing labour mobility and workers from offshore oil and gas and from the Yallourn and Loy Yang power stations – which we know are scheduled to close under this government, earlier than planned – all those people, not getting jobs in the Latrobe Valley or in my electorate around Sale but actually – having arrows – going to Hastings. So supposedly the benefits for Gippsland are not going to be in Gippsland; the benefits will be ‘Oh, you can all pack up and move to Hastings, where you will be able to work at the Port of Hastings.’

Obviously the private companies will make their own decisions about where the best place to develop their offshore plans is, but I will be strongly encouraging them to consider Barry Beach in Gippsland so that the benefits of the construction and ongoing operation and maintenance of these wind farms are in fact in Gippsland. We need to push that.

On the government’s rhetoric on the SEC – the rhetoric about privatisation – the government tried to say this was a referendum on privatisation. Well, I am sorry, but you are about 20 years late. I think we had that when Jeff Kennett lost in 1999. But Labor, when it comes to privatisation, is either wrong or hypocritical. For a start, it is constantly forgotten by the current government that it was Joan Kirner that started the privatisation of the SEC by selling half of Loy Yang B. That does not get mentioned. Joan gets mentioned a lot, but not when it comes to privatisation. We have got this government having privatised the lease on the Port of Melbourne, the land titles office and VicRoads – a modernisation program worth \$7.9 billion.

I must say it genuinely saddens me that Labor has gone backwards on policy on this and gone back to this notion that government knows best. Since the Hawke and Keating reforms, supported by the then

federal coalition, I thought we understood that government does not know best. Time and time again the evidence is otherwise: that the private sector can do things more efficiently and more effectively. If I am wrong, why has this government gone through all those privatisations that I have just mentioned? I just find it a difficult argument to deal with. Sometimes they say, 'Essential services shouldn't be privatised.' As someone whose electorate is host to the oil and gas industry in this state, which provides still to this day 90 per cent of our gas supplies, it should be a big shock to those opposite that that has been run for 50 years by the private sector. Esso BHP and its partners have been running that for 50 years. It has been competitive, there have been good prices and it has all flowed. There have been great jobs in our region, and the government did not need to lift a finger. Heaven forbid – please do not anyone tell the Premier who owns the petrol stations in this country, because I am sure he will start saying that they need to be privatised too.

I just want to mention too that the Premier in his celebratory speech on the night of the election talked about hope over hate. I am not entirely sure what he was referring to when he mentioned hate. But I would like to challenge the government on truth versus lies, because we saw a lot of lies during the election campaign. We had the government telling us that the only way that we could get the gas that the coalition proposed would be to go fracking. You can go back onto the government's own website and find the Attorney-General, the then Minister for Energy and Resources, in 2020 and 2021, with a press release, 'Onshore conventional gas restart a green light for jobs', 16 June 2020. The minister said:

Production of the estimated resources could generate as much as \$310 million annually for regional economies ...

Two years ago the government said, 'Yes, there is onshore gas.' Then through the election campaign the minister comes out and says it is not there.

Tim Richardson: It's not fracking, mate. Are you opposed to fracking?

Danny O'BRIEN: I am opposed to fracking. That was the lie, member for Mordialloc. That was the lie.

The government stands condemned for bringing those things in. We had the candidate for Morwell saying that we were going to privatise Gippsland Water – that was never our policy – and that we were going to privatise Latrobe Regional Hospital. So do not stand there and point your finger at us on this side and talk about hope over hate when those lies come out.

I will briefly reprise what I said in the address-in-reply back then: we need to do better as politicians. Our behaviour needs to improve. The way we do politics is still turning people off. In 2018, 78 per cent of people voted for the major parties; in 2022, just 71.3 per cent. We need to do better. We need to do better for our democracy.

Members applauded.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:49): Wasn't that a positive rev-up? Goodness me – he got the pulse going, the member for Gippsland South. It was, 'Toot-toot, look at the Nationals.' They are the major party now, the major party coming through. He did talk about, the member for Gippsland South, moving away from the coalition agreement, but we wait with bated breath to see if anything happens on that front.

It is a real honour to stand up on behalf of your local community and to be elected, and to have the honour of being elected for a third term is truly extraordinary. I still think about the first time that my community gave me the honour of representing them some 3001 days ago, and every single day that you get to stand up on behalf of your community and advocate for them and their needs is a real honour and a privilege. In everything that we do in the Mordialloc team and the Mordialloc electorate office, the legends there that support our constituents each and every day, our mantra is to not waste an hour, not waste a moment, and we try to put everything we possibly can into representing and supporting our local communities. So to be endorsed and to be back again to make sure that we deliver on our

election commitments and build on the legacy over a number of years of transforming the City of Kingston and Greater Dandenong into even better places than they were before and leaving our community better for tomorrow is a great honour.

There are a few things I want to reflect on from that campaign. It was an intense, divisive and at times brutal engagement. It is not how democracy should be reflected – in hateful speech and lowest common denominator politics. The main state parties – some of them revved up some really unsavoury elements in our local community. While the member for Gippsland South talked about the primary of major parties, we need to reflect on lifting the standards of that debate, and I welcome some of those comments and reflections from the Leader of the Opposition. We need to head towards that in the future, because our democracy in our state depends on it. We see the diminishing of attendance voting in our mandatory attendance system, and we need to think about how we are inspiring and engaging in our debates rather than being divisive and alienating communities. So we always try to not look at partisan politics locally. The opposition and other parties put forward their views, we put forward ours in our policies and we see who comes out on top. That has always been the mantra.

I want to acknowledge the work of those candidates in putting themselves forward in the Mordialloc electorate and their ideas that they shared in our community. I was able to see some of those and make assessments. We took a pretty bold and ambitious program through. We farewelled in the redistribution the communities of Mentone and Cheltenham, which I have had the great honour of serving. I still miss – even though they are in the City of Kingston and we have crossover in the region – those constituents, in their thousands, in Mentone and Cheltenham. It was great to represent them on a number of different platforms and policies: level crossing removals, school upgrades, health upgrades as well, upgrades to local kinders. It was a real honour.

We took in the Waterways and Keysborough South communities and had some pretty incredible commitments. The Keysborough Gardens Primary School – of course it was a Labor government under the former member for Keysborough Martin Pakula that delivered that outcome and will come back for the next stage in investment there. And then there were the planning works for the Keysborough CFA, a wonderful, inclusive, diverse volunteer fire brigade in our community. They have some of the hallmarks of our upgrades at Edithvale CFA, the support and the redevelopment we did there some 4½ years ago. Support for volunteer emergency services has been something we have heavily focused on, whether it is Chelsea SES unit getting an upgrade and redevelopment of their site or Edithvale Life Saving Club, Aspendale Life Saving Club and Mentone Life Saving Club all getting significant upgrades. To be welcomed and to be able to get into the Keysborough South and Waterways communities has been amazing as well.

We have been removing level crossings on the Frankston line since day dot. I remember standing out there with the then shadow public transport minister Jill Hennessy committing to removing the Edithvale Road level crossing. Many thought it would not be possible to have such a bold agenda – 50 level crossings. To think now we are up to 110 removals, and we are going to make the Frankston train line level crossing free by 2029. There has been a lot of conjecture and a lot of campaign and debate through the community on the methods and those outcomes – and we saw that during the election campaign – whether rail under road or elevated rail was the pathway forward. We committed to removing the Parkdale level crossings with an elevated rail, and that was endorsed by our local community. A majority of Parkdale residents endorsed the Andrews Labor government's plan. Now we get on with the important work of design, building and outcomes, and that will then see that community transform with more open space, making it safer and accessible for the future. When we go down the road a bit, Mordialloc and Aspendale will be next on the list.

What we see with those level crossing removals is not just the safety outcomes, as important as those are with those 210 trains that run up and down the Frankston train line each and every day, but that we have increased the services and we have increased the frequency, and as the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel comes online in 2025 we will see a really different outcome for Frankston train line residents.

Of course just over on the Dandenong–Cranbourne line we will now see it level crossing free by 2025, which will be an extraordinary outcome for those Keysborough South residents that interact with that community. The transport outcome is one thing; it is the passion, the energy and the engagement that you get from a community that brings all that aspiration together. It is a one-in-100-year opportunity to transform those areas, whether it is in transport outcomes or landscape planning, and to think: what do we want tomorrow for our local communities? Whether it is precinct upgrades, station upgrades, town planning outcomes or urban design, we see a real transformation getting underway. We are seeing that as a hallmark on the Frankston train line as well.

I am really proud and passionate about our work in education. To have been the parliamentary secretary for education was an absolute true honour. The disability inclusion package and the inclusive education work that we have done are hallmarks of the Education State. Excellence in equity in everything that we do: that is the hallmark, that is the prism of what we want to see. I want to give a big shout-out to our educators, our teachers, our education support staff and our early childhood educators, who through significant challenges over the last few years and now staff shortages are going over and above to support our youngest Victorians on their journey in learning. It was a real privilege just to sit next to the Minister for Education on those occasions to see that reform and agenda and be a little bit of a part of that story. We take that aspiration further now, where we are seeing free kinder delivered for our three-year-olds. What a wonderful transformational policy that is. Those first thousand days in the brain's development – we know how critical they are. You fund your values and you fund those priorities. We know that that will have a lasting change – be a generational change – for so many young Victorians, so we are really pumped in the Mordialloc electorate for the benefit that that is going to provide to our communities in the future.

When I turn to the parliamentary secretary role that I have now, in health infrastructure and in mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention, there is a massive reform agenda here: \$20 billion in health infrastructure investment, building on a legacy of upgrades and works right across our state and our local communities. In my local community Monash Medical Centre will have a substantial upgrade – a world-leading facility there – Dandenong Hospital will have a significant upgrade as well, and then we have just seen the recent milestone of the Victorian Heart Hospital opening up. What a truly extraordinary precinct that will be.

In mental health and wellbeing, we know that the impact of mental ill health on Victorians, particularly in recent times and in coverage, has been devastating. We have to look at not the haves and have-nots in mental health; it is about a shared community purpose in everything that we do. I am a really big advocate and fan of positive psychology. We all move across the spectrum – it might be from 10 to minus 10 – and we all have a shared collective interest in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all Victorians. Any life lost to suicide is one too many. We have to look at every single person that we lose as a preventable outcome and death. I know the Minister for Mental Health is just so passionate in advocating in this space. The former minister, James Merlino, led the Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2022 and led the work on the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and the Premier initiating that royal commission was truly extraordinary. We have that funding certainty and investment for the future – for the mental health and wellbeing levy and for the 74 recommendations, the nine interim ones and the other 65 and their subparts. We see the hope and the aspiration for a better tomorrow for Victorians who are suffering mental ill health – to know that if you confront that over a time in your life or you know someone you love and care about is impacted by mental health and wellbeing challenges, we will have the answers and know how they can get that support and care. So to be working through some of that work now is really important and critical for the future.

Turning my attention to some of the other works that we have been doing in our local community, I have to give a big shout-out for the work around the cost of living, with the SEC coming back. We heard from the member for Gippsland South. They are a bit in doubt about whether they support renewable energy. Have they got a renewable energy target? Some of them want to legislate it, some of them are opposed to the SEC. On this side we are absolutely committed to reforms in renewable energy.

A member interjected.

Tim RICHARDSON: We just heard from the member for Gippsland South. He is opposed for any communities; that really might be Nationals policy being communicated. But we are about lowering the cost-of-living impacts on Victorians, making sure of that with the power saving bonus and with the upsurge in renewable energy. We know the cost benefit of investing in the future, and that partnership between the Victorian government and the private sector will be transformational into the future.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The time has come for me to interrupt business. The member will have the call when we resume the government business program.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:01): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Minister, section 8.4 of the ministerial code of conduct states that where a conflict or a potential conflict of interest could arise between a minister’s private interests and their public duty a minister should divest themselves of the conflict. Why didn’t the minister sell his Commonwealth Bank shares knowing he stood to profit?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:01): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Yesterday it was brought to my attention that a longstanding shareholding that I have declared to the Parliament at every reporting period since becoming an MP may have given rise to a perceived potential conflict of interest. For completeness, I can confirm that I was not a decision-maker in the awarding of the banking and financial services tender. This was an independent process undertaken by senior bureaucrats within the Department of Treasury and Finance, with a probity auditor involved at each step of the way. I noted the outcome of the tender once it had been determined by the Department of Treasury and Finance. Despite this, however, I do acknowledge that this was an error of judgement not to recognise and manage the potential. I unreservedly apologise for this oversight. For the avoidance of doubt, I have spoken with the Premier and advised him I will be placing my shareholdings in a blind trust.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): Section 8.5 of the ministerial code of conduct states:

... Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries will be obliged to take necessary action to prevent conflicts or potential conflicts of interest.

With the Commonwealth Bank making \$1 million profit per hour, how is it fair that the minister has profited from his decision while Victorians suffer a cost-of-living crisis?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:03): Again, I just refer to my answer I provided to the substantive question, which is that I noted the outcome of an independent tender process run by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Ministers statements: energy policy

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:03): I am very pleased to be able to update the house on the fact that Victorians right across our state could not be any clearer in their support for renewable energy. Victorians know and understand that it is not a fossil fuel future that we ought be building or clinging to, for that matter. We have got to make this transition and make it in good time. That is why as the renewable energy jobs and the renewable energy capacity capital of our nation, every Victorian can be very proud of our investments and our resolve to get on and replace fossil fuels with renewable energy.

A member: Nation leading.

Daniel ANDREWS: It is, as my honourable friend says, nation leading. When it comes to net zero by 2045 or our other ambitious targets in relation to 100 per cent renewable electricity, we are in fact leading the world, not just leading our nation. The SEC – government-owned renewable energy for people, not for profit – is a very important part of this. We are not leaving it to the private sector to replace themselves, where their profits go up when things get scarce. We will not be leaving it to the private sector to make this transition for the rest of us.

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: Some things are scarce and not so profitable over there, but we know when it comes to energy we have a multitude of different things that we are doing: the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program, creating 4500 jobs – and 5500 jobs by 2028; the power saving bonus – literally more than 1 million households have accessed that funding, that money in their pocket; but also seven out of 10 households who go to compare.energy.vic.gov.au are \$330 better off each and every year. We lead our nation, and we are proud to do so.

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. Between July 2020 and August 2021 the minister received at least seven written briefings from the Department of Treasury and Finance in relation to Victorian government banking contracts. How could the minister not know that he had a conflict of interest when he read and signed these seven briefings?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:06): Again I refer the member to the answer to the previous question, which is that I signed off on a noting brief in relation to this matter. It was an independent process run by the Department of Treasury and Finance overseen by a probity auditor.

Members interjecting.

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

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:06): On 14 occasions the minister has declared to Parliament that he owns a significant holding of Commonwealth Bank shares. How can Victorians believe that he was unaware of his conflict of interest and breach of the ministerial code of conduct?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:07): As I have indicated, I declared this at every step of the way once I had the great privilege to be the member for Essendon in this place, and these things have been disclosed in the appropriate way.

Ministers statements: energy policy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:07): I am absolutely delighted to update this house on our plan to unlock further investment in renewables, bring back the SEC and create tens of thousands of jobs for Victorians. Our government has made Victoria the home of renewables in this country, backed by strong targets, backed by real action and real investments, and the outcomes speak for themselves. We have smashed our 2020 renewable energy targets. We are on our way to achieving our 65 per cent renewables target by 2030 and are absolutely leading the country and in fact beyond that with a 95 per cent renewables target by 2035. We have 59,000 jobs in construction and the supply chain, from the smallest installation of a solar panel on someone's roof right through to the big projects

that are being built right across this state and will continue to be built not just on land but off coasts, offshore, with our world-leading offshore wind energy targets.

This will help us reduce our emissions – 75 to 80 per cent by 2035 – placing downward pressure on our energy prices and people’s bills every single day. More than 200,000 Victorians right now, today, are enjoying an average of \$1000 off their energy bills each and every year because of this government’s commitment. Bringing back the SEC is simply going to mean more of this: more money in people’s pockets; more jobs for Victorians; great jobs for the future for young people, backed by the SEC, which will be 100 per cent owned by Victorians, produce 100 per cent renewables, deliver 4500 megawatts of new renewable power, deliver of course our SEC centre of excellence, 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships – *(Time expired)*

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. The minister has now accepted that he had a conflict of interest. At this moment –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on my right will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will start again.

John PESUTTO: The minister has now accepted that he had a conflict of interest.

Members interjecting.

John PESUTTO: Sorry, he has accepted, apologised, admitted to an error – what else hasn’t he done? The minister has accepted that he had a conflict of interest. Here it comes: at this moment, does the minister still own Commonwealth Bank shares?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:10): I reject the premise of the Leader of the Opposition’s question. What I have indicated is that this may have given rise to a perceived potential conflict of interest, and that is why the action has been taken. I have always complied with the standards of this place, and I know that the register of members interests is due to be provided at the end of this –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very simple and direct: does the minister still own Commonwealth Bank shares? Just a simple answer.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The minister was being entirely relevant to the question. He was answering your question. But let me say this: he rejected the premise of the question, and he is entitled to do that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I believe the minister addressed the question in his previous answers, but I ask the Minister for Government Services to come back to it.

Danny PEARSON: Thank you, Speaker. Again, my register has always been updated, and when the new register is required to be updated it will reflect my current holdings at the time.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:12): When is the minister going to sell his Commonwealth Bank shares?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:12): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As I indicated in an earlier answer, I have spoken with the Premier, and I have indicated that I will be placing my shareholdings in a blind trust. As I indicated, I have commenced the process of appointing someone to establish and manage a blind trust, and this structure will mean I am not involved in decisions they would make on my holdings.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Nationals is warned. I ask the Premier to come to order.

Ministers statements: electric vehicles

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:13): I rise to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is taking action, not words, when it comes to tackling transport emissions. Transitioning mass transit to zero emissions is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. It is a win-win for workers. It is a win-win for the environment. It is also a win-win for communities and local amenities.

Last week I joined the Premier and the member for Ivanhoe to visit Victoria’s first all-electric bus depot in Ivanhoe. It is a major milestone in our rollout of zero-emission vehicles and meeting our target of being net zero by 2045. The bus network is an essential part of our transport system. It connects millions of Victorians, whether it is to school, to shops, to centres – wherever they need to get to. Bus services last year travelled more kilometres than trains, some 155 million kilometres. At an average bus emission rate of 1.35 kilograms per kilometre, this equates to more than 200,000 tonnes of CO₂. That is a big problem, but it is a problem the Andrews government has a solution for, and that means rolling out zero-emission buses powered by solar and clean electricity right throughout our network. It is already paying dividends for students at La Trobe University. Buses are being powered and built down in Dandenong.

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: I know the other side are excited. I know the member for Warrandyte is not in his chair. I think he is out driving a bus right now. We know where he is headed: straight for the opposition leader.

Members interjecting.

Ben CARROLL: You asked for the punchline, and I gave it to you.

Wages policy

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:15): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, over the past year inflation has risen to 7.8 per cent, the cost of food has increased by over 9 per cent and the cost of housing has increased by over 10 per cent, yet the government’s public sector wages policy is stuck at just 1.5 per cent, capping wage increases to below inflation. Treasurer, when Victorians are struggling with the cost of living – struggling to pay the rent, struggling to put food on the table – why is it the government’s official policy to keep wages low?

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:16): I thank the member for Pahran for his question. I feel like I should answer this question both as the Treasurer and the Minister for Industrial Relations because our workforce has done an exceptional job throughout the pandemic. They have actually kept Victorians safe. This government consistently works with our workforce to ensure not only that they get quality conditions but, where the government has the capacity, they get appropriate wages. We respect their collective bargaining rights.

It is true, member for Pahran, that whilst this government has during the course of the pandemic had to make enormous contributions towards the wellbeing of the community and to increase the public sector staff who care for the community, we have done that quite expressly and we have done it with the view that we must keep the community safe. Not only that, but we must keep that workforce safe by ensuring that they have adequate resources to do the job that they need to. That has meant an enormous investment in our health and our caring communities throughout the pandemic.

It is true, however, that our wages policy will require evaluation as a consequence of the peaking level of inflation. I would, however, make the point that we are not simply going to get caught in a process of matching whatever CPI is, otherwise we will get caught in a wage-price spiral. Nonetheless I think it is relevant and appropriate that we recognise that there are pressures upon the workforce that government has an obligation to make a distinct and substantial effort towards addressing. We will address that through the efficient deployment of our resources and our capacity, and that deployment of our resources and capacity may well include recognising that the workforce is adequately resourced in terms of staffing and is also supported, where we have the capacity, with an appropriate wage commitment.

Whilst our wages policy is substantively lower than the inflation rate at the moment, and indeed the Reserve Bank governor has picked out the state of Victoria for having a headline low inflation rate, do not make the mistake that the headline cap on wages is where it stops – that is the CPI adjustment. There are also adjustments for skill, sign-on payments and increments that attach across the public sector. If you simply go to the policy headline number, you will not get an accurate reflection of the contribution that this government has been making towards the welfare of our staff and to ensuring that where we can we assist them in the challenges they confront.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:19): Low wages are affecting workers right across society. The Treasurer has indicated that there will be a review and the wage cap will be assessed. But does the Treasurer accept that a low public sector wage cap now signals to the private sector that they can keep wages low for their workers too?

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:19): I thank the member for Pahran for his supplementary question, but he has extracted an enormous concession from me, one that I have been banging on about for the last 12 months. In the lead-up to the last election I made it clear that the government would review its wages policy and that policy would go up as a consequence of the peaking level of CPI. But I am not going to incorporate a wages policy that assumes we get into a wage-price spiral; we will build a foundation for value for money for the taxpayer and also respect and support for our workers.

Ministers statements: renewable energy

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:20): I rise to talk about the Andrews Labor government's support for schools to become more sustainable by investing in renewable energy production at school sites. We want our schools to benefit from lower electricity bills and also to contribute to the state's renewable targets. And kids – they care about the environment. Whether I am at Kew secondary college or a south-coast secondary college, I have spoken to so many student leaders who are so passionate about greening our schools and making sure that our schools are feeding into our renewables program, particularly the energy target of sourcing 100 per cent renewable energy for all Victorian government operations, including our schools, by 2025.

We are doing that by supporting two key programs. One is the installation of new solar systems, and the second is maintaining the solar systems that are currently in place around our schools. Through our program of solar inspections the VSBA has conducted over 700 inspections at our schools. That has led to 370 old systems being replaced – a saving of \$2 million to our school budgets just in that program. Secondly, we are also proactively adding renewable energy capacity for schools through the greener government school buildings program, which is up-front funding for installation of new solar power systems. 232 schools have already benefited from this, and that again has led to a reduction in electricity bills of \$2.5 million across our school system. That is a great investment, and this is just the start. There is a round 3 opening up soon: \$4.6 million to go across 70 schools.

Member conduct

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:22): My question is to the Assistant Treasurer. This morning in relation to the banking and financial services state purchase contract you said that the decision was made by the department:

I noted the outcome ...

Who approved the contract?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:23): As I indicated, I noted that brief, and the contract would have been executed by a senior official of the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Jacinta Allan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier!

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair, Leader of the Opposition. The Deputy Premier will come to order.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:23): Indeed. The government's own Buying for Victoria website states in relation to the banking and financial services state purchase contract:

All Department accounts will be transitioned to the new state purchase contract under an umbrella purchase order contract approved by the Assistant Treasurer.

Minister, did you just mislead the house?

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:24): As I have indicated previously, I was not a decision-maker in the awarding of the banking and financial services tender. It was an independent process undertaken by senior officials within the Department of Treasury and Finance with a probity auditor involved at every step of the way, and I noted the outcome of the tender once it was determined by the department.

Ministers statements: transport infrastructure

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:24): As we know, not only does the Andrews Labor government build the infrastructure that our growing city and state need into the future, but we are also driving every single dollar as hard as we can to maximise the broader community benefits out of our projects.

Whether it is our apprenticeship targets, getting more women on construction sites or our renewable and recycling targets that are built into every single tender, we are out there getting bang for buck across our program. I know the member for Mordialloc knows this well. Not only is the Mordialloc Freeway a great road project that is slashing travel times for people travelling in the south-eastern suburbs, the noise walls were made from 75 per cent recycled plastic collected from households. That is the equivalent of 30 million water bottles – not Perrier – or the plastic waste collected from 25,000 Victorians' homes in one year. Even better, as the member for Carrum and the Minister for Planning know, these recycled noise walls were made in Carrum Downs by Pact Group, keeping local people working on local projects that they benefit from.

Also, we have installed 1500 composite recycled plastic sleepers across the regional rail network, and they are made in regional Victoria, in Mildura. I believe the Minister for Energy and Resources knows

this very well. Not only are we keeping all of our regions involved in our investment in infrastructure, we are making sure the job benefit is spread as well.

It does not stop there. On the Suburban Rail Loop all trains will be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. The members for Cranbourne and Sunbury know too that on the Hall Road and Sunbury Road upgrades we are using solar sheds to capture the solar energy for our sites. To build big you have to recycle big and think big about renewable energy and support that big and important pipeline across the Victorian community.

Constituency questions

Brighton electorate

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (14:27): (21) My constituency question is to the Premier, and I ask: when will the Premier personally intervene on the decision by many state schools, including in my community, to permanently cut school camps because of a lack of government funding? The start of the school year should be an exciting time for kids returning to school – a time to plan for a year of learning ahead, which should have included a school camp. As a Brighton parent recently described:

Children flourish during these school camps; its a time for team building, bonding, independence.

Yet many kids have started this year differently, learning that their camps have been cut. Students and families have been shocked by the news, with one saying:

The change, as has been advised to me by my son, as no advice has been given to us ... from the school, is that teachers who go to a camp are paid extra for their out of hours work on camp.

Given what kids have gone through in recent years – and they have done it tough – the Premier needs to step in and make sure our schools are properly funded and kids can head back to camp.

Croydon electorate

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:28): (22) My question is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and the question I ask is: Minister, when will the Cardigan Road, Mooroolbark, storage site, presently being used by the level crossing removal authority to store materials, be closed for good? As the minister knows, the Mooroolbark and Lilydale level crossings were removed in recent years, and the Croydon and Ringwood East crossings have now commenced the removal process. The Level Crossing Removal Project team have advised residents in Mooroolbark that the storage site on Cardigan Road, Mooroolbark, will be accessed 24/7 for the next three months to store materials from the Mont Albert and Surrey Hills projects, increasing the number of trucks travelling down already congested local roads and disturbing the peace for locals at all hours of the night and day. Minister, to provide some assurance of when this continual disruption will end, please advise when this site will be closed.

Ringwood electorate

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (14:29): (23) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Employment. Minister, how many workers across Whitehorse, Maroondah and Manningham LGAs have accessed the Andrews government's sick pay guarantee program since it was created? The premise of the sick pay guarantee is simple: nobody in a modern, fair Victoria should have to choose between going to work sick and putting food on the table. That includes our casual workers, many of whom are already vulnerable, often younger, from migrant backgrounds or with English as a second language. The Andrews Labor government is proud to support these workers not just with our words but also our actions. Our sick pay guarantee provides casual workers across select industries with 38 hours per year of sick and carers pay paid at the minimum wage. This includes some of our most essential workers in aged and disability care, cleaning, security and hospitality. To apply, I encourage eligible casual workers across the Ringwood electorate to head to the Service Victoria app or service.vic.gov.au. This is a landmark, nation-leading reform proudly delivered by a progressive Andrews Labor government.

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:30): (24) My question is for the Minister for Education, and I ask: when will the government complete a new master plan for Broadford Secondary College? The Mitchell shire is growing at a rapid rate, with Broadford and Kilmore's populations booming. Before the start of 2023 the school had to turn away several families due to the school being so close to capacity. This is despite the education minister in April of last year stating the school is not currently experiencing enrolment pressure. At the same time, neighbouring Kilmore does not even have a public school, which was why the Nationals committed to both a business case for a new public school in Kilmore as well as funding \$8 million towards upgrading Broadford Secondary College if elected to government. It would be great to see this government undertake this crucial work. Our children desperately need a master plan for Broadford Secondary to show the significant investment required to meet basic school infrastructure needs. Regional students should not have to settle for second best. This cannot be ignored. Broadford and Kilmore children need these investments now.

Albert Park electorate

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (14:31): (25) My question is to the Minister for Climate Action, and I ask how the Victorian government's renewable energy targets and cost-of-living measures will work to support constituents in Albert Park. Albert Park is known for its commitment to climate action, and I commend the Victorian government, and in particular the Minister for Climate Action, for their nation-leading reform. As the member for Albert Park I am proud to represent such an active and environmentally conscious community that includes local constituents like Linda Condon. Linda and I often speak at length about how hard it has been to keep up with the increasing cost of power bills and her wish to see emissions cut. Minister, it is clear that these updated targets will create thousands of jobs, support the reliability of Victoria's electricity supply and reduce emissions, but can I ask how these energy targets, alongside the Victorian government's cost-of-living measures, will work to support local families like Linda's? I look forward to hearing the minister's response.

Prahran electorate

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:32): (26) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what is the latest information on pop-up bike lanes in the Prahran electorate? There have been three deaths of cyclists on Victorian roads in the past fortnight, showing just how important safe, separated bike infrastructure is for people who want to ride a bike. Deaths and serious injuries of vulnerable road users like pedestrians and people who ride a bike are increasing. The proposed pop-up bike lanes in Prahran, particularly along Chapel Street north and Orrong Road, have not been built. They have not even progressed to having the designs put out for consultation. This is despite the pop-up bike lanes program being announced in 2020. So I urge the government to progress the pop-up bike lanes in the Prahran electorate to improve the safety of bike riders and make it easier for people to choose active, climate-friendly transport to get around our community, and I also urge the government to significantly increase its investment in safe, climate-friendly transport infrastructure like separated bike lanes well above the current 1 per cent of transport infrastructure spending and towards the 20 per cent UN-recommended funding levels.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:33): (27) My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the minister please provide me with an update of how the tutor learning initiative is benefiting students in my electorate of Wendouree? On a visit to Forest Street Primary School, a great school in Wendouree, I was pleased to meet a tutor working with grade 2 students to improve their numeracy. As a former teacher, I want every student to reach their potential, and the tutor program is supporting this. Over the last two years the tutor learning initiative has identified the needs of individual students and provided instruction in small groups to help these students develop better understandings. I welcome that the program has been extended into 2023 through our nation-leading investment of \$258 million. Our tutor initiative supports our classroom teachers and provides opportunities for

teachers who may be retired or have caring responsibilities and are unable to work full-time to be able to return to the classroom and continue teaching, which they enjoy so much. I look forward to the minister's response.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:34): (28) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, with the upcoming Aston by-election, when will the state government fix the major roads – namely Lysterfield, Wellington, Napoleon and Ferntree Gully roads – in the electorate of Rowville? This is an ongoing serious issue affecting all residents in Rowville, who are sick and tired of the potholes, the road surfacing breaking up and becoming dangerous and drivers driving on the shoulders of roads to avoid potholes, which is even more dangerous. Despite the federal Liberal government allocating \$50 million to duplicate Napoleon Road and \$100 million to resurface Wellington Road in 2019, the Andrews government did nothing through sheer incompetence. Now that the Albanese Labor government have cut their allocation of funds in their first budget, Rowville–Lysterfield residents are back to square one, driving on dangerous roads. It is time at long last for the Andrews government to step in and fix these dangerous roads.

Bayswater electorate

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (14:35): (29) The outer east deserves nothing less than world-class health care close to home, so alongside the new public aged care facility in Wantirna and our expansion of the Angliss beginning this year – major construction – the rebuild of Maroondah will mean that our community have access to all the care they need close to home. My constituency question is to the Minister for Health Infrastructure: what are the next steps for the promise we made to rebuild Maroondah Hospital – the new Queen Elizabeth II – from the ground up? We promised a Labor government would invest up to \$1.05 billion in the new hospital, and that is exactly what we are going to do. The new hospital will include a new emergency department, new operating theatres, day procedure facilities, specialist care spaces and a new mental health hub. It will also feature an expanded medical imaging unit and two six-storey inpatient towers housing more than 200 extra beds. We have recruited and trained thousands of extra healthcare workers since coming to government; we will recruit and train 24,000 more. We have made nurse and midwifery degrees free, and we are building the health infrastructure the east not only needs but absolutely well and truly deserves.

Address to Parliament

Governor's speech

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (14:36): It is great to resume after the question time bells went. I was talking at that time about the importance of investing in renewable energy. Not only is it such a substantially important thing for our environment and our outcomes in the future but the cost-of-living outcomes are really important as well. When we think about how important the SEC policy will be, that investment from the Victorian government and the private sector in renewable energy will be transformational. We know the cost pressures that families are experiencing. It is why we announced and we are again delivering the power saving bonus; the next round is coming up in March 2023. We need to support the cost-of-living outcomes given the pressures that families are under. We see that at the moment with the increase in interest rates and not only the substantial financial pressure but also the mental health and wellbeing pressure that that is placing on families. We need to do all we can to support them through this time. The next months will be tough times ahead.

I want to thank the people in my local community who put their trust in me – the thousands of people that you get the honour to meet on the doors, to chat to on the phones or out in communities and the relationships you build over the years. It is really humbling to be called upon to support them through

different times or different circumstances. Sometimes I and my team are the last port of call for a particular issue, and we work as hard as we can to make sure that we support those residents each and every day. The community groups, the schools and the local businesses in our community – we are really privileged to work alongside them each and every day, and we recommit our efforts to do all we can to support them over the coming term of the 60th Parliament.

I want to give a shout-out to my electorate office team Claire, Dhani, Leah and Brad; to my long-term adviser and friend and now my parliamentary secretary adviser Kavisha; and to all of the team of legends, the hundreds of volunteers and supporters in the Mordialloc electorate. It has been a journey. Some have been on that journey from when I worked on the Isaacs campaigns with Mark Dreyfus all the way through to now. Some got on – like young Lucy, who had just turned 18 – and literally started on pre-poll and doorknocking two weeks before the election, because it is about giving voice to your values and putting forward a progressive agenda for our community and Victorians and putting that contest of ideas forward. We are really appreciative of all those efforts as well.

To my family, who front up each and every day and have grown up in this environment, and to my partner Lauren, who does extraordinary work in her own right as a superstar in town planning and the support that she provides. Particularly during the COVID-19 response period, some in our community will know that we jumped on Facebook Lives on about a hundred occasions to answer questions on behalf of our local community and to give a Kingston and Greater Dandenong message during times of stress and uncertainty and that mental health and wellbeing anguish. It was not something that Lauren agreed to do, but she jumped on to help out during that time. It really opened up why we care so much about our patch. During those times and those uncertainties, to jump on for an hour or two and to just chat to our local community was really important. To little Paisley and Orla, who have grown up in this place and have come in and sat on the benches from time to time, thank you for all you put up with as well.

It is a really remarkable and humbling honour to be elected to a third term as the member for Mordialloc, and I commit to my community each and every day to not waste a moment. It is what I said the first time I came into this place – living your values each and every day and trying to make your community better than you find it today, working with a range of different stakeholders and sometimes across parties as well to get the very best outcomes. That is what they expect – it does not matter where their vote or where their support goes – that we front up each and every day and give it our very best shot and we redouble our efforts to do everything we possibly can.

We have got a bold agenda, and we have got a lot on the go. There are upgrades to our schools, whether it is Mordialloc College or Keysborough Gardens Primary School; taking the level crossing removal program to the next level, making the Dandenong line level-crossing free by 2025 and the Frankston train line level-crossing free by 2029; and upgrades to our hospitals – Monash Medical, Dandenong Hospital and Frankston Hospital, which is literally coming out of the ground now. There are tens of thousands of health workers that we will deliver to the mental health and wellbeing workforce who will be transformational in the royal commission outcomes. Our ambitions in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System cannot be met without a significant increase in workforce. We give them a big shout-out and look forward to going on this journey together in the 60th Parliament, and we look forward to an action-packed term ahead.

Members applauded.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:41): Yes, I am excited to rise today as the member for Berwick. I was the member for Gembrook for 12 years, and I thoroughly loved serving the electorate, which started off as 2058 square kilometres and went down to 400 square kilometres when I took over the smaller part of Gembrook, and now we have gone to 90 square kilometres. The first person that thinks this is wonderful is my wife when I get home from events that go till 10 o'clock at night. I am only 15 minutes from home, not an hour and a half from the top end of the electorate.

To the electorate that I was in – Gembrook – I wish everyone the best. I thank them for their support. I thank them for working with me over that period of time. I note that they now have, obviously, Emma Vulin, the member for Pakenham, and I congratulate Emma on her role there. She did forget in her inaugural speech that some former members are very, very kind and may or may not have left a bottle of Chandon in the office for her to drink. If anyone over there had not heard of that, that means she did not share it with you and did not really like you – I am sorry.

I am actually really excited to represent Berwick. Why? I played footy in Berwick. I have worked in Berwick. I was a paperboy in Berwick, walking up and down the main street at 12 years old. I was born and bred in Berwick. I simply love my community. There is nothing about Berwick that is bad. We have an amazing school, where I went. There may be a little bit of bad; they did ask me to leave before the end of year 10, but other than that it was a pretty good school. Some of the teachers who were there are still there, and I want to thank them for their support. One of the teachers along the way was Peter Slate, who is still at the school. I did have a choice in life to go down a difficult path or the one that I ended up choosing in going into work. It is people like Peter Slate that give you the guidance along the way. Stuart Daly, who I look forward to having an award for primary schools named after in my local electorate, was my teacher in grade 6. While some of his jokes would probably be best left behind, he was a person that supported not just me but other students as well from Harkaway Primary, where I attended primary school. And, no, I was not asked to leave Harkaway Primary School; I saved that for high school only.

I had the pleasure of working in some of the car yards in Berwick. Yes, I was a used car salesman at some stage. I know a lot of my constituents would love to hear that. We know that is out there.

Will Fowles: Nothing wrong with that.

Brad BATTIN: That is exactly right. I have also gone out and worked in houses and real estate through our area, and I have to say that other than this role – I have worked for Victoria Police – working in real estate in Berwick was one of the easiest things I had to do, because it was not hard to sell to people and families why they might want to live in our community.

One of the challenges we have got is growth. Clyde North – we have seen the growth down there. The expectation for my seat by the next election is that instead of it being sort of 50,000, which we are all targeting as our voter numbers under the redistributed figures, it will probably be up at about 60,000. By the 2030 election I estimate it will be up around about 75,000. That is a lot of people in one electorate. The City of Casey will go up to around about 400,000, aiming at 500,000 by 2040.

We need to plan for that growth. I could stand here today, as we know, and just absolutely hammer the government about what they have and have not done, but what I want to talk about is the future of the area that I love. We need to start to work together on what we are going to do and start to put in place a plan for 2040, 2050, 2060 and out to 2100.

What are we going to be doing for water? What are we going to be doing for food? What are we going to be doing for public transport? How are we going to move people around on our roads without causing the disruption that is currently there right now? These are plans that, with all due respect to people within this chamber, we do not have all the answers for. But what we do have is access to people who do understand this.

Whilst ‘developers’ sometimes can be seen as a negative word, developers also understand exactly what is needed to keep people moving. Yes, they are driven by money. I do not mind that. But if they are out there, they can come up with some genuinely good plans that we can put into a 2050 portfolio so any government can come in and have a look at how our infrastructure should be assembled going into the future – where kids are going to go to school, some of the changes that will happen with ageing populations. There will be areas where we have got schools now that in the future will not need that number of schools. You have obviously got areas out in our areas, through Pakenham, through Berwick, through Casey and through Cardinia, where you need more schools at the moment because

of the number of young families moving into those areas. These are things that I think we continue to do a bandaied fix on rather than having a blueprint of what we need going forward.

The impact of that is that it makes it more and more difficult through areas like Clyde North, as an example, just to travel around. To get onto Clyde Road at the moment is an absolute nightmare. Some of the intersections down there have been under construction now for four or five years, where they have been closed. This has an impact on business, it has an impact on getting kids to and from school and it has an impact on the public transport sector through there, because they have to travel slower. There are no positives out of the impact of what is happening with some of the infrastructure down there and the delays in getting it done. This goes to also the private sector, and I call on the private sector. Clyde North has very limited places for families to go shopping. We have an Aldi, and we have got a couple of other smaller shops in Clyde North. Over in Selandra Rise there is a Coles. But on the other side of the main areas of Clyde North, in Clydevale et cetera, the shopping centres are not going to be up until 2025, so again we are seeing people travel outside of those areas. They have to travel further each time to do their shopping – just day-to-day things – which is impacting their lives. These are the things that we need to make sure are in the plans and in the plans early.

When you are talking about an area like Clyde North, without fail the number one thing that comes through my office is the phone reception. Mobile phone reception – you would barely date it at 1993 with the infrastructure down there –

Juliana Addison: That's a federal issue.

Brad BATTIN: I will take that up. It is not a federal issue. The issue is planning. Telstra have agreed and got money for it. The government have agreed and put money up for it, and I will even say that the Labor government in Victoria have agreed and put money for it. The issue is that every time it has gone to council it gets knocked back, because the state planning laws allow that. The new infrastructure, which should have been up in Clyde at the new ovals which are currently getting built down in Clyde, was knocked back by Casey council under state provisions. Can we fix it? Yes, we can. Let us actually see it. Without putting politics in it, why wouldn't we then say it should be like any precinct structure plan for any development in an area? We have to currently put where sewerage is, where Telstra is, where the drains are, where power goes. We have to put every single thing on that plan now to ensure that parks are delivered and schools are delivered, but we do not put where phone towers are going to be. We all know phone towers are not a beautiful palm tree like you would see up in Queensland; they are ugly-looking things that you do not want next to your house. People will say, 'I want the tower, but not in my backyard.'

There are two things to fix that. Number one, you can put them on shopping centres. That is actually allowed at the moment. The challenge in Clyde North, as I said before, is that we will not have the shopping centres until 2025. You cannot put the towers up till the shopping centres are built. Those are the smaller ones. But the larger ones: if we had them on the plans to start with, exactly the same as for families who live next door to a railway station and choose to buy next to a railway station or live next door to a freeway and they choose to buy next to a freeway – if we had the plans in place for where those towers are going to be in place, people could choose. It may be cheaper property, it may be a cheaper block of land, but they know what is coming next to them and they know they are going to get put up in those areas. It is a simple fix. It could be something used all across those growth corridors, and it would save the number one issue that we have got coming through the office, which is around that area.

We are very keen to see some of the developments down in our area. I have met up with the Brentwood Park playgroup, who I know are very keen to see some developments. Whilst we committed in relation to what would happen down at the Brentwood playgroup – we wanted to expand the playground – we have gone and had a look and it actually needs further funding. We could upgrade the entire park there, again working with the council. It is an area that needs it.

We committed funding to a Princes Highway–Coniston Avenue intersection upgrade at Wilson botanical gardens. The gardens are in my beautiful Berwick, so they are beautiful gardens. We had an issue there during COVID because they became everybody's backyard. When that happened, the car parking was not accessible for a lot of people. They started parking along the highway, which is now no standing, which I do support. Now they are parking across the road. When you walk across the road – I saw it again just the other day. It nearly makes me sick when I see a family trying to run across, with a pram, a road that Mick Morland was killed walking across. If people do not take care, we are going to see a tragic accident there. The council now has admitted that. They need to see the funding for that, and I will be keeping up my support to see money coming in for that.

Grices Road reserve – I note that Labor has committed \$1.2 million. We would like to see some extra money for that so we get upgrades to not just the facilities but also the grounds. We have gone through the infrastructure upgrade for mobile phone reception. We also want to see the Clyde rail link. Clyde needs a train station. It needs a station extension from Cranbourne to Cranbourne East down to Clyde. It was committed to by Labor in 1999. It was committed to by Labor in 2002. It was committed to by Labor in 2006. It was committed to by Labor in 2010. It was not committed to by Labor from then on, and they still do not have it. By the time we eventually put a railway station in, every house will have 3.5 cars, as an average, and they are not going to change their habits just because the Labor Party decide to put something in so late there. We want to see that infrastructure as soon as possible. We acknowledge the fact that they have done the duplication down to Cranbourne; that is a positive. We are starting to see some of the positives out of that. We have seen the grade separations. I knew Abbots Road et cetera from being a police officer in Dandenong, but we do need to see the extension going down to the growth corridors where we are.

Edwin Flack Reserve needs upgrading, and we need to have a master plan about what we can do with sport. More and more young people are playing so many different sports. We are seeing Berwick Football Club and Beaconsfield Football Club have not got places for the kids to play footy. They have run out of ovals. Part of this is council. In their planning council have got overflow grounds. I ask them the question: what is an overflow ground? They go, 'It's for when the facilities are full – you can use it so we've got an extra place for them to play.' Okay. We have got seven teams missing out on playing any sport at the moment because they will not use the overflow ground because it is used for overflow. I am trying to work out what the definition is; I cannot get that. The other side of this is that due to changes with the lighting in most of these areas – we have got nine facilities through Cardinia where lights have been taken down, reducing the amount of hours that kids can be out playing sports, training and getting ready for the preseason that is coming up. That includes cricket, football – all of those sports down there.

We need to see an investment – a big investment – in basketball. Basketball is rapidly growing in our community. We know it is an expensive sport, but again through the education department, through the government, through the councils, there is nothing stopping us building greater and better facilities that can get used during the day by schools and then used during the night by our community. There are some great examples out there where it has happened. We know this has happened at the Officer Secondary College. This is the sort of thing that I think I would be pushing for so we can have it at Berwick College as well. They have already got a basketball program. As I said, other than they asked me to leave, it is an amazing school. They could see that ability for something like this which I may have engaged in when I was in school, because not every person is going to remain in there for academics.

Finally, we all know that we do not get into this place without the support of many. I spoke about my wife before, but it takes your family, it takes your friends. I think every person in this room had to ring up a few friends and just say, 'Come on, mate, just 2 more hours on a polling booth for me.' Every minute helps, and we all go through those same pressures. It is changing. It is not as comfortable on the polling booths anymore. It is changing on the polling booths, the behaviours there. I will say predominantly out in the Berwick electorate it was not the major parties that were creating conflicts at our booths. It was not coming from people within this chamber or people from either of the parties

that are in here. But there was an increased conflict. Credit to the marijuana party – I forget what they are called – their candidate was very calm the whole way through. Everybody else in there seemed to be very up and about, but he did bring in some great munchies for our days as well. I will give him credit – it was fantastic.

I want to thank some people out in my area: Karen Chipperfield, Shane Miller, Elizabeth Donaldson, Adelaide Donaldson, Trent Simpson, Olga Kalweit, Jess Vidic and Liam Pittorino. Not only did they dedicate time to supporting me the whole way through, some of them gave up two weeks of work or took two weeks of leave to come and support me, and I want to thank them for that. Phil Macreadie has been my chair since day one of getting into politics. I approached him when I first got preselected and asked him to be the chair of my campaign. He asked me, ‘Why? I didn’t vote for you.’ And I said, ‘That’s exactly why: because you were honest enough to tell me you didn’t vote for me and you gave me true feedback on what I did in my preselection, which I thoroughly supported.’ So to him and Lorraine, and to my staff in my office, who worked tirelessly: Suzannah, Shemane, Sam and Ashley, who all do an amazing job and continue, and currently Nick, who is over there at the moment – he was not there before the election; he was busy in Bayswater – and to the ones that are there I want to say thank you very much. We all know that we do not do this job ourselves. To support and work within our community takes that little community and that little team to make sure that we can get everything answered.

I will finish by saying to all those electors in Berwick and to the people who ran as well – to Malik Zaveer, who ran as the Labor candidate – can I thank you all. The election period was a fantastic election and example. If anyone ever wants an example of how an election should be, Berwick overall was it. We had no issues, we had no conflict, we had no other dramas going on. Malik and I worked very well together when we needed to and sorted out issues. To the Berwick electorate, thank you so much for the honour. My wife is very, very pleased. I will finish off with a little joke: she used to be the FLOG, the first lady of Gembrook, and now she is the FLOB, the first lady of Berwick.

Members applauded.

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:56): Normally I would come into this place and I would extol the virtues of the responsible fiscal management of the Andrews Labor government. I would spend a fair bit of time prognosticating about the economy, perhaps even taking the opportunity to remind people in this place that 342,000 jobs since September 2020 is the greatest job creation that this nation has seen in any state, in both percentage and absolute terms. But I am not going to do that today. Instead I am going to pay tribute to my electorate. The people of Werribee have given me the greatest compliment and indeed the greatest honour that you can get, and that is the opportunity to continue to serve a community that have great aspirations for the future and great ambition for themselves and their children. It is a community that I have been very proud to serve, and I thank them very much for the opportunity, having re-elected me as their local member of Parliament for another term.

They have put their trust in the Australian Labor Party. They have put their trust in the quality of leadership that the Premier demonstrated and the cohesion and focus of effort that went in during an incredibly difficult time that this state had to confront – probably the most difficult outside of wartime that any government really has had to confront in at least the postwar period. What it did demonstrate was a focus and commitment to seeing the issue through and supporting the community. No matter how difficult the times that people had to endure, they always knew that they had a government that was prepared to stand with them and to support them through the difficult times. There could be no more telling demonstration of that support and endorsement, I think, than the re-election of a majority Andrews Labor government.

In my own seat of Werribee it is a little difficult to prognosticate upon what the election result was, in fact, because it is a two-candidate preferred result, which Antony Green uses. But I am more than happy to defer to Antony Green’s great statistical appreciation of the electoral process, because he says that I got a swing to me in those circumstances, so of course he is right. That in many respects I

think is a demonstration that whilst it was an incredibly difficult campaign, people did reward effort and recognise the quality of leadership that was required in very difficult times.

I take this opportunity really to thank the countless number of people that assisted me and have consistently assisted me throughout my time as a member for Werribee and before that Tarneit and then back to Werribee again. It has been a bit of a changing kaleidoscope of seats, largely because the population in that area has grown so dramatically. Of course that is probably another story of the challenges that this community confronts – one that this government is very much alive to.

I want to thank, importantly, my staff, past and present, who have worked tirelessly and contributed their thoughts and ideas to deliver good policy. To my electorate staff on the front line, both past and present, thank you for your dedication, your empathy and your compassion in assisting local community members throughout and giving them a demonstration of what a government that is concerned about the wellbeing of the community does in a real sense and in a dramatic sense on the ground. As always I would like to give my particular thanks to my long-serving electorate office manager Helen Landolina, as well as Somhita, Kim and Ella – an incredibly dedicated team who have gone above and beyond for our community every day.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who put their hands up to help. Some of them are members of our great Labor Party, and some are local community residents who just wanted to help Labor in Werribee and make our western suburbs even better. They recognise that we have worked consistently and invested dramatically in the western suburbs to materially assist them with the challenges that a growing and aspirational community not only deserve but demand. Make no mistake: only Labor delivers for the west. There was a huge swell of support from local volunteers, who were out and about in all types of weather, walking the streets, talking to the community, doorknocking, standing on street stalls – the stuff that really does demonstrate that you have to be part of a community if you want to represent it and demonstrate that you are there for them when they need it. Whether it was in the wind, the rain or the cold or every now and then – rather rarely – when we got some sunshine, they were there. I am also grateful for their efforts in communicating the Labor message and the Labor values to ensure that people understand the benefits of Labor governments for Melbourne's west.

Before the 2018 election I did an analysis of the commitments that were given by the Liberal government when they were in government in that 2010–14 period and compared it to the dollar value commitments that Labor gave over the 2014–18 period. I stopped counting when the multiple was 15 times more by Labor governments in the City of Wyndham. Really, that does demonstrate that you can always talk about a sense and try to jump on board a sense of disenfranchisement and indeed a sense of disadvantage, but the people of Werribee see through it. They saw that there was a government materially changing the circumstances and making dramatic investments in both infrastructure and services in that community, and they recognised and rewarded it when they voted. They did that because, whilst there are many who will talk about what they could do in a perfect world, governments need to make sure that we can share resources and in sharing resources ensure that every Victorian gets a fair deal from their government. But that does not exculpate government from making the effort where the need is greatest, and in my humble opinion there is a very clear and demonstrable need in the electorate of Werribee.

There was a huge swell of support from local volunteers who were out and about, as I said, throughout that time frame, and I particularly want to single out Henry Barlow for thanks. Whether he listed his name on the roster to be available or not, Henry was there, or if he was not there he was not far away. He and his wife Pam spent so much time advocating for Labor in circumstances where he would not have been expected to have done the service that he did, and for that I am greatly appreciative. He is a passionate and fiercely loyal advocate for Labor and for Wyndham. We might not share the same passion in AFL colours, but I can tell you we do agree upon our great affection for the mighty Werribee Tigers.

Also, I would like to shout out to John Lister and Jesse Damjanovski for their help on pre-poll and all the other wonderful volunteers who really stood by every day. They did the hard yards in I think

perhaps the most heavily contested electorate by way of candidates in the state of Victoria. There were many volunteers – too many to list, really, because they showed up so often and in numbers – and I do want to thank them for doing the hard yards over such a long period of time.

To everybody who wished me luck, who stopped for a chat or to shake my hand during the campaign, it was a pleasure to meet you. For those who did not necessarily want to shake my hand, who perhaps had alternative views to express, understand that those views are respected. The only way as a community we can come together is if we have civil discourse about the issues that we disagree upon and make sure that our society is the better for it. I do commit to the people of Werribee that that is something that I will work hard to do, to ensure that the aspirations of not only those who voted for Labor in the last election but those who believe that they are disadvantaged, are suffering from inequality or in any other material respect believe that they deserve a fair go from government. They will find a voice and an advocate in myself and, believe me, in the calibre and quality of members of this government right across the board, through caucus and in cabinet.

A big shout-out to those who kept us caffeinated: the Black Seed Cafe, Old Habits and the Jolly Miller cafe, to name but a few. I spent much time caffeinating myself and others through those wonderful institutions. They run great businesses. If I could just make one recommendation, if you are looking for a great patisserie, the Jolly Miller cafe in Wyndham Vale is first rate.

A big thankyou to my favourite barber, office neighbour and thoroughly decent bloke John. For 16 years I have been promising John that I would get a haircut. I told him it would be the easiest job he had ever done, and John sat me down as the polls closed just to make sure that I looked my best. He did have a pretty significant job on his hands, in fairness.

A member interjected.

Tim PALLAS: Yes, he took a while. He took a while, but I spruced up very nicely on the night. He finally achieved his ambition of making me look even less hirsute than I already do. It finally happened, and really it was his easiest job, but he is a genuinely decent and hardworking bloke and a great neighbour.

Thanks to Joanne Ryan for her continued support and friendship. To my parliamentary colleagues in the west Sarah Connolly, Mat Hilakari and Dylan Wight, I really do look forward to working with you in partnership. You have demonstrated yourselves to be highly committed, highly active and very capable members of Parliament. I also want to say, just looking around this sparsely populated caucus room, that I see that we have an amazing talent of caucus members in here. As a man of rapidly appreciating years, it is good to see that we have had a process of renewal that demonstrates that we can all feel happy and comfortable about the future of the communities that you represent, for the values that you lived large in your campaigns and, most importantly, can I say for your capacity to take forward the agenda of an active and engaged Labor government. You will do us all proud.

The Andrews Labor government has invested significantly in Melbourne's west since 2014. The people of Werribee recognise this, and I am incredibly proud to be part of delivering for this community. We have removed three level crossings, upgraded major roads, and our local hospital has opened. We have a new police complex and we are currently building new law courts. We have opened new schools and kinders and buildings so all local children can access a great education close to home.

But of course there is still so much more to do. We need to invest in hospitals and train thousands of nurses and paramedics, and we will make nursing free, to make sure that patients get the best care. More than making kinder free, saving families thousands and giving our kids the best start, it is about making sure that all Victorians have a bright future, resourced and demonstrated in our commitment through the Andrews Labor government.

Just as the government is committed to our Big Build in Wyndham and across the state, it is great to see that investment demonstrating its value. Thanks to a joint investment of \$114 million from the

Albanese and Andrews governments, we are building the Ison Road bridge to connect Wyndham Vale and Manor Lakes residents directly to the Princes Freeway, with construction set to begin this year. Our government will invest \$120 million to upgrade Ballan Road at the intersection of McGrath and Heaths roads and provide a further \$5 million for a traffic management action plan for Wyndham to identify new ways to get people where they need to be sooner.

We will deliver a neighbourhood battery in Wyndham, an upgrade to Manorvale Primary, a comprehensive women's clinic at Werribee Mercy Hospital, a government owned and operated childcare centre for Werribee, free rego for eligible apprentices and plenty more.

As our Premier said on 26 November, Victorians returned a strong, stable majority Labor government, a government that will continue to do what matters, and I look forward to being part of that. But I recognise that good governance is ultimately a reflection of the aspirations of the team. To the caucus, to my cabinet colleagues and might I say also to my parliamentary colleagues across the bench, we have a very significant job to do for this state. The challenges that we confront are ones that will define us as acting either in the interests of the state or for sectional and short-term interest. I hope that we can work together to achieve some of the things that the previous speaker identified. We should come together to build a better state and recognise that consensus is much better than conflict.

Members applauded.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:11): It is an honour and a privilege to have been re-elected for a second term as the member for Evelyn and to continue to have the opportunity to represent the communities across the Lilydale district and the Yarra Valley. As I always say – probably like most members – Evelyn district is the most magnificent part of Victoria. I extend my thanks to the people of the Evelyn electorate, who have placed their trust in me to represent them again. As always, I will honour that trust – the trust that the people of Evelyn have put in me. I will always honour that trust. To everyone in my community I say: I will always listen to you and work hard for you, locally in our community and as your voice and your advocate here in Parliament. It is why over the past four years, in my first term, I did not waste a day engaging with residents, businesses, schools and local community organisations in our region to understand the issues that mattered most and what I could do to help and to advocate for my community – issues like roads; road safety; access to health and mental health services; education; housing; supporting our local emergency services workers, who work tirelessly for our community to keep us safe 365 days of the year; more reliable and lower cost public transport; and so much more.

Additionally, these past few years have been some of the most challenging our community has faced, with the COVID pandemic coming to Victoria at the start of 2020 and the first impacts being felt heavily in the Yarra Valley tourism sector. Yarra Valley tourism operators were hit hard with a loss of overseas visitors from January 2020. And then from March our community were subjected to constant lockdowns, our freedoms being stripped away; tragically losing loved ones and not being able to attend funerals or milestone celebrations; a health system in crisis; an emerging mental health crisis; disrupted education for our children – I mean, our kids were forced to miss seven terms in a row from in-person school; teenagers being banned from outdoor skate parks; and children being banned from playgrounds outdoors. And of course throughout the Evelyn electorate, sadly, many local businesses struggled to survive – the absolute heartbeat of our local economy. Some were unable to survive.

Then we had the devastating storms of June 2021 that ripped right through the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges – right through our community – leaving thousands without power for weeks and people's homes crushed. Our community across Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges – some who have lost their homes altogether – are still, some more than 18 months later, recovering. And then we had the destructive flash flooding in Lilydale and Coldstream in October 2022. Just last year Lilydale main street was completely a river, completely underwater. So many small businesses through the main street of Lilydale were underwater, and some of these businesses still today are going through that recovery process, refurbishing their stores so that they can service their customers once again.

During those years my office was inundated with calls for help and assistance from people and businesses who were struggling and really needed help. They were turning to their local MP because they did not know where else to turn, whether that be about the COVID restrictions throughout 2020 and 2021, cancelled surgeries, accessing housing or accessing financial assistance after suffering flood damage or from the storms. I want to thank my electorate office staff, who did an outstanding job in responding to the calls and helping our community in their time of need with positivity and determination. It can often be a challenging and unthanked role, being an electorate officer, and I want to thank my staff very much for getting the best possible outcomes for local residents.

At the November 2022 election, just a couple of months ago, the Evelyn district boundaries changed as a result of the statewide redistribution, and it was an absolute pleasure to be acquainted with the Montrose community and more of the Mount Evelyn community. The redistribution saw the community of Chirnside Park, which in the last Parliament was in the Evelyn district, cut in two between the seats of Warrandyte and Evelyn. I am sad to no longer be the local MP for many a Chirnside Park resident. Many a Chirny resident has contacted me and said, 'Oh, you're no longer my local MP', or came up to pre-poll and was not able to vote in Evelyn, but they had a good candidate in Warrandyte that they could vote for.

The redistribution saw the township of Montrose being inserted into the new boundaries of the Evelyn electorate, and it has been fantastic really to get to know people in Montrose, the Montrose residents. I have met with community groups in Montrose, including the Montrose Township Group, the Montrose CFA fire brigade, the Montrose Cricket Club, the Montrose Football Netball Club and many of the small business owners in the main street of Montrose – the IGA, the bakery and many more.

Whilst the statewide result was not what the Victorian Liberal Party was striving for in terms of a change of government, we achieved an incredible result in the Evelyn electorate with an increased margin. The strong result did not just happen. It goes without saying that there are so many volunteers and people behind the scenes that help each and every one of us in this place get elected, and I want to thank each and every person who contributed in one way or another to support me and the Liberal team in our re-election in the Evelyn electorate. I wish to pay tribute to and thank the stellar efforts of Paul Molluso, who managed my campaign, having many a late night and giving up his weekends. Together we developed a campaign that was principally focused on the local issues that mattered most to people living and working in our community.

Our local plan for the Evelyn district included – for those who do not know, Evelyn has no major hospital, its closest major hospital is the Maroondah Hospital – major upgrades to the Maroondah Hospital after the Andrews Labor government failed to deliver on its 2018 election promise to do so; upgrades to local primary schools in Mount Evelyn, Wandin North, Coldstream, Chirnside Park and Mooroolbark – after decades of neglect we had announcements and pledges of facility upgrades for schools right across the Evelyn district; a new Victoria State Emergency Service unit for the Mount Dandenong–Olinda area, which was really listening to the call from the Lilydale and Emerald SES units that they really needed another unit up in the hills, and that was to protect right across the Yarra Ranges in times of storms and emergencies; fixing dangerous roads in the Yarra Valley – we had funding commitments for safety upgrades to the Warburton Highway in Seville East between Douthie and Peters roads, a notoriously dangerous stretch, and of course Maroondah Highway in Coldstream, particularly at the dangerous Killara Road and Station Street intersection, and a road maintenance program to fix potholes right across our region and make roads safer; scoping works to kickstart the rail duplication between Mooroolbark and Lilydale train stations, a project very close to my heart – it was a failure on the part of the Andrews Labor government to not deliver that rail duplication at the time that they were removing the level crossings, really poor future planning; a review of the bus network, including upgrades to routes in Lilydale and the Yarra Valley; lower daily fares on trains and buses, which are so vital for people throughout the Yarra Valley; sports facility upgrades in Coldstream and in Montrose; and of course payroll tax cuts and a periodic freeze of local government fees for small businesses.

This was all part of our plan that was going to help residents in Evelyn. I will come back to the Maroondah Hospital shortly, but it must be noted that none of these commitments were matched by the Labor government, demonstrating how little they care about the communities of the Lilydale district and the Yarra Valley. I will continue to advocate for these important projects and for our fair share.

It was interesting to hear in the Governor's speech at the opening of the 60th Parliament:

The government has spent the last four years building the hospitals, schools and roads that Victorians need ...

Well, the Evelyn electorate and communities across the outer east must have fallen off the Labor government's map, because they made no commitments to invest in the many schools in our community. Labor utterly neglected to invest, indeed did not allocate a single cent, in road safety upgrades or fixing nine dangerous roads throughout the Yarra Valley, despite the multiple deaths – three deaths on our roads just in the last month. As for the Maroondah Hospital, they promised that at the 2018 election and then failed to deliver it, only repromising it again one day after the Liberal announcement of major upgrades at the Maroondah Hospital.

During the campaign we had the help of seasoned volunteers and welcomed many new volunteers to help at listening posts, community festivals and pre-poll and on polling day. Thank you to every single volunteer who helped, quite literally in the freezing hail and in the hot sunshine.

All volunteers are amazing, but I must make special mention of some volunteers and branch executive members who went above and beyond, including Peter Manders, Gwen Corbett, Peter Falconer, Judy and Howard Carter, Ben Zerbe, Cheryl Baumgartel, Andrew Ermel, Arun Marappan, Thomas Derum, Geoff and Maggie Hawthorne, Ron Van Aken, Caroline Turner, Tim Hogard, Lachlan Millstead, Angela Molluso, Elizabeth Lithgow, Maria, Maddie and Tegan Lohner, Anne and Gerry Vallence, my federal colleague the member for Casey Aaron Violi, and Rachel Violi. Of course I could not do the role of serving our community without the immense love and support of my gorgeous sons, my key advisers, Rory and Emanuel, and my wonderful husband Ben, who is always by my side.

I thank the member for Hawthorn and new leader of the Victoria coalition for appointing me again to the shadow cabinet, with expanded portfolios in this term of industry and innovation, manufacturing, employment and industrial relations and skills and training, really reflecting my professional background and things that I am very passionate about – our manufacturing sector and of course skills of Victorians.

I am eager to be part of the Victorian coalition's economic team, focusing on meeting the economic challenges that today – and will in the future – face the state of Victoria and the rising cost of living. From record unsustainable debt, the Labor government – this Andrews Labor government – is leading our state, Victoria, to \$165 billion of debt that our children and our grandchildren will be burdened with. They will have to pay for it, and that is a terrible legacy of this Andrews Labor government.

The waste and mismanagement across Victoria's health system – Victorians are waiting years for vital surgery and dental care. It is astonishing how lengthy the public dental waiting lists have gotten, and people are really suffering. There is at least \$30 billion in budget blowouts on major infrastructure projects. These major infrastructure projects, which are part of the narrative of the government that says they are strong for them, are being totally mismanaged. They are years behind. The West Gate Tunnel Project is an example. This government are dumping toxic soil on suburban communities, because they could not get it right. They are years behind and \$30 billion at least, that we know of, over budget on their so-called Big Build. It is really a big catch-up, because we have needed this infrastructure for a very long time, but this Andrews government has failed to deliver on it in an economically and financially sound fashion.

The cost of living is going up and up, and this Labor government is responsible for having the country's highest taxes. It is again another astonishing legacy that this Andrews Labor government is leaving – of being the highest taxing state in Australia. This is hurting everyday Victorians. It is hurting Victorian businesses. So many businesses across multiple industry sectors are saying that they do not

want to do business, that it is too hard to do business. The cost of business and the cost to serve in Victoria is so high. When they are looking to grow or expand they are not choosing to do that in Victoria; they are choosing to do that in other states – New South Wales or Queensland – or in New Zealand or Singapore. That is because the Andrews Labor government is high taxing, and something has to change. They have introduced something like 44 new or increased taxes.

The cost of electricity and gas is rising, making household energy bills higher. The Andrews Labor government will say they are going to reduce the cost of energy, but we are seeing it going up and up and up. People are making the choice between putting on the cooling – vulnerable and elderly Victorians – and putting food on the table. Also, Labor has cut funding for road maintenance. They have cut funding budget after budget for road maintenance. They could not support the Lilydale Youth Hub, supporting our young people's mental health in the Yarra Ranges, which was absolutely astonishing.

Members applauded.

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (15:26): Quite frankly, I am humbled to be rising at this point to make an address-in-reply to the Governor's speech – humbled because the voters of Narre Warren South have returned me as their representative in state Parliament, and indeed this Andrews Labor government, for a second term. I am so truly grateful. It speaks not only to what I think is a body of great work that this government is doing but also to the values of community and the strength and resilience that the voters of Narre Warren South have. A little bit later in this speech I hope to go to some thank-yous which will show the broad range of the community's support that the Labor Party had, and I am truly appreciative of the individual support that these members of our community did give to me.

I speak of a body of work when voters in Narre Warren South went to the polls. There are just so many policy initiatives and so many local upgrades and infrastructure builds that I know the members of my community voted very strongly for. In Narre Warren South at Strathaird Reserve there is a pavilion that the cricket club and the footy club have long been fighting for, and to know that planning is underway with that is, I am sure, one of the reasons that constituents voted for Labor. In terms of other sporting pavilions and the like which are being invested in, the Hampton Park Bowls Club is having renovation work done there. We have also got Robert Booth Reserve, where some \$3 million is being invested in that pavilion. It has been great to see, rising from the ashes as it were, how the new pavilion is coming up there. It is really looking a treat, and I cannot wait to open that later this year.

As I said, the body of work connects different parts of the community together. Improvements to our rail network are really important. The removal of the Clyde Road level crossing and the opening of the new underpass there is helping our community to get from one place to another really quickly. Of course we also had the removal of the Hallam Road level crossing and the opening of the brand new Hallam station. All of these are linking together and just networking beautifully.

This government, in the last term, spent on education, because nothing is more precious than our children and them being able to participate in a society that is ever-changing. To know that the interests of education as well as interests in the creative industries mean that a school like Narre Warren South P-12 can have a performing arts centre valued at some \$5.5 million open up is really a truly magnificent thing. Our scouts got a new hall. I can just keep rattling them off. Hampton Park Primary School got a new community hub space. Heritage College got a new early learning centre. We delivered a new pavilion upgrade to Robert Bernly reserve for Berwick Chase Primary School and the community as well, not to mention free four-year-old kinder. Currently in Hampton Park we have three stages of upgrade works taking place. Some \$14 million has been spent over the last few years in ensuring that a STEAM centre, wellness centre and upgraded senior learning facilities are delivered.

A suite of economic policy and social initiatives was promised at the last election, and I am really looking forward to getting to work on the extensive upgrade at Lyndhurst Secondary College, the

refurbishment of Hampton Park Tennis Club and money to assist the magnificent work that the Hampton Park Uniting Church does in delivering local support services to those who really are very much in need. I am also looking forward to delivering a new primary school that will meet the growing demand in our ever-growing electorates and indeed our ever-growing outer south-eastern suburbs.

In terms of commitments that will benefit Narre South constituents, Casey Radio plays an incredible role in being able to bring together different parts of our community through public broadcasting, and just a small amount of money, just \$50,000, is going to help them to deliver local news and bring our community further together. We are also looking forward to that \$250 power saving bonus from March 2023. It is very, very popular in my electorate and really helping to assist with easing the burden that comes with the cost-of-living increases.

Reviving the SEC will have an enormous impact on my community. There are so many apprentices in Narre Warren South, and there are so many who want to go to TAFE, who want to be able to get an apprenticeship but who also want to have a job at the end of it, and this means they can know that they will be contributing to a state-owned energy facility which guarantees cheaper prices but also guarantees longevity in employment for our young. The promise of full free rego for eligible tradies – bricklayers, carpenters, joiners and the like – is again a connection of good social policy with economic policy, where you are seeing savings of up to \$865 a year. It is all about greater access. It is about equity. It is about accessing free TAFE for prospective students who are able to enrol in a free course regardless of their prior skills and qualifications.

I did say at the beginning of my contribution that there are several community members, volunteers and cultural groups that I would like to give a shout-out to. I would really like to thank the Narre Warren South ALP branch members for the role they played. I would particularly shout out to Ali, Mark and Alessandra, as well as Nikki, Dale, Rob, Denis, Dianne and Mark. Thank you so much for all of the work that you did in pitching in to ensure that I was re-elected and that Labor continued to hold Narre Warren South.

There are just so many community leaders who have always been so supportive of me, and to have their support coming into this term of government meant the world to me – and I am pretty sure many of my outer south-eastern colleagues feel exactly the same way. In no particular order I would like to thank Rahimi, Nasser, Nazir, Mohammad, Asadullah, Haroon, good old Mick O'Brien, Kate Madden, Zohra, Paulien George, Sadia, Dur, Reverend Ric, David and Mary, as well as Jaswinder and Harpreet. Thank you so much to all of you for your support and helping us get where we needed.

I would like to thank some of my federal parliamentary colleagues and their staff – Julian Hill, member for Bruce, and Cassandra Fernando, the member for Holt. I would also like to thank Senator Jess Walsh and her staff; Jordan Bassilious; Hafiz, from Cassandra's office; Matt Musilli; and Courtney Newman. I would also like to thank Carina Garland, the member for Chisholm, and Lisa Chesters, the member for Bendigo. It is always good to have a chinwag when you are not necessarily feeling as confident as you might at some stages of the campaign.

To the outer south-eastern MPs, thank you so much as well for your support. To the member for Cranbourne, the member for Dandenong, the member for Bass and to their staff as well – Jamie, Margie, and Stefan – thank you so much. I will also throw into that mix Mr Tarlamis from the other place – an incredible support. Thank you.

I would also like to pay a special shout-out to some colleagues who were not members of Parliament at the time but now find themselves members of Parliament in this place. To the new member for Pakenham, it was just absolutely terrific to work with you and to ensure that we all ended up back here in this place. Thank you to Mr Galea from the other place; it is great to see him here as well. And a very special, big thankyou to the member for Narre Warren North – the two Narres. It was really great to work with you and particularly to share some good times at the campaign hub. It was really extraordinary. Thank you so much.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of some members in the outer south-east who did not quite get across the line, but jeez, they worked really hard. To that end I would like to mention Malik Zaveer and Rumaan as well, who really helped him out. Some incredible work took place there.

In terms of my campaign team, on the digital front I would like to thank Paul for everything that he did for me. Paul is a very close mate as well as being a guru with all things digital, design and brand related. Thank you.

In terms of the field campaign, I would like to thank the United Workers Union and Tim Kennedy, Gary Bullock, Jo Briskey, Paddy Keyes-Macpherson and Andi Sutherland. I would also like to thank Suzanne Carmody.

I would like to thank the team from Trades Hall. They were absolutely magnificent in all of that phone banking work and intelligence that they were able to get through to us so we were able to know what we had to target and where we needed to go. I just could not have done it without you. Thank you, Luke Hilakari, and thank you, Wil Stracke and team.

In terms of my own campaign team, there is no harder worker than a fellow by the name of Myles McMullen, who was my campaign manager, is also my office manager and is just an incredible person. Grace under pressure is the phrase that I use to describe him; nothing fazes him. He is an incredibly hard worker, and he keeps my team in check. And they are a tremendous team. I would to that end like to thank Tamim Sayed for the extraordinary work that he does – and Anya Ristic as well. As a part of that campaign team, we had some ring-ins from about the place, and I would like to especially mention John Hondros and also Asad Jan.

Last but not least, I take the opportunity to thank my family and two very special girls who keep me on track – Audrey and Harriet – two wonderful daughters. You could not ask for better daughters. Thank you for your love and support, and it is great to be here. Of course it would be remiss of me not to mention Louie the groodle as well.

Members applauded.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (15:41): It is a pleasure to rise and make my contribution to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech. We are all well aware that the content of the address by the Governor is provided largely by the government of the day, and whilst I might be quite critical, in some of my elements, of the Governor's speech, it is certainly not directed at the Governor.

I want to start off by saying I have huge concerns over the lack of content in relation to the regional spend that was contained in that address. There was no commitment to spend equitably in country areas. Now, rural areas make up 25 per cent of our Victorian population, and country Victoria more than kicks the tin when it comes to contributing to the Victorian economy more largely. But we do not get anywhere near 25 per cent of this government's infrastructure fund, and what we would certainly like to see, and we have an upcoming budget, is some commitment for 25 per cent of that infrastructure spend, commensurate with the 25 per cent of Victoria's population coming from the country, being matched within the budget papers so that we are making sure that we get our fair share of investment in areas of rural and regional Victoria.

I also want to raise the issue of housing affordability and homelessness, which was fleetingly covered in the Governor's speech. But it continues to be a massive problem, not only in my electorate of Gippsland East but right across the state. My concern is that we really have no short-term solutions being proposed. What I am asking the government to do, and I note the Minister for Housing, who is here at the table now, is to release a detailed plan of what it intends to do to address this problem short term. Whenever housing is raised in this place, the response coming back from the government of the day is with reference to what it phrases as the Big Build, but the reality is – when we look at the outcomes of what the Big Build will deliver, and that investment had support from across the chamber – it will deliver 12,000 homes. That is what it will do. That significant investment will deliver

12,000 homes. But we already have a waiting list that is nearly 70,000 and climbing, and at least half of that is on the priority housing waiting list. Over the next few years we are going to build 12,000 homes when the waiting list sits at 70,000. So the question is: what is the government and what is the Parliament more broadly going to do about that? Do we do more around rental assistance? Is it more short-term accommodation that we provide to those in crisis? Is it more of a focus on providing more affordable housing so that people who are currently sleeping in their cars or sleeping rough but do have an income can finally afford housing?

But we need to have a plan of what we are going to do in the short term. We cannot just continually keep referring to the Big Build, because the Big Build does not provide a short-term answer. I think one of the issues that we can have a look at immediately is providing more support to those charity groups that are assisting our homeless in our communities. They are doing some great work, but they are up against it, I guess, with financial restrictions on what they can contribute. To my line of thinking, we do not have a short-term solution to this problem. We need one, whatever that be. Maybe we can get together as a Parliament and have a look at how we can address this burgeoning problem in our communities at the moment. It is only going to be made worse, and I am sure the minister is aware of this, as we progress through this year because we have got rising interest rates and the Reserve Bank forecasting that they are going to increase further. When I read those stories on the front pages of the paper and see them on the news bulletins at night, what does that mean on the ground? Rising interest rates mean more people doing it tough, unable to keep up their mortgage repayments, sleeping rough, sleeping in their cars. We really should work as a Parliament on providing some short-term solutions to those problems.

I want to talk for a few moments about roads. The speech from the Governor said that this government has spent the last four years building the roads we need. That is not accurate; not in country Victoria is that accurate. The roads are a disgrace. Truckies, bus drivers and long-term residents say they are the worst they have ever seen. To infer that we are building the roads that we need is not accurate. Even before the rain events that we had in the last couple of years the roads were falling to bits and were in a horrible, horrible situation. The rain has made it worse, but we cannot blame the rain. I feel sorry for the staff at Regional Roads Victoria; they would just be getting absolutely hammered because of the condition of our rural roads. You cannot cut road maintenance funding in your budget – and it is there in black and white in the government's own budget – and expect any result other than the road conditions deteriorating. We have another budget coming up, as I mentioned earlier, and we need to see more investment in road maintenance, not another cut.

The Governor also said that this government will improve hospitals and our health service. I would certainly like to think that they would. I mean, it is hard to imagine our health system getting any worse than it is now. It has to improve. We have health workers leaving the system because of the stresses and the pressures of the job, and what happens when they leave is obviously that workload burden rests on fewer people. When we have our nurses under pressure, under stress, realising that they can get out and get similar dollars in another sector, they are doing that, and it leaves that health workload resting on fewer people. That then results in greater levels of stress and a greater downturn in service.

We have also a number of rural and regional hospitals that need upgrading. The Bairnsdale hospital, which we committed pre election to rebuild to the tune of \$230 million for stage 1 – the plans are done, and it is sitting there ready to go. I would certainly urge the government to consider that project as one of priority for my electorate in East Gippsland and for the people of East Gippsland to give them the health service that they need.

I attended on the weekend the Heyfield Timber Festival, and what a great event that was. It made me reflect yet again on this government's lack of support for our hardwood timber industry. The government talks about transitioning to hardwood plantations by 2030, but those hardwood plantations, if we are to transition by 2030, should be 25 years old now. The trouble is these plantations do not exist, therefore there is nothing to transition to when it comes to hardwood plantation. As I have said in this chamber so many times before, our timber industry harvests 5 per cent of our bush on an

80-year rotation – 0.04 per cent a year. We are told we are going to get out of that, but we are not told where that replacement timber is coming from.

I was reading – this is how bored I was over Christmas – the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and it was interesting to see their very common and often repeated ethos: that timber is the only carbon-storing building material and that we should be using timber as the preferred building material to address greenhouse emissions and global warming. If that is the case, why in Victoria are we closing down our timber industry? Planet Ark have a slogan at the moment: ‘Do the world some good, build it with wood.’ We should be taking a leaf out of their book and making sure we support our native timber industry.

If we do get rid of our timber industry, it is obviously not just that. It is not a case of whether we have fires again, it is when, and our timber industry provides the frontline, first defence in relation to fires. If we get rid of them, we are going to be more vulnerable in our rural areas to the attack of wildfire. Our workers in the timber industry are presently facing enormous uncertainty due to court action, but we need this government to be very proactive about getting them back into the bush.

I want to take a few minutes to also talk about our bushfire rebuilds. How slow have they been? These fires hit East Gippsland in 2019–20. The Cape Conran boardwalk that was meant to be finished two years ago is not finished. The Cape Conran cabins that were meant to be finished two years ago are not finished. The Thurra River bridge – we have not had a sod turned on that in three years. The latest departmental advice is that that bridge will not be rebuilt until 2025, five years after the fires. That is an absolute disgrace. It should not take five years to build a bridge to our second-biggest campground that we have in our region. Of concern was when this was raised in last year’s Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, the departmental secretary sat back and said, ‘Yeah, this is a priority project for us. We’re across it; we understand everything,’ and then spoke about a bridge to an island. There is no island. It is a bridge over a river on the Victorian mainland; it does not go to an island. He was apparently right across this – it was a priority project – but then spoke about a bridge to an island. It makes you wonder, I tell you.

I mentioned bushfire preparedness before. We have this ongoing problem in East Gippsland where, post fires, we have allowed roadside vegetation to build up to incredible levels. We have black wattle infestation. It is like a jungle on some of our roadsides. We also have these windrows of logs and timber that were pushed up after the fires that have not been cleared yet. All this time – three years after the fires – they have not been cleared. I am told that they will be cleared by the middle of this year, but I will believe that when it actually happens. In addition to that, we also need to make sure that we are controlling vegetation more broadly on our roadsides. There are so many impediments to getting these approvals through to maintain vegetation on our roadsides. We saw in the 2019–20 fires they acted as wicks, and we do not want that to be the case again when we have fire in the landscape – and it will be when, as I said, not if.

I want to talk about access to mental health. We have significant problems with access to the mental health services in East Gippsland that people need. They present in crisis. I had one instance very recently where a person in crisis and their family presented to the Bairnsdale hospital. They were referred to Flynn ward in the Latrobe Valley. The family contacted Flynn ward in the Latrobe Valley, and they were told that they had at least a three-week wait before there was going to be a bed available. This person, who was threatening harm to others and having suicidal tendencies, fronts up to our mental health facility in East Gippsland and is told, ‘You’ve got at least a three-week wait.’ The family is then expected to provide ongoing 24-hour care to this person to make sure that a horrible outcome does not occur. We need more investment in our mental health services, and we need to see results on the ground. The government talks a big game when it comes to mental health services, but a lot of us are not seeing it at ground level. Through our electorate offices we are seeing the situations continually get worse and worse and worse. I am seeing this in my office, and I know a lot of my National Party colleagues are, with people who need help getting told there is a waiting list for beds. It is not good enough. We need to do better.

For the public dental system in my area the waitlist is over two years. We have no public dentist in Bairnsdale, and in cases of very, very urgent care people rock up and get told there is a more than two-year waiting list. In some cases they are given a voucher to present to a private dental practice. We had one instance recently where a person got the voucher and presented it to the private dental practice, but they do not accept the government vouchers. There is no requirement for private dentists to accept the government vouchers. The person then, in pain, had to make a decision; they paid out of pocket and are now right behind the eight ball. We need to make sure that if we are going to hand out these vouchers the information is provided to people there and then as to the dental practices that will use these vouchers, accept these vouchers, and allow the work to be done. It is a mess, and we need to provide more services under the public dental banner to areas right across rural and regional Victoria but also in my electorate.

I also want to briefly touch on V/Line and transport. In relation to our V/Line service in Bairnsdale, there are some elements of it that have improved with the VLocity carriages, but there are other elements of it that have got worse. In the 1970s you could get on the train in Bairnsdale to go to Melbourne and get a meal, go to the buffet car and get a coffee, get a drink of water – you could do anything. Now here we are in 2023 – you get on the train for that 3¼-hour trip or whatever it is, and you cannot get anything to eat on that train. We have a lot of elderly people living in our electorate. You cannot get anything to eat or anything to drink. The buffet service has gone. I believe that there has been one provided on the Albury line. That should be standard practice with all long-haul V/Line services in Victoria. The government ought to make that a priority and make sure that is delivered. It is very important. There is a lot of work for this government to do, and I look forward to seeing it done.

Members applauded.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:56): It is an honour to be so comprehensively re-elected as the representative for Frankston once again – the gateway to the peninsula; the best beach on the bay; the education electorate, we call ourselves; a community that have seen more progress in the last eight years than in the last 100 years, because they demanded it and because they have aspirations for their families and their children. They are very optimistic for the future. It is a community that I have adored since I was first posted there as a firefighter in 2001. I had never been to Frankston, and I remember at the time having work colleagues say, ‘Oh, Young Street’ and this, that and the other. I grew up in Latrobe Valley next to a coalmine, so I thought being near the beach was ace and people needed to appreciate that more – and they do now. The rhetoric around Frankston is changing, and it is basically because of the Andrews Labor government. I reflected: eight years ago in the south and south-east I was surrounded by federal and state Liberal members. Of course I had the amazing member for Carrum up to the north, but I was surrounded on the peninsula, I guess you could say. But now we have got the fantastic member for Dunkley, the great Peta Murphy, who has been elected a second time, and the community has seen fit on the peninsula to elect Paul Mercurio, the member for Hastings, who is going to do a brilliant job.

This election was held after the global COVID crisis, which many would say is still ongoing. Our state and our nation saw leadership like they had never seen before – leadership that had never been required to that extent – and people found it different, it is fair to say that. Decisions had to be made based on hard truths. Governments of the day, whether federal or state, were punished harshly for not being able to make decisions. It goes back to an old statement, I think by General Petraeus, who is not held in a great light now. But when he was, I read his book, and he basically said that in a war zone or a crisis people respect you when you make a decision even if you get it wrong, but if you make no decision, they will not respect your authority. The Premier had to make some very, very hard decisions, as did the cabinet, in the face of the worst opposition in the nation. And it is not just me saying that; that has been said fairly often in the media. That opposition was judged very, very harshly at the election by the Victorian community, yet the Andrews Labor government and the Premier himself received a huge vote of confidence at the election, returning with 56 seats and of course a larger majority in this house. Within hours of the opening of the booths at early voting or pre-poll we saw the look of confusion –

and some of my colleagues might be able to sympathise with me here – as people took a how-to-vote card with Daniel Andrews’s face on it, went in to vote Labor, came out, threw it on the ground and said, ‘No, no, I want the Labor one’. You could see the depression mounting, the fog over the Liberal Party, as they realised that essentially they had been talking to themselves this whole time.

We saw people take umbrage at that tagline, being told to vote Dan out, and just saying, ‘No. What are you going to do?’ They were told once more ‘We’re going to vote Dan out’ and nothing else. I think what it comes down to is that the good people of Frankston and the good people of the peninsula put a whole lot more thought into this election than the Liberal Party did, especially at a local level. We saw bemused voters standing there asking candidates, ‘But what are you doing in Frankston?’ The replies they got were, ‘We’re going to get rid of Dan’ and people just walked up and took other how-to-votes, because there really was no plan.

I think that is reflective of the situation during COVID. There really was no plan from the opposition in the face of a fairly cohesive, flexible, adapt-and-overcome government that was dealing with the issues as they came up every day, even hourly. Really, why wouldn’t our community think really long and hard about this election? They have seen an opposition that really thought that they had flourished, propagating dangerous rumours, dangerous mistruths, undermining the health response from health professionals. It was just pathetic, and they were judged for that. It is almost like the opposition are incapable of learning. It is almost like they recycle their mistakes. It is almost like our community knows that they can never afford to elect them again.

On the other side of things, can I make a round of thankyou’s. I just want to start with Victorian Trades Hall Council. They are just amazing. Thank you, Luke, Will, Amanda and their team. Special thanks to the team at Labor HQ. They know who they are, but they did an amazing job. The other unions that came out and helped in Frankston – the AMWU, the Health and Community Services Union, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, CFMEU – our branch members at Frankston that are so grassroots Labor. They knew that we needed to keep Frankston Labor. They just inspire me with confidence every day, knowing they have got my back and they have got this government’s back in Frankston. Also to the young Labor left – the future looks very, very bright when you have got these people there. They are more astute and, I guess, probably deeper thinkers than I ever was at their age, unfortunately. They are a large talent pool that I think the Labor Party will draw upon in decades to come.

Can I also put a special thanks out there to the people in our community, especially those in our community who are not political, who are not Labor but who saw fit to support someone who they think, and a government they think, is actually reaching out in their community and making change that they can support. Thank you to those community leaders. To my electorate office team, Sheridan, Karen and Elizabeth. I could not imagine life without this crew. They are a great team, a great bunch of friends. They do an enormous amount of work in our Frankston community, and I could not be prouder of them. To Jeremy, Rebecca and my daughter Charli, thank you very much for your support. It was Charli’s first time standing on a pre-poll. As a proud parent, always, I have got to say that I was even prouder on the last day of pre-poll when without anyone saying a word Charli went up to every single candidate and shook their hands and said good luck. No matter what had happened on that pre-poll, I was pretty proud, because that is the way politics should be.

We had a great campaign built around our community, but obviously we were let down by some minor parties, and there have been some people talking about that. I guess the shame for me is that some of the larger parties, being the opposition, cuddle up to that kind of rhetoric, that hard-right rhetoric. It obviously did not work, and it was very transparent to people. Campaigning is not easy, it is a grind, and we saw the results of some very hard work in Frankston. Our community voted for action. They voted for integrity. They voted for equality and action on the environment, and that is indeed what they are getting.

We committed to the Frankston community what they have been asking for for years this election, and I was very proud to be able to commit to the Frankston & District Basketball Association

redevelopment, to some schools as well – Mount Erin College, Overport Primary School, Mahogany Rise Primary School and Aldercourt Primary School, obviously part of that Frankston North cohort. We also made a commitment to the Scouts in Frankston and to Frankston Zero, which is a network within Frankston of leadership groups and community leaders aiming to get homelessness on the peninsula down to functional zero in a few years.

We are improving a pedestrian crossing near Fletcher Road and supporting the Frankston Brekky Club, which helps out some of our needy. We committed to a new tech school, a new childcare centre and a new early parenting centre for Indigenous families and children – and a big shout-out to First Peoples Health and Wellbeing and Nairn Marr Djambana in our patch as well – and that all level crossings would be removed on the Frankston line. That is pretty amazing. We will continue the progress in Frankston, building that \$1.1 billion hospital that some said we could not. Unfortunately during pre-poll we had an incident where a pole driver fell over, and it made the news. No-one was injured, but certainly you cannot deny that something is happening, and we are not building when there is an actual incident on the worksite. We had plenty of people come into pre-poll – community-minded members – asking, ‘Is everyone okay?’ That was an interesting day on pre-poll.

We are going to continue with Chisholm stage 2, making Frankston again the flagship of Chisholm TAFE and TAFE in general in the south-east. We will continue building the Jubilee Park netball club, and the Big Picture festival is coming up again. I know, member for Broadmeadows, I am going to have you down for lunch and we are going to go check out the Big Picture festival. You will love it, it is a cracker. We are going to build a 500-space public transport car park at Frankston station, and there are all those upgrades to schools. Thank you to the Minister for Industry and Innovation at the table. We have got plenty of sporting club redevelopments underway too. A big thankyou also to the Frankston Revitalisation Board. We have been at this for around six years now as the latest incarnation of the board, and what that board has brought to Frankston and what has been brought to the table by that board has been absolutely amazing.

We have had the recent announcement that the new Frankston Public Surgical Centre – which was the Frankston Private Hospital which the Andrews Labor government acquired and made into a public elective surgery centre – has just passed 1500 elective surgeries after being opened late last year, so that is great. Also in Frankston we look forward to the rollout of free kinder and another round of the power saving bonus through Energy Compare, which has been really popular in Frankston, as I know it has in other electorates. I think in Frankston we are looking forward to those cost-of-living measures and policies that this government has put in place. As well as the power saving bonus there is free rego for tradies, up to \$865 a year; VET student costs covered; free kinder – and the list goes on.

It cannot be stressed enough that we are part of a government that is rolling out the largest renewables policy in the nation, and that includes the SEC. In late 2022, 35 per cent of renewables came from Victoria, and that is something we can be proud of. We are leading the nation in this. I must admit every time the SEC is mentioned – I have got a bit of a link to the SEC – I get a smile on my face, to the point where I now get picked on by my electorate office staff. They see me behind the Premier or a minister at a doorstep, and someone mentions the SEC and I cannot help but crack a smile. I was there when the SEC was essentially sold off and privatised. I remember my dad was part of the union crew that were working out the voluntary departure packages. I saw the effect on my community, I saw the effect on the valley, and I have got to say I was literally up and about and dancing when this announcement was made. This is going to change so much in our community as far as renewables, as far as owning the power and putting the power back in Victorians’ hands and being able to control those bills. As the Premier and the minister have said many times, we have seen the energy providers in the market decide that they wanted to get up and leave, and we have happily said, ‘Goodbye. We will take this back over, we will run it through the state and we will look after Victorians, and Victorians will own that piece of infrastructure as well.’

Of course I heard the Treasurer say before that 342,000 jobs have been created or assisted in being created by this government, which is more than anywhere else in the nation. So you can count on this

government to keep on pursuing those kinds of stats and make sure that we are leading the nation in so many ways.

It would be remiss of me not to mention being the only state on a pathway to treaty and seeing the federal government now going through similar motions, I guess you could say. But also in Frankston, as with nine other constituencies, we were part of an announcement worth \$50 million last week for 130 housing projects. We have been after that one for a long time, and it was great to see the minister sign it off.

It is fair to say that not everyone in Frankston supports Labor, but we will always support everyone in Frankston. Labor will always support everyone in Frankston. As the state custodian for Frankston, I certainly got the impression on two weeks of pre-poll that they know we are proven, they know we are trusted and they know we get results. They know we are delivering for Frankston and the community, and we are building a better Frankston. How do I know that? Well, I am part of a group of people on the revitalisation board and of Labor MPs on the peninsula that know Frankston's future is bright, because we are actually the ones building it – we are making it happen – and I really look forward to seeing what that future brings in the next four years.

I have listed some of the projects we have got rolling out in Frankston and in Victoria, and that is literally just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the social policy and some of the transport projects that are going to affect my community in such a big way are rolling out now, and I could not be prouder to be elected the member for Frankston once again.

Members applauded.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (16:11): I rise today to deliver my address-in-reply to the 60th Parliament of Victoria. I have the great honour of representing the good people of Rowville. Any election campaign is a huge team effort, and I just want to start by thanking my family. They were out there all the time working on pre-poll. To all my mates and friends, a big thankyou. To Danny from Bairnsdale –

Tim Bull: Yep – good man.

Kim WELLS: a good man, who supported me on election day, to the election campaign team, led by Ev, Mike, Glenda, Glenn, Frances, Kerri, Manny and Lois – and can I thank my hardworking staff, because once the election started they were just inundated with phone calls, so a big shout-out to Shan, Colleen and Stuart, who just manned the phones or assisted people all the way through. It was so good, and we had such a fantastic team to be able to do that.

Can I thank my Rowville campaign manager, Max Williams, who did a brilliant job; Lois Hutchings, who did pre-poll; and can I do a big shout-out for Tony Holland, who was on pre-poll the whole time. He is a former mayor of Knox. He did an extraordinary job. He is a great mate, and I would love to know how many hours he spent on pre-poll. To Fred Cadby – interestingly enough, I used to live with his in-laws' family when I was growing up in Bairnsdale, with Don Cadby – during rain, hail or shine, Fred was there on the polling booth. He did an extraordinary job.

Special thanks to John Kavanagh and John Plunkett, who put up my signs all over Rowville, which was fantastic, and there must just be something about my signs, because they kept on wanting to be souvenirs for certain people, so –

Tim Bull: Good-looking rooster.

Kim WELLS: Well, good-looking rooster, that is right. As soon as we put them up at night they would be gone the next morning. So we would send out John Kavanagh and John Plunkett to put all the signs back up again, and within a couple of days they would all be gone. There would be a garage somewhere in Rowville or Scoresby full of my posters, so if you can give them back to me at any time, I would be grateful.

It was the first election where Marg Briggs was not running my office. Marg passed away, unfortunately, a year or two ago. It would have been Marg's birthday on election day, and she would have been about 94, I think. She is sadly, sadly missed.

I am so incredibly honoured to represent the good people of Rowville. We are going to be working very, very hard, and I will be making a promise to Rowville voters that in return for their support we are going to find solutions one way or another to fix the many, many issues that the Andrews government has neglected over the past eight years. I am finding ways to fund the vital projects. Whether it be roads, schools or sporting clubs, we are going to keep on working through each one of those. But the one that I want to raise today was during the election campaign the biggest issue – just behind health – the issue of roads.

Alan Tudge, who was the federal member for Aston, secured funding for duplicating Napoleon Road. This was on 1 April 2019, so nearly four years ago he secured funding to duplicate Napoleon Road. It was a massive issue in the area because it was this single-lane road full of potholes and we were just getting numerous complaints about the number of people who were having to swerve around potholes or who hit potholes creating accidents. He secured that funding, which was in the federal budget on 1 April 2019. It was in the section of the federal budget under the title of 'the government will provide a further \$162 million for projects under the Victorian congestion package'.

We had the issue of Napoleon Road and being able to duplicate that, and then we had the issue of \$475 million for Rowville rail. Alan Tudge also secured that funding for Rowville rail. The idea was that it would go from Caulfield across to Monash, Clayton and then down Wellington Road into Rowville. Alan Tudge secured \$475 million for that. Then he secured – you are not going to believe it – \$100 million for the upgrade of Wellington Road. \$100 million. We had the funding for Napoleon Road – making sure that was duplicated, getting rid of all the potholes – and upgrading Wellington Road, and \$475 million to make sure that the Rowville rail would be half funded to be able to get it to Rowville. Then we also had the extension of Dorset Road, which I think was about another \$100 million. They were pretty good, solid commitments. And as I said, why would it be that for four years it would sit in the coffers of the Andrews government? VicRoads, for some reason, felt that it did not need to be done or there was some other issue, but in the meantime the potholes got larger and larger and larger, so we were getting more and more accidents happening on those roads.

What happened at the last federal budget? At the last federal budget – this is the Albanese federal budget – this is what happened: they cut. This is the Albanese Labor government. They cut the \$475 million for Rowville rail, they cut the \$50 million for duplication of Napoleon Road, they cut the \$100 million for the Wellington Road upgrade and they withdrew the \$4 billion for the east–west link. What do you reckon the Andrews government should have done at that point, when all of that funding for the outer east was going to be cut? You would have thought they would have spoken up and said, 'This is an outrage, this is a disgrace, we want that money reinstated.' There was not one word from the Premier. When he was asked about it, he said the Albanese government has other priorities. In other words, the Andrews government is Labor first. I do not know how far down the track Victorians are, but I tell you what: when it comes to the outer east, goodness only knows how far down the totem pole we are.

Isn't it interesting that with the resignation of Alan Tudge we now have an Aston by-election on 1 April. I wonder what is going to happen now with the federal Labor commitments to Aston. What might happen?

A member: It might be reinstated.

Kim WELLS: If they reinstate what they have just cut out of the federal budget, people are going to say, 'You're not sincere.' Surely, surely, they would say, 'You're not sincere.' But the point is the Andrews Labor government have not put in one cent into any of those roads, and the Albanese government is going to be running around all over Aston, because it is now being held by only 2 per

cent. At this stage you have Prime Minister Albanese on his honeymoon and being a very popular prime minister, so they must be thinking –

Tim Bull: They are a chance.

Kim WELLS: they are a chance. The member for East Gippsland is right – they must be thinking there is a chance, so ‘What can we do to actually secure that seat and take it away from the Liberals?’ As the *Herald Sun* said:

Federal Labor to axe \$900m of key state road & rail projects ...

Of the \$900 million, most of it was out in the electorate of Aston and, more importantly, in my electorate of Rowville, and it just makes it ironic.

But you have also got the issue about schools. The Andrews government are very, very keen to say ‘We govern for all Victorians’, but they forget to add a comma and say, ‘unless you live in the electorate of Rowville’. If you live in the electorate of Rowville, ‘Sorry, that’s not what we’re going to consider.’ So you have got this situation where Rowville Secondary College has had little or no funding for years and years and years; we promised \$15 million at the last state election. And you have got the Scoresby Secondary College – a great school, a really very good school getting excellent results – but again, no funding, because it is in that electorate of Rowville. But I wonder how many times the federal Labor candidate for Aston is going to want to put up her hand and go running off to the Rowville Secondary College and Scoresby Secondary College and while she is there try to get into the Scoresby Primary School to assist with their maintenance.

There are the sporting clubs like the Rowville Football Club. I mean, the Rowville footy club is the only club in Knox that is in the premier league, and it does not have poker machines like some of the other clubs. It is amazing how a club like that are able to keep their players, but they need a chop-out by getting clubrooms rebuilt so they have got change rooms for the women and change rooms for the men, instead of the ridiculous situation of trying to manage who gets changed when.

David Hodgett: They are in the major comp.

Kim WELLS: They are in the premier league, one of the biggest football leagues in the country, and they are still not able to get funding.

I just want to step outside the local area and go to the issue about the state government’s commitment to the SEC. I was in this Parliament when Jeff Kennett made a number of changes to the SEC. I find it ironic how Premier Andrews and the Labor members keep going around and saying that it was Kennett who started the privatisation of the SEC. That is blatantly wrong.

Ben Carroll: He sold it overseas.

Kim WELLS: And even the minister at the table is still parroting something that is wrong. Joan Kirner sold part of the SEC to Mission Energy – 51 per cent. The privatisation was started by Joan Kirner, and they started it because they were so desperate for money.

Ben Carroll: Jeff sold it all overseas – carved it up and sold it overseas.

Kim WELLS: Oh, I cannot believe the minister at the table. I cannot believe that he is believing what the Premier has told him in the cabinet room. It is very clear: the contract started in 1991 under the Kirner government, and they had to sell it because they had no money. Do you know that they were borrowing money to pay for nurses and teachers? How embarrassing. And then when the Kennett government came in, the issue is – and I still have not seen it written anywhere by any of the Labor members – the SEC was \$8 billion in debt, and they were 1991 figures. In today’s figures that would be about \$14 billion or \$15 billion in debt. How does a power company try to recoup \$14 billion, \$15 billion or \$16 billion? Do you put up power prices to the stage where no-one can afford it? Do you sell off assets? In the end, Kennett had no choice. He had no choice. The privatisation had been started by Kirner in 1991 with the sale of 51 per cent to Mission Energy. That is the fact. And then

when Kennett came in, because of the dreadful situation the SEC was in there was no choice but to start privatising it.

I still do not understand when you have got one of the ministers saying it is going to be 100 per cent government-owned but then the next minister goes out and says part of it is going to be owned by the superannuation funds. I do not understand, because a superannuation fund's goal, their mandate as a superannuation fund, whether it be an industry body or whether it be AMP, is to maximise the returns back to the superannuation holder. That is what their job is, but to start saying, 'Oh, we're going to get you to invest in a number of government projects. Oh, there won't be much of a return' – that is not the money of the government, that is the money of Victorians, and I do not see how the government is going to force superannuation groups to actually invest in something that is not going to give a return.

I for one will be watching this very, very carefully to see how the SEC is actually going to work. I understand the politics of it, I get all that sort of stuff, but at the end of the day we want cheaper power. We want to make sure that our manufacturing and our industries are functioning properly, and that means good, secure and cheap power.

Members applauded.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (16:26): Speaker, congratulations on your reappointment. It is also an honour to be elevated to Deputy Speaker and serving with you. I am sure we are going to have a wonderful time together for this term.

It is very good to follow on from the father of the house with a bit of a history lesson. I thank him for that. I would like to start with acknowledging the traditional owners of the land of the Ashwood district, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation and the Boon Wurrung people, and recognise their deep and unwavering connection to the land and waterways. I extend that recognition to Victoria's First Peoples' Assembly and their fantastic work to deliver, towards truth and treaty, with our First Nations people under the leadership of co-chairs Aunty Geraldine Atkinson and Marcus Stewart. It was a privilege to be in this chamber last term and see the advancement of that work that the Assembly is doing towards truth and treaty, knowing that we are going towards such a tremendous milestone in our state's history.

Also, congratulations to the Premier and the cabinet. It is fantastic to see so many of us here on this side and some on that side of the chamber. We had a pretty good day. It has been a pretty good four years – now another one. I am so grateful and humbled to be part of this historic third term of the Andrews Labor government. I thank the Premier and cabinet and all of our members on this side for the work we have done over the last four years, because it was a difficult four years for all of us, no matter what side of the chamber you are on. To have that faith shown in us by the Victorian people, with even another seat added – all of the difficulties do not go away; it was tough for so many people, especially in my Mount Waverley district and everyone's district – and to have that vote of confidence come back is totally humbling. When the Victorian Electoral Commission decided to redraw the boundaries I obviously noticed pretty soon that the Mount Waverley district ceased to be. I thought that was a bit cheeky. Who knows? You cannot take these things for granted, but I was very lucky to be endorsed by our wonderful Labor Party for the new seat of Ashwood. I thank the people of Mount Waverley, which is my home, but I also thank all of the people in Ashwood, whether they voted for us or not.

Fifty years ago my grandparents moved into Hilltop Avenue in Ashburton, now in the seat of Ashwood. When I was a kid, popping grandma's flowers – I cannot remember what they are called, but we used to go and pop the flowers around the side and get in trouble – I obviously never had any idea that one day I would be representing the people who live in that house now, and that is pretty special. When Rebecca and I moved to Mount Waverley in 2010, I had no idea that I would be representing the people in my neighbourhood, and that is pretty special. When Chris Herbert and I moved my old company Throughput to High Street in Glen Iris – also in the Ashwood district – I also

had no idea. And yet, whether my commute was from Mount Waverley, on one side of the Ashwood district, to Glen Iris on the other, for eight years – eight years, nine years, 10 years, whatever it was while we were there – now that is the district that people have chosen me to represent. So I thank them all, and I will do everything in my power to do the best job that I can do to represent those people, regardless of who they voted for.

There are a lot of thanks to make, so I am going to try and get everybody I can. If I somehow forget someone, I apologise and I will buy you an appropriate drink at some time to make it up. I would like to start with the state secretary of the Labor Party in Victoria, Chris Ford; assistant secretaries Nicola Castleman and Cam Petric; Roman Ciofuli, who was leading up the field campaign; Ning Yan and Bofeng Wu; Declan McGonigle and Matt McDonald from Premier's – thank you for putting up with a stressed-out candidate; Betty Belay is also there; and I would like to thank Nicole Nabbout for her work in the whip's office for the last four years. Congratulations to the new whippy team, doing a sterling job.

A member: The whippy team.

Matt FREGON: The whippy team – that is right. I have got that in *Hansard* now. It might stick; you never know.

Thanks to our friends in the industrial movement: my very good friends at the Transport Workers Union, Victoria and Tasmania: secretary Mike McNess, assistant secretary Mem Suleyman, Bill, Dissio, Chris, John, Daniela – everyone who is there – and the national secretary, who I think was here today to hear Mr Berger's speech from the other place, Michael Kaine; and also Mr Berger in the other place. Of others that I must mention, I thank: Michael Donovan from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association; from the Electrical Trades Union, state secretary Troy Gray, and Michael Watson, one of my constituents and a good bloke to have a beer with; and Joe and Liz from the CFMEU, who have been very supportive, and I thank them for that. At Trades Hall, Luke Hilakari and Phoebe Cotton, who is a constituent I kept seeing popping up around election time – thank you, Phoebe, and thank you, Luke.

Federal colleagues that I need to thank: the former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd came down to pre-poll, and let me tell you he has still got it – he was pretty popular; Senator Jana Stewart, who also brought the cutest baby at pre-poll, which would have to have got a vote or two, just by having little Ari there; the federal member for Higgins, Dr Michelle Anada Rajah, and the member for Chisholm, Dr Carina Garland. I am going to have to speed up. The Monash mayor Tina Samardzija and Deputy Mayor Nicky Luo – thank you for your support.

I thank my good friends in this place and the other place, the Minister for Police and Minister for Racing, the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Veterans, the returning member for Laverton, and all of our eastern bloc MPs. We are all here, and we added another one, who is sitting over there.

A member: The eastern red wall.

Matt FREGON: Yes. Also I must thank President Shaun Leane in the other place and Ms Terpstra for their support over the last four years. Mr Leane was present at pre-poll a number of days, and I really appreciate his support. Every one of us – we have all chipped in to help each other, and it is magnificent just to see that team and that teamwork of a party that keeps itself together. I think we have the results to show that that counts.

My new neighbour used to work in my office until he put his hand up so we kicked him out, but I am very glad to see him over there, the new member for Glen Waverley, and I cannot wait to hear his address a little later on. It will be a cracker, I am sure. Whilst we are on inaugurals or a cracker, the member for Hastings did not mention anything about a certain movie in his speech, which I thought was very classy. Brentwood Secondary College, which was in my area of Mount Waverley and now is in the Glen Waverley area, were doing a certain play based on that movie, and the member for

Hastings – a candidate then – came down to see it. Now, the word had obviously got around that the member was coming down, and all the kids were very excited, but there was a group of mothers who seemed to be a lot more excited. All I can say is that the member for Glen Waverley and I were not important at all. It was all about the member for Hastings. You may not have mentioned it in your inaugural speech, member for Hastings, but no-one is forgetting.

To my staff: the member for Glen Waverley used to be my staff; Lisa Williams; Skye Griffiths, who took leave to be the best campaign manager – maybe as good as the former member for Glen Waverley, actually better; Eve Zhang; Hannah Krasovec; Oskar Beadell, the field organiser extraordinaire; and past staff Rachael Tian and Caitlin Brown.

To community groups, and there are many to mention: the Victorian Tamil Association, Satha and Ranjini and the whole group down there – wonderful support; Julia Fu and Michael Murray and the Ashburton Chinese Seniors Cultural Association; Michael Miao and the Chinese association of Monash; and Miss Li and the Monash Chinese seniors volunteers – I am not only thanking you for the support but also my daughter is hooked on the little red bean rice sweet things that we get from Miss Li and Sam is hooked on the dumplings. I cannot go to any event with Miss Li or anyone without bringing them home or I am in trouble.

To the volunteers: none of us would be here without our volunteers helping – the member for Rowville mentioned them; we have all mentioned them – so I am just going to read some names very quickly: Julie Vines, John Watson, Nayme Raman and Bisou the dog, Rod Charles, Matt Crossman, David Shultz, Anne Hyde and John Smith, John Nihil, Rod and Darcy Short, Bill Dayandas, Gav Ryan and Gil Davenport, Alex Haines, Harsha Gunratne, Bev Phillips, Emma Louise Lee, Chris Barcham, Stephen Watson, Finn McHugh – who we met doorknocking, and he said, ‘Can I come and help?’ and then he did – Muhammad Shabaz, Nathan Temple, Gil Iam-hing, Angus Reynolds and Rajna Nina Minkin, Sue Swinbourne and Ken Blaker, Yvonne Tabe, Chap Chow, Lesley Tan, Tony Zhang, Jeremy O’Keefe, Naiyu Wang, Sandeep Sarathy, Daniel Ffrench-Mullen, Isa Pendragon, Joshua Bruni and Roslyn Keller. And special thanks to the former member for Burwood, Bob Stensholt; Anna Burke, the former member for Chisholm; Stephen Martin, the former Speaker of the house in Canberra; and Cyril and Jan Kennedy. Also to Guleid Abdulliah, Jerry Cui and the whole Deakin University Student Association team, having my old alma mater help out was fantastic, and I probably owe them a pizza night or something. To Jake and the Young La Trobe crew: Tanmay, Piper, Molly, Sara, Ruby, Lucy, Maryam, Hany, Julian, Ansh, Ramy, Joel, Corey, Callum and Declan. And of course if I forget these I will be dead when I get home: to my beautiful, intelligent, clever and wonderful wife Rebecca, I could not do any of it without you; and to my kids, who as all of our families do, put up with the rigours of this job, Sophie, Lindsay and Sam. They are obviously my proudest achievement in life. My proudest achievement in working life is to be in this job.

Also to my parents Marcia and John Fregon, who are watching, and my parents-in-law Doug and Ruth Hastings, thank you. While I am on my mother, who is probably watching at home – she could not come in today – it was four years ago today that I had my first speech in this house, on this very day, and to be here four years later and see my very good friend the member for Glen Waverley do his is very special. But four years ago, when my mother was sitting just in the gallery over there, I did say ‘Happy birthday, Mum’ because it is and was her birthday. So once again, to my mother, happy birthday. You got it in *Hansard* twice.

Members applauded.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:40): It is an honour and I am extremely humbled to be elected the member for Narracan in this, the 60th Parliament of Victoria. The first thing that comes to mind is ‘Better late than never’, which seems to be the story of my life, right from the start, when after 72 hours of labour my poor mother finally delivered me into this world. I am the youngest of eight, with five sisters and two brothers. My parents are Joyce and George Farnham. My father was born on the dirt floor of a tent in the district of Allora. He was the eldest of eight kids, and his family was very poor.

Leaving school in year 8 after contracting and surviving polio, he got his first job at the then new West Gippsland Hospital. That was in 1949; the hospital was 10 years old. My mother is an Italian immigrant, born in Grammichele, Sicily, who migrated to Australia as a baby. Her family, like my father's, were also very poor. My mother's family migrated to Australia so they could start a better life, escaping the fascist Mussolini regime – a government that was brutal, a government that would lock its citizens away if they disagreed with government or protested against the government. Some were returned home; some were never seen again. I often wonder what my grandfather would think of modern-day Victoria as it is today.

My first real job was as an apprentice fitter and turner at Thompsons, Kelly and Lewis. After 18 months I transferred to the SEC. After being there for three months we were called in and told that out of the 40 apprentices there, only four of us would have a job, because at the end of our apprenticeship the government was selling Loy Yang and the rest of the SEC was going to be privatised. That was in 1989 – and no, the Premier of the day was not Jeff Kennett. It was the Labor government's Joan Kirner that started the privatisation of the SEC. Selective memory is convenient when one is controlling the narrative. From the time I left the SEC until now I have always been in construction. Self-employed for almost 30 years, a small business owner like many Victorians, I know the challenges of small business. I would love to say more about my family and me, but this is not about me; this is about the people of Narracan. And with the opportunity my time here today offers there are three things I want to touch on: 'We are doing what matters', 'We govern for all Victorians' and 'Hope defeats hate'.

The clear feedback from Narracan has been that the Andrews Labor government has not been doing what matters in our community. Doing what matters would mean sewerage for our tiny community of Walhalla, which has 20 residents but 100,000 visitors per year. Doing what matters would give the water authorities and councils the funds to clean the drains in Trafalgar, Yarragon, Longwarry, Bunyip and Garfield to stop flooding on roads and farms, which is devastating locals, including Sharon Kane, whose property continually floods every time heavy rains occur. Doing what matters would be fixing the Thorpdale slip, a road failure putting lives and businesses at risk in one of our biggest produce-growing communities in Australia. Doing what matters would be providing the \$3 million we critically need to plan and design central road and intersection upgrades in Drouin and Warragul, which are bursting at the seams with population growth and traffic. We have only been waiting three years. Doing what matters would be investing the funds to give Drouin the infrastructure and resources it needs as a major town: 24-hour police resources so people feel safe, schools to meet the needs of the families moving to our region and usable sporting grounds, which have not increased in number since I was a kid. It would be investing in all our CFA and SES organisations so they can continue to protect our rural communities.

The Andrews Labor government may tell you 'We govern for all Victorians', but before you accept the spin just ask the native timber forest workers and the workers at Opal in Morwell. They virtue signal on carbon – 'We need to be green, we need to be renewable, we need to reduce carbon' – but the one industry, being the native timber industry, that can reduce carbon year in, year out, they are determined to destroy. The Andrews government promised them security until 2030, but they have failed. Instead we have an industry that has been shut down without notice. Generational businesses have been ruined, jobs have been lost and families and communities are now vulnerable and left with no security for the future. They could fix this. It was avoidable, but they are just not brave enough to govern for all Victorians. My predecessor has taken this up with government many times, and if they thought they would get a break because he retired, they were wrong.

The last one: hope wins over hate – the catchcry of victory, with a little fist pump to back it up. You see, my community is living in hope – the hope that they do not treat the West Gippsland hospital like they did Melton, Geelong and the 10 community hospitals they promised but never delivered. We live in hope that our doctors and nurses and all the other staff do not burn out and that they will be there for us when we are ill. We live in hope that in the year 2028 our hospital will be delivered. I make this

offer to the Premier: when the time comes to break new ground for the hospital, I am more than happy to dust off the nail bag and help lay the first pegs. The Premier can hold the pegs, and I will swing the hammer.

All of us in regional Victoria feel cheated. I am sure my regional Liberal–Nationals colleagues on this side of the chamber feel the same. In my electorate and east of me in Gippsland, we are in many ways responsible for keeping our state running. Gippsland supplies your power, your water, your gas, 25 per cent of Australia's dairy, fruit, vegetables, beef, chicken, lamb, pork and, yes, do not forget the timber. We feed this state, we keep you warm, we supply you with drinking water, but you do not invest in us. If we were a separate state and chose not to sell to you, you would not be able to survive. It is about time we in Narracan and the wider Gippsland area were treated with a lot more respect. We see billions spent in the city, and our basic needs cannot be met. We feel neglected and totally let down.

The government has made promises for mental health and funding for families with new babies. Do not get me wrong, I support these commitments, but wouldn't it be smarter to invest in organisations that are already providing these services and build on their success – organisations like Olivia's Place, which provides support for new mothers; Mindfull Aus, which delivers early support for mental health in primary schools; and Bettermentall, which provides critical mental health support for adults?

I have my two children here today, Jack and Gabbie, and without a doubt they are the loves of my life. There is another love of my life, and do not worry, Yen, I have not forgotten about you. My kids are 26 and 24, right in the age bracket that is finding it hard to see a future for themselves. They work hard but they struggle to live. They actually want to own their own homes. To make the comment that people would rather rent than own their own home is fanciful and out of touch. Jack and I had a conversation not too long ago where, at 26 years old, with rent the same as a mortgage payment, it is virtually impossible for him to save a deposit to get into the market. What you do not realise is that every time you create another tax or charge for developers it gets passed down the line. Every time we have to import materials, that cost gets passed down the line. This government with Melbourne's Big Build, because of their mismanagement, is driving up the cost of labour and materials, so housing is becoming less affordable every day for our young aspirational adults. I am not here just for Jack and Gabbie; I am here for every one of their friends and every other young adult and family. I am here as a member of the coalition team that is determined to hold this government to account so that every young person has a secure future.

There are three basic principles I believe society should have: governments should govern, teachers should teach and parents should parent. It is not hard, it is not complicated, but the government does not see it that way. No school or teacher should be telling our children what to say or how to live. It is a parent's right to raise their children with an understanding of their beliefs and values, whatever they may be. That is what we do as parents. We try to raise our kids to be decent human beings and to treat others with tolerance and respect. When our kids get old enough they will make up their own minds, like my kids have. It is not a government's or school's responsibility to parent, and it has to stop.

The one thing I stand strongly on is freedoms – all freedoms, not selective freedoms. Governments should not be telling us who we should or should not employ. Governments should not have an opinion on whether someone is employable or not because of their beliefs.

What concerns me over the next four years is how this government is going to do business. Will they negotiate with the Greens and the minor parties and do drug deals – sorry, dodgy deals – to get cannabis use legalised? The full legalisation of cannabis is one of the most stupid things I have ever heard. The cannabis party got 4 per cent of the vote. It is hardly a mandate to legalise a drug. I will be very clear: I do not have a problem with medicinal cannabis that is prescribed by medical professionals. If this government or anyone in this chamber or the other place can guarantee me that no child will be affected by the legalisation of cannabis, I may change my mind, but they cannot. The legalisation of cannabis is for the very few narcissistic individuals that are only thinking about themselves. We do not want to

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become the stoner state; we want a state with a bright future. My suggestion is if you legalise cannabis, you should triple the budget for child protective services, because you are going to need it.

As I come to the close of the speech, there are a lot of thank-yous I need to make. Firstly, to the people of Narracan: thank you so much for this honour. We live in one of the best parts of the world, and my goal is to make a positive difference in the lives of all in Narracan. My office and my ears will always be open. You are my focus. You are my number one priority for as long as you choose me to represent you.

To Jack and Gabbie: I am doing this for you, for your future, to try to make that little bit of difference to make your futures that little bit brighter. I love you both with all my heart – but for goodness sake, do not tell anyone your old man is a politician; you will never hear the end of it.

To my campaign team, Mary Aldridge, Sean Dingham, Gary Blackwood, Matt Greene, Kaye Clements, Michael Sheppard, Andrew Ronalds and Millie McClean: the support and professionalism through not just one election but two elections was amazing. Trying to keep me on track is no easy task. You did it, and that is why I am here today.

To my entire family: thank you for your love and support. To all my brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews and their children as well: I hope my contribution in this place can make your lives better.

To all the volunteers and members that handed out on pre-poll and election day for both elections: your faith in me was unwavering. I appreciate your support, and I could not have managed this campaign without all of you. To my parliamentary team and to my leader JP: you all gave up time over the Christmas break and left your families to help me. Your encouragement, advice and commitment to my election is a very big part of the reason why I am here.

To my mother and father: the kid who you thought did not have a brain has made it this far, but I could not have got this far without the both of you. From when I was seven years old you instilled me with the knowledge that if I work hard, I can achieve anything. This is a value that was front of mind when I visited you in the nursing home on polling day. We sat together and I remembered how much of yourselves you gave to make me what I am and in turn how much of myself I have to give to my community. I love you both. I know you could not be here, so I hope the live stream did not stuff up.

To Gloria Castle: this one is for JC. I know he is smiling and I know he is saying, ‘Get stuck into them, Farnham.’ To my close friends, many that are here today, and for those watching: I know you all think I am crazy for taking this on. You are the ones that keep me grounded. You are the ones that will give me your opinion even if I do not want it, but you are the ones I will always turn to when I need it, and I know you will always be there. Thank you.

Finally, to Yen, my Mahal: everyone in this building knows how much our partners sacrifice during elections. To do two elections in two months is bad enough for candidates, but for the partners it can be worse. You were always supportive. You never complained, and I would not have blamed you if you did. You are very much the big reason why I am here today, and I have said this many times before: I could not have done this without you. Mahal din Kita, mahal.

The last thing I will say, because I know everyone in this building is thinking it – it is the most asked question I have had through two campaigns and two elections – is that I am not related to John Farnham. He sings and I shout. Thank you, Speaker, and the house for your indulgence.

Members applauded.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (16:57): I am delighted to rise to give an address-in-reply to the Governor’s speech. I am really honoured to stand here to represent the people of the newly created seat of Eureka. I really want to thank the people of Eureka for their support for me but also of course for the Andrews Labor government, and I want to give them my absolute commitment that I will focus on the needs of all of the communities in my area. It was a strong win. It was a strong message from the community that they wanted more of what this government has done. This government has spent

the last four years building hospitals, schools and roads – the things that Victorians need, the things people in my community really need. We introduced free TAFE courses, invested in renewable energy, created thousands of jobs and made wage theft and workplace manslaughter a criminal offence to make sure that workers rights are protected. We did so much, and I think that was reflected in the results that we saw in Eureka. Of course this government has made a commitment that over the next four years we will focus on energy, health, education, transport and jobs. These are the things that really matter to people in my community. I know that we will continue to work to deliver free TAFE and free kinder and to bring back the SEC.

I am really honoured to represent the seat of Eureka. It changed a lot after the redistribution. Of course in 2018 I was elected as the member for Buninyong, and we had a redistribution. I think sometimes redistributions are tweaking at the edges, but there really was a substantial change to the seat of Eureka. I love it dearly. I suppose the big fundamental change was that we took in the whole of Bacchus Marsh, so now my seat covers most of Golden Plains, most of Moorabool shire, the east of Ballarat and all of Bacchus Marsh.

I am really delighted to be representing the folk of Bacchus Marsh. The marsh is a strong and proud community. They have got a real sense of identity. It is not a suburb or just an area. People from the marsh know that they are from the marsh, and it has a long, long tradition. It is changing, though, and I think it is important to acknowledge that. I went to the recent citizenship ceremony, and it was one of the biggest citizenship ceremonies that they have ever had. There are a lot of people moving into Moorabool, and that creates absolutely extraordinary opportunities. But it does of course give us challenges, and I am delighted that I will be able to work over the next four years to really try and address some of those challenges but make the absolute most of all of those opportunities of this wonderful growing community.

We did not waste much time in the last term. A lot of things have happened in that area, and they are really starting to come to fruition now. So I am really excited that fairly soon I am going to be doing a sod turn for the West Maddingley early childhood centre. This is something that was committed in the last term, and it reflects this government's absolute commitment to the early years of learning. We know what a fundamental difference that makes to a child – of course to their whole life – so it is going to be great to see the West Maddingley early learning centre kick off.

The Ballan rec reserve is something that is really close to my heart. It was actually my very first election commitment, and it was the first meeting I had with a man who has become a dear friend of mine Billy Smith. The very first phone call I had when I had been preselected was Billy saying, 'We need you to do something about the Ballan Recreation Reserve.' So that work has been underway. Council have been working diligently at that, and I am really looking forward to seeing that completed. I think we are looking at about March or April, but certainly in time for the next footy season.

In Ballan again I am delighted that we will be doing the sod turn fairly shortly, probably in June, on the new Ballan library. This government understands a sense of community. In these small towns in my electorate the community is all-important, and making sure that we have good facilities for community to come together is incredibly important. We are looking at completing the Bacchus Marsh indoor stadium stage 1 in July and also the completion of the Darley pavilion in March, and I would just really like to take a moment: both of those two projects were a consequence of the very hard work of the previous member, my good friend and colleague the member for Melton. I know he worked so hard on those projects, and I hope that he will join me as they come to fruition.

Of course those are all of the things that we did do over the last four years, and there is so much more that we have to do. I am excited about the next stage of that indoor centre, a really important project for people in Bacchus Marsh. We are taking the two bowls clubs out of their current home, building them a brand new home and merging the clubs, and everyone is really excited about that project. So I will certainly be pushing as hard as I can to make sure that that money comes through in the budget to get that work underway.

Anyone who lives in the marsh will tell you that the number one issue we have is traffic congestion. I know prior to the election the member for Melton worked to get some traffic lights to replace a roundabout on Grant and Main streets, and anyone who goes to the marsh will know what a difficult spot that can be. There was a further commitment in the election to replace a roundabout. I was delighted to have the minister at the desk, the Minister for Industry and Innovation, with me in Bacchus Marsh. He could see the absolute need to do some work on Griffith and Grant streets, and I am delighted that that was a commitment we went ahead with. We really need to plan ahead. I am going to continue to advocate for a truck bypass, and growing communities like Maddingley need more bus services. We have already committed to an extension of the 433, and I will certainly be meeting with the minister at the desk to advocate really strongly for a whole-of-city bus review in coming years. It is a growing town, Bacchus Marsh, and we need to make sure that our bus network is keeping up with that community.

The new seat of Eureka also takes in some new towns like Teesdale, Rokewood, Inverleigh and Shelford in the Golden Plains shire. As I said earlier, community is really the most important part in these towns, and I am delighted that one of the election commitments was to upgrade the Teesdale recreation reserve. We have already started the work on delivering the Rokewood community centre.

Everybody in all of these growing communities really needs access to good health care, and I am delighted that the member for Melton has made such a strong commitment to see the Melton hospital built, because that will be incredibly important to people in Bacchus Marsh. The work is well and truly underway on the massive rebuild of the Ballarat Base Hospital, but we on this side know that the health system is much more than bricks and mortar. It is really our dedicated health workers that we need to invest in to ensure a great and strong health system, and I am delighted with the introduction of free nursing and midwifery courses. Why that is incredibly important in my electorate is that Federation Uni offers nursing courses, and they are there to help train the healthcare workers of the future. Federation Uni and Federation TAFE play an incredibly important role in my region. In addition to training healthcare workers, they are also really involved in training for the jobs of the future.

As has been mentioned, this government is bringing back the State Electricity Commission, which will create thousands of jobs building new renewables like wind and solar. I was delighted that last year the Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney visited Federation TAFE in Ballarat to announce that the Andrews Labor government will invest in Australia's first apprenticeship for wind turbine blade technicians. That was part of a raft of investments to provide better training options for Ballarat jobseekers.

This government also knows very strongly that education changes lives. In my first term in government I was absolutely delighted to see a substantial investment in schools across my electorate, from the big projects like Phoenix P-12 and Mount Clear College to the smaller schools like the wonderful Mount Egerton. The last budget saw a \$10 million commitment to rebuild Darley Primary School, and we made election commitments to create a year 7 centre at Woodmans Hill in Ballarat and to help fund the expansion of St Bernard's in Bacchus Marsh. As Bacchus Marsh grows, I will work with the minister's office to identify future needs for schools in growing areas like Bacchus Marsh and Maddingley.

Following the election I was delighted to be asked by the Premier to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture. I am very grateful for this opportunity as both of these portfolios are close to my heart. I ran my family farm in Ararat for 10 years and raised my sons on the land. I know that farmers are some of the most innovative and forward-thinking workers of any industry. We have got challenges ahead with the impact of climate change, and I look forward to working closely with the industry to forge a way ahead. Having spent most of my life in regional Victoria, I am keen to look at ways that we can continue to develop the regions. In 2020 I completed my masters in public policy with a paper on regional development theory in a post-COVID world. COVID has shaken so many of the traditional tenets of regional development; decentralisation is no longer the Holy Grail but rather an existing reality.

I am really looking forward to working with two such extraordinary ministers as Minister Tierney in the other place and our own Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Water, Minister for Equality and Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy. The Commonwealth Games will be the first of their kind in the world, delivering the games across our regions. In addition to the excitement of the games themselves there will be a substantial legacy, and I will work to make sure that the legacy is felt further afield than just the village towns.

The gift of government is an extraordinary privilege, and we will not waste a day. Thank you to the people of Eureka, especially areas that are new to the electorate, for putting your faith in me. Eureka is a truly beautiful and diverse electorate, taking in most of the Golden Plains and Moorabool shires, rich in agriculture but also in newer and developing communities.

Of course we get here with the help of many, many people, and I would like to thank some who were involved in the campaign. Before I do, though, I would also like to acknowledge my Liberal Party opponent Paul Tatchell and the now elected member Joe McCracken in the other place. Both Paul and Joe understood the importance of protecting our democracy, and I am pleased to say that we all worked to make pre-poll venues civil and welcoming spaces for voters. I would also like to thank and acknowledge my colleagues the member for Wendouree and the member for Ripon. With pre-poll booths across Ballarat, it was vital that we worked together and supported each other, and that we did.

There was such tireless work from so many volunteers. There is one very special family that I have to acknowledge. The matriarch is the wonderful Andrea Rose. I have known Andrea since 2014, when she volunteered for the Community Action Network. She has made more phone calls than any other volunteer I know, and she was blessed with two beautiful daughters. Her wonderful daughter Tahlia ran the Community Action Network in my electorate while her sister Brittany was my fabulous campaign manager – what a powerhouse of women the Rose ladies are.

I would also like to thank my office staff, who kept the electorate office running. Thank you, Lachie and Janine. Some people put in the extra mile, and I want to thank Virginia and Rick for all of their work. A very special thanks and acknowledgement go to the We Are Union Eureka campaign – thank you for talking to so many people about the importance of protecting workers rights. Of course I thank head office for all the support that she gave us, even if she did drive us a little mad at times.

Every MP in this place knows that we rely on our local branches, and I want to say a huge thankyou to both the Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat East branches. So many people got behind me and this campaign to get us here.

Of course I want to thank my family. I would say that my parents were fantastic when I was elected in 2018, but in 2022 they decided they would work on the Polwarth campaign with Hutch Hussein. They worked very hard, and I am very proud of them, but they were not there. Nonetheless, their support was in spirit. I really want to thank my sons. Many of us have children who man the booths. My son stood in the Elaine booth all day and sat with the Liberal Party volunteer and had a wonderful day. We are talking about writing a short story about it; it was really a lovely experience for everyone. Thank you so much to everybody who helped me gain the seat of Eureka.

Members applauded.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (17:12): I rise to speak to the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech, and although this is not my first speech, I have been informed that my children may be tuning in through the live stream. We felt it about time that they see what Papa gets up to in the big place he goes to every second week. Hopefully I can beat out *Paw Patrol*. No doubt the temptation to switch over will be great, but a shout-out to my wife Ariel and hello to Henry and Alma. I am told Alma spoke for the first time at school assembly today, so very similar, but no doubt with much better delivery than me.

I am really pleased to be re-elected as the member for Prahran and so glad to be re-elected on the positive platform that the Greens took to the election, a platform that spoke to the massive challenges that this state is facing: climate change, the extinction and biodiversity crisis, homelessness and unaffordable housing, the massive increase in incarceration, particularly amongst First Nations people, and rising inequality. So I was really proud to stand on a platform of stopping new coal and gas projects and getting to 100 per cent renewable energy as soon as possible. The approval of fossil fuel projects, whether that is gas drilling offshore near the Twelve Apostles, onshore conventional gas or trying to turn coal into dirty hydrogen for export, is incompatible with the need to stop burning fossil fuels and to limit the earth's temperature rises.

Our platform included supporting people to make the shift out of polluting petrol cars to more climate friendly transport – transport is Victoria's biggest growing source of carbon emissions and our biggest overall source of emissions after coal-fired power stations – increasing funding for active transport above the paltry 1 per cent is that it is now; increasing the number of services on our trains, trams and buses so people are not waiting 15, 20, 30 minutes or more for their public transport, even in Prahran on the Sandringham line and route 78; and lowering the costs of making the switch to electric vehicles by making them more affordable and not putting a new tax on them to make them even more expensive.

Our platform included ending logging in our native forests, which we even introduced legislation in the other place to do, ending it this year. If there is one thing – one thing – that the government can do right now to halt the decline in species of our native plants and animals, it is to stop logging in our native forests. In fact in the Governor's speech, which was of course written by the government, I do not think the word 'environment' was written there. The same thing happened last term. The second thing the government can do is properly fund biodiversity. The Greens inquiry into biodiversity found that the state government has been chronically underfunding environment and biodiversity by billions of dollars, leaving thousands of species at risk of extinction.

Our platform included ending homelessness. A society like ours should not have people sleeping rough, should not have people living in unsafe or insecure accommodation or living in poor-quality housing, but that is what is happening here in Victoria. It is the number one social justice issue facing this state, and the reality is that the public housing waiting list continues to rise – it is over 120,000 people – and the government is simply not building enough homes. That is why I introduced a bill on day one of this Parliament into this place to make housing a human right, to set a target for new public housing homes and to ensure adequate funding of homelessness services.

Our platform included criminal justice reform. The massive increase in incarceration in Victoria, especially of First Nations people, is not an accident. It was an entirely predictable outcome of the tough-on-crime race to the bottom that occurred several years ago. That is why we took to the election reforming bail laws, raising the age of criminal responsibility so children are not caught up in the cycle of incarceration and, instead of spending billions on new prisons, actually closing prisons and investing the money in what has been proven to prevent crime. Increasing incarceration and the need for government to spend billions on prisons is a failure of social policy. Another failure of social policy has been drug laws – for the past century, I would say. We need drug law reform, like legalising cannabis and pill testing. I have got no doubt that society is with us and that the evidence is with us, so it is time to reform drug laws in Victoria.

The Greens ran on a positive platform supported by our campaign teams, volunteers, supporters and state office. Now the Greens have doubled our numbers in this Parliament – the most Greens ever elected at a state election: four now in the lower house, with Gabrielle de Vietri elected in the seat of Richmond, and four in the upper house, with Aiv Puglielli in North East Metro; Sarah Mansfield in Western Victoria, the first Green MP representing regional Victoria; and Kat Copsey, my upper house MP in Southern Metro, who also did a lot of work to help me campaign in Prahran. I am sure they are all going to be absolutely fantastic MPs. This state does need to go further and faster on climate, on environment and on social justice, and this Parliament, with a progressive majority in the upper house,

with more Greens than ever, should seize this moment for progressive reform. We might not get a better chance.

There are great opportunities in the Prahran electorate too. I love living in Prahran. It has been my home for well over a decade now, from when I was first renting with a flatmate to now raising my family. I do not get the chance to experience the night-life on Chapel Street as much as I used to, but I still do occasionally. I put on the agenda this election some of my key priorities to help make Prahran more liveable and more thriving and to create a better future for everyone. That includes further upgrades to South Yarra station. I campaigned hard for the first stage, and now I am urging the government to go further with new ground entrances, with a platform overpass, to really serve that growing Forrest Hill growth area.

There is still much more that needs to be done to make walking and riding a bike safe for everyone in Prahran. It is great to see the St Kilda Road separated bike lanes finally come to completion. I, like many in our community, have been pushing for these bike lanes to be built for years. We are now waiting to see the pop-up bike lanes in Chapel Street and Orrong Road that were promised some time ago, not to mention the numerous dangerous pedestrian crossings that are still in need of fixing, particularly around schools in Prahran. Our public housing tenants are still struggling, not just from the lack of maintenance and upgrades to things like windows that need to be filled with old newspapers but from kitchens that have not been upgraded since these buildings were originally built. There is a need to ensure there is adequate staffing and support for tenants so when they raise issues they can be addressed.

The Prahran TAFE site remains massively an untapped potential. Already home to the performing arts, dance and the National Institute of Circus Arts amongst others, a Prahran arts and education precinct would revitalise the campus and the local area around Chapel Street, so I urge the government to quickly progress the consultation process and start investing in the campus.

I want to say a massive thanks to everyone who helped us retain Prahran. It was good, or it was a nice change not to have to wait two weeks for the result again, but if it comes to that, it is better than not getting in at all, I would say. To my campaign manager, John Friend-Pereira; organisers Brendan Cooper, Naomi Lanbie, Kurt Callaghan; my neighbourhood team leaders Rodney, Jane, Lucy, Anita; data coordinators James and Maria; and my placard installers Terrance, Bob and Jeremy, and to all volunteers and everyone who helped out, it was as always a team effort and a massive honour to be the MP for Prahran.

I am really pleased to be able to take on the portfolios of treasury and economic justice as well as community services and, of course, sport. These are critical – particularly economic justice – portfolios at this time in history. As a society inequality is rising, homelessness is increasing, living standards, particularly for young people, are going backwards, the cost of living is skyrocketing, rents and mortgages are continuing to rise throughout the year and wages are not even close to keeping up. It is time to turn the page on neoliberalism, which has been the driving ideology behind economic policy here in Victoria for the past 30 years. It is staggering that at a time when so many people are struggling with low wages this government's official wages policy is to keep wages low, not just in the public sector but the wage cap sends a signal to the private sector that they can keep wages low too.

The underfunding of public services needs to end. It is little wonder with the lowest-funded public schools that parents are faced with the highest costs in the country, with what should be a genuinely free public education. As the Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services* revealed, Victoria is below the national average in funding public schools, public hospitals and public housing.

There is no doubt that with upcoming budgets the government will cry poor, but it needs to look at revenue. It needs to look at revenue from the profiteering big banks. It needs to look at revenue from property developers and the gambling industry. Billions can be raised to properly fund the services that everyone needs. The big banks are profiteering off rising interest rates, and we should make them pay with a state-based big bank levy. The government walked away from a social housing levy last

term that could be paying for thousands more public and affordable homes. If the government is not looking at revenue in the lead-up to the next budget, it is not doing its job.

The Premier, who I note is in the chamber, has not hesitated to weigh into federal issues when he thinks it is relevant to Victoria. I reckon there is one thing the Premier could advocate for right now – to lift people out of poverty and help with the cost of living and push the federal government to lift the rate of income support. I know Labor does not want to listen to raising the rate, keeping income support below the poverty line. It keeps people in poverty. It pushes people into hunger, homelessness, poor health and into already overly stretched and underfunded state services. It is an example of cost shifting from federal to state, with the worst possible outcome for people. And if he is looking for a way to pay for it, the Premier should be urging the Prime Minister to abolish the stage 3 tax cuts – to reverse them, tax cuts for the most wealthy – and redirect them into income support for those most in need –

A member interjected.

Sam HIBBINS: You go for it, mate. You go for it, Premier. Whatever way, whatever works for you.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Prahran, through the Chair.

Sam HIBBINS: What we saw during COVID, when income support was raised by the federal government, when the state government had the From Homelessness to a Home program, which again it cut, was that we can end homelessness. We can properly tackle poverty and disadvantage. In fact it should be at the heart of what governments are doing. What this will take is a fundamental shift in ideology and economic policy that has been in place for too long.

On top of that this government needs to end its addiction to privatisation. We have seen the biggest privatisation agenda since Kennett under this government, and despite their claims even the new SEC is going to be part-privatised. So to make sure that public services are delivered –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Sam HIBBINS: They don't want to hear it. I reckon I have hit a spot. I reckon I have hit a nerve.

This government needs to make sure that public services are delivered in the public interest and for the public good, not for private profit. I move that this government put a moratorium on privatisation until a parliamentary inquiry into the effects of privatisation has been completed and legislation is passed so that either house of Parliament can veto the privatisation of public assets. Finally, I want to say thanks to my electorate office staff for working so hard over the past terms and for, no doubt, the hard work that they will do in this term supporting me and helping members of our community.

Members applauded.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (17:26): Thank you, Speaker, and I congratulate you on your election.

It is an honour to rise in this place as the first Labor member for Glen Waverley – a community as diverse and strong as they come, a community I have the privilege of representing as a member of a progressive Andrews Labor government that is doing what matters for all Victorians. I acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting and I pay my respects to their elders past and present, and I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. Woi Wurrung land extends eastwards from here to the Glen Waverley district, where their land meets that of the Boon Wurrung people, who I would like to acknowledge as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the southern end of my electorate.

The lands of all First Nations people were never ceded, but rather, violently dispossessed over the course of generations and governments. I recognise the trauma of this history, and I am proud to be part of an Andrews Labor government working together with Indigenous communities towards self-determination through the First Peoples' Assembly and, ultimately, treaty. It is my sincere hope that 2023 also marks the year when the Australian community embraces a Voice to our federal Parliament, taking a leap towards the process of truth, treaty and voice outlined in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

It is an honour to represent the people of the Glen Waverley district – a true representation of a modern, inclusive Victoria. I say that not just as an ideal but as a description of reality. More than half of all residents in my electorate were born overseas and speak a language other than English at home. This multiculturalism and diversity is our strength. From Forest Hill and Vermont in the north to Wheelers Hill and Glen Waverley in the south, migrants from every corner of the world have come to our community for a better future. It is a concept I know well as the son of two proud Irish immigrants that arrived in this country in 1978, drawn to a land of opportunity, with quality education for their children, reliable medical care, significantly warmer – and drier – weather and a chance to start their own small business. Australia was all my parents could ask for and more.

In 1982 I was born in Baxter House, Geelong – go Cats! I remember my early childhood fondly. I was the middle of five children. We grew up within a tight-knit community of Irish migrant families – the Sharkeys, the Bradys and the O'Loughlins – around the suburbs of Geelong and Melbourne. Our social gatherings centred around our traditions, celebrating our music, dance and frequent discussions on Irish Republicanism and self-determination. Seeing the strength of our multicultural communities across the Glen Waverley district, I know the value and importance of keeping cultural traditions. The embrace of diversity through food, song and dance is by no means lost on me as we continue to back multiculturalism across this state.

My parents quickly established a thriving construction business specialising in concreting, formwork and steel reinforcement. It is with great pride that I see the contribution my father has made to Victorian infrastructure – the buildings, the bridges and iconic landmarks. Not dissimilarly to the thousands of workers currently delivering Victoria's Big Build, my father worked on transport projects such as CityLink and the Western Ring Road. He helped build our healthcare facilities like Box Hill Hospital and Geelong hospital, and important centres of our arts and culture like the iconic Federation Square and the Geelong performing arts centre. My father's business was a vocation dedicated to building a better Victoria, an attitude he instilled in me.

My mother worked hard to raise my brother, my three sisters and me. While supporting the family business and later a farm she taught me empathy and consideration of others. In 1985 she joined Interchange, an organisation that strives to make our community more inclusive for Victorians living with a disability. I gained a brother with spina bifida who used a wheelchair. He would regularly stay with us, and I learned about the access and healthcare challenges faced by people living with a disability. More importantly, we learned firsthand how compassion and community can help support them.

In 1995 we moved to Meredith, a country town where my parents built our home on a farm. After going to high school in both Ballarat and later Geelong, I moved to Melbourne to start a university degree, driven by a thirst for knowledge in science and business. For nearly 10 years I worked in our family's construction business, and I learned about hard work, drive and determination, which led me to start my own small business. From a spare bedroom in the eastern suburbs a successful IT and telecommunications company was born. It was built on understanding the needs of others and finding solutions for those needs. While I learned so much from this venture, I also discovered my passion for helping people.

It was the federal opposition leader in 2012 that activated me and commenced my foray into politics. This supposed leader continually sowed the seeds of division through bigotry, misogyny and racism. Many evenings there were outbursts at the TV when the 7.30 program came on. One evening my

partner Donna said, ‘Why don’t you do something about it?’ So I did. I joined the Waverley West Ashwood branch of the Victorian Labor Party. It was here that I found people with the same values of compassion and empathy and a rejection of the divisive conservatism that has no place in modern, progressive Victoria. The first people I met were Cyril Kennedy, a former member for Waverley district in the other place, and his wife Jan. I respected their values and their contribution to the Labor movement in the east. From day one they offered me guidance, building on my childhood conversations about Labor politics with my aunt and uncle Owen and Maureen Sharkey. Before long I was involved in local state and federal election campaigns, the first of which was Anna Burke’s 2013 Chisholm campaign, a grassroots campaign in eastern Melbourne, re-electing a terrific community-minded MP.

I remember warmly in 2016 a branch member and close friend asked me who was running for the Mount Waverley district at the 2018 state election, to which I answered, ‘You are’. And so the Mount Waverley campaign began. Run on the smell of an oily rag and not much else, we walked out thousands of flyers and had conversations with locals across the area, many of whom I now represent in the Glen Waverley district. The result was a little better than we expected, and it marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter. With that win came an important decision that I had to make: do I continue running my successful small business or change careers to serve the public? That decision is why I am here today. In fact it is four years ago to this very day that the then member for Mount Waverley gave his inaugural speech to this chamber. In reviewing the footage recently to prepare for my own inaugural speech you can see an anxious, fresh-faced electorate officer sitting in the background. Matt Fregon, member for Ashwood and Deputy Speaker, I am excited to be your colleague in this chamber, and I will try my best not to get kicked out. I would also like to wish your wonderful mother Marcia a happy birthday for today.

My time working in Matt’s office was a political apprenticeship for which I am deeply grateful. It taught me the value of serving our community during the most difficult of times and the importance of having strong Labor values of compassion and empathy. These are the reasons that I put my hand up to contest the election for the new district of Glen Waverley. We had our work cut out for us, just like any marginal seat campaign, and I could not have done it without a dedicated team of volunteers. We had a simple plan: to have as many genuine conversations with the community as possible. Our volunteers gave up their time – weeks of it – to have thousands of conversations with Glen Waverley constituents about what matters to them.

I would like to acknowledge former member for Forest Hill Neil Angus for his service to our local community. My thanks also extend to the other candidates and the Victorian Electoral Commission for their work to ensure a strong democratic process.

Now, I want to take this moment to thank my campaign team of over 100 volunteers, especially the members of the Glen Waverley ALP. While I cannot mention each and every one of you by name, your hard work and contribution is deeply appreciated. To my key team – Hannah Krasovec, Felix Hughes, James Gan, Dustin Kim, Adam Rae, Ishmohit Sabharwal, Shara Teo, Nate Truong, Liz De La Motte, Naiyu Wang, Nicky Luo, Tina Samardzija, Matt Price, Diana Doidge, David Coombs, Eve Zhang, Graeme Bond, Abhi Kumar and David McLennan – who all worked relentlessly to run an A-grade, professional campaign, I am forever indebted to you. And thanks to those who were able to render assistance even when they were busy on their own campaigns: Lisa Williams, Skye Griffiths, Tom Yakubowski, Drew Lindsay and the formidable Rachel Tian.

A big thankyou to the Monash Young Labor left for always turning up, especially to their leadership team, Noah Andrews and Grayson Lowe. Also thank you to Maya McGrath, Izzy Carmody, Aaron Sharkey, Harry Ketsakidis, Chloe Ward, Mitch Evans and Phil Dahn.

I would also like to thank the contribution of the Inn Group.

A personal thankyou to my good friend and comrade Michael Watson. I will always be your best man.

Thank you also to secretary Troy Gray and the team at the Electrical Trades Union, the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the mighty union movement. Your advocacy for working people across the state is critical to improving the lives of all Victorians.

To the members and ministers who supported me, I say thank you. In particular I would like to acknowledge the eastern bloc – the members for Ashwood, Bayswater, Box Hill, Eltham, Ivanhoe and Ringwood, plus Shaun Leane and Sonja Terpstra in the other place – for sharing their experiences as Labor MPs and campaigning in the east. I make a special mention of the former member for Ringwood Dustin Halse for his wise counsel.

To Minister D'Ambrosio and Minister Pallas, thank you for launching and supporting my campaign. To the Premier and the campaign chair, James Merlino: thank you for your leadership and hard work in delivering a monumental victory for our movement. I would like to extend this thanks to the team at campaign headquarters, including Chris Ford, Nicola Castleman, Cam Petrie and Bofeng Wu.

Most importantly, a thankyou to my family and friends for standing with me always. Often speeches in this chamber comment on how our families bear the brunt of our participation in politics, as I have recently been made aware. So to my partner Donna of 16 years and our daughter Orla, who are here, I say a heartfelt thankyou, and I love you.

I want to express the same thanks to my mum and dad, Sean and Marian, and my siblings William, Bridget, Maryanne and Christina. You have always been there with unconditional love and words of encouragement. In particular I would like to thank my brother William for pausing his life in Poland. He turned up on my doorstep, surprising me, ready to spend a month working on my campaign: ABC, 123, I am lucky to have you, brother. I want to extend my thanks to his family – Marysia, Kasia and Ronan – for supporting us.

I am proud to be part of politics that is compassionate and focused on doing what matters for Victorians. An issue close to me is the impact of gambling on our communities and its influence on our young Victorians. As a child, one of the first funerals I attended was for someone who took their own life, ruined by the scourge of gambling. When our young children today talk about the odds when discussing sport, we know we have a problem. I worry for the next generation if we do not take action, and I believe we can look towards other major policy reforms for guidance.

In particular I am proud to be a member of a Labor government that has led the way on bold policies to address family and domestic violence since coming to power in 2014. I lost a friend to domestic violence, and that trauma will last my lifetime. As a government, it takes courage to make serious and lasting policy changes. I am proud that we have implemented every single recommendation of Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence, transforming the lives of the most vulnerable in our community, and we are well on the way to doing the same with our mental health system too.

When I look forward to serving the Glen Waverley district over the coming years, I do so with eagerness, knowing my community is ground zero for some of the boldest projects and reforms in a generation. The Suburban Rail Loop will connect Glen Waverley to jobs, health care and educational opportunities across the state as well as to every rail line. The people of Glen Waverley have endorsed this project resoundingly – twice – and the Labor government is getting it done.

I am delighted with the revival of the State Electricity Commission, the boldest energy policy reform of a generation. For too long multinational companies have taken advantage of Victorians, and it is about time the government takes its rightful place as an agent for positive change. The conversations I have had while doorknocking back government-owned renewable energy to drive down power bills.

The rollout of free kinder across my community is a great Labor policy, good for our youngest Victorians, like my daughter, good for creating more equality for women and good for reducing the cost-of-living pressures. In 2018 the Andrews government led the way with a promise to deliver three-year-old kinder, and last year my daughter Orla experienced the benefits firsthand, as did my partner

and I. Now we take the next step by making three- and four-year-old kinder free, because as a government we are not resting on our laurels: we are doing what matters for Victorian families.

As I look around this chamber I see common ground – a desire to do what is right for our communities and to shape a future that we can all be proud of for our home, Victoria. I take our collective responsibility to build a brighter future for the next generation seriously, and I truly believe that Victoria's best days lie ahead. I will work hard every day for the people of the Glen Waverley district in doing what matters for all Victorians today and for the years to come.

Members applauded.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:45): Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment to that role.

I rise to respond to the Governor's address, which we heard at the end of last year, and I want to thank the electors of the district of Eildon for electing me again – the third time to the seat of Eildon; my first term was to that of Seymour. When I was sworn in to this place I was sworn in holding the Bible that my grandmother gave me, and she told me that my father had carried that with him during the Second World War in his service in Borneo and New Britain. I am humbled to be this time the Shadow Minister for Small Business, Shadow Minister for Women and Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence – they are all areas that I as a member of Parliament have had quite a lot to do with.

The Eildon district is an absolutely wonderful place to live and work. It is home to many small towns and communities – the largest populations are in and around Healesville and Mansfield – and we have a beautiful natural environment. We have got the Goulburn, Broken, Yea and Yarra rivers and many tributaries; we have got Melbourne's green wedge; Victoria's high plains; the Yarra Valley and the Yarra Ranges; and snowfields at Lake Mountain, Mount Donna Buang, Eildon and Mount Buller. In the heart of my electorate is Lake Eildon. We have many rivers and hills and mountains – rivers that flood, and they did very much so in October last year. We have pastures and bush and forests that burn, and we have had that on multiple occasions. As I speak today, just out of Yea in the area of Flowerdale, Homewood, Ghin Ghin, Strath Creek, Kerrisdale and Dairy Creek at 5 pm the Emergency Management Victoria alert had 54 trucks, and this was turning into quite a major fire. We have firsthand experience – everybody – of the issues of living in the bush and how much Mother Nature can have an impact, whether it is torrential rain, whether it is a lightning strike that starts a fire, whether it is from a whole range of other reasons, but we have strong and resilient communities. It is home to agriculture. We have got wonderful viticulture, horticulture and beef, we export genetics, we have got fisheries – two large catchments – so much in tourism, and pretty well everyone that has a business in there has a small business. Like many other areas, there is pressure of growth, but there is no housing. This is something that the government really need to have a look at – making housing supply easier. People get jobs in towns, and they cannot move to those towns to take up the jobs because they cannot find anywhere to live.

At this last election the redistribution took in new communities for me of Hurstbridge and Nutfield, and I want to reflect just briefly on the communities, because we have such strength in small communities in different ways. In Arthurs Creek I have been inspired by the community group that purchased the former Anglican church to turn it into a community centre and have community drinks. They have worked really hard to do that. Reefton and McMahons Creek, a very small area further from East Warburton, have got a community action group and are doing a lot to improve the area out there. We have got a community action group in Millgrove, the residents action group. In Alexandra and Eildon there are so many people that want to put on events and make this the best place that it can be. This year in January we had Opera at the Pondage, and I have got to congratulate the community for doing something different. It was a sellout and it was great. They have the rodeo, they have the truck show in Alex, which brings thousands of people. We have got racing and sporting and community service groups that do everything to make the areas better. We have small working groups in Merton and Glenburn. In Healesville we have had a group of volunteers who have put in an

extraordinary number of hours – some 650 hours – to work on the Maroondah dam, which is something that the government has let slide, but we have had community members really roll up their sleeves and do some great work fixing up that park. They are about to tackle the rose staircase, which will just be extraordinary. The sundial has come up really well.

We have had in Pantom Hill every year on Ash Wednesday a remembrance service for those that lost their lives, and there were five members of the Pantom Hill brigade along with seven members of the Narre Warren brigade who lost their lives on Ash Wednesday in Narre Warren.

In Mansfield there are so many people doing so many things to really improve that town – it is just so inspiring. We have got the need for an emergency services precinct. People not only want action but do so much themselves. They are extraordinary fundraisers, because they want to make sure that they deliver what they can.

Part of the Mansfield community is former member of Parliament Graeme Stoney, who received an AM in the Australia Day awards. Graeme has been a pillar of the community for so long and is for me personally a wonderful rock. He is so grounded in common sense, and it is just terrific to have him there. He served for 14 years in the Legislative Council. He was the executive officer of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria and the Mansfield Historical Society president. The Victoria Tourism Industry Council he has represented. He is a High Country cattle and sheep producer. He is for alpine grazing. He is a former Mansfield newspaper owner. In *The Man from Snowy River* he was a crack rider as well, so he has also had a go at being in the movies. I congratulate Graeme for that recognition, because he has been involved in so many areas of the community for so long.

The community spirit, as I have said earlier, is strong, and it was evidenced with the floods – neighbours helping neighbours move livestock, fix fences and sandbag homes. We had business owners helping sandbag stores. The CFA volunteers were out there. Community members were out there. They were sandbagging roads at Thornton in preparation for a second wave of flooding, and it is just so inspiring to see people do what they need to do. So for me, representing those people in this Parliament is indeed a privileged role. Every new term it brings new and different experiences, and it will bring some that I have been banging on about for quite a long time.

I will start with the country roads, which have been in an appalling state for so long. We have had so many accidents because of the country roads' potholes. We had a car flip over the barriers and land on its roof because it hit a pothole, according to the police report. There are crumbling roads and there is uneven camber – Warburton Highway, Maroondah Highway, Melba Highway, Goulburn Valley Highway. But what really got me and really got the goat of most people in the electorate was that just prior to the 2022 election Labor committed to a country Victoria road maintenance blitz. I had this sense of déjà vu, because when I read about that I thought, 'Hang on, I've heard this before.' I went back four years, almost to the day – it was only a few days apart that they announced exactly the same thing, right up at the last minute before the election: 'Oh, we're actually fixing something here.' Well, no, they did not. They tried to create that illusion that they were doing something, and it just did not cut the mustard. Everybody understood that they had mismanaged roads. And it continues; potholes continue to open up. There has been some work, and I am pleased that that has happened, because the number of complaints I had had about the roads far outnumbered any other complaints that people came into my electorate office with.

We had some commitments that I am really looking for the government also to follow on. We need, desperately, new CFA stations at Hoddles Creek and Yarck. They have been on the drawing board for ages. The government purchased the land at Yarck years and years ago. They were up on the top of the list, and they have fallen completely off. We need to get that station off the main road, out of the quaint little section of shops, and put it around the corner. Hoddles Creek need to have a bigger station than what the government are proposing – and that is only because they have not got enough money to pay for what they really need. School upgrades are required at Launching Place Primary School, Yarra Glen, Alexandra and Yea. We need covered areas for kids to be in. I know at Pantom Hill and

Yarra Glen they would kill for a covered area so that the kids can play outside in the shade or in the sun or, if it is wet, still be outside and be protected. Some of these are really quite simple and inexpensive. A number of the Catholic schools in my area need works; St Brigid's and Mansfield have got so many projects that they could be supported for. I know as the member for Eildon I will be doing everything I can to continue to hold the government to account.

We know that our area was very much disrespected during COVID. Powelton has a timber mill; it was classed as metropolitan Melbourne. Again, people cannot understand that. East Warburton, Reefton, Warburton itself, Healesville – people have moved to the country and think they live in country areas, but to be lumbered with all the restrictions from Melbourne metropolitan was very difficult for so many people. It was pleasing that we had come out to say that if we were in government at a time like this we would be treating those communities terribly differently.

I have so many priorities for the community, and each day more and more opportunities for the government to fix things in my area pop up. Again, it can be roads, it can be in schools – and while I am talking of schools I do want to congratulate a couple of the longstanding staff members who have retired. We have had Annie Robertson, who has been at Flowerdale Primary School as an integration aide for almost 20 years. She has had such a wonderful impact on the students, teachers and school community, and I know Annie will be missed very much. Sal Phillips was at the heart of Yea Primary School for 27 years, starting in 1990 as a librarian. She wore so many hats over the years, including teaching Italian, art, PE and junior school swimming, and directing over 20 school musicals and the grade 6 students show. She has been on the school council for 27 years. She taught generations of students, had passion and energy and was always eager to learn. Sal is well loved, and she will be missed.

I want to go to a few thank-yous now, because I have very many people to thank who supported me. I had so many family and friends and members of the party who helped in so many ways, whether that was financially, where they could, putting up signs – and I had hundreds of signs up, and so many people helped me out in that regard – and of course the time during pre-poll and on the polling booths. For country members it is a little bit different from those in the city, when you have 40 polling booths that you have got to have people on and pre-poll miles and miles apart – I have the lowest pre-poll in my area – but I had some wonderful supporters. Karen is my electorate chair, and Peter down in Nillumbik; John, Marlene and Bruce at Mansfield, who did so much; Mike, who put so many signs up in and around Alexandra and helped organise the polling rosters. And my staff, my amazing staff: former staff Heather and Chris helped out in the electorates of Shepparton and Euroa, but Kerri, who retired from my office and remained absolutely committed as a volunteer to my team, she and her husband put so many signs up and organised polling booths. Michael McKinley has done so much to help and support. And the staff members that I have in my office who go above and beyond – I am just losing Nicole now; she is going back to become a vet nurse and I wish her all the best. Talin, Narelle and Denise – such energy, such passion, such loyalty, and the work that they have done for me is so greatly appreciated. We have a rule in my office that you need to be able to laugh and smile and have fun, and when things get a little bit crazy we have got to stop and laugh and think, 'Okay, maybe we need to go out for lunch'. There are so many wonderful places to have lunch or dinner in my electorate, and we have got some great vineyards, and they are always happy to see us as well. But my staff have been amazing. The volunteers have been amazing. I could not hope for a better team around me.

My family: my daughter Hannah, who did whatever it was that she was required to do – be on a polling booth on her own for most of the day with a couple of people ducking down just to help her out so she could have a quick bathroom stop, and Jeff, who had to do pretty well everything that I told him he needed to do, whether it was trying to re-erect signs when they had fallen down, which in very windy areas happened a lot of times. I particularly want to mention Barry Goding again, who put up so many signs in the Yarra Ranges. One had just blown down and 10 minutes later he was there with his drill putting that sign back up. He does not miss a beat. He works full time but as he was driving home going past these signs he was always with that drill, ready to make sure that everything was in place.

The volunteers, my state electorate conference, everybody in the Liberal Party that have supported me, my friends and my colleagues in this place – it has been remarkable, and I know that I will continue my hard work for the communities in the Eildon district. They are many and far between – places like Woods Point are hours and hours from home, but I will always represent them.

Members applauded.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (18:00): Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. Congratulations on your appointment, mate. You have done a great job these past four years, and it is wonderful to see you there.

Can I start by of course thanking the community of Bayswater so much for the greatest honour and privilege to continue to serve as their Labor member of Parliament for Bayswater and to represent this amazing community that I live in and love in our state Parliament. It was a great dream of mine growing up to be a member of Parliament. I know it is an odd dream to have as a young person. I wanted to be a police officer and a parliamentarian – not a firefighter, sadly, Acting Speaker Edbrooke. I feel very humbled to be returned here the second time around to be part of the Andrews Labor government. I remember at the first election being preselected some four weeks out, everyone thinking I was not a chance, and eventually winning by 296 votes. It is a surreal experience to be doing an address-in-reply to the Governor's speech in circumstances which are a lot less stressful, I have got to be honest with you.

Four years ago I said that I would never take for granted this opportunity and that I would be a strong voice for our community and get things done. I said that I would get out there and listen to the community about what matters most, and I believe I have done exactly that, because for the wonderful community I represent – Boronia, The Basin, Wantirna South, Wantirna, Bayswater and Ferntree Gully – that is exactly what they deserve; they deserve nothing less. It has no doubt been a massive four years, and I am so grateful to the community for working with me and also working together during some challenging times across Victoria.

I had many opportunities in this place to talk about the COVID pandemic and how that impacted our community. It changed the way we do things; in fact it just changed everything. It was almost like we were standing still in many respects for two years. But our community came together like never before. My appreciation and love for Knox grew each and every single day in this job, and my resolve to keep delivering for our community and putting in the hard yards has as well.

It was also four years that saw two federal elections – that was fun. I feel like I gave a bit to pre-poll. I gave a bit to helping fill some booths and getting out there. It was a good opportunity for me in many respects as well, I suppose. We saw a redistribution that put me 0.6 per cent behind, which meant I was coming into an election campaign trying to take a seat off a sitting member for the second time in a row – there will be more about that. And it was a great pleasure also, having been the most marginal Labor seat, to proudly hand that baton on. Now, after having served one term in Parliament, I have moved from being the second youngest in the Legislative Assembly to being the youngest in the Legislative Assembly, which I cannot imagine has happened too many times. However, I am still not the youngest in Parliament, with another member in the Council being in his 20s. Good luck!

It was also four years where I put myself out there on our community's doorsteps, in their shopping centres, on the phone and in our community. I have got to tell you it is the best thing I have done, because it has helped me to be a better local member and to understand the issues. And it has helped me to get things done across our schools, hospitals, roads, rail and more. I wear it as a badge of pride that we held hundreds of mobile offices, knocked on thousands of doors – I certainly knocked on thousands of doors with my volunteers over the course of the journey – made thousands of phone calls and did dozens and dozens of train stations. Those train stations – there were some cold mornings. But I believe it made me a better member. I know it is a radical notion to make a deliberate effort to hear from those you represent, even if you disagree – crazy, I know, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I am also

proud that these years included putting together a youth advisory council, which came up with some amazing ideas and filled me with great hope for the next generation. It was truly a fantastic experience, and I genuinely appreciated them working with me.

Some notable moments from the last Parliament: I will never forget when James Merlino at the 50th anniversary of Boronia Heights Primary School stood outside with the rain pouring down. The event got completely wiped out because it just turned to the proverbial. Before James left, I said, 'Mate, can we grab a selfie?' It was pouring down. No word of a lie, he just goes, 'Absolutely, mate.' We were standing there, it was pelting. His suit was absolutely ruined, but we got a fantastic selfie. So that is a great memory.

Opening Bayswater Primary School with the Premier – it was the first budget item back in my very first budget as a member of Parliament. Not only that, as the first budget item, but it was a school that desperately needed new facilities. They are now delivered. It was opened by the Premier himself.

Doorknocking wonderful people like Peter and Maree in Bayswater – I knocked on their door. They told me they were both strong Labor supporters. I ended up walking in and having a cup of tea, and now we are very good friends. I really appreciate people like Peter and Maree and every single person who invited me into their home whilst doorknocking.

I remember Dan leaning through my parliamentary office window to congratulate me on funding for Wantirna College in last year's budget. He was walking past and he said, 'Good job, mate. Love your work' – or words to that effect anyway. Thousands of calls to people over the age of 60 during COVID – checking in and seeing how they were travelling. Another notable moment towards the back end was pre-poll for two weeks – I will not forget that – one week with my partner, who took a week off work. I tell you what, if she was not enthused by the start of it, she was up and about by the end of it.

I want to talk further about the election and what has just been, but I want to take this opportunity to do the most important thing, which is to thank all the people who made it happen. I am a big believer that whilst often the attention circles around the member of Parliament, I would not be without the amazing support shown to me by so many people in my life, professionally and personally. Natasha Russo – Tash, my other half, my fiancée – is the best person I have ever met. There is nobody else out there like her, and I would not be here without her. She is absolutely incredible. My greatest support: never complained, never whinged, never had a go when I was not there on the weekends, and I am very, very grateful for all of her support and for agreeing to marry me as well.

To my cavoodle Penny, who brings me lots of joy, and who is in the parliamentary office as we speak, Penny on a bad day made everything feel that much better.

To my nana Nedra Pearson, really almost someone that is like a mother to me. I want to thank her for all of her support. To my grandfather George Raymond Pearson, who passed away on 14 January – the most decent man I knew. He took such a great interest in my life, and not just personally. The older I got the more conversations we had, and he took great interest in my, I guess, political career. He was just a thoroughly decent person and will be sorely missed. He was someone who supported me in every endeavour that I led myself to in life.

To my dad David Pearson, to my brothers Josh and Oscar. I also want to thank Maria, Angelo, Damian and others I may have missed in the family for everything you have done to support me and enable me. It is also worth thanking all of my friends for continuing to support me and put up with me. As I promised in my first speech, I will always do my best to continue to support all of you. To Josh and Tom for handing out again for a full day. Cheers again, guys.

It also feels like my staff, my friends in my electorate office, have become like family. It is an open-plan office. We have had construction going for two years now, so we have become a lot closer by virtue of that as well. And you do really rely on them. They have been here through thick and thin. They have been patient, dedicated and have gone above and beyond for our community each and every

single day. One person cannot do it all, and I am always extremely proud to acknowledge their work and their service. There is no handbook when you first start, so having fantastic people around you is critically important.

To Patrick Kelly – I feel like everyone wants a Patrick Kelly, everyone needs a Patrick Kelly, in their electorate office. Everyone knows Patrick Kelly. I feel like if I say this guy's name again I am going to start one of those jars where I put a dollar in, but Pat is an absolute gentleman. He is extremely professional. He would have to be one of the most qualified electorate officers in the entire state of Victoria working for a state parliamentarian. He has been my right-hand person. He is an incredible human, someone who I am very glad to call a close friend, and I thank him very much for everything he has done.

To Liam Pierides, who has been with me now for nearly a couple of years. He used to work for the member for Box Hill. He has just been an absolute go-getter: enthusiastic, passionate, loves the community, is very proud to help me in supporting the constituents of Bayswater, and I am also very glad to call him a friend and thank him for all of his support of me over this past couple of years and during the campaign.

To Will Broadbent, living it up overseas at the moment, you probably earned a seven- or eight-week break. He is the graphics video guru. He is an impressive young man who has been with me for four years and has grown immeasurably. I think he has grown professionally but more importantly personally as well. I am very grateful to have him in my office and also glad to call Will a friend.

To my former staff Eve Cain-McAlicie and Julie Buxton, both very decent people who were a part of the team over the course of the journey. I am very proud to have been able to have the opportunity to work with them. It has been a massive four years. Of course they were there every single step of the way, and I just simply want to say thank you, thank you, thank you.

Talking about the campaign, I believe we now have a world record in an ALP campaign in Knox. We outdid the Libs on physical material. That would be the first time we have done that. I could not go more than 500 metres without seeing myself and Tash and Penny on some real estate board somewhere. I feel like Penny and Tash are probably more revered in the community than me in some aspects, maybe; people probably got sick of me. But it was an amazing campaign and really that is my way of simply saying it was the best campaign I have ever worked on – genuinely. I will never work another campaign that beats it. It was organised within an inch of its life, almost to the point where volunteers were saying 'All right, enough. I get it. I know where I have got to be.' I am extremely grateful to people like Warren Wingrove, Robert Bonte, Russell Cook, Pat Bunney, Peter Anderson, Darena Tucker, Sheryl Weeks and so many others who I might have missed. I wanted to particularly note those who spent a lot of time on the campaign – thank you so much.

Often the unsung heroes – ministerial officers, electorate officers and staffers – do incredible work, and I wanted to thank them. In particular Declan McGonigle and Matt McDonald are two incredible people, and I thank them for all their support and help over the last four years and particularly during the campaign.

I also want to thank the Premier Daniel Andrews for his work as Premier, for backing in the east and for backing in me and working with me to get things done. And thank you to all colleagues. I do really enjoy working with all of you. It is amazing, and I must say in listening to your inaugural speeches that there have been some beautiful stories. It is wonderful to hear all the places that people come from to be in this place to represent their community. Importantly, I want to thank the community from the bottom of my heart for believing in me and believing in what Labor governments can and will deliver to make our community a better place.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge Nick Wakeling, the former member for Ferntree Gully, who served his community for 16 years. Nick is absolutely a decent bloke. We saw a lot of each other, particularly when there was a redistribution that essentially left me with about 53 per cent and him

with about 45 per cent of his old Ferntree Gully electorate. We have seen a lot of each other over the past couple of years, and I want to thank him for the friendly campaign and his service to the community.

I also want to thank all the other candidates who put themselves forward. It is no easy task to put yourself out there and on the ballot, so thank you and well done. It was not always sunshine, lollipops and rainbows though, as elections go. Sadly, there was a lot of nastiness from some extremes I had never seen before, and I will not name or provide any notoriety to those individuals or groups. I imagine they would probably have no idea they were being referred to anyway, given their approach to any constructive feedback provided on behaviour. What I will say is that we have to do better. I am very proud of democracy and the democracy we have and the systems we have in place in Victoria. A lot of the stuff we saw in 2022 I hope was for the very last time for so many reasons. I want to thank my community and all Victorians for bearing with it and acquitting your duties to cast your votes.

I am a big believer in seeing the job through, so I cannot tell you how stoked I am at getting the opportunity to keep doing what I am doing, because I believe what I am doing is the best job in town. So thank you for placing your trust in me to be your voice and representation in Parliament. No matter how you voted, I again give you the commitment that I will be a member that listens to everyone and works for everyone. Even if we do disagree, that is okay. I will always listen. I will always be respectful. I said the same thing four years ago, and that absolutely still stands.

I am very proud that over the last four years we have delivered a few things. We are going to fix McMahons Road intersection – that is underway. There is \$112 million to expand the Angliss and over \$4 million to revitalise Boronia CBD. We are building the North East Link. We are constructing the Suburban Rail Loop. We are upgrading Wantirna College. We are delivering free kinder. We are delivering the green heart of Knox project. We are delivering new and upgraded facilities at Templeton Primary. We are removing the Bedford Road level crossing. We delivered a new public aged care facility in Wantirna. We have delivered more paramedics. We delivered brand new facilities for the Knox SES unit. We have got some work underway with Boronia station of course – \$60 million; an election commitment. There is \$5 million to build the Knox regional netball facility. We are rebuilding Bayswater Secondary College. We have rebuilt Bayswater Primary School and delivered a major upgrade to Boronia West Primary School.

We are delivering airport rail. There are major upgrades being delivered to The Basin Primary School, and there is \$8 million underway at Fairhills High. The new St Bernadette's Primary School building is underway. A new double-storey pavilion at JW Manson Reserve is underway. The new home of Australian basketball at Knox is nearly finished. A major upgrade to Eastern Ranges School has been planned and is underway. Fixing up one of the problem intersections at Alchester Village, Boronia, is underway. Eight million dollars of works is underway at Heathmont College or delivered. There is \$5.3 billion to deliver 12,000 new social housing dwellings. We have delivered new all-abilities facilities at Bayswater West. We delivered new buildings at Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School in Bayswater – they are nearly finished. There are five new cricket nets across Knox and close to \$500,000 for Regency Park Primary School. We are putting over 700,000 solar panels on roofs. There is \$500,000 for the Sri Vakrahunda Vinayagar Temple. There are mental health practitioners in every secondary school. There is \$5 billion to rebuild our mental health system, and there are new ovals for Boronia Heights Primary School. We have secured funding for new facilities for The Basin CFA. There is \$100,000 for the 1st Bayswater Scout Group, sick pay guarantees, free TAFE and the \$250 power saving bonus.

And election commitments: we are of course going to provide \$6 million for a rebuild of Boronia station, \$11.07 million for Bayswater South Primary School, \$900,000 for Kent Park Primary School, \$2.1 million for St Joseph's Primary School, \$2 million to upgrade Wally Tew Reserve pavilion and \$1.2 million for a new pavilion at Tormore Reserve. We are going to put \$490,000 towards a new dog park and upgraded playground in Wantirna and up to \$1.05 billion for a rebuild of Maroondah Hospital.

I tell you what, it is all happening. It is great to be back, and I am so proud to represent the community of Bayswater. I am looking forward to continuing to get the job done and delivering for Knox.

Members applauded.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (18:15): The people of Polwarth now know why there has been no money or commitments made to south-west Victoria on our roads, because it has been buying votes out at Bayswater. That is a bit of information, a bit of a hot tip there for people.

I am very pleased to be back here in the 60th Parliament representing the wonderful seat of Polwarth. My constituents are well aware now that the electorate of Polwarth underwent a very, very large change at the last election. We saw traditional areas of Terang, Glenormiston, Noorat, Mortlake, Bannockburn all carved out, and we have seen the beautiful growing coastal area of Torquay added to the electorate. I first of all want to just pay my thanks to the people of those areas that I now no longer represent. They are all pretty much to the west of Mount Emu Creek, which travels just on the east side of Terang, and of course those to the north of the Hamilton Highway in Bannockburn, Inverleigh, Teesdale and those communities. They have been a part of Polwarth for a very long time, and they represent some of the most stable and strong communities that anyone could wish to represent or to have as part of their electorate.

But change happens, and we have seen the demographic changes in the G21 region where we have seen the Geelong area grow rapidly, particularly over COVID but in the preceding years to COVID. We have the situation where we have now added the element of Torquay, which has really moved the centre of balance around for the seat of Polwarth. It is still a very strong and prosperous agricultural and rural region, but it now has the entirety of the Great Ocean Road surf community as part of the electorate as well, which provides a great challenge for the sitting member, but it also provides great opportunities into the future in managing the way this part of rural and regional and coastal Victoria grows and develops in time.

I was very pleased in representing this expanded coastal area and also my traditional areas with some really great initiatives that we took to the last election and sought support for from the voters of Polwarth. Some of those things included items that have been long overlooked by the current government. It was energising to be down at Apollo Bay, for example, and supporting the VBOSS centre, which is the Victorian Blue Ocean Safety Skills Centre, an initiative wholly designed, created, developed and worked on by the local community down there not only to provide an essential surf training capacity that Victoria does not currently have but also to work in strongly with the local school community and the local business community and to help maximise foreshore resources in Apollo Bay. A centre like this for an investment of about \$7.5 million, which is what the coalition took to the election, would also mean year-round employment opportunities and extra visitors to that community in off-peak times. One of the really crucial elements was working with the local school to provide extra accommodation, which would be a great resource for the school in terms of additional income but would also provide opportunities in peak times for extra worker accommodation and also provide short-term stays for those training and using the VBOSS centre.

A really important project was the Birregurra Recreation Reserve. Now, Birregurra is well known to many people. It has produced the odd recent successful AFL footballer. But Birregurra Recreation Reserve is one of those really, really strong local sporting clubs. It regularly features in the Colac & District Football League Netball Association finals series. It is a strong team, but it has inadequate, antiquated facilities. It has poor change facilities. It is not set up in any way, shape or form to support women's sport. It is not able to really help foster the younger kids and teams because the facilities are just so antiquated and archaic. It is a real disappointment that not only has this community again missed out on an opportunity to get that development, but the current government has refused at all times to really support that community and move it on.

Another commitment that we made and that I was very proud of was to the community developing the Cobden aged care facility. Cobden Health is one of the last remaining bush hospitals that we have in Victoria. It is run by a volunteer board. It provides essential healthcare to a very busy and prosperous local community, and of course its pride and joy in that facility is its aged care facility, where elderly people from that community can stay connected to their local community. They are not forced to be some hour or more away from family and friends. Those familiar with the aged care system understand the need for accreditation and keeping the facility up to standard for rooms, and this was an important head start for that agency – to make sure that good quality aged care service remains in the community.

A project I was very keen to progress and which we brought to the table, working with local community, environment and agricultural groups, we call the Victorian lakes pipeline project, and that was about bringing the best of what we can offer in the environment and returning it back to the community for value-adding. Currently the Geelong wastewater plant releases endless amounts of water back out to sea after cleaning it up, and the local community can really see value in recycling that water and piping it back through. The current government has shown a lacklustre interest in this. They occasionally throw some research and business case money towards Barwon Water to advance that cause, but in not doing it they are denying the Polwarth electorate an opportunity to create new value-added agricultural industries in things such as avocados, higher value crops, intense horticulture – lettuces and other things that could be grown in the region.

But, more importantly, with the wet seasons that we have had in the last two years, we have had many of our local lakes brought back to life. Magnificent Lake Colac and Lake Modewarre are among the largest naturally occurring lakes that we have here in the state of Victoria. With a little bit of augmentation and sustainable water supply, these lakes could have permanent recreational, aquaculture and other features not only for the people of Polwarth to enjoy but for those right around the state. That is a project that really warrants further investigation, and my community is well aware of the fact that this government has been quick to throw hundreds of millions of dollars – into the billions – into level crossing removals and other big projects in Melbourne but has been very short on infrastructure projects for rural and regional Victoria. The Victorian lakes pipeline project was one such project that for a relatively modest spend, way less than the cost of a level crossing removal, we could have seen the re-use of an important resource – in water – circulated back not only into the environment but into allowing local communities to grow and develop on that.

Certainly, had we been elected, we would have been moving along much quicker at the Torquay community hospital. This government first announced some three elections ago now about building a hospital. They have only recently committed to some land in the community to progress that idea, but it still sits as a thistle-laden, weed-ravaged paddock, and of course like so much of the rest of the Victorian public health system it is not really delivering the service that the community expects. But that is an opportunity that sits there in this term of government, and we would hope to see, through strong advocacy, the government actually live up to its now three-elections-ago commitment to provide that level of health to the area.

We were also pleased to support the local Torquay Surf Life Saving Club with added financial support to do a much-needed redevelopment of their surf lifesaving club down on the foreshore at Torquay. It is an important community hub. It has a large amount of local members – people that live, play and surf in the Torquay area – and so being able to provide support for a basic infrastructure like that is an important part of what we need to do in representing our communities.

One of the key projects that the coalition took to the last election was an almost doubling of country road maintenance. I have raised in this house many times the need to reset the way we manage our roads and highways and byways, particularly in rural and regional Victoria. They are the conduit that delivers the value-add that we bring to the state of Victoria, whether it is agricultural product, tourism or just the need for people to get around safely, adequately and in a timely way. Increasingly, right throughout the electorate of Polwarth we are seeing speed limits lowered. The Surf Coast shire, for example, has just put out a massive new program to bring 100-kilometre-an-hour roads, which have

been that way now for decades, down to 80 kilometres. My colleague here, the member for South-West Coast, will attest to the fact that when we have roads so riddled with potholes and edges so destroyed, rather than getting the work crews onto it, fixing it up and making it an adequate and safe roadway, we instead lower the speed limits to 40 kilometres an hour. That is simply a deliberate choice of government. The government has the option to prioritise what it deems as important and necessary infrastructure for this state, and time and time again country Victorians are feeling very left out of the mix with that as we go from one winter to another with roads not improving. The greatest example of that, of course, is the Princes Highway west from Geelong, which still to this day is not officially opened. It was first commenced back in 2007. It is still yet to be officially signed off. It is not officially open, and yet the road surfaces, particularly the left-hand lanes both to and from Geelong, are almost unusable, with people from right around the region talking about the fact that they now have to just drive solely in the right-hand lane.

Another issue that is uppermost not only in our coastal communities but in our hinterland and western Victorian plains towns is just the availability of accommodation. It is a huge task and an enormous responsibility of a responsible and proactive government. And we have seen many ideas we took to the election about supporting local councils for more rapid land release and working actively with local communities about identifying land and resources to help get the accommodation that the communities need, whether it is for essential workers or for people that have lived and contributed to communities all their lives but are now finding themselves no longer able to afford to live in certain towns. This is a huge priority and a huge need for everyone that is living outside of metro Melbourne. We cannot continue to allow a situation in a country like Australia, so rich in land and resources, where we are so unable to house affordably and accessibly the people that want to live in those communities. So that is a real challenge that I will continue to advocate for for the people of Polwarth. Whether they are in Torquay, Apollo Bay, Lorne, Camperdown or Colac, wherever they live throughout Polwarth it is vital that we get a better system in place, one that is more sustainable and one that actually helps build our communities and makes them stronger.

With the few minutes I have left, the other great tragedy that we have seen unfold in government policy over the last eight years has in fact been the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. It has been a great disappointment. And as we celebrated the Apollo Bay Seafood Festival in the last week, again it was driven home by the community – things such as skate parks that are no longer being supported by the authority and the fact that a 70-year-old fisherman's co-op that is ideally located, of all places, in a harbour in front of the fishing boats in a coastal village is no longer deemed as an appropriate use of land and space by the new agency and authority that this government has put in place.

The community is now really calling for government to not only take into account environmental elements that are so crucial and cultural elements that are vital to be preserved and looked after but to actually take into account the modern cultural uses of so many of these spaces. What the community means by that is that public foreshores and public spaces in our coastal towns are the only open public spaces that those communities have. They are not going to sit back and allow government to take the use of those open spaces off them, because quite frankly communities like Apollo Bay, communities like Torquay and communities like Lorne since European settlement have used these spaces as a central element and identity of these towns. This current government is ripping that use of public space and those identities from those towns. It is something that the people of Polwarth will want me to stand up for and represent them for in this Parliament – to protect the current modern cultural uses of spaces, not just the traditional, the environmental and the long traditions of the Aboriginal people that were there before them. So with that, I thank you for your time.

Members applauded.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (18:30): I would like to start my contribution this evening by saying a huge thankyou to the people of Laverton, to the folks of Laverton in Melbourne's west. Thank you for believing in me, thank you for believing in an Andrews Labor government and thank you for voting for what I can only describe as the greatest party in this country, the Labor Party. I would also

like to congratulate all of my colleagues who are once again here in this place and have been re-elected by their communities. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all the new members that have been elected. It has been lovely listening to the inaugural contributions, on both sides of the house, and welcome to you all.

As I give my address-in-reply, I have to say it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be back here in this place as the first ever member for the new Laverton district. Whilst there is a great part of me that feels very sad to lose the communities of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing that I served for the last four years, I have absolute faith that the new member for Tarneit will continue to serve them with such dedication, and I wish him all the best.

The Laverton electorate that I now represent is indeed a very unique electorate in Melbourne's western suburbs. As many people have pointed out, it can appear as a bit of a hodgepodge of communities, ranging from outer-suburban growth areas like the mighty Truganina and Williams Landing to well-established inner-suburban communities in Sunshine, Sunshine West, Albion, Ardeer and Braybrook. Adjoining these suburbs are major industrial areas like Laverton North, Brooklyn and Tottenham, and sitting there in between is the beautiful suburb of Laverton, which my seat is named after. It is a small suburb, a small piece of such a wide-spanning electorate, nestled in between very contrasting communities with different sets of challenges. But what unites us all, I think, is a very powerful underlying sense of community throughout the western suburbs. Folks across Laverton are proud of and passionate about the suburbs they live in, and it is a great privilege to be able to represent them.

I want to acknowledge my fellow members in this place who previously represented these communities, the member for Footscray, the member for St Albans and the previous member for Altona, the Honourable Jill Hennessy. I have incredibly large shoes to fill and I have no doubt that there will be challenges in navigating these contrasting communities, but as I have always said and I will continue to say no matter how long I am in this place, with challenges come immense opportunities.

One of my federal colleagues, the member for Lalor Joanne Ryan, is fond of describing the Lalor electorate as a microcosm of the broader Australian electorate, where government decisions and impacts can be observed right across the community she represents – from some of the most vulnerable in our society to some of the most well off. Now, I know she will forgive me for appropriating that saying, because in my view the Laverton electorate could very much be described as a microcosm of the Andrews Labor government's amazing achievements here in Victoria. The government's Big Build is happening here in our community. Projects like Melbourne Airport rail and the Metro Tunnel will be absolutely transformative for my Sunshine community and will of course deliver wider benefits, so many benefits, for Melbourne's west. Albion station – we are going to rebuild her. We are not just going to upgrade it; we are going to rebuild her, rebuilt completely. And I say this because there have been a lot of people who were very unsure that we would be doing it – rebuilding from the ground up. Sunshine station will begin stage 1 of implementing the master plan – \$143 million for stage 1 alone. That is hardly a watered-down approach, like some in the media did try to suggest during the election period. But most importantly, all of these projects are going to be life-changing for folks and families in the Sunshine area. I want to make it clear to those people that voted for me and those people that did not that I intend to be as hands-on as I can to ensure that this project takes shape, that it benefits our community, that we get what we need and most importantly what we deserve, and that we deliver the best outcome that can possibly be achieved for the Sunshine community, because the benefits of these projects cannot be understated.

Sunshine station is going to be a major transport super-hub once finished. I heard a lot of talk during the election about this not being delivered, but I think that some folks do not quite understand the benefits of having train access to the city every 5 minutes for this part of Melbourne's west – every 5 minutes. Eleven minutes between Sunshine and the airport, access to the Metro Tunnel and most of the south-east and access to pretty much every regional service in western Victoria – these benefits cannot be understated. Tarneit West and Truganina are going to get brand new train stations, and it is something I fought very hard for. Acting Speaker Edbrooke, you know the amount of times that I have

stood in this place and talked about the growth in Melbourne's outer west and the need to build more stations. Well, we are not building just one; we are going to build two. These brand new stations will properly unclog the demand for public transport on the regional rail link, a link which will soon be decongested, with works to deliver the fast rail to Geelong set to begin very, very soon. To complement these works, we get to say goodbye to every level crossing on the Werribee line. The Werribee line will be level crossing free, and that is going to allow for more services to run more often. It was only as recent as this morning that I left the car behind and I caught the train – the Werribee line – to Parliament. It was wonderful to see so many people from my community on that train, and I would like to give a big shout-out to everyone who did come up and say hello or give me a wave and a nod. We are getting on delivering for you people.

We are getting on with building the Education State, with the Truganina education precinct set to be built this year and opened next year. Over 20 new schools have been built by our government in the past five years in just Wyndham alone. Let me say that again, because there are people here that need to hear it, including people in the community that I am going to share this on Facebook with. I will highlight this again and again: over 20 new schools have been built by our government in the past five years in just Wyndham alone. And I have to say, seeing as this is my second term in Parliament, I am pretty sick and tired of seeing article after article bemoaning that Wyndham does not have enough schools without acknowledging this incredible work that has been done in our neck of the woods in this state. And believe me, in this term of Parliament, the 60th Parliament here in Victoria, you are going to hear me start calling this out. We are getting on and building schools in the places that matter.

In addition to this, our free kinder program, which will make a profound difference in the lives of Victorian children from now to well into the future, is being rolled out right now. We know that investing in early childhood education delivers lifelong benefits for our kids. It is why we are rolling out three-year-old kinder, giving kids an extra year to develop those crucial skills needed to flourish later on. Our new reforms add an extra year of pre-prep kinder, setting them up for school. I am pretty pleased to say that there are going to be new kinders built in the Sunshine area to accommodate the free kinder rollout, and I look forward to seeing them built as soon as possible. They are at Sunshine East, I think it is, and around Sunshine Primary School.

When it comes to the environment – and I want to pause to speak a little bit on the environment here and what is happening in the western suburbs – we are going on and delivering for the west. We are improving things. It will not surprise anyone here that I like to spend a bit of time in nature with my family. I have got my son and my husband here in the chamber this afternoon – it was a lovely surprise to have you here – I know my son loves getting out into nature. The difference in our tree canopy – and he notices it when we drive back into Melbourne and Melbourne's west in particular – is glaringly noticeable and obvious. We know this has a flow-on effect. That is why I fought so hard in the last Parliament to get more trees planted. Now half a million trees are being planted across Melbourne's western suburbs. It is a small investment – \$5 million – but it will make a huge impact on livability in the suburbs.

We are also tackling air pollution in the inner west, and that is with two new air quality precincts and \$20 million to seal up some of our worst dusty roads and get diesel-chugging trucks off those roads at the same time. Now, while we are talking about reducing pollution, I cannot help but feel so excited about our government's cornerstone policy of bringing back the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. Every day that I was on pre-poll and during the many, many, many months before that I spent at train stations and street stalls people time and time again came up to talk to me about what an incredible cornerstone policy it was, bringing back the SEC.

I speak in this place often about my former life working in the energy sector. In fact I worked for a government-owned corporation in Queensland. It was called Energex, but I think it is Energy Queensland now. I have worked with government-owned corporations and also in the private networks, and I have seen firsthand how privatisation of our energy grid has failed to deliver benefits to its customers, which is why I know a new state-run competitor driving investments in renewable

energy is going to drive down prices and provide a public alternative for Victorian households. For communities like mine in Melbourne's west, this is going to go a really long way towards addressing the cost-of-living pressures that I know many, many families are facing. When I think of the things that I have just listed, they remind me of why I am here in this place.

I acknowledge of course that we have returned here after what can only be described as a very bizarre and completely unpredictable election. Whilst I had no doubt that our Andrews Labor government would be re-elected – we had worked really hard to do that – who could possibly have predicted that we would end up with more seats than we had four years ago. Now, many thought that they would capitalise on the pain that communities like mine in Melbourne's west had endured and suffered during the pandemic to continue playing politics with the pandemic and to stoke the fires of conspiracy theory and extremism – it can only be described as extremism – in the hopes that it would yield electoral success. I think it is also fair to say that for those of us who rejected that extremism and who did not cater to that type of crowd the election was nothing short of vindication, because we chose to believe that most Victorians will back in a government that does the hard work and makes the big calls, no matter how difficult that may be – a government that time and time again has shown a willingness to make good on its commitments to deliver positive outcomes for Victorians. That is what we have done over the past eight years and will continue to do. There was a lot of good to come out of this election, and there are a lot of great things that my community are going to benefit from.

We have also seen more women elected to this place than ever before, comprising nearly half the Parliament. More than 50 per cent of our caucus are now women. It is a historic achievement and something we should all feel very proud of.

But there is something else that I wanted to highlight that bears mentioning in this place. Throughout the last year we saw a concerted effort by those opposite and many others in the community to effectively lay siege to Melbourne's west. We were told that certain candidates would sweep up the west and give Labor the shock of a lifetime. Well, I feel very pleased and very proud to stand here along with all of my western suburb colleagues – all of them – and report that this shock was perhaps something a little bit more of a sizzle. There are lessons to be learned from this election – there always are. The wounds of the pandemic are absolutely there, and it will take time to mend them, but I am confident that I will continue to deliver as part of an Andrews Labor government for Melbourne's mighty west.

Now, there are a lot of thank-yous I need to fit into less than 60 seconds, but I better start with my husband and my son – and my daughter, who is not here this evening. Elections are never about one person, and there are a lot of people that are affected along the way. Families make a great deal of sacrifices as we continue to get out there every single day and campaign for very long periods of time, so I would like to say to my husband Scott: thank you for backing me in and allowing me to go and represent so many people in Melbourne's west. Thank you to Leo for allowing mummy to go and campaign and for being with me on election day, shouting to people, 'Vote for my mum!'

I would also like to give a big shout-out to everyone that was involved in my campaign. The work that you did was absolutely tremendous in backing me in. I would also like to give a very special shout-out to the staff in my office over the past four years that have helped represent Melbourne's west.

Members applauded.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (18:45): It is my pleasure to rise as the re-elected member for Niddrie to address the Parliament and lay out my gratitude to the local community, to the volunteers, to my staff – to everyone that has been part of this journey. We know it was an emphatic victory for the Andrews Labor government, and to be a member of that government – to be serving alongside all of my parliamentary colleagues and my cabinet colleagues, to get on and do the things that matter and be part of a government that really has reshaped the state in

such a positive way, from social policy to economic policy to infrastructure, like no other administration – is something to behold, something to always remember and something I think one day to hopefully tell kids and grandkids about.

But I want to begin just with the initiatives in my own electorate of Niddrie that are real game changers for the community, and first and foremost it does begin with building the train station at Keilor East to service the community of about 150,000 residents in East Keilor, Airport West and Keilor Park. Nearby Penleigh and Essendon Grammar's 2000 students will use this train. For 95 years we have discussed having a train at this point. Niddrie does not have a train station, and I am the Minister for Public Transport. As the public transport minister and as the local member, to have the opportunity and to be part of a government that is going to fix that blackspot once and for all is really something that I am very proud of. I am really excited though to bring the community on the journey. Much of the hard work has been done in committing to the station, but now we get to bring the community with us. I am looking forward to, next week, being at the Milleara Integrated Learning and Development Centre for Children, where we have actually had the children involved in naming the mini tunnel-boring machine that will be used as part of the airport rail link. Following that there will also be a welcome to country and smoking ceremony to commence some of the early works that will occur at the station.

This is really important, groundbreaking reform at the local level. The very first member for Niddrie, Jack Simpson, in the early 1970s stood in this place and said he wanted to really fix up public transport in the seat of Niddrie, and that is some 50 years ago. He said this, and I will just quote here. On 27 April 1976 as the very first member for Niddrie in his inaugural speech to the Parliament he said:

I have said that there are no trains in the electorate of Niddrie. That is not 100 per cent correct. A train route runs right through the centre of the Niddrie electorate But they do not take local passenger trains. To accommodate local passenger trains and to demonstrate what could be done with the grid system, all that is needed is one more line to be added to the broad gauge line.

Fifty years on from that speech, nearly 100 years from the City of Keilor's first advocacy, an additional line is being built through the Melbourne Airport rail link. This will be a train station at the halfway point between Melbourne Airport and Sunshine, located at Terror Street, Keilor Park, on the borders of Airport West, Keilor Park and Keilor East but also within walking distance of four bus routes, four schools and the large catchment of employees that work at Melbourne Airport. So it is going to be a real game changer for mobility in this community and local amenity.

I should add to that too. We do have a tram running through the Niddrie electorate, and I am very proud as the minister that we are going to deliver the first tram order, one of the biggest tram orders in our state's history, for next-generation trams to help remove the high-floor trams, which are not disability compliant. To be able to roll them out across the state, including for Melbourne's north-west in the route 59, will again also be a real game changer for the community and something that I know is very popular right throughout the local community of Niddrie and surrounds.

I also just want to touch on a couple of other commitments that are really important in the Niddrie electorate. I want to put on record that we have committed some \$700,000 to rebuilding the Keilor Sports Club. I was at the Keilor Sports Club on the weekend for the running of the Keilor Gift. It has been running since the 1930s in Keilor. It is a major running event that attracts competitors from all over the state and sometimes interstate. It was a beautiful, warm, balmy Saturday evening. You had the woodchopping, you had the runners and you had all sorts of fun happening around Keilor Village, which is a beautiful local area. But, like a lot of sports clubs, it has grown out of its buildings; it is not fit for purpose. This \$700,000, in partnership with the City of Brimbank, will be a really important investment for that community.

Also, right across this state, we are building the Education State. To have a commitment for St Peter's Primary School in the Niddrie electorate is equally very important. I know that one of the things I have been able to do as a local member is rebuild pretty much all of our local schools. We have always got

more work to do, and it is amazing how stage 2s often come around quicker than you think. But rebuilding all our schools, giving kids the best start, is so important.

I am very proud that the Niddrie Autistic School is nearly finished. I have been talking a bit about privatisation, but it is hard to believe that at the Niddrie Autistic School Jeff Kennett sold off the oval of the school back in the 1990s. It is hard to believe, but the Niddrie Autistic School was once the Dousta Galla Primary School, the oval was sold off for development and just the school remained. Through this government we have been able to rebuild it and turn it from a small part of the Western Autistic School into the Niddrie Autistic School under some fantastic leadership, which has been a real game changer. I have had the Premier at the school previously and I have had the Deputy Premier, and it is going to do wonders for the local community of Niddrie.

I have obviously been through a by-election and several elections now, and this was one of the most robust elections I have been involved in. I want to pay credit not only to myself but by and large to all the candidates. We had eight candidates in Niddrie, and my Liberal opponent Alan Youhana, I have got to say, was a gentleman at the polling booth. I got to meet his partner. He was a very decent person who had for the first time put himself up for public office. That is not easy, and I congratulate him for the clean, ethical campaign he ran. I also want to acknowledge Declan McGinness from the Australian Greens, who equally ran a very good campaign. I also got to meet Frank Maugeri from the Freedom Party. We were not preferencing each other; we were certainly preferencing each other very far down the list. But again, despite the policies of the Freedom Party, which I was in many respects totally in opposition to, I got to meet Frank and his partner, his wife. As you do when you are spending two weeks with people, people were often bringing sandwiches and drinks and seeing if you were going okay. It is always a difficult two weeks, but to have those sorts of people with them I felt was good, and I really appreciated it.

I have got to say, though, and I will put it on record: Brad Reich from the Victorian Socialists spent a little bit of time at the polling centre – not a lot – but his volunteers were quite difficult. I have never seen so many people walking into the booths and literally, from different sets of traffic lights, almost being hassled on their way through. That is something I have never seen before. It was the first time I have experienced that, and I hope it does not return.

In the 5 minutes I have left I do want to thank my volunteers and campaign staff. I want to thank first and foremost my ministerial staff – my former chief of staff Michael Livingstone; Yvette Haikal; Narelle Wiggan, my executive assistant; Chris Oliver; Abraam Gregoriou; Annick Pascal; Annick Thompson; Isobel Loschiavo; Kate Shuttleworth; Ashlea Bright; and Mohamed Elrafihi – who all did such wonderful work and support with me. We know a campaign just does not start a month out from an election; there is often so much work that goes on in serving the community, and to that end my electorate office staff – Jackie Foley, Emily Williams, Stefan Loukomitis and Abbie Benci – all did so, so well. I want to thank all the volunteers that just came out and did such a wonderful job supporting me and helping me get through. Ashlea Gilmore, Luis and Violetta Veliz, Cathy Fasciale, Paula Theocharides, Charlie Ryan, Dom Corsino, Charlie Pandolfo, Maria Barra, Noah Candotti, Nigel and Christine Gould, Peter Leydon, Therese Brophy, Ben Thompson, the Honourable Judy Maddigan, James Singh, Ben Wiggan, Geoff Nicholl, Simon Frankland, Bassel Tallal, Pierce Tyson, Josh Rose, Serge Premier and Maryse Premier – I really do thank you.

We are very much in the communications age. We know more and more that, in campaigning, how you present to the community is changing, and to this end for the first time I actually employed a company, the Shannon group, and I do want to thank Michael Daddo, the CEO; the owner, Bill Shannon; and employee James Shannon. The Shannon group is all about values and emotional connection. They sat down with me – at one stage we had a whole film crew in my house in the electorate – and my wife and daughter. It is not something we have ever done before. We spent a whole day with a film crew talking about what matters to you as an individual, as a person, as a father, as a husband. I really thank them, because it went above and beyond just the camera work. It was a lot

of sit-downs with me and my wife where we thoroughly discussed what we are about and what we want to do for the local community. I thank them so very much.

On that note, I do want to thank my family. I just want to thank Mum and Dad – Greg Carroll and Kay Carroll – who in the early 1970s basically decided to call Niddrie home, and I am pleased to continue that tradition and live locally and be part of the community that is so much me, and I hope I am so much one of them. As the minister at the table, the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, knows, my dad is a proud SEC man, and despite some of the things I was hearing today in the Parliament, the SEC every year delivered about \$100 million in dividends to the state, which went on to research and development. I think as an election commitment returning the State Electricity Commission to Victorians, powered by renewables, is one of the most important things. And I noticed New South Wales have just announced the Labor opposition there are following suit as well as the British Labour Party. So this is world-leading reform that is going to go a long way for this state. I am so proud to be part of it. It was one of the highlights of the campaign, to ring up my dad and say, ‘Guess what. We’re bringing the SEC back.’ To be there with the minister, with the Premier, at the campaign launch with members of the Electrical Trades Union was something very special. This is a game changer, this project, very much like the Suburban Rail Loop and like airport rail. They are game changers for different reasons, but this really does put Victoria on the pathway forward. As the Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, I am looking very much forward to rolling up the sleeves over the next four years with the minister responsible for delivering the SEC and getting on with it.

In my last minute I want to thank my wife Fiona and daughter Madeline. Fiona was my rock – always has been. She ensured that people were turning up at pre-poll when they said they were going to do it. She ensured that I was well looked after when I needed to be and provided lots of advice to me. She was a great sounding board. She made the campaign more fun than it probably would have been, which is something I am eternally grateful for. To all in the community that voted for me and that did not vote me, I am here to serve you, and thank you very much.

Members applauded.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:00): (41) My adjournment today is for the Minister for Environment, and the action that I seek is that the minister meet with the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust to discuss providing them adequate funding to perform their fundamental duties to keep the doors open but also to consider a business case for accepted works to develop the racecourse and the open space that is in the middle of the racecourse reserve itself. As I have mentioned a number of times in this Parliament, Glen Eira has the lowest amount of open space of any municipality, and we have got 54 hectares of open space right in the heart of Caulfield waiting to be activated. In 2016 I first advocated for the creation of the trust, and in fact at the time the Minister for Environment, the former member for Bellarine, was sitting at the table and I leaned across and said, ‘I’m going to make this adjournment tonight. Can we work together and get a new reserve?’ That is what happened – we got a new trust, we got a group that was formed and we got a plan to actually activate that open space with running tracks, with an environment park in the heartland of it, sporting facilities, ovals and a whole range of really fantastic things. Unfortunately the dollars have not followed.

At the election the Liberal–Nationals committed \$30 million to activating stage 1 of the reserve. The ability here provides for a whole range of partnerships between community to be able to take that

space to create so many different other community uses for that space going forward. I appreciate money is tight, but can I say the opportunity is still ripe. I would ask the minister to meet with me to see what we can do. The trust is at a key point now of being able to keep their doors open. They need the funding, they need the support. I have spoken to the member for Oakleigh, who is very, very supportive of this, and he and I have worked very closely on this. I think it is a great opportunity in a bipartisan way to get this happening to ensure that we provide the open space, certainly to my residents of Caulfield but also to be able to take what is a great opportunity for the state of Victoria. It is a main precinct. Caulfield Racecourse, as we all know, has fantastic races – the Minister for Racing is here at the table now, and he knows just how important racing is – but we also have the ability to provide sport, environment, open space and a market has started there that the Caulfield rotary have also partaken in. All of those are opportunities waiting to happen, and I ask the minister to work with me to make them happen.

Ripon electorate roads

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (19:03): (42) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister joins me in my electorate of Ripon to inspect the quality of our rural and regional roads and discuss how the Andrews Labor government will help improve them. Our roads maintenance is the number one issue raised by locals across my electorate. It is an issue important to so many rural and regional Victorians because we rely on our roads to connect our communities and get us home to our families. They took an absolute beating last year, with all the rain and floods ripping many of them apart. I want to acknowledge the hard work currently being done by Regional Roads Victoria and local crews to fix many of our most flood-affected roads, including Beaufort-Lexton Road, Mortlake-Ararat Road and the Western and Wimmera highways. We are taking action to rebuild many sections of roads to get us moving again, but there is still more to do. I welcome the chance for the minister to inspect our roads and discuss how we can improve them more long term, including how we maintain and rebuild them beyond the immediate flood recovery.

Verney Road School

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (19:04): (43) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and I ask her to fully fund stage 1 and commit to stage 2 of the development and relocation of the Shepparton Verney Road School to the former Wanganui school site. The \$24.8 million funded for stage 1 is not enough. The school has been told that increasing building costs, as well as the cost of \$400,000 to clear and prepare the site, has left the school short of realising the full stage 1 plans that they were promised.

The school has been told that they will need to reduce the number of classrooms in stage 1, which would mean not all primary school students would be able to move to the new site in late 2024. This is something the school could not manage, and it should not be negotiable. They must have all the primary school students move at the one time. Stage 2 funding is critical to ensure the completion of the relocation of the school and to have all the students on one site, including the secondary school students.

The school has also been told that they would not receive the quantity of hoists they require due to cost escalations. This is a school with students with special needs. It is appalling to think the required equipment is also not being fully funded as promised. The current location is no longer fit for purpose. It was designed to accommodate 75 students. There are now 250 students at the school and this number is continuing to grow. There are also 119 staff.

Unsafe access is another issue. There is no street parking out the front of the school, caused by upgrades, roadworks and a school bus exchange. This is causing anxiety and stress to families, students and staff. Students are having to walk at least 50 metres to traffic lights. This is a difficult task for many students and for their families and carers to manage. This is a wonderful school that wants to provide the very best of education, care and support to its students. The students, their families and staff deserve better. They deserve a future plan, a safe, stable environment and fully functional and

appropriate facilities, not uncertainty with only half the school partially funded and a jigsaw project with missing pieces and total disruption.

Sick pay guarantee

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (19:06): (44) The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Employment and concerns the sick pay guarantee. The action I seek is that the minister provide information on how the Andrews Labor government's sick pay guarantee is helping workers and families in my electorate of Narre Warren South.

It has been almost a year since the sick pay guarantee pilot program began, and I know from speaking to my constituents that this program has made life easier for many casual and contract workers. So many rely upon employment through insecure work, and it is important that their protections and support are not left behind simply because some employers see workers' classifications as a means to increase profit while reducing their responsibilities to employees should they fall ill. Many migrants, young workers, students and those struggling to get by in my electorate rely on casual and contract work to support themselves and their families. While the previous federal government removed workers rights and entitlements, this state Labor government has been increasing support for workers in industries such as aged care, supermarkets and retail, security, warehousing, cleaning and hospitality. This program is necessary to make sure unwell workers concentrate on getting better rather than attending work at reduced capacity or even risking spreading their illness to fellow employees, customers and clients alike. Illness, as we know from recent experience, has the potential to be personally devastating but also financially devastating. I would appreciate if the minister could provide any further information on how the sick pay guarantee is supporting workers in my electorate, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Warrandyte electorate schools

Ryan SMITH (Warrandyte) (19:08): (45) Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to ensure that adequate funding is provided in the 2023–24 budget for Warrandyte electorate schools, particularly Warrandyte High School, Donvale Primary School and Beverley Hills Primary School.

The Warrandyte electorate is very spoiled when it comes to education choices. From Doncaster Gardens to Chirnside Park, the length and breadth of the electorate has outstanding schools with welcoming classrooms and communities, though, through no fault of their own, parents, students and staff are at a disadvantage. I have stood in this place budget after budget seeking adequate and much-needed capital funding for schools in my electorate, but I have been continually ignored by this Labor government. During the 2022 election campaign I was proud to announce that a successful Liberal government would have invested in three very well-deserving schools, which included \$4.5 million to modernise Donvale Primary School, \$4.5 million to upgrade and modernise Beverley Hills Primary School and \$4.4 million to help fund and deliver stage 2 of Warrandyte High School's master plan – over \$13 million for my local schools.

In stark contrast, Labor committed nothing, just as they did in the last state budget. Donvale Primary is a fantastic school, but its buildings date back 40-odd years, still have asbestos – something that this government promised to remove – and are in need of major modernisation. In just one example, the main building continually needs patch jobs on the previous patch jobs to stop water leaking. The constant battle to fix the roof starves the school of much-needed maintenance funding to fix or combat future maintenance issues around the school. I have brought up the funding needs of this school no less than 12 times in this place and wrote to the previous education minister numerous times, all to no avail. It is hard to understand why.

Warrandyte High School, a school which was lucky enough to receive funding in the 2021–22 budget, is still needing major funding to continue its modernisation. My commitment to the school would have allowed for the upgrade of 20 classrooms, refurbishment of the basketball stadium, new theatre lights

and seating, new toilets and the removal of the water treatment plant. For the only state high school in its immediate area, this continued upgrade in line with its master plan is instrumental in allowing the school to grow and prosper.

I recently visited Beverley Hills Primary School, another outstanding school which has seen an influx of an additional 60 students this year, pushing the school's total to 750 students. Credit must be given to the principal and the school's teachers for making Beverley Hills a top choice in Doncaster East. Again, the one thing missing from the school is modern facilities. School buildings date back 64 years and once again are still filled with asbestos needing to be replaced. Teachers and admin staff cannot even run air conditioning throughout the whole school, as this will lead to power failures. In fact a noisy generator has had to be installed to help power the demountable classrooms. This is a school that I have again raised multiple times with the government in this place, citing numerous concerns raised by the school and the need for capital investment.

I have outlined to the house three schools that are in need of major capital funding. I would hope that this minister has a long-term vision to understand that these schools in the Warrandyte electorate need and deserve attention in the upcoming budget, and I implore the minister to meet with these schools and ensure that adequate funding is provided in the 2023–24 budget.

Power saving bonus

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (19:11): (46) It is back – the \$250 power saving bonus is back with a vengeance, and it is coming to every single Victorian household that makes an application. I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources: the action that I seek is for the minister to provide my community with the amount of Knox households eligible for the next round of the bonus and how many applied in the last round.

We promised the Andrews Labor government would bring back this popular cost-of-living measure that is putting money back into the pockets of Victorians, and in March, when applications open for the next round, that is exactly what we will be doing. All you need to do is log on to the Victorian Energy Compare website to find a better power deal, which could also save you up to \$580 in total. The big power companies of course rely on us not bothering to find a better deal, but we know they are absolutely out there. So head to compare.energy.vic.gov.au for the easiest \$250 you will ever pocket. Even if you do not make the switch, you will still get the \$250, no strings attached.

We know tens of thousands of Victorians have found a better deal and 1.7 million have accessed this current round of the power saving bonus. There is one payment available per household, and those who previously received the \$250 bonus under the concession program – the one back again – or the previous round, which is still open, can still apply for this current round. Every single Victorian household will again be eligible. You can also call 1800 000 832 for assistance if you do not use the internet. This along with free TAFE, the sick pay guarantee and free kinder are just some of the many ways the state Labor government are helping to put money back in your pocket.

Cyclist safety

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:13): (47) Today my adjournment is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Before I ask it I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Angus Collins, the young cyclist who was tragically killed two weeks ago by a truck as he was riding his bike in West Melbourne, in my electorate. A friend of Angus's reached out to me in the wake of this tragedy. I would like to read out something they sent me:

Gus was such a beautiful young man and the whole cycling community is mourning him. He was determined, funny, and always kind. It's especially tragic that we have lost Gus unnecessarily – had the recommendations of the coroner following the death of Arzu Karakoc been followed, Gus would still be here with us today. I implore all those in attendance to do everything in their power to avoid yet another avoidable death. We miss Gus dearly, and hope that no family ever again has to feel the pain that the Collins family is feeling right now.

The recommendations made by the coroner in 2021 included changing intersection lights to ensure vehicles are not given a green light to turn left into pedestrians and cyclists who also have a green light. Another recommendation called for an alternate safe cycling path to be provided while construction works occur. These recommendations were not implemented.

I note that the intersection where Angus was killed is still very dangerous. In fact I was just down there last night in peak hour. The only change that has been made is an additional sign, which is honestly pretty useless amongst a sea of existing signs, fencing and construction equipment. Even though there is a red arrow on the traffic lights, it has not even been turned on, so trucks are still sent on a collision course with cyclists, with both having a green light at the same time. Even the traffic supervisors that the West Gate Tunnel authority promised to implement were nowhere to be seen. This morning they were apparently on site but not actually doing anything to help with safety at the intersection. People are also rightly concerned about what happens when this cycle path closes, as it will soon, and cyclists are pushed onto the equally unsafe Dynon Road, as well as having questions and concerns about the long-term plans for this cycle path once the toll road is complete.

With a cyclist killed every nine days in Australia, it is clear this situation is beyond urgent. It really does not seem like rocket science to be able to make some reasonable changes to our roads in this area to keep cyclists safe. I am really not sure why the ministers involved have not responded to me or to the community when we have contacted them and told them that there are some easy fixes here. It just requires a bit of foresight, a bit of courage and the right priority. So today in Angus's memory the action I seek is that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety urgently intervene to fix the lights and design at this intersection to implement the coroner's report and make cycling safe across Victoria.

St Kilda Road bike lanes

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (19:16): (48) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and the action I seek is an update on the new bike lanes along St Kilda Road. St Kilda Road is Victoria's busiest tram corridor and one of Melbourne's most active cycling routes, with over 3500 cyclists per day, but it is also one of the most dangerous for cyclists. Cyclists are more likely to be seriously injured by car-doorings on St Kilda Road than anywhere else in Melbourne. Our government has committed to improving the safety of cyclists by delivering separated kerbside bike lanes that physically separate vehicles and bicycles on St Kilda Road from Linlithgow Avenue to Dorcas Street, and Toorak Road to Union Street to Charnwood Road. I have spoken to many local stakeholders, including the Port Phillip Bicycle User Group, who have told me how important these improvements are for ensuring the safety of the 3500 cyclists that currently use St Kilda Road each day.

Benambra electorate ambulance services

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (19:17): (49) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Ambulance Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to explain what is planned to address the systemic chronic failure of ambulance services to deliver benchmark response times to the Indigo and Towong shires.

Towong is the worst for ambulance response times in the whole state of Victoria. Indigo bounces around a bit, but with the latest data trotted out – on a Friday at the end of a sitting week – it sits at about sixth worst in the state. Let me throw you some numbers: 30 minutes and 9 seconds – that is the average wait time for a life-threatening medical emergency in the Towong shire, the average, the worst in the state; 22.7 – that is the percentage of people in Towong with life-threatening medical emergencies who saw the flashing lights of an ambulance arrive on time in the last three months of 2022. What about these: 172 – that is the number of people with a life-threatening emergency who did not get an ambulance within 15 minutes in Indigo shire. That is a 16 per cent increase in the average wait time for the lights and sirens, an ambulance, in Indigo in the 12 months from late 2021 to late 2022. Now, I am on a roll with all these figures and so forth, so let us keep going with the actuarial work.

Between 2015 and 2022 Indigo shire grew by almost 8 per cent. The average number of ambulance call-outs to code 1 emergencies, however, jumped from 161 to 202.6. That is almost 26 per cent. What can Ambulance Victoria tell us about that? Why has this happened? I have spoken with many paramedics at the front line who say one of the major roadblocks is when the ambulance gets to hospital. They sit outside emergency with their patient until a bed is available; it can take hours. Albury-Wodonga Health is a cross-border health service with two campuses. When the Wodonga ambulance is sitting at the Albury Base Hospital or Wodonga Hospital, the next call-out is to the paramedics at Beechworth, taking that service out of Indigo shire. The next after that is Tallangatta, leaving Towong short. Until there are enough beds in our hospital system it is hard to see this pattern changing.

There are solutions out there. Turning Beechworth into a 24-hour station could at least help Indigo shire. I understand the current roster is two paramedics on day shift and on call between 6 am and 8 am. An additional seven paramedics would do the trick. I also think the time is right to give the north-east its own helicopter emergency medical service, not one out of Bendigo, Traralgon, Warrnambool or Essendon but one based in Albury-Wodonga. The AgustaWestland AW139 twin-engine helicopters are for life-threatening emergencies, trauma and paediatric cases, and it is time we had our own service – just like the one we lost to south-west coast in a shadowy horsetrading deal back in 2009.

Early childhood education

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:20): (50) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with early childhood teachers and early childhood education support staff in my community to discuss the Andrews Labor government's free kinder policy. The Andrews Labor government has a significant track record in delivering for the youngest Victorians in our state. Our increase of four-year-old kinder to 15 hours was a revolutionary policy and really led the nation in our support for those first thousand days of a child's life. But we were not done there, and we understood that three-year-old kinder just like four-year-old kinder was so impactful on the development of young Victorians. So that policy to deliver three-year-old kinder but make it free for families and for our communities has been truly extraordinary.

There is a cost saving of up to \$2500 for families, and we know how impactful that is. Especially in this high interest rate time frame and period when families are struggling to make ends meet, they know that the Andrews Labor government is supporting them with free kinder to support not only education outcomes but the household budget, and of course that is proportionate support for families to re-enter the workforce. We know in terms of gender-responsive budgeting this is a really critical area in supporting women back into the workforce as well.

The pre-prep policy is 30 hours of that wonderful early childhood experience going to prep to really enhance that transition into the primary school years. The member for Carrum and now Minister for Planning and I worked on a joint report for the then Deputy Premier and education minister James Merlino on the transition from early years into primary school and how significant that is. Pre-prep answers some of those challenges around enhancing that transition and that connection and giving our youngest Victorians the best start in prep. We know it is such a big leap in that development and we know the importance of play-based learning that goes all the way through to the age of eight, so pre-prep is a wonderful policy.

I also want to give a big shout-out to the early childhood educators, who have been toiling away for decades supporting our kids in early childhood settings. They do an outstanding job. We need so many more of them. We need over 10,000 more early childhood educators, so if anyone is considering a fulfilling and rewarding career, think about an option in early childhood education. It is one of the most wonderful and rewarding things you can do in giving back to community, so we want more people to choose that into the future. That ambition of early childhood education cannot be realised without surging the workforce capacity. I cannot wait for the minister to come down to the Mordialloc electorate and meet with some of the early childhood educators that are making the free kinder policy and our reforms in early childhood education possible.

Responses

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (19:23): I rise to respond to adjournment debate matters raised by members. The member for Caulfield raised a matter for the Minister for Environment seeking a meeting with the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust to discuss funding to acquit and perform their fundamental duties. I can also just add as Minister for Racing that I met recently with the MRC, the Melbourne Racing Club, and there is a great desire to do a lot of work there with regard to both Glen Eira council and the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust. We have seen in past parliaments a number of legislative changes that the members for Caulfield, Bentleigh and Oakleigh have been heavily involved in, which for many of us does just pass us by, but a lot of heavy work and lifting has been done. I would also be pleased to catch up with the member for Caulfield on some of the discussions I have had to sort of energise that work in relation to kicking some goals for the trust and the local community, but I will pass on those matters.

The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in relation to joining her to inspect the quality of local roads and plans for further rural road improvements in her electorate.

The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Education to fully fund stage 1 and commit to funding for stage 2 of her local school project at Verney Road School.

The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the Minister for Employment regarding the sick pay guarantee, seeking information with regard to how the sick pay guarantee is helping workers and families in his Narre Warren South electorate.

The member for Warrandyte is no longer with us; the honourable member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking action in the 2023–24 budget for capital works funding for a range of Warrandyte district schools, which he listed in his contribution.

The member for Bayswater raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources with regard to the power saving bonus and was keen to know about further action and information in regard to the community of Knox and the eligible power saving bonus families and other related matters.

The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, a very serious matter, with regard to the death of a cyclist recently, a road fatality, in West Melbourne and the urgent action that is required to invest in both the redesign of that intersection and lights to fix the matters there in West Melbourne. I know that we give the sympathies of the house with regard to Mr Collins and his family in what has been a very tragic and difficult time.

The member for Albert Park raised a matter for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure with regard to new bike lanes on St Kilda Road. It is the busiest tram corridor and a very significant cycling corridor along St Kilda Road. It will be familiar to many members, and the member has sought further updates on investment and work there.

The member for Benambra, who is in the house, raised a matter for the Minister for Ambulance Services on plans to deliver benchmark ambulance response times across Indigo and Towong shires. He went into some detail on those matters, which will be reflected in his contribution.

The member for Mordialloc did raise a matter for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep with regard to meeting with the teachers and support staff – never forget the support staff – to discuss the Andrews Labor government’s free kinder policy.

I will action those matters with ministers on behalf of members.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7:27 pm.