



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 18 May 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

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ²	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'Keeffe, 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 ³	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will ¹	Ringwood	Ind	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	Werner, Nicole	Warrandyte	Lib
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wight, Dylan	Tarneit	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Wayne Farnham	Narracan	Lib	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
			Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP – Australian Labor Party, Greens – Australian Greens,

Ind – Independent, Lib – Liberal Party of Australia, Nat – National Party of Australia

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Thursday 18 May 2023

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

*Documents***Documents****Incorporated list as follows:**

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958 – Year Two to Five Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan May 2023
Ombudsman – Complaint handling casebook: Resolving issues informally – Ordered to be published
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council – Advice on Aspects of Public Land Use Information (two documents).

*Motions***SBS headquarters**

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (09:34): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) notes that the Special Broadcasting Service is one of two national funded government broadcasters headquartered in Sydney;
- (2) notes that Victoria is the multicultural capital of the nation; and
- (3) calls on the federal government to reverse their plan to relocate SBS to Western Sydney and instead base it in Melbourne.

Leave refused.

*Members statements***Windarring**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:35): I rise to speak about my recent visit to Windarring in Kyneton. Windarring is a people-centred, community-based organisation committed to eliminating barriers to participation for people with disabilities in our local community. On my tour I was hosted by Kate, a participant and resident of Windarring. Kate gave me a card with her special flower design to welcome me. I spent time in the arts and crafts room for some sewing and papier-mâché. I visited the dancing class for a big session of dancing to Elvis Presley songs in a conga line. There were waves, hugs, smiles and so many Windarring participants proudly showing me their work. Kate delighted in showing me her own home, an onsite residence at Windarring. We talked independence, going on holidays and what it is like to play football for the Kyneton Tigers Football Integration Development Association team. As an NDIS provider the work done by the staff and volunteers to support people with disabilities and their families is nothing short of extraordinary. The Windarring team are utterly dedicated to equity and inclusion. They value people and are committed to ensuring that every single one of their clients has access to the support that they need to thrive. We can all learn from a visit to a place like Windarring. Thank you so much for having me, and I cannot wait to return.

Don Drummond

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:36): A special 90th birthday shout-out to lifelong ALP member and luminary Don Drummond of Woodend. Happy birthday, comrade.

South-West Coast electorate roads

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:36): I am delighted to inform the house that just last week the Minister for Roads and Road Safety visited South-West Coast to experience some of our roads. I am disappointed that I was not invited to spend time with the minister. It was also disappointing to hear the minister's interview on ABC South West Victoria. It seems the minister was blaming the people of South-West Coast for the condition of our roads. The minister said it is our weather, our limestone substructure, our booming industry and our geographical placement between the Port of Portland and Geelong that make it challenging for our roads. No, Minister, it is years of systematic neglect that has resulted in South-West Coast roads becoming a shambolic web of dangerous roads. The minister also said she was able to provide that advocacy so we could continue to leverage on investment and that the government stand ready to do more. Minister, South-West Coast needs actions, not leveraging on investment. We do not need bureaucratic buzzwords. We need roads that are safe, not potholed goat tracks. We need roads that are fit for purpose. Minister, if the government stands ready to do more, what is stopping you from repairing our roads properly once and for all?

Felicitations

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (09:37): I would also like to take the opportunity to do a birthday shout-out, as the minister across the table just did, to my mum, who turned 91 just last month.

Free TAFE

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:38): I would like to celebrate the benefits provided to some of my constituents from the Andrews Labor government's free TAFE initiative. James, aged 27, recently completed a diploma of justice at the Kangan Institute. He said that the availability of free TAFE gave him the opportunity of a lifetime and that undertaking the course was something he would never have considered otherwise. James is now proudly working as a trainee court registrar and loves being part of a workforce that supports the judiciary system and assists court users. Completing his diploma has encouraged him to participate in additional studies through an internal training program, and he looks forward to developing his skills and experience further in the court processes.

Another local resident, Dannii, completed a diploma of nursing under free TAFE. Dannii also wanted to be a doctor, but with five beautiful sons to look after, she put her family first. The free TAFE program gave her the opportunity she was looking for to start a new career. After graduating from Victoria University in 2022 with top marks in all her units, Dannii is now studying for a bachelor of nursing, with her ultimate goal being to work in midwifery. It is pleasing to hear of the direct benefits that local residents James and Dannii have gained. I am grateful to them for sharing their stories, and I wish them all the best in their future careers.

Warracknabeal education precinct

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:39): Next week we have got a budget coming up, and I urge the government to finish off the funding for the Warracknabeal education precinct. The students have recently moved into their new school. It is fabulous and it has been many, many years in the making, but the government have failed to fund the hands-on learning shed. These are students that are at high risk of disengaging from education. The school needs around \$233,000. It is not a lot of money. I urge the government to support this fabulous project, support this school and, most importantly, support the hands-on learning students at Warracknabeal.

Cavendish Football Netball Club

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:40): I would also like to make mention of the great work that is happening at Cavendish Football Netball Club. They have got an incredible team down there. Clinton Thomas and Vanessa Brown have done a fabulous job, along with other committee members, in building up their membership. They have got their first female football team launching this year, and

they have also increased the number of junior football players from just 12 in 2011 to 149 players in four teams. Great work by the Cavendish Football Netball Club, and I urge the government to give them a little drink of money for a new club room in that region.

Let's Talk Foundation

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:40): I would also like to make mention of the Let's Talk Foundation. Recently I met with Mick Fitzgibbon and John Parkinson. They do a fabulous job in that area around educating the community about the stigma of mental illness, increasing help-seeking behaviour and raising the level of community competence in supporting people with mental ill health. They are looking for a million dollars –

The SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired. The member knows that props are not allowed in the chamber.

Power saving bonus

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:41): I am pleased to update the house on the incredible uptake of our cost-of-living \$250 power saving bonus in my electorate of Mill Park. Since the launch of the fourth round of the power saving bonus there have been 1.4 million applications lodged in Victoria, with over 20,000 households in my electorate of Mill Park applying. This is more than \$5 million worth of immediate cost-of-living support straight into the pockets of my constituents. My office alone has assisted 430 households to apply for the bonus, totalling more than \$107,000 of cost-of-living support delivered to local families. For families who applied for the last round of the bonus, which was another \$250, we see that in just 12 months \$500 has been made available to the pockets of Victorian households. I have had many pop-up stalls across my electorate to make sure that everyone gets their chance to apply. Most recently it was great to bring the power saving bonus to shoppers at Westfield Plenty Valley, and I kept hearing from my constituents how important the bonus is to their family budget, providing real relief to rising cost-of-living pressures. That is also what I heard at my next stop at Mill Park Stables Shopping Centre. It was particularly great to chat with Bryan, who not only has applied for the power saving bonus but is one of 222,000 – *(Time expired)*

St Joan of Arc Tennis Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:42): St Joan of Arc tennis club has been a cornerstone club in Brighton since its formation in 1921. The club's women's weekly night competition has a cherished history, and they are working on a plan to reinstate the weekly competition. Increasing female participation in sport is a cause we all support. Congratulations to Olivia Collins, new club president, on her leadership.

Elwood parklets

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:43): Elwood is a village that we need to protect. Although parklets have been a positive addition to Ormond Road, their insertion needs to be balanced against the rights of neighbouring traders. Unfortunately, Port Phillip council wants to reduce parking further and increase parklet space. Many people have now signed a petition led by Derek Mulvihill of Pet Pantry & Co. Council needs to listen to that community feedback.

Flowers by Varu

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:43): Flowers by Varu are a self-described small but mighty Brighton-based ensemble of florists, wedding planners and events stylists who bring dream days to life through floristry. The team recently brought me in to roll up my sleeves and learn the floristry craft – I might not have the skills for a new career, but I did learn how skilled they are. Thank you to the Varu team.

Brighton electorate crime

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:43): Last night a recently widowed Brighton resident was home invaded for the second time in six months. On the first occasion a gang broke in while she was in bed, only weeks after her husband passed away. There has been a 578 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries in Brighton, and it sickens me that the state Labor government keeps ignoring these ongoing crimes that are happening to the most vulnerable people in my community.

Niddrie Autistic School

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (09:44): I rise today to discuss Niddrie Autistic School, one of the key specialist schools in my electorate. Last Wednesday, 10 May, I had the great pleasure of joining the Premier in visiting Niddrie Autistic School. All the way back in 2018 our government announced we would do a \$7.3 million redevelopment of this school, which the school desperately needed. The school was officially finished in 2022; however, we did not get a chance to do a new visit to the school and see it until more recently.

Our Labor government education policy is based around one key idea: no child is left behind. Every child deserves the best education and the best possible facilities to mature their young minds, and now the Niddrie Autistic School has these very facilities. These facilities include a new landscaped sensory play area and 12 specifically designed classrooms as well as staff facilities. Not only does this upgrade mean world-class facilities, it also means the school can take on more students, which we know is so important to ensure every child gets the best education for them. In particular I want to thank principal Paige Davey and former principals Mary Thomas and Liz Richardson. These three women have worked tirelessly for the best possible outcomes for the students, and this is a great legacy to everyone.

I want to give a special mention to Noah, who was the tour guide for me and the Premier. He kept me and the Premier on our toes, wanting to know the diameters of the buses and trams and wanting to know what our diaries had in store for the rest of the day. I cannot wait to see what life has in store for Noah; I am sure it is something in the transport industry.

This has been a personal passion project of mine, and I was glad to see how many happy children and families were there when we visited. At the end of the day, this is all about the children.

National Volunteer Week

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:45): It is Volunteer Week, and I want to place on record my support and thanks to volunteers for the incalculable value of the work they contribute to our communities. Whether it is at a service club cooking sausages at a community market, running drinks for the local footy or netball club, helping out with Meals on Wheels or planting trees at a local creek to improve the local environment, there are so many ways volunteers make a difference in our communities. There are also those who put themselves in harm's way for the benefit of others – our CFA volunteers; SES, who we celebrated yesterday with Wear Orange Wednesday; Marine Search and Rescue; and community ambulance volunteers and many others who do so much to protect the rest of us. In Gippsland South volunteers carry a huge load – well above their weight. In South Gippsland shire 22 per cent of people volunteer, compared to 13 per cent across the state, and the figures are similar in Wellington shire and Latrobe city. So this Volunteer Week I simply say to our volunteers: thank you.

National Road Safety Week

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:46): It is also National Road Safety Week. Tragically, we have had a number of reminders of the need for attention on this issue this week, including fatalities and the awful bus crash in Melbourne's west on Tuesday. It is every parent's nightmare to get the call that their child's bus has been involved in a serious accident. While this was a very serious accident, with some children suffering life-altering injuries, thankfully there were no fatalities. As Shadow

Minister for Roads and Road Safety I extend our thoughts to all those impacted by this terrible accident. More broadly, we need to continue to do better on road safety in this state. So far this year 120 people have lost their lives on Victorian roads, 30 more than at the same time last year. We must do better.

Education Week

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:47): I rise in recognition of Education Week, an annual celebration dedicated to the great work done by teachers, principals, volunteers and brilliant school communities across our state. I am proud to have recently announced that we are continuing the successful tutor learning initiative, where over 4200 tutors have helped more than 90,000 students alone.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary tutors in my own electorate of Sydenham: Fabricio Lima at Catholic Regional College Sydenham; Lesya Saciuk, Natalie Edwards and Thomas Andoiou at Parkwood Green; Victoria Bertram at Sydenham – Hillside Primary School; Jane Pace and Rowena Bernal-Richards at Taylors Lakes Secondary College; Danni Corrado, Helen Bonnes and Rita Kyriakidis, who have had a huge impact at Taylors Lakes Primary School; and also the tutors at Copperfield College. The college recently shared with me some feedback around a student who said their tutor made them feel that they could do anything: ‘He has taught me how to be myself, and he has treated me like a daughter.’ I think that is very special. Thank you to our tutors and experts, who are committed in helping as many students as possible.

Elsie Sykes

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:48): Finally, can I say a very special ‘happy birthday’ to my great-nan Elsie Sykes, who will be celebrating 103 years on this planet this weekend. Thank you, Nan, for your leadership, love and commitment.

John Fenton

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:48): It is with great sadness that I inform the Parliament of the death of John Fenton, former captain of the Coldstream CFA fire brigade, earlier this month. For his long and dedicated service as a volunteer firefighter, I pay tribute to John Fenton, a valued and highly decorated member of the Coldstream fire brigade. He held several roles within the brigade from 1983, including captain, from 2009 to 2015, and deputy group officer for six years with the Melba fire brigade group. My deepest sympathies to his wife Terrie, his family, his friends and indeed his mates at the Coldstream fire brigade. Vale, John Fenton.

Ron Haines

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:49): Congratulations to Ron Haines, awarded the life membership of the Lilydale CFA fire brigade at the recent brigade awards dinner. Ron has been an outstanding and brave volunteer firefighter, having joined the CFA in 1968; has held many brigade roles, including lieutenant, from 1985 to 1991; and is the recipient of the Australian Fire Service Medal for outstanding service. During the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires Ron Haines was OIC on the Lilydale Bedford tanker, and his crew were prominent in saving the lives of many people in East Warburton. Thank you, Ron Haines, for your service, and congratulations on a tremendous achievement.

State Emergency Service Lilydale unit

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (09:50): Finally, in the week of Wear Orange Wednesday, thanks to Lilydale State Emergency Service, our SES in Lilydale, who do so much to help our community through fires and floods – of which we have had a number recently through the Lilydale district – thank you.

Dean Holland

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:50): I rise to pay tribute to jockey Dean Holland, who lost his life in a race fall at Donald racecourse last month. The racing family came together at Flemington last week, some 2500 people, to honour a much-loved and highly respected horseman. I joined mourners who lined the famous straight at Headquarters, which stretched some 500 metres from the winning post. Flemington was the scene of Dean's greatest triumph, winning the Group 1 Newmarket handicap in March aboard In Secret. Jockeys are gifted, they are brave, they stick together. Dean was a very popular figure in the sport, and as a gifted lightweight rider he won over 1000 races.

I acknowledge and thank the Victorian Jockeys Association and its chief executive Matt Hyland for the leadership and compassion they have demonstrated in these tragic circumstances and the team at Racing Victoria. To Dean's extended family and friends and to the race day staff and medical team at Donald and District Racing Club, our thoughts and support are with you all. Deepest condolences on behalf of the state government and our Victorian Parliament to Dean's partner Lucy and their four children Harley, Luca, Franklin and Lily. Vale, Dean Holland.

Drouin Family Hotel and Royal Hotel Drouin

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:51): I rise today to congratulate two outstanding local venues in my community, in Drouin. The Drouin Family Hotel and the Royal Hotel Drouin were recognised in the Australian Hotels Association annual awards, both ranked among the top 10 parras in Victoria. And let us be correct – they are called parras, not parris. The Drouin Family Hotel was also recognised as the best all-abilities hotel. I encourage all the ministers and shadow ministers, when you come down to Narracan to look at the issues we have, to pop into one of these two local pubs and have a parma.

Frankies Community Kitchen, Warragul

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:52): I also recently met with representatives of Frankies in Warragul to hear about their fantastic community kitchen program. Their aim is to reduce food waste, turning quality ingredients that might normally be thrown away into meals for those in need. They gather food donations. Volunteers then use Frankies kitchen to create meals, and they are distributed locally to those who need them most. Local businesses play a vital role in supporting our community, and I thank Frankies Community Kitchen in Warragul for their effort and their outstanding program, which is making a real difference to people who truly need it.

State Emergency Service Warragul unit

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:52): I would also like to shout out to the Warragul SES this week for the fantastic work they do in my local community, and I would encourage the government to support them as well.

Gerard Mansour

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (09:53): I rise today to reflect on the wonderful work of Victoria's commissioner for senior Victorians, Gerard Mansour, who after 10 years in the role ends his term this week. I had the privilege of working with Gerard in my time as the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers at the end of last year. He is a passionate and hardworking advocate for the needs and aspirations and the experiences of our diverse senior community. Before coming into the role he was already highly respected for his work addressing the needs of older people as the CEO of Aged and Community Care Victoria.

Gerard was appointed commissioner for senior Victorians in 2013 and since then has contributed significantly to improving policies and services for older Victorians. He chaired the then ministerial advisory committee for senior Victorians, which provided independent advice to the minister. He understood the importance of seeking out the views of senior Victorians and listening carefully to their

concerns and aspirations and was the driving force behind the Victorian ageing well survey. Working with the ministerial advisory committee, he released *Seniors Count! 2014–2019: Victoria's Seniors Participation Action Plan*, highlighting the need to respect the voices of senior Victorians and promote participation and lifelong learning. Gerard also ensured the voices of senior Victorians were heard during COVID in countless submissions to royal commissions and inquiries and advocated to address ageism, loneliness and elder abuse. Victorians have been fortunate to have someone of Gerard's integrity and character representing our seniors for the past decade. I thank him for his work and wish him well.

Native forest logging

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:54): This Saturday, 20 May, Labor's extreme anti-democratic laws to jail logging protesters will come into effect. But I want to make it known that this government cannot and will not stop the community protesting the needless destruction of Victoria's beautiful, precious native forests. Almost a year ago today the Victorian Labor government introduced some of the most draconian anti-protest laws in Australia's history. Fearing that peaceful protesters might get in the way of the profits of the logging industry, Dan Andrews joined a wave of premiers across the country in making environmental protests illegal in this state. Protesters can now be threatened with a 12-month jail sentence or \$21,000 in fines for simply walking into a logging area and daring to challenge the destruction of threatened species habitat.

Labor, the Liberals and the Nationals all joined together to support these new laws, ignoring the concerns of human rights groups, environmental groups and unions, who are all very troubled by this attack on Victorians' freedom to protest. I want to express my solidarity with and gratitude and admiration for the environmentalists, citizen scientists and community groups who intend to protest this outrageous law this Saturday by peacefully walking into the forests. The Greens stand with you 100 per cent, and I am very proud to be joining you this Saturday to challenge these laws.

John Perryman

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (09:56): I rise to recognise the wonderful life and incredible community contribution of my good friend John Perryman. John slipped away peacefully surrounded by family on 7 May 2023 at the age of 88. Bigger than life, John had this booming voice and never left you in any doubt about what he thought about things, particularly politics. John was a loyal, dedicated and very active member of the Australian Labor Party for over 67 years. He immersed himself in local branches at Clayton, Frankston and Carrum and in all election campaigns. He was one of my fiercest supporters, particularly on the front line of pre-poll. I am forever grateful to him and his wife Rosemary for their incredible support, guidance and friendship over the years. Politics, service to his community, his beloved St Kilda football team and of course his family drove John every day to make a difference, and make a difference he did.

For 24 years John was a councillor with Oakleigh council, from the 1960s to the 1980s. In 1966 John was elected mayor, making him the youngest councillor and youngest mayor ever elected to council. He was mayor twice again, from 1977 to 1979. John got things done. He connected people and worked all levels of government. He believed everyone should have equal access to a great local community with good roads, transport, parks and green spaces, community facilities and public open spaces. Significantly, he worked closely with the Victorian government, Monash University and the health department to help make the dream of a world-class hospital in Clayton and the south-east a reality with the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton. We are all richer for John's incredible contribution, his integrity, his wit and his living his Labor values every day.

National Volunteer Week

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (09:57): I am very pleased to have the opportunity during National Volunteer Week to recognise the great altruism of the Cranbourne community. There are so

many people I have the opportunity to think about and acknowledge during these important times, but I would like in particular to recognise Rabia Safa. Last week I got to spend time with Rabia as she spent time teaching people how to use computers and speak English. Some people were newly arrived in Australia and some people had been here for a long time. I am very grateful to Rabia.

I was also very pleased to have some time with Lindi Ndebele. Lindi runs a sewing group. Many of the people are from Zimbabwe, and the group of women come together with terrific joy and care for each other. I am always impressed by the way that people can share their stories and be so generous.

I was also pleased to be with the South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society for their homework club and spent time with Andrew Gai, as I often do, as we taught so many young children how to sit down and enjoy the pleasure of reading and learning to be together.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Casey Rainbow Community during both Volunteer Week and IDAHOBIT. We are so conscious of the tremendous work and their importance. We see you, we love you, we acknowledge you. It has been a difficult time, and the work that the Casey Rainbow Community does is terrific.

Dandenong South Preschool Centre

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (09:59): Last Friday I had the great pleasure of visiting Dandenong South preschool. This preschool has been a pillar of the Dandenong community for the last 49 years. I was given a tour of the campus by co-educator Jennifer Sadikay and was struck to find that even after almost five decades the campus remains in really great shape. It is a really unique natural environment wonderful for the kids. It was lovely to witness the incredible educators in action and learn about the suite of programs on offer. I was not one foot through the door when young Abdul grabbed me by the hand and took me to the back of the playground to show me a worm that he had found. It was gorgeous, and we had a great discussion about how the worm was probably sleeping and needed a bit of a rest.

A member: You didn't wake it up?

Gabrielle WILLIAMS: We did not wake it up. We gently left where it was and continued on our tour, and Abdul was a great tour guide in conjunction with Jennifer. Like Dandenong itself, Dandenong South preschool is a welcoming community for children and families from all walks of life, and the student body is made up of very bright and passionate young learners from a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with varying abilities and skills as well.

Dandenong South preschool has helped to shape many little lives in our community through a very compassionate and stimulating approach to learning, taking the time to ensure each student has the support they need to reach their fullest potential. The impact of the brilliant and inspiring team of educators working to create an inclusive and enriching environment for young students is unparalleled. I cannot wait to go back.

Broadmeadows electorate schools

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:00): Last week I had the pleasure of attending St Francis de Sales Primary School in Oak Park to turn the first sod, along with the wonderful principal John Rudd and Fr Vo Due Tien, inspiring student leaders Victoria and Danny and gorgeous preppies Ava and Noah. This \$3.24 million project will see a new specialist learning area, four new classrooms and new student amenities. The state Labor government has contributed \$2 million towards this project through the Non-government Schools Capital Fund, which is designed to ensure that every child has access to a great education and that our schools are better equipped to prepare students for the 21st century.

Tomorrow morning I am very excited to be celebrating National Walk Safely to School Day, Education Week and National Volunteer Week at Glenroy West Primary School, three of my favourite things to celebrate. I am so proud of the Labor government's investment in the \$18.1 million upgrade and expansion of Glenroy West Primary School, with three new learning neighbourhoods linked to outdoor classrooms and a new outdoor play and learning area.

A huge shout-out to the volunteers that dedicate their time and talents across the state and that help make our schools wonderful places to be. And of course, in Education Week, our deepest respect and gratitude to Victoria's teachers and staff, who dedicate their lives to the most important and worthy vocation: shaping our future through educating and supporting our young people. Thank you for the difference you make every day to their lives and to our collective future.

Arthur Murdoch

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:02): Arthur Murdoch, born 1929, passed 2023. A gentleman, mentor and leader, he set the scene and the standard, his work ethic and values an inspiration.

Affectionately known as 'Young Artie', he gave to the brim, a passion for volunteerism coursing through his veins, with the most outstanding his 75 years of service to the Phillip Island fire brigade. He joined in 1948, turning out in shorts and thongs, putting out fires with branches and knapsacks. He went on to captain the brigade for 21 years. When he hung up his boots he carried on – mowing, cleaning, offering learnings and guidance to members. He was so highly regarded, the tanker bears his name, as does their firefighter of the year award.

Life membership and the Queen's Fire Service Medal amongst his swathe, he was life governor of the Royal Children's for his commitment every Good Friday at the corner IGA, grandchildren and tins in hand.

He loved his footy club: 1951 Bulldogs premiership team member and 40 years as their first aid trainer; black armbands were worn in his honour. He founded the volunteer ambulance service and devoted decades, was made a life governor in 1977, a life member in 2018. He was local Rotary Club Citizen of the Year and received a Governor-General's award too.

Insightful and teary when making eulogies, his son David and Lieutenant Rhyce Davis also spoke of the formidable duo of Artie and June. A guard of honour was befitting.

My condolences to the Murdoch family, Artie's brigade family, all who loved and cherished him. His spirit, energy, humour, kind-heartedness and legacy live on. Thank you, Artie, for your service.

Women's Friendship Cafe

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:03): In April I visited the Women's Friendship Cafe at Living and Learning in Pakenham for lunch to celebrate the group's sixth birthday. The Women's Friendship Cafe meet weekly and provide a safe, welcoming environment where all members can relax, make friends and share experiences from their diverse backgrounds. Many thanks to Jolene and all the incredible women for having me once again.

Pakenham electorate schools

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:04): Last week I represented the Minister for Education in announcing the new principals for Officer Brunt Road Primary School and Alexander Boulevard Primary School. Both schools are opening on day one of term 1 next year, and their designs are cutting-edge, state-of-the-art and, most of all, clever. These spaces will offer flexibility to support the many ways children learn today. The clever designs create the kinds of environments that will be a great stepping stone for students progressing to secondary school. Congratulations to Sharon Mitchell on her appointment as principal of Brunt Road Primary School; I look forward to visiting you all at the start of 2024. Also, big congratulations to principal Marc de Ley on his appointment as principal at Alexander Boulevard Primary School.

Pakenham electorate level crossing removals

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:04): Next door to Brunt Road Primary School, the Andrews Labor government is removing the Brunt Road level crossing by building a new road bridge over the rail line. Removing this crossing will improve safety, reduce congestion and allow more trains to run more often. This is one of five level crossings being removed in my electorate, helping make the Pakenham line level crossing free by 2025. There is so much happening in Pakenham, and I look forward to seeing all the finished projects.

Western Bulldogs football club

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (10:05): I would like to say how excited I am about the Western Bulldogs coming to Ballarat on Saturday. We have got a game at 2:10 pm at Mars Stadium. It is going to be a cracker. Go Dogs! Woof, woof, woof!

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:05): I move:

That the consideration of notices of motion, government business, 1 and 2 be postponed until later this day.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:05): I move:

That the words 'later this day' be omitted and replaced with the words 'after consideration of general business, notice of motion 16'.

This week the opposition has made it clear that it wants to work with the government in making sure the Parliament is used in the way that all Victorians would want it to be used. We have made that clear. We have now made that clear for four weeks. But there is one line in the sand, and that is the Parliament being misused in a way that, frankly, is political and is simply the government using its time to sledge the opposition. That is what it is doing. So the opposition is seeking to move a motion to amend what the government intends to schedule for the day and instead insert a very important motion for consideration and debate, that being a motion standing in my name:

That this house notes comments:

- (1) made by the Premier in response to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission report *Operation Daintree* citing it as an 'educational' report; and
- (2) from the Ombudsman that the report was 'damning' rather than 'educational'.

This is an important motion. This is a very important motion for the house to consider, because the house can no longer be used in a way that, frankly, wastes Victorians' time. This is the people's place, and the government should have the legislative program to carry the debate of the week. We have not seen that. We have not seen the government with the intellect, energy or will to carry the debate of this place and move forward with the program that it so often stands to speak to in this place. We have now seen effectively this Parliament collapse in on itself in that the government does not have work to do.

On Tuesday the government stood up to speak on the government business program, which is its agenda for the week in this place. It did mention at that time that two motions would be debated this week, and today the Leader of the House has moved a motion which sets out that four motions will be considered by this house this week. So the government itself, when it spoke to its own program two days ago, did not even have the capacity or foresight to work out how to fill its own time for the week, and we learn today in this place that the government is instead moving to motions. Sometimes the opposition is given less than half an hour's notice, and I do not think it is just discourtesy, though discourtesy I am sure it is, but it is also because I do not think the government knows what it is doing in terms of managing the time in this place.

We will have a division on this question shortly. I note that the Premier again was not here this morning, and it will be interesting to see whether the Premier has arrived at work yet. But we cannot continue moving forward and seeing a Parliament's time wasted because the government has not got the foresight, will or intellect to fill the Parliament's time with important work that needs to be done – to debate matters of urgency, matters that are on the minds of every Victorian, like this very motion that I am proposing the house now considers in relation to the motion that I moved relating to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission report *Operation Daintree*, which was cited appallingly by the Premier as 'educational' and forced the Ombudsman to correct him in a public way that I have never seen. I do not think any Victorian has seen an Ombudsman being forced to publicly correct a Premier.

I make a final point in saying we cannot keep having this Parliament collapse in on itself because the government has not got the capacity to work out its schedule. They do not have the capacity to work out on Tuesday what they will be doing for two days, and that is what we are seeing. It is frankly shameful, and I call on the government to work with the opposition to debate the important questions and to use the Parliament's time in the way that every Victorian would expect.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (10:10): I have not heard so much hysterical nonsense in this chamber for some time. The reality is, and I will give the member for Brighton a tip: this is the government chamber. It has always been the government chamber. If you want to set the agenda for this chamber, then there is a very strong piece of advice I would give you: go and win an election.

These motions put forward by the government are in fact very important motions. They are motions that I know a very significant number of people in this chamber want to make contributions to. All the way from that corner of the chamber to that corner a very significant number of people want to make contributions on these very important motions. I will say very clearly to the member for Brighton: if you want to set the agenda of this place, go and win an election. I know you have not had that opportunity for some time, but if you want to set the agenda of this place –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member that 'you' refers to the Chair.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Indeed. I do apologise, Deputy Speaker. If the opposition wishes to set the agenda of this place, then it should go and win an election. These motions are very important. A large number of Labor government members want to make contributions on these important matters. I certainly wish to make contributions on these matters. These matters have been debated extensively in the Victorian community. They were canvassed in a very broad sense late last year when we went to the Victorian community with a very clear plan. If the member for Brighton wants to make a contribution in this place, if he wants to set the agenda, then he should win an election.

I am looking forward to these matters being debated. I am looking forward to these important issues being canvassed in this place, and I very much commend the government business program and these matters to the Legislative Assembly chamber. I think it is absolutely the right of the government of the day to set the agenda for this chamber. We have set that. We have got these very important motions, and I am looking forward to them being debated and to us getting on with the day. I would hope that the opposition would stop wasting the time of this chamber, as they do every single day, by trying to frustrate the government in getting through the business that we would like to get through. Constantly the opposition try to frustrate the work of the government and of this important chamber. I am looking forward to the debate continuing through the course of the day. I can give the member for Brighton a tip: we are going to clearly win this motion, as we always do.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (10:14): I rise in support of the amendment by the member for Brighton that we now move to motion 16, which is a very important motion that goes to some of the greatest concerns that Victorians have. They want to know with certainty what is happening in the state of Victoria, particularly around the levels of corruption that we are hearing about in the Andrews Labor government. The motion by the member for Brighton is:

That this house notes comments:

- (3) made by the Premier in response to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission report *Operation Daintree* citing it as an 'educational' report; and
- (4) from the Ombudsman that the report was 'damning' rather than 'educational'.

I note the comments by the member for South Barwon that this is the government's chamber, and I would like to remind him that actually we have a responsibility to every single Victorian to make sure that we are discussing and debating issues which matter to them. This includes the school students who are here today. They want to know that their voices are being heard. They want to be sure that Victorians are making sure that they are talking about issues including corruption in this government.

When we hear that a very important report about IBAC is looking at issues of corruption within the Andrews Labor government and the only response that we really get is 'I don't recall' or 'It's simply an educational report', it is nothing but a snub to every single Victorian. Now, we have an opportunity in this place to be able to debate this and for government members to be able to put their views on the table. We know that they will not do that through an IBAC inquiry. We have seen multiple reports. In fact I think we are now onto our eighth IBAC investigation with this government. We hear that this government on so many occasions is record breaking in many ways. Well, I think that breaking a record for the most corruption inquiries by IBAC has to be a fairly notorious reputation to have. But there is absolutely no reason why Victorians do not have a right to actually have this debate in this chamber to understand more about Operation Daintree, about what levels of corruption are happening within this government and most importantly that questions are being answered and we do not have the same series of responses that we have heard from the government through so many different inquiries: 'I do not recall.' So I urge the member for South Barwon to get on his feet and rather than question –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a procedural debate. It is not an opportunity for the member for Lowan to anticipate the motion on the paper, so I ask that she come back to debating the procedural motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to come back to the amendment to the motion in front of the house.

Emma KEALY: My comments were directly in relation to the member for South Barwon, who kept on saying that they cannot fill the agenda – and that is exactly the problem. We have got complete mismanagement by the manager of government business in being unable to provide enough bills to complete the entire week, so we are having these other things like motions come out. This is not just the government's chamber; it is the people's chamber. Everyone in Victoria has the opportunity to elect people to represent them, and they have an opportunity also to make sure that they have the issues that matter to them raised. This is not about the government just directing debate in a certain way and just using it as an attack tool on the opposition. If they truly want to represent all Victorians, which is something we hear on a very frequent basis, then they should also make sure that they are willing to be questioned on the issues that matter to every single Victorian, and every single Victorian is now talking about concerns about corruption in this government – money going to mates in return for donations back to the Labor Party to get re-elected. That is simply unacceptable.

Colin Brooks: Deputy Speaker, I think you can anticipate my point of order. The member has strayed way off the motion that has been moved by both the Leader of the House and the amendment that has been put by the member for Brighton. She is onto much broader topics, and she needs to be brought back.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will rule on that point of order. I do ask the member to come back to the procedural motion in front of the house.

Emma KEALY: Thank you very much. I again reiterate my support for the motion by the member for Brighton that we now move on to debating issues surrounding the IBAC Commission's report into

Operation Daintree and particularly the dismissal of this report as being 'educational' by the Premier, as opposed to being 'damning' as it was framed by the Victorian Ombudsman.

We have seen the government business program in complete disarray. We are seeing bills which are only provided to the community for feedback for just six days. We are simply seeing a snubbing not just of the opposition, which I think is how the government think they are framing it; they are snubbing every single Victorian who wants to see these serious issues debated, but most importantly they want answers to all of these corruption allegations.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (10:19): Well, if ever there was an award or a crown to be placed on the head of someone in this chamber who has stood here more than anyone else with confected outrage, I think there would be quite a few contenders on the side of those opposite. I notice we have two of the main contenders sitting in the room right now.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance. I would say that the member is covering for the fact that no senior minister has the wherewithal to stand up and speak on this motion, forcing the backbench to stand up. I would ask you to bring the member back to this tight procedural question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member had just commenced and will be debating the procedural motion in front of us, I am sure.

Sarah CONNOLLY: I do digress. It was me having a go at confected humour, really. It does not happen very often in this place.

Look, it is just incredible to be standing here listening to those opposite talk about how passionate, how strongly and how intensely they want to stand in this place and debate our legislative reform agenda when, for the past four years – and I am sure it has been eight years for those who have been here a lot longer – those opposite have struggled to have probably more than two or three people in the chamber at any time, while this side of the house –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a tight procedural motion, and I do not think it is fair to embarrass the Premier for having not spoken on any second reading this term.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are debating a procedural motion on the motion; however, members on both sides have had some context on that. The member to continue on the procedural motion.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Time and time again the Andrews Labor government has put some incredible bills before this house, and I have no doubt that people here this week have very much looked forward to speaking about not only the bills before the house but also the motions that have been before the house. They are talking about nuclear energy, and the position of members here in this house about that nuclear energy is really important. It is something that goes to the best interests of people here in Victoria. As the member for Brighton noted, this is the people's Parliament, very much so, and the bills and the motions that come before this house are things that are important to debate. It is important for the Victorian public to hear what elected members of this chamber have to say in relation to that.

I am very much looking forward to hearing the narrative on this side of the house about nuclear energy. I know I have got colleagues speaking on that, and I very much look forward to hearing what they have to say; they have very strong opinions about that. The schoolkids who were here have left, but I have no doubt that, whether they are Victorian students or adults, and regardless of what stage of life they are at, they would be interested in hearing about nuclear energy and the positions of members of this house.

It was really interesting also to hear the member for Brighton try to talk about the work ethic of the Premier, and I would have to say I have never, ever seen a stronger work ethic in a leader in this state.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a point of order that has been raised. I hear the groans of the manager of government business.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is?

Emma Kealy: That the member has strayed far from the topic. This is a very tight, narrow procedural motion, and trying to talk up and suck up to the boss really does not form part of the contribution.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Lowan. I think I can take it from here. I encourage all members yet to speak to, once again, come back to the procedural motion.

Sarah CONNOLLY: As I was saying, the Premier's work ethic is incredibly strong, which is why we get stuff done on this side of the house in this chamber each and every single parliamentary sitting week, but whether we are in this house or actually out in broader Victoria, we are getting things done –

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member is not adhering to your deliberations, a clear ruling on my last point of order, which was about sticking to the motion which is before the house today. It is a very narrow debate. It is a very narrow debate about a procedural motion, and I urge you to bring the member back to the debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Lowan. As I have said now a number of times to similar points of order both ways –

The member's time is over.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (10:25): It has often been said that the essence of parliamentary democracy is 'the majority gets its way, but the minority gets its say'. I think that is a very important message that people on the other side of this chamber have forgotten, because to hear the arrogance dripping from the Government Whip, the member for South Barwon, that this is the government's chamber – I am sorry, member for South Barwon, this is the people's chamber. This is not yours, this is ours. This is every Victorian's. It was very, very telling, because the use of that language by the member for South Barwon is exactly how this government treats this chamber: with absolute disdain and absolute arrogance.

Members here have not just a right to be heard, we have a responsibility to be heard. This government has a poorly managed legislative program, but despite having all of this time it refuses to allow the opposition to debate any of the motions that we have on the notice paper. Every single time we put motions up, leave is denied. When the motions go onto the notice paper and we seek, as we are today, to have those debated, the government says no. What is the government so scared of? What is the government afraid of? Why don't you want to debate corruption? Why don't you want to debate IBAC's Operation Daintree report? Why doesn't the government want to debate the Ombudsman's pulling up of the Premier for calling this an 'educational' report when it is quite clearly a report exposing corruption in the government? It is quite extraordinary that not only does the government not have a significant legislative program – and a poorly managed one at that – but it wants to deny the opposition the opportunity to put motions forward and have those debated in this chamber.

I am not a fan of big government. If the government does not have a proper legislative program, then do not put up rubbish. I am not saying just debate bills for the sake of it, but what we see this government doing now is putting on the notice paper what are effectively sledge motions – motions to simply attack the opposition. What a great example of a government that has run out of puff, that has run out of steam and that does not have any greater ambition other than to keep its bums on those green seats. That is about it, because they do not have a legislative program to increase the freedom of Victorians, to increase the prosperity of small business or to improve educational standards in this state. They do not have a legislative program to improve the disaster that is our healthcare system or address ramping in ambulances. They do not have an agenda to help our farmers. They do not have an agenda to attract more major events to the state. They do not have an agenda. They are treading water, and because they

are treading water they have to fill up this notice paper with garbage political motions to simply try and attack the opposition. That is an example of a government that has lost its way.

If we are going to be debating motions, how about we debate serious motions like the one proposed by the member for Brighton, number 16 on the notice paper? Let us put it into *Hansard* again:

That this house notes comments:

- (1) made by the Premier in response to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission report *Operation Daintree*, citing it as an ‘educational’ report; and
- (2) from the Ombudsman that the report was ‘damning’ rather than ‘educational’.

I think it was in a debate yesterday that we heard one of the members opposite talk about how he had great respect for the office of Ombudsman. He talked about all the calumnies that had been attributed to the office of Ombudsman by the Kennett government, because this government, when they are not attacking the opposition, love living in the past. They have got no agenda for the future, but they love talking about the Kennett government. We do not hear the government talk up the benefits of the Ombudsman so much these days, do we? They are pretty quiet about the Ombudsman. We do not hear a lot of praise for the Ombudsman coming from government members these days, do we? No, no, no, they will talk her down. I am waiting for the day the Premier refers to Deborah Glass OBE as being ‘some woman who used to run some agency’, the same way they attacked Robert Redlich when he stood down from IBAC.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think again you will be able to anticipate the point of order I wish to raise. The member has strayed wide from the actual narrow procedural motion that we are debating today. He is using his opportunity to speak on this procedural motion to sledge the government and make a whole range of assertions about different members of this place.

Michael O’BRIEN: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I would say I am actually exactly referring to the issues raised by the member for Brighton and why these should be debated now.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House has moved to postpone government business notices of motion 1 and 2 until later this day. The Manager of Opposition Business has moved to omit ‘later this day’ and to replace the words with ‘after consideration of general business notice of motion 16’. The house will divide on the question:

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

Those supporting the amendment should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (54): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (26): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, Kim O’Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ryan Smith, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.**Motion agreed to.****Standing and sessional orders**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:37): I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on 23, 30 and 31 May 2023 to allow:

- (1) The House to meet at 9.30 am on Tuesday 30 May.
- (2) The order of business to be:

Tuesday 23 May

Question time

Formal business

Statements by members

Government business

Tuesday 30 May

Formal business

Statements by members

Statements on committee reports

Government business

Question time (2.00 pm)

Government business *continued*

Matter of public importance (4.00 pm)

Government business *continued*

Wednesday 31 May

Formal business

Members statements

Government business

Question time (2.00 pm)

Government business *continued*.

- (3) In relation to the matter of public importance:
 - (a) at 4.00 pm on Tuesday 30 May, unless a division is taking place, the Chair interrupts the business before the House and the bells are then rung for one minute;
 - (b) if a division is taking place at 4.00 pm:
 - (i) it will be completed without interruption and result announced;
 - (ii) if the division is on a closure motion, and the motion is agreed to, the question or questions then required to be put to close the issue before the House will also be dealt with;
 - (iii) business is then interrupted following the procedure in sub paragraph (a);
 - (c) the Chair announces the matter of public importance;
 - (d) any business under discussion and not completed at the interruption will be resumed immediately at the end of matter of public importance, and any member speaking at the time of the interruption may then continue their speech.
- (4) The Speaker to interrupt business under Sessional Order 2 at 5.00 pm on Wednesday.

Motion agreed to.

*Bills***Gambling Taxation Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Tim Pallas:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (10:38): Unlike a soufflé, I rise again as the nightwatchman looking after the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. This bill is of course a crucial step, and the opposition I am sure will be very supportive of this crucial step in improving the regulation in our state around gambling, making the system fairer, more transparent and more equitable. The Gambling Taxation Bill delivers on a recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. It strengthens the casino taxation arrangements at Crown Melbourne. It brings together the administration of Victoria's gambling taxes and makes several consequential amendments to the Casino Control Act 1991, the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993, the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the Taxation Administration Act 1997.

As we all know in this place, getting taxes right is vitally important for fairness. It is also vitally important to deliver on the things that our communities need. As we all know, this bill responds to the royal commission that was established in February 2021. It was established in light of the Bergin inquiry in New South Wales. The Bergin inquiry found that Crown Resorts should not be entitled to hold the licence for the Sydney Barangaroo complex. The Victorian government initiated a royal commission into the suitability of Crown Melbourne to hold its casino licence, and its findings were delivered on 15 October 2021.

The royal commission's report and recommendations were then released subsequently, on 26 October 2021. The results of this royal commission were nothing short of shocking. It found Crown Melbourne improperly claimed deductions from gambling revenue and reduced its tax bill. Millions of dollars in taxes were not paid to fund the services and infrastructure that every Victorian relies on, taking money out of the pockets of every Victorian. The millions of dollars needed to be repaid. It is so that we can deliver the schools, the hospitals, the public and social housing, the social supports and the support to problem gamblers and others with addiction. This was taken from every Victorian – not the government of Victoria, every Victorian.

Crown Melbourne, according to the royal commission, showed a complete disregard for the law. By the time the commission had reported, more than \$60 million in back taxes and interest had been repaid. They considered that more was likely to be due. These back taxes related to a period going back at least a decade – back to 2012, in their reckoning, and beyond. The royal commission noted that Crown Melbourne facilitated millions of dollars to be laundered through a bank account of its subsidiary. They considered that Crown Melbourne allowed operators with links to organised crime to arrange for junket players to gamble at the casino. The royal commission wrote that Crown's behaviour was variously illegal, dishonest, unethical and exploitative. Royal commissions do not make these statements lightly. The government has not taken these statements lightly, and we have been quick to act.

This is the fourth and final tranche of completing the royal commission's recommendations. The new powers have already resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars of fines to Crown Melbourne – \$200 million in 2022 alone: \$80 million in May from the illegal transfer of funds through to the China UnionPay scheme; \$100 million in fines in November 2022 for breaches of its responsible service of gambling – this included allowing people in one of the most monitored environments in the state to be able to gamble for more than 24 hours straight, an aberration of their responsibilities; and in November 2022, again, they were fined \$20 million for failing to comply with a statutory direction by the regulator to take all reasonable steps to prevent patrons from using stimulated automatic play. Again,

it is a well-regulated environment for Crown Casino and for their profits, but when it came to patrons they turned a blind eye – and wilfully.

The lack of tax obligations was part of a pattern of behaviour by Crown Melbourne. The commissioner concluded Crown Melbourne was not suitable to hold the licence. Among the recommendations of the royal commission was to move the casino's taxation arrangements in line with the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to provide a greater level of enforcement if wrongdoing was to occur. It standardises the administration of taxes under the commissioner of the State Revenue Office and the State Revenue Office.

This government has acted on the royal commissioner's findings. We are seeking to ensure that if bad behaviour occurs again, it will be caught and appropriate penalties will be put in place. The bill also transfers the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to the State Revenue Office, strengthening oversight and compliance. It allows for the imposition of taxation penalties and for more timely collection of taxes owed to every Victorian. It is owed to the people of this state to deliver the services that we need – taxes that are now going to be due monthly and returns that will be lodged monthly for a greater level of oversight. The bill delineates the taxation role undertaken by the State Revenue Office and the regulatory role with the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. The bill also allows for transfer of information between these bodies where disclosure is appropriate and relevant.

The Gambling Taxation Bill 2023 goes further. Critically, the royal commission found that the existing management agreement did not provide appropriate penalties. The bill remedies this in respect of Crown Melbourne's underpayment of tax by moving aspects of the Tax Administration Act's administrative framework. The standardised interest and penalties will apply to casino taxes starting this year on 1 July. In a practical sense, what does that mean? It means it will be 8 per cent on top of commercial market interest rates. It gives a stronger incentive to pay the taxes required. Further penalties may be imposed by the State Revenue Office and its commissioner.

The bill legislates that the tax rate for Crown's electronic gaming machines will match rates applying to club and other venue operators, increasing the tax recouped from Crown Casino by increasing the maximum marginal tax rate for electronic gaming machines operated at the casino from 31.57 per cent to 60.67 per cent plus the 1 per cent community benefit. It will improve equity by ensuring the casino is taxed at rates equivalent to many Victorian gaming venues. It brings us into alignment with New South Wales and most other states and territories.

Further, the bill implements an increase to the rate of wagering and betting tax from 10 to 15 per cent, which comes into place on 1 July 2024. As I said earlier, this is part of the fourth tranche of changes as a result of the royal commission, and we are delivering on the findings as such. This bill, with its enhanced taxation framework, is a crucial step towards ensuring that the gambling industry and Crown Melbourne in particular are regulated and taxed in a fairer, more transparent and more equitable manner with penalties that will deter future misconduct.

Taxations provide the supports that we need in our community to fund the infrastructure that we need, and for more than 10 years Crown Melbourne have been taking those taxes from every single Victorian. In my community the Werribee Mercy Hospital could have done with those millions of dollars to provide the improvements that they need and that this government is delivering. The schools in Point Cook needed these funds for improvements. The sporting clubs in Point Cook needed these funds for their improvements. Point Cook Road – what could we have done with that \$60 million that was taken from every part of our community? We could have made lives better for everyone there. And that is just the information that this royal commission was able to uncover. That is why this bill is important. That is why I seek that this house supports this bill. I know those opposite want to see their communities funded – and well funded – by taxes that are owed to our community. I commend the bill to the house.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (10:48): I will just start by saying I do agree with the member. We all want to see our communities funded and hope to do so in next week's state budget. I rise to give a contribution on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023, and I just want to thank the Shadow Treasurer, the member for Sandringham, for his work on this as well as the other shadow ministers, the member for Gippsland South – the member for Gippsland South is in the chamber – for his work and the member for Gippsland East for his knowledge on this. I do note that we will not be opposing the bill, as it is quite uncontroversial and it is not opposed by the racing industry or the gaming industry. This bill will achieve several key purposes as part of broader reform to gambling taxation in Victoria, including strengthening the casino tax arrangements beginning on 1 July this year, 2023, which will be administered by the commissioner of state revenue as taxation law under the Taxation Administration Act 1997. The bill will also raise the point-of-consumption tax, which I will go into a bit more, from 10 to 15 per cent, which will bring Victoria in line with those levels in New South Wales. The broader bill will create a single legislative vehicle to address gambling taxes administered by the commissioner.

First, I will touch on the Crown Casino taxation rates. The bill will change those tax arrangements for the electronic gaming machines, or EGMs, at Crown Casino, which had previously been taxed at a different rate to those in ordinary clubs around the state. Crown Casino's EGMs are currently taxed at 31.57 per cent of machine revenue, plus they contribute a 1 per cent community benefit levy on total machine revenue, and this differs from ordinary clubs who operate EGMs and are taxed on a sliding scale. This bill will subject Crown Casino to the same tax regimen that ordinary clubs are subject to, and it will result in a higher rate of tax for Crown's EGMs. This increase is expected to raise up to \$30 million in additional revenue for the state government, and as I said, with a budget coming up they could certainly need it.

The point-of-consumption tax, or the POCT, will provide an increase, as we said, of 10 to 15 per cent and will move us up so we are in line with New South Wales. It will impose a tax on the net wagering revenue of a wagering and betting entity at a rate of 10 per cent of the amount of the entity's net wagering revenue more than the \$1 million tax-free threshold on or after 1 July 2023 and before 1 July 2024, and after 1 July 2024 it will be raised to 15 per cent. Now, 4 per cent of that 5 per cent raised will go to industry, and the final 1 per cent – well, that at the moment will go into consolidated revenue, hopefully for schools and roads et cetera. But as we have already heard on the Gambling Regulation Amendment Bill 2023, dealt with by the member for Gippsland South, with the expectation that that licensing will not quite reach the heights that it did previously with Tabcorp because of the difference in what those licences are going to be and with the range of online bookmakers, there is sort of an understanding that that final 1 per cent will actually end up going back to the industry anyway to make up some of that shortfall in the licensing.

The bill also provides for a monthly payment to the industry, so they will get that paid monthly from the Consolidated Fund. The bill will allow the government to increase payments to the racing industry from 3.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent as a result of the changes to the POCT. This will result in an additional \$119 million in average annual funding to the racing industry here in Victoria over the three financial years from 1 July 2024.

A couple of small issues with the point-of-consumption tax have to do with some of the smaller bookmakers. We have got our big bookmakers – Tabcorp, Entain and some of these big players – but a lot of the smaller bookmakers run at a short loss throughout a lot of the racing season and then make that up around the spring carnival and the big events like the Caulfield Cup, the Melbourne Cup and these sorts of times throughout the year. Quite often these bookmakers may struggle to regularly pay the revenue-based tax. I think they would like to see some considerations made around an increase in the threshold, the removal of free bets or an allowance in the calculation of the POCT for clients under that threshold and maybe the consideration of an end-of-financial year true-up for those smaller bookmakers on the POCT rather than their paying it throughout the year. Maybe they could pay it every six months or annually to give them a chance and so that they do not run at a loss and get hit

with a big, hefty tax bill and have to try and front up the cash. They could go through their good period of the year, and when Melbourne Cup finishes then maybe they could pay their tax bill for that year.

We also know there is an agreement with the government and the racing industry to provide certainty for 10 years, and that agreement as laid out in this bill has been agreed to. The industry now have the funding assurances for the next 10 years, but they cannot come back, hands out, if something changes with this licensing or the way people bet. There is no expectation that these provisions will be revisited in the next 10 years. As the commercial landscape in the wagering and racing industries has and continues to change – there are new operators popping up all the time, and the way people bet is continuing to change – it is going to be important to consider how removing flexibility may affect future policymaking both in a positive and negative way. Assuming that the government follows through with its promises – we know there is a memorandum of understanding with the industry – I think this bill is overall good for the industry. It will be good to support all of those jobs that we see in the industry – all the trainers, the jockeys, the people that breed the horses and everyone. It is great. This does bring us in line with New South Wales. I think that everyone is fairly happy with what is in this bill. I thank the members on this side for their work, and I thank the members, the minister and the government staff for the briefings they have provided. I note that we will not be opposing this bill.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (10:54): No heads-up there, Grothy.

Sam Groth: What did I do?

Will FOWLES: You only did 6½ minutes; you are killing me, brother.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Will FOWLES: It is my great pleasure to rise to speak on this Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. I want to begin by saying that with the passing of this bill we will have the final of the 33 recommendations of the royal commission either fully implemented or legislated and awaiting commencement. That is a not insignificant achievement. I commend the minister on her work in relation to this. It has been a big journey for Crown Casino.

It has been a journey that has resulted in the uncovering of some outrageous behaviour, but I am very pleased that there is some bipartisanship around, one, holding Crown to account, and two, ensuring that the regulatory framework from here on out will be more appropriate, will be fit for purpose and will ensure that Victorians get their fair share of the vast amounts of revenue driven through that place. Of course that revenue does not come without the outstanding work of over 3000 members of the United Workers Union – my union – who do incredible work in that place, who work really, really hard and whose lives and livelihoods we did not want to see disrupted by any heavy-handed regulatory intervention.

Make no mistake: Crown Casino is still on notice. The way in which the recommendation around the retention of their licence is structured is that they will lose their licence unless a bunch of things happen. So the default position, if you like, is that the licence goes unless they can demonstrate – and the onus is on them to demonstrate – that they are an appropriate entity to hold that licence. I appreciate that the ownership has changed, but nonetheless many senior managers remain in place. I know that there is significant cultural change being driven through the organisation, but I also note that since the monitor has been in place there have nonetheless been a number of examples of corporate misconduct which have resulted in very, very significant fines. So the work is ongoing, but I am pleased that it has been largely a bipartisan process to ensure that Crown is able to continue being a very big employer, including those hardworking members of the United Workers Union, but also a good corporate citizen who is paying their fair share for the very special privilege they have been granted by government of holding a monopoly casino licence here in Victoria.

One of the additional findings of the royal commission – and every single one of those recommendations, as I say, with the passage of this act will be fully implemented or will be legislated

and awaiting commencement – was that the casino tax should be brought under the administrative framework of the Taxation Administration Act 1997. That is for a number of reasons, and that is what this bill seeks to set about putting in place. One reason is that we had a regulator without specialist expertise in taxation performing that function, and that was clearly shown to be deficient, particularly in relation to a bunch of casino tax payments that had not been made by Crown extending over a number of years. Clearly there was perhaps not regulatory failure but certainly administrative failure in not being able to get those amounts that were owed and be able to bring them to book, but also presumably there was a lack of sufficient expertise or technical expertise to make sure that those matters were properly acquitted at the time. Bringing it into the State Revenue Office (SRO), where all of our specialist tax bureaucrats reside, is an appropriate response to that deficiency that was identified by the royal commission.

The royal commission also found that Crown improperly claimed deductions in the calculations of its casino tax. There were underpayments going back over 10 years, at least back as far as 2012, and the commission also observed that once any underpayment was determined the dispute could only be resolved by pursuing disciplinary action or by suing the casino for the unpaid tax plus penalty interest, but there was no other financial consequence. So at the very least the casino could game the system and just get a loan for those monies with tax payable at some future indeterminate point in time if in fact it was ever uncovered by the regulator. The royal commission said that was an unusual situation, and I am pretty strongly inclined to agree with that – it was a very unusual situation – and it meant that even if tax was intentionally withheld from government, there would be no penalty other than the payment of penalty interest. That is clearly not the sort of outcome we want.

We want to make absolutely sure that if corporations, whether casino operators or otherwise, are engaged in conduct that is deceptive, engaged in conduct that is depriving the Victorian government of the resources that it needs to fund all those essential services that it provides, they are brought to account with a punitive component in those circumstances where they are seeking to defraud us, the Parliament, the government and the people of Victoria. Bringing these taxation provisions out of the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993 and into a new act called the Gambling Taxation Act 2023 changes the administration and oversight of casino taxation and brings all of that casino taxation under the purview of the commissioner of state revenue whilst leaving all the other regulatory functions with the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC).

I want to make a couple of comments about the establishment of that commission, because the establishment of the VGCCC was a very important part of our response to the royal commission. Under the gambling act the casino now has to lodge returns monthly. It has to deal with the commissioner, and it then has a separate regulatory relationship with the regulator, which is all about gambling harm and running safe gambling operations. The Taxation Administration Act 1997, which is the head act, if you like, of these tax provisions, has extensive abilities to impose not just penalty interest but penalty tax and provisions around record keeping. Importantly, it also has a bunch of criminal offences, including for giving false or misleading information to tax officers. It is that elevation into the tax regulation environment, as opposed to sitting in a discrete gambling regulatory environment, that makes these rules very important. It makes the recommendation of the commissioner very important, and it allows us to ensure that Crown is held to the highest standards of corporate behaviour.

This is about the separation, in effect, of the two functions – the gambling tax function and the operational function, the regulatory function – but it is also about the efficiency and the delivery of both. It is using the right tool for the right job. It is using specialists in their respective fields, in their respective organisations, to administer those parts of the act which we consider to be extremely important.

There are additional amendments which will allow the SRO to share information about the casino licensee's tax affairs with the VGCCC where it is appropriate and where it is relevant to their regulatory and disciplinary functions. That is important because there will be circumstances where the

reporting obligations of Crown on, say, turnover of machines or whatever, need to reconcile with what they are reporting to the SRO as well as to the VGCCC. It is appropriate that you have that information-sharing capacity in place.

This is the fourth tranche of legislation since we tabled our response to the royal commission in October 2021. There was a fair bit of other stuff going on during that period. I know that members of the 59th Parliament were very heavily engaged in keeping their community safe during that time, but it was undoubtedly a seismic report, a seismic royal commission, a royal commission that resulted in significant legislative change, significantly regulatory change and a significant change to the structure of Victoria's monopoly casino licensee. In responding the government has been firm but fair. It has sought to ensure the ultimate viability of the casino but under a framework that means they behave better, they pay their fair share of taxes and they conduct themselves as a good corporate citizen, all the while having a view to the very important work of those 3000-odd United Workers Union members and other workers at the site. I do commend this bill to the house.

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (11:04): I rise to speak on behalf of the Greens on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. This bill, among other things, responds to the Royal Commission into the Crown Casino Operator and Licence. Certainly the changes in relation to regulation there make sense to us. The bill also raises the rate of the point-of-consumption tax for betting in Victoria to 15 per cent.

At its current rate of 10 percent this is a tax that generates about \$280 million per year, and this bill, by increasing it, will generate at least another \$140 million of revenue. But what we do not think makes sense is that at the same time we have got a government saying they have got to make tough decisions. We are going to see the cutting of funding in the upcoming budget, we are going to see cuts to public sector jobs, we are going to see an austerity budget, yet at this point in time they are choosing to hand over millions of dollars to the racing industry. It is going to see around half the revenue – some members have even indicated it could be more – gifted back to the racing industry. Really, when you look at all the needs in Victoria, should we be funnelling even more money at this point in time to this industry? This is a time when Victorians are struggling to keep their heads above water, when people are being pushed into poverty, into crisis, and are needing to seek help from homelessness services, food relief and emergency wards. This government really has a clear choice. It has got a clear choice in this bill, it has got a clear choice in the upcoming budget: are you going to support Victorians who are struggling to make ends meet, or are you going to continue to side with profiteering industries? This government is choosing the latter – in fact the government and the opposition are choosing the latter – by gifting hundreds of millions of dollars to the racing industry with this bill, and it just beggars belief.

What sort of government sits around the cabinet table or sits around the party room and decides, 'Well, we're increasing a tax here on the gambling industry, what are we going to do with the revenue?' You have got people experiencing homelessness. You have already got increasing homelessness, cuts to the From Homelessness to a Home program and homelessness services turning people away. You have got people experiencing hunger, you have got community service organisations that are struggling to meet the needs of people seeking food and material aid. You have got people who are waiting months for essential medical care and dental or mental health support. You have got people putting off seeking medical care because of the costs and being unable to access bulk billing. You have got our community health services crying out for more funding to help people in need. But, no, not them; I tell you what: we will give the biggest chunk to the racing industry. I mean, come on. Come on, part of the money goes to the Hospitals and Charities Fund. What I would like to do is circulate the amendments in my name, which remove the Victorian racing industry payment from the money raised through this bill.

Amendments circulated under standing orders.

Sam HIBBINS: What we also call on the government to do is increase the rate of this tax to 20 per cent. I note that in Queensland, that is the rate that this tax is set at. We have got some of the highest rates of gambling in the world, and I think 20 per cent would be a fair rate of taxation for the gambling

industry in terms of a betting point-of-consumption tax. This would raise the total revenue to about \$560 million per annum. When you look at what is happening across our state – a skyrocketing cost of living; a real wage cut for workers, the biggest ever on record; people waiting months for essential medical care – there is a clear choice: make industries like the gambling industry pay their fair share of tax to fund the things that people need. This could not come at a more timely point, given the massive challenges that people are facing, and certainly that is the direction the government should be going with this bill and with the upcoming state budget – not an austerity budget that is going to make things worse for people. People in need cannot wait another few years until we get back into surplus to have these sorts of issues addressed. So I would certainly urge the government to do that: to raise the rate of the point-of-consumption tax and not funnel hundreds of millions of dollars into the racing industry, and I would certainly urge consideration of those amendments in this place and in the other place.

I would like to conclude just in terms of the bill's actions in relation to Crown Casino. We support those measures, but what I say is that the government had to be dragged kicking and screaming into that royal commission. It took far too long for that to occur. In terms of the response to Crown Casino as well, the government missed the trick and missed the opportunity to downsize and reduce the scale of Crown Casino. Crown Casino, when it came to fruition under the Kennett government, was I think the largest casino in the Southern Hemisphere. Melbourne does not need the largest casino in the Southern Hemisphere. It is far too big, and that has added to the issues and added to the reason why the clear problems with Crown Casino were not addressed. It was a casino that was simply too big to fail. Often when the Premier would speak about the casino he would talk about it being the largest single-site employer in Melbourne, as if that should somehow cover for all the wrongdoing that was occurring with Crown Casino. I would urge the government to look at downsizing Crown Casino. We do not need this massive casino in Melbourne. Then if you change tax rates and other regulations, it could ensure that the income from Crown Casino can be contained.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (11:11): I also rise to speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. Perhaps before I do, I will note that the member for Malvern was speaking very passionately not half an hour ago about the need for the opposition to have their say, but they are not necessarily here in big numbers to have their say at this point on this bill. I notice that the member for Nepean has returned, so good on him.

This bill obviously deals with gambling, and several of the previous speakers have touched on the broader challenges of gambling within our Victorian society. I would like to echo and support the comments of the member for Kororoit in particular, who I thought spoke compellingly about some of the problems that gambling can cause in her part of the world, and also those of the member for Point Cook, who spoke compellingly about some of the problems associated with Crown in particular and their money laundering, tax underpayment and so forth.

If I can, I might just turn to some of the mechanics of the bill. As the member for Point Cook said, once we have arrived in a position where we are taxing gambling, it is important to do it well, and the bill does exactly that. As a general proposition, those on the government side of the house have of course long supported gambling taxes. They have the same sorts of characteristics as taxes on alcohol or on tobacco – they do serve as a disincentive to behaviour that can have a negative affect. But importantly, they also raise revenue, which the government can spend on all the things that it needs to spend it on.

The bill before us does have some quite complex hypothecation arrangements in it with respect to the revenue that it raises. Hypothecation arrangements are not always loved by treasurers, but there are certainly plenty in this bill. Most of the funds, as we know, go to the Hospitals and Charities Fund. The Hospitals and Charities Fund is a wonderfully venerable fund that has been around I think since 1911, and we have been paying gambling tax into it since about 1930. I noted that the member for East Gippsland earlier complained that the money raised by some of these taxes would go to various projects that he did not support, but in fact most of it is very clearly hypothecated into that fund. For the interest of members, if you go back to 1930, when we first set this up, Maurice Blackburn, who

was then the member for Clifton Hill, did quite strongly oppose the hypothecation of this money into the Hospitals and Charities Fund, not because he had anything against hospitals or charities but because he opposed gambling, full stop, and did not want it to be used as a reason to support gambling. I think if the member for Clifton Hill were alive today, he would be very pleased with a lot of the progress on many of the progressive issues that were dear to his heart, but I reckon he would be slightly surprised that 100 years later gambling arrangements look very similar to what they looked like when he was debating them in 1930.

As the Minister for Racing alluded to earlier – I will not repeat his comments – a significant amount of the funds is hypothecated to the racing industry. My favourite – and maybe it is just me – is that one-thirtieth of the proceeds of the tax from the month of April go to the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund, and that will support veterans and the ex-service community.

Coming then to the taxes consolidated by the bill: they include now the wagering and betting tax. The member for Nepean touched on the fact that that is now a point-of-consumption tax, an important reform of this Labor government back in 2017, and is of course being raised by this bill to 15 per cent as previous speakers have alluded to. There is the tax-free threshold there for smaller bookmakers, which the member for Nepean also touched on. Secondly, there is the keno tax, which now comes across into this bill, and then thirdly, there are the casino taxes, which are the key driving motivation of the bill if you like. They are quite complex, the casino taxes. If you look at them, they have sort of built up over a long period of time. There are the community levy and the table game tax, which is 21.25 per cent of net gaming revenue. There is then separately to that a tax on the electronic gaming machines, which is relatively complex. The gist of that is that this bill harmonises that with the rate paid by other clubs. There are then a couple of measures to do with commission-based players, and finally a form of super-profits tax, if you like, which is also levied on Crown Casino and is set out in schedule 1.

That brings me, I suppose, to the key reason for supporting the bill. The key thing about it is that the casino taxes are in it and that it will now be read with the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and thus be brought under the jurisdiction, if you like, of the commissioner and of the State Revenue Office. As others have spoken to, the bill had its origins in the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, which was established by this government under commissioner Ray Finkelstein in 2021. I think we have to acknowledge the great work done by the commissioner and also acknowledge the very well written report – a very quotable report, as we have heard from the number of times it has been quoted in this debate, but clear and well written.

It is probably fair to say that if you are a company operating in this state, it is not a good sign when a royal commission is created solely for the purpose of dealing with your company, and it is probably also fair to say that it was very much warranted. Other speakers, including the member for Ringwood, have spoken at some length about Crown's 'disgraceful behaviour', as the commissioner called it. I will not reiterate all of that, but of particular relevance to this bill is the underpayment of more than \$60 million worth of tax –

A member: Shameful.

Nathan LAMBERT: Shameful behaviour by Crown. Again, the royal commission goes into detail about the mechanics of that underpayment. Essentially, Crown misrepresented loyalty programs as if they were winnings in order to minimise the taxes that I have mentioned previously. The report goes into some detail about the great lengths that Crown went to to hide those underpayments and, importantly, the limitations of the Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993 on allowing the government to penalise them for that behaviour and to take all the measures that we would normally take had that been, say, a company failing to pay payroll tax or anything that comes under our other taxation arrangements. So that is exactly why it led to the recommendation of the royal commission's report that we bring casino taxes into this act and then bring them under the Taxation Administration

Act. The end point will be that it is now the same as the Payroll Tax Act 2007 or the Land Tax Act 2005 or all the others that are under the State Revenue Office.

I should do a shout-out: in a previous role I did work with the State Revenue Office, and I think they do a very good job of what is a very difficult job. People often do not like paying tax, and as many of us here know if perhaps they have been contacted by their electorate officers, people sometimes go to very great lengths. They are sometimes very aggressive and very manipulative in their attempts to avoid paying tax. It has always been like that, and unfortunately, Crown's behaviour, disgraceful as it was, is not entirely outside the realm of the things that we do see every year. And so I think it is exactly the reason why the State Revenue Office – and full credit to them, having to deal with that day in and day out as part of their work – will now be dealing day in and day out with collecting those taxes from Crown. Of course they already deal with some gambling taxes, so it is an incremental reform but an important one.

If I can just reflect briefly on the so-called 'management agreement', which is the former casino management agreement that this bill is effectively getting rid of by moving the taxes across. If you look at that management agreement, it perhaps reminds you that it is hard for the government to negotiate well with large corporations. It just always has been. They know their business well and they are very aggressive negotiators. There is information asymmetry, so to speak. We do see time and time again, when governments reach commercial agreements with large organisations, that there is an unfortunate tendency for risk to be pushed onto the government, and that is what we saw here. So I am very glad that the Treasurer and his team at the Department of Treasury and Finance and the team in his office have taken the step of pushing back and negotiating hard – and our Treasurer is a very good negotiator – to ensure that now the pushing of risk onto the government will no longer occur should this bill, hopefully, be passed. As I have alluded to, once we agree that we are going to tax gambling, it is important that we do it well. I think it is a huge credit to the Treasurer, his team and his department that they have brought forward this important incremental reform. Crown do need to be regulated more strongly, that was clear from the royal commission, and this is a bill that will do that. I commend it to the house.

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (11:21): I am happy to stand and speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. I am excited that this is my first debate in this place, and I would like to thank the electorate of Hastings for affording me this opportunity and for giving me a seat at the table.

The Gambling Taxation Bill 2023 delivers a significant recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence to strengthen the casino taxation arrangements for Crown Melbourne. The bill consolidates the administration of a number of Victoria's gambling taxes and also implements the 2023–24 budget measures. The Gambling Taxation Bill 2023 will establish a new standalone gambling taxation act, which will bring Victorian into line with other states, to provide a fairer amount of revenue for Victoria.

Now, I have read lots of words in putting this debate together. I have gone through pages of information, and I still sit back and go, 'What really is this bill about?' I know it is quite complex – there are a lot of issues in this bill – but at the end of the day, for me and perhaps Mum and Dad at home watching this, this bill is about a fair go. It says that here: 'provide a fairer amount of revenue'. It is about a fair go, and not a fair go for those on the other side of the chamber – a fair go for mates. This is a Labor fair go, where it is a fair go for all of the community and all of the members of Victoria. So I am very happy to be here and debate it. I also want to say that this is not a new tax. There are no new taxes in this for everyday Victorians. As I said, this is about a fair go. There is a multibillion-dollar company that is not paying its fair share, and it is time it did. That is what this is about. It is about levelling the playing field and being fair for everyone.

The bill implements the 2023–24 budget announcement to increase the wagering and betting tax from 10 per cent to 15 per cent from 1 July 2024. There is no change to the annual tax-free threshold of \$1 million. The government's annual payment to the racing industry will be increased from 3.5 per

cent to 7.5 per cent. That is an increase of 4 per cent for the racing industry – an industry that contributes \$4.7 billion to the state’s economic activity and provides nearly 35,000 jobs. So we are giving a bit, they are giving a bit – it sounds pretty fair to me.

The bill comes about from work done in 2021 by the Honourable Ray Finkelstein, who delivered the royal commission’s report on casino operators and licences. They found that there were significant underpayments of casino tax to the state by Crown over several years, which is why this government is supporting all of the recommendations handed down. That is 33 recommendations. I did consider going through every recommendation to run the clock down, but I thought I would not do that. It is interesting to hear other members’ ideas on what recommendations are great, and I will say a little bit more about that in a moment.

The Victorian government has already introduced major reforms to tackle gambling-related harm and address money laundering at Crown Melbourne. This bill is the fourth tranche of legislation to be brought to the Parliament since the Victorian government tabled its response to the royal commission in October 2021. Since then the government has acted fast by committing to strengthen the casino’s oversight and tax arrangements. These are key areas of reform and keep Crown on an even playing field with local clubs and pubs. It is a fair go.

Further, the Victorian government has done tremendous work delivering nine priority recommendations. Importantly, it has established the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, the VGCCC. Last year the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Act 2022 delivered further recommendations to boost the powers and functions of inspectors, embed harm minimisation and complete transition to the new regulator, the VGCCC. The work has been done and continues to be done, and this bill continues that good work.

I am really glad to say that the VGCCC has teeth. In May 2022 Crown was fined \$80 million for the illegal transfer of funds. In November 2022, just this last November, Crown was fined \$100 million for breaches of its code of conduct for the responsible service of gambling – it was sometimes letting people gamble for over 24 hours in a row. Also in November 2022 Crown was fined \$20 million by the regulator for failing to comply with statutory regulations. I am really grateful that the government is working so hard and consistently to provide a fairer system for all Victorians. The great news is that in passing this bill we will have successfully implemented or legislated all 33 recommendations by the royal commission. That is getting things done. That is a fairer go for Victoria.

I want to go back and talk a little bit about why this bill is so important from my point of view, especially in the strengthening of the oversight of the casino. I want to quote two things that Ray Finkelstein wrote in the report. He said:

Perhaps the most damning discovery by the Commission is the manner in which Crown Melbourne deals with the many vulnerable people who have a gambling problem. The cost to the community of problem gambling is enormous. It is not only the gambler who suffers. It also affects many other people, and institutions.

He further stated:

Crown Melbourne had for years held itself out as having a world’s best approach to problem gambling. Nothing can be further from the truth –

‘nothing can be further from the truth’ –

The Commission heard many distressing stories from people whose lives were ruined by gambling but whose situation might have been improved if casino staff had carried out their obligations under Crown Melbourne’s ... Code.

I do not gamble. I do not really understand gambling, As a young dancer-actor I was lucky if I had three bucks to buy a beer after a show, so the last thing I was going to do was put three bucks in a gambling machine. But I understand that it is valid. If people want to go down with friends and throw a few bucks in the pokies or mates want to get together or you just want to relax from a hard day’s

work, then that is all fine. But those people that can do that have control. It is those with an addiction that do not.

My mate Brett had a rather addictive nature – a lovely man, very talented. When he was younger he was a heroin addict, and I am very glad to say he got off that, which was difficult, but he made it. But then he fell into a gambling addiction and he spent his time at the pub putting his and his wife's earnings through. I am very glad to say he got through that and now his addiction is his family, his kids and his artistic pursuits. He got through. There are many people that do not. There are people that do not survive this – they are dead or they are in jail.

I recently had Anna come to my office. She got through this, but she came and explained to me about addiction, and she told me her story. She started gambling just with friends over a wine or two; they would go to the pokies, and she really enjoyed that. And then she thought when she was alone, she might go back to the pokies and have a little tippie. She told me how the bright lights, the colours and the sound of all the machines really drew her in – my granddaughter would love to go there, especially when she gets free lemonade. She would stay there for hours and gamble. Anna stayed there for 10 years. She lost her husband, she lost her money, she lost her house and she lost more. Anna also said to me, because she gets a little annoyed, 'Don't use the word "problem gambler". Don't use the word "gambling problem",' – because a heroin user-addict is not a problem heroin user, they are an addict. An alcoholic is an addict.

A gambler with an addiction is someone with an addiction, not a problem. I think we need to just focus on that a little bit so that we can help these people more. The problem is not gambling or drugs or alcohol, the problem is addiction, and there are companies like Crown that are willing to abuse people with an addiction for their own financial gain – disgusting. This bill goes some way to stopping that. The Andrews Labor government is working hard to help those in the community that are vulnerable and being exploited for others' financial gain.

Just to sum up my debate and this bill, essentially this bill is bringing Victoria in line with other states and providing greater economic benefit for Victoria. It also puts Crown on the same level playing field as pubs and clubs, which have paid a far higher rate compared with Crown, a multibillion-dollar organisation. Additionally the recommendations handed down by the royal commission provide additional strengthening of oversight of Crown. I would just like to finish by saying: if you feel that you need help with your gambling or you know someone that needs help with gambling – if you feel like your gambling or your friend's gambling is getting out of control – in my electorate you can go to Peninsula Health at Hastings, to Gambler's Help, or more broadly contact the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. I commend this bill to the house.

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (11:31): I rise to speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. This bill creates a new standalone gambling taxation act consolidating the administration of several Victorian gambling taxes. In strengthening the casino taxation arrangements for Crown Casino Melbourne, it delivers on a significant recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence.

Over 20 years ago I worked as a Crown Club host at Melbourne's Crown Casino. I obtained a fair wage and was treated well as an employee despite the gruelling graveyard shifts. But I also saw the realities of gambling addiction. I saw the punters come in day after day, and I even knew many of them by name. It was a place of fun and entertainment for most, a place of comfort for some but also, sadly, a place a harm for others. I saw some faces come back again and again. It became clear their losses were Crown's gains. A trip to the casino should be a little bit of fun, entertainment and excitement. For the majority of visitors that is the case; however, for some it is not. In my own electorate of Pakenham more than \$22 million was lost in the 2021–22 financial year in the 305 electronic gaming machines located across our four local venues. While these losses are significant, they are lower than many other areas within our state as my community has a young population, with many of my constituents not yet old enough to gamble.

These clubs provide local gathering spaces for our growing community to socialise with family and friends over a meal. Clubs are required to fulfil a community benefit levy, and they do so. My local venues fulfil their community obligations through community grants, which are open to sporting clubs, local charities and community groups, and employ local workers, which keeps our economy turning. These hotels and clubs are part of our local social fabric. The clubs in my electorate pay proportionately more in tax per gaming machine than Crown; in fact they pay 15 to 19 per cent more of their takings. This tax gap would be higher again if electronic gaming machines were played at a very high rate in my electorate. The clubs would then pay as much as 25 per cent more tax than Crown.

It only seems fair that Crown's approximately 2500 gaming machines are taxed at the same rate as other operators and matched to those who have strong links to community: the clubs. Crown's machines are consolidated in one location. They have the drawcard of the city and all of its attractions. Crown has significant domestic and international visitor numbers from which to draw revenue across the multiple gaming options beyond poker machines on offer in its entertainment complex, with some amazing restaurants, experiences and of course retail outlets. This bill will increase the tax rate on electronic gaming machines at the casino, matching the electronic gaming machine tax rates for clubs from 1 July 2023. The maximum marginal tax rate for electronic gaming machines operated at the casino will be increased from 31.57 per cent to 60.67 per cent plus the 1 per cent community benefit levy.

This results in a more equitable arrangement that equalises the gambling tax rates between the casino and clubs operating electronic gaming machines, ensures the Victorian community receives a fair share of the significant profits of Crown Melbourne without affecting the casino's economic viability and ensures the tax paid by the largest gambling venue in the state is not lower than the rates paid by smaller not-for-profit community-based venues like those in my electorate. This change is only possible because the Labor government acted swiftly to respond to the recommendations of the Crown royal commission, removing the arrangement with Crown introduced by the previous coalition government – those opposite – that prevented the state from changing regulations without having to pay compensation. This has paved the way for fairer taxation arrangements. For too long Crown has benefited from preferential tax treatment. The change is expected to generate up to \$30 million a year in additional revenue for the state without increasing gambling. This revenue can then be spent on what Victorians need – things that matter – like new schools, community hospitals, public transport and major road projects. It is a change I strongly support.

A government direction has recently been issued that requires the casino's responsible gambling code of conduct to be updated with additional protections to minimise gambling-related harm. The code sets limits on the length of time a person may gamble at the casino, with the operator required to enforce 15-minute breaks if a person has been gambling for three continuous hours. Anyone who has gambled for 12 hours in any 24-hour period will be required to take a break of 24 hours, with no person able to gamble for more than 36 hours in a single week. Crown responsible gambling staff will have powers to exclude them from the casino floor. I welcome this action following my past observations of the many hours punters would spend on the floor, not to mention the wads of cash some would feed into the machines. This direction has been developed to implement recommendation 11 of the royal commission, which was to impose duties on the casino operator to prevent and monitor for gambling harm. This government supports the recommendations of the royal commission and is implementing the critical recommendations in a sensible manner.

Oversight of the casino operator has been strengthened. On 1 July 2022 the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission was fully established as the new regulator, with a dedicated casino division and a stronger focus on gambling harm. Government has provided this commission with the unprecedented powers and strength to make sure that the Melbourne casino operates within the law and regulations and within community expectations. We have already seen the VGCCC use its new powers. In May 2022 Crown Melbourne was fined \$80 million for the illegal transfer of funds through the China UnionPay scheme. In November 2022 Crown Melbourne was fined \$100 million for breaches of its code of conduct for the responsible service of gambling over many years by consistently

failing to intervene to prevent gambling harm and allowing customers to often gamble for long periods of time without a break and sometimes for even more than 24 hours. Again in the same month Crown was fined \$20 million for failing to comply with a statutory direction by the regulator to take all reasonable steps to prevent patrons from using plastic picks and other devices to stimulate automatic play when gambling on certain electronic gaming machines, or pokies. With the passing of this bill we will have the final of the 33 recommendations of the royal commission either fully implemented or legislated and awaiting commencement. The government continues to take strong action to hold Crown Melbourne to account on all levels, addressing illegal activity and money laundering and reducing gambling harm at the casino.

Through the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023 the government is making changes to ensure Victoria's wagering taxes are in line with other states. The bill implements the 2023–24 budget announcement to increase the wagering and betting tax rate from 10 per cent to 15 per cent from 1 July 2024. New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania's point-of-consumption tax sits at 15 per cent of net wagering revenue. This change is also being made to ensure the Victorian racing industry has a framework to ensure long-term sustainability. Much of the increase will be passed through to the racing industry. From 1 July 2024, 7.5 percentage points of the 15 per cent wagering and betting tax will be paid into the racing industry. One-thirtieth of the April revenue will continue to be paid into the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund, and the balance of the revenue will be paid into the Hospitals and Charities Fund. Funds paid into the Hospitals and Charities Fund are used to support hospitals, health and community services in Victoria. The Victorian racing industry is a significant contributor to the state, adding \$4.7 billion annually in economic activity and providing more than 35,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

Racing is particularly important to regional Victoria, where more than 100 clubs are supported by more than 70,000 participants and provide more than \$2.45 billion annually in economic value each year. Pakenham Racing Club, just outside my electorate, is one of these venues. It employs many people from my local community. The venue hosts the Pakenham Cup each December, which is a highlight of the local entertainment calendar.

The increase to the point-of-consumption tax strikes the right balance, brings us into line with other states and provides long-term certainty for Victoria's racing industry. Harness Racing Victoria, Greyhound Racing Victoria and Racing Victoria all agree that this change will benefit the long-term sustainability of their industries. In concluding, the Andrews Labor government is getting on with delivering the tax reforms needed to strengthen the oversight of Melbourne's Crown Casino and the whole Victorian gambling industry, with a focus on harm minimisation, and our government is ensuring the future of racing in Victoria through sensible taxes on gambling. I commend this bill to the house.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (11:41): It is with some pleasure that I rise this morning to make my contribution on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. I certainly from the outset acknowledge a couple of things: firstly, that Crown, as the only holder of a casino licence in the state of Victoria, has the right to run that facility, but of course along with that right, the licence to run that facility, there is a whole set of obligations that sits alongside the ownership of that casino. There are very good and clear reasons why there is a whole set of obligations, and we certainly know globally that it is an absolute necessity with casino-style licences that there is strong and proper oversight to make sure that criminality and other poor behaviour are excluded from those premises. What we do know is that there was a need to put in place a royal commission into the conduct that was happening and was allowed to happen at Crown Casino. A whole bunch of recommendations came out of that, and this government has been responding to those recommendations to make sure that Crown, going forward, is well regulated and that criminal activity and other poor behaviour are minimised.

Last time I looked at the employment statistics around Crown I think it was Victoria's largest private sector employer. Many millions of people make their way to the casino either on an ad hoc or occasional basis for various functions and other things, to have a good time, and of course some head

there more often. I think we all want to see a well-regulated casino in this state so that people can continue to enjoy all that is on offer there, that it can be a great place to work and obviously that it adds to the state offering in a tourism and hospitality context.

I also would like to take the opportunity on this bill to reflect particularly on the horseracing industry in and around Geelong. Of course we have a very historic racetrack that has existed in the Geelong region for well over a century. We have quite a number of smaller racetracks that historically have existed in our region that are no longer are in existence. The Geelong Racing Club is, in its own right, particularly on race meeting days, a significant employer. On any one race meeting you can have over 1000 people working and enjoying the opportunity of having a good, strong job on race day. On race days those numbers swell with all of the hospitality services that are on offer at that racetrack.

But we also have a very significant equine industry that exists in and around Geelong – those people that directly deal with horses, that are involved as strappers or trainers or jockeys or breeders or veterinarians et cetera. If anyone was to take a drive in and around the countryside that surrounds Geelong, you will find any number of horse studs and professional equine services on offer, again supplying many hundreds of jobs in and around the Geelong region. Some of those jobs are highly paid for highly skilled workers, and some of them are more entry level in that sector and in our economy. Again, I want to make the point that in a Geelong context the club is really well run, and a lot of people get a lot of enjoyment out of its existence, and certainly there are many hundreds of jobs on offer. What we want to see with industries like this is that we have a real approach to supporting and growing the sector but also making sure that we have appropriate public health policies in place to make sure we minimise harm that can be done from gambling addiction. That is a challenge, and getting those measures right, getting them balanced, makes a huge amount of sense.

This industry continues to change and evolve. What we have seen I think over the last decade or so is some real disruptors that have come along and provided some really significant challenges, not only to the Victorian government but to the sector and race clubs and on-track betting and the like. Some of those disruptors are new apps where people can go online and gamble in that way. I do not have a particular problem with that. That is a reality. Technology often in any industry can be a disruptor, but we do need to make sure that we recognise those challenges and that we respond to them, and we regulate or legislate where appropriate to recognise those things. One of the concerns that I do have is that often with respect to online gambling, because those servers can be hosted either interstate or internationally, it can be a challenge for a state-based jurisdiction to regulate those things. I do not think there is a lot we can do about it other than recognise it and find other ways to make sure that we have arrangements in place that are fair and appropriate.

What I would also like to say is, like any industry that is profitable – that is making a profit – there needs to be appropriate taxation arrangements in place. It does not matter what sector of the economy it is, it is fair and appropriate that they help contribute to the delivery of the services that our state needs to make sure that we have the capacity to build the things that we need. These taxation measures are appropriate tweaks. I think they are fair and reasonable. They have a very wide level of support from that sector, and I am very pleased to see that.

I want to conclude by saying this: whilst some people are opposed to gambling, if we look at the Geelong context, many thousands of people derive either all or part of their family's income from this important sector. That is why we want to see strong regulation and legislation and taxation in place. I commend the bill to the house.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (11:51): I rise to offer my support for the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. I do have to say that the politics nerd in me is a little bit excited to be speaking on an entirely new piece of legislation for the first time. So far my contributions have been on amendment bills. All have been very worthy and worthwhile of course, and they are important for ensuring that our legislation remains contemporary and best practice, but this is a fresh bill that will establish a very new and very much-needed act. We are implementing a recommendation of the Royal Commission into

the Casino Operator and Licence, which I will come back to later, to extend the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to cover casino tax payable by Crown Melbourne by establishing this act as a taxation law. This will implement the royal commission's recommendation to strengthen the taxation arrangements for Crown Melbourne.

Before I discuss the bill at length, I would really like to reflect on some of the contributions from the members here today, commencing with the member for Point Cook and his examples of Crown's egregious breaches of their obligations, their disdain for doing what is right and their failure to pay their fair share of taxes. It truly was deplorable behaviour. The member for Hastings made note of the fairness of this bill, and I have to concur that each aspect of this is about what is fair and what is right – that Crown pays what is fair and they do what is right and they do not get away with planning to do the wrong thing anymore. The member for Hastings and the members for Kororoit and Pakenham spoke poignantly upon the scourge of gambling; they touched upon that.

I am the daughter of a punter. We had greyhounds and raced them. Dad loved his greyhounds – I have often joked in the past that he knew more about them than he did about me at school at the time, and that is fine, that was his pastime. It was his letting off of steam; he worked very, very hard on our businesses. But he loved a punt, and he loved the doggies. I think I visited every dog track in Victoria, in southern New South Wales and even over the border in South Australia throughout my childhood. I spent many many, many, many, many hours of my lifetime at those dog tracks, and I saw people enjoying themselves, but I also saw people who were desperate, who were at their end, who could not control how they felt, who could not control how much they put on their bets. It is a compulsion, it is an addiction, it is more than just a problem.

The racing industry can provide wonderful jobs, as the member for South Barwon mentioned before, and everything in balance really. But this bill will help to ensure that in wagering also we get a greater percentage in tax, and I will touch a bit more on Crown and where we are going with that.

The bill establishes a new standalone Gambling Taxation Act which is going to perform five key functions. It will increase the wagering and betting tax rate from 10 to 15 per cent from 1 July next year, a significant portion of which will go to the Hospitals and Charities Fund, and I will elucidate more on that later. It will also transfer the administration of casino tax from the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission to the commissioner of state revenue. It will increase the tax rate on electronic gaming machines for Crown to match the equivalent rates at the small pokies down the road, sometimes at not-for-profit organisations like your RSL. There will be no more special deals for Crown now.

It will establish a new Gambling Taxation Act as a taxation law under the TAA – the Taxation Administration Act 1997 – and it will consolidate other gambling taxes currently administered by the commissioner in the new act. In essence it is a tidying up of legal instruments which deal with taxes and gambling, but more importantly, as has been noted, it is about Crown paying its fair dues. Now, taxation bills are probably not the most popular kind of bill a government can introduce, but I have got a sneaking suspicion that this one is likely to go down fairly well across the broader community, and it is because it is requiring a multibillion-dollar industry to do what is right and, as I said before, to pay its fair share. We all have a very strong sense of fairness and justice in this state of Victoria, and I know that the people of Monbulk do as well. When we see it, we know it.

I mentioned before that a significant portion of the wagering and betting tax is going to the Hospitals and Charities Fund. It is an incredibly important fund. It is used to support our hospital, health and community services across the state. It is fairly hard to argue that it is unworthy, isn't it? Two hospitals, Casey Hospital in Berwick and the Angliss in Upper Ferntree Gully, serve the people of my electorate in Monbulk predominantly. The Angliss Hospital is actually located within Monbulk. We are very proud of it. It provides the most important health link for the majority of people living across the Dandenong Ranges. It has proudly served our community for over 80 years. We have actually done quite a bit as a state government at the Angliss Hospital. We have delivered \$20 million for their new

intensive care unit and short-stay unit, and early works are just about to commence on a \$112 million multistorey building that is going to deliver a new inpatient unit, four operating theatres, a new central sterile supply department and spaces for outpatient services. Just outside the southern border of my electorate, Casey Hospital has seen major investment, including six new operating theatres and two upgraded theatres. This investment also provided 128 new multi-day beds, 12 intensive care unit beds and 12 day surgery beds. Projects like these are made possible by modern fit-for-purpose tax regimes, and the betting and wagering sphere is changing. It is increasingly becoming digitised and mobile, and this bill responds to those shifts in a responsible and sustainable way.

I just want to touch on the royal commission into Crown. I know that many of my wonderful colleagues in this place have done so as well, but it would be really remiss of me not to mention what went on. So this bill aims to stop the obfuscating of tax obligations which came to light in recent years. The royal commission identified Crown Melbourne's lack of compliance with its tax obligations and recommended that casino taxation arrangements be brought under the TAA. Our government accepted this recommendation, acknowledging that the TAA has broad provisions regarding tax collection, penalty imposition, interest on tax defaults and record keeping, all of which contribute to an effective tax assessment. Crown's underpayment of their casino tax showed a flagrant and complete disregard for the law. Its behaviour was egregious to say the least. In 2011 Crown Melbourne embarked upon a plan – a plan; it was by design, not by accident – to minimise its casino tax by claiming as deductions amounts that were not deductible items. They were dodging their taxes.

Luba Grigorovitch: Shame.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Shame indeed. If we did it, we would end up at the very, very pointy end of the law. So their plan involved concealing from the regulator the true nature of the deductions for fear of getting caught, and in the end it failed when the royal commission that our government set up caught them out. Crown Melbourne has already repaid significant sums in back taxes and interest, but this legislation will provide a sustainable model to ensure that going forward it will always pay what is due.

The bill also increases the total rates on casino gaming machines so that it is subject – Crown, when I say 'it' – to the same tax structure as venue operators with club entitlements. The new act will substitute the existing 31.5 per cent tax on casino electronic gaming machines with a progressive tax rate scale, bringing Victoria in line with other jurisdictions. It is going to safeguard taxation equity by ensuring the taxes paid by Crown Melbourne are not lower than rates at smaller not-for-profit, community-based venues, such as the local RSL down the road – though I will make note that none of the RSLs in Monbulk electorate has a poker machine. I would like to put that on the record. They are very proud of that.

Under the provisions outlined in this bill, the casino operator will be obligated to submit regular returns and make monthly payments of casino taxes to the commissioner. It will be on a level playing field with all the other gaming venues across the state. Once again, as I said, this bill is about Crown paying its fair share. Moreover – this is the part I do like, I have to say – the act includes various criminal offences related to taxation, ensuring accountability and deterring false information, deliberate omissions and tax evasion. The penalties for these offences are substantial and are applicable to both corporate taxpayers and their officers, meaning those who instigate this kind of activity cannot hide behind a veil anymore. By transferring the casino tax provisions to a dedicated gambling taxation act that operates under the TAA, we will align the legal framework and administration of casino tax with other major state taxes. The Andrews Labor government, through this strengthened legislative framework, will ensure the industry operates transparently and is held to account, with severe repercussions if found in breach of its obligations, and that is why I unequivocally commend this bill to the house.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:01): I too rise to speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. It is an absolute pleasure to rise to speak in support of this bill in this place, which was previously mentioned earlier this morning as the people's Parliament and the people's house indeed, and to talk on a bill that is just absolutely essential for all Victorians, particularly some of the most vulnerable Victorians, in going even further to ensure that they are protected from gambling harm and also, most importantly, making one of the biggest ends of town pay a fairer share of tax.

It was a really interesting contribution that we heard earlier from the member for Hastings, when he reflected upon the language that we use in this place to talk about problem gamblers and that it is probably more appropriate to talk about gambling addictions and gambling addicts in fact. It really did make me cast my mind back to my first memories of gambling and perhaps some of the ways in which it interacted with my family history in my early years growing up.

I think about my Nanna Jean, who has, very sadly, passed. She was a big one for heading off to the local bowling club and playing the pokies. I have talked about Nanna Jean here before. She went deaf at about age 50 or 60 – completely deaf – so she had that disability and that challenge in her life. Her husband by that time had passed away, and except for the presence of her children and grandchildren she was probably largely isolated in society because of that disability. There was nothing she loved more than heading over to the bowling club there at Kingscliff Beach, getting a cheap roast dinner and spending a bit of time on the pokies.

Nanna never had anything in her life and came from a very poor background. She would only, I think, be putting in 5- or 10-cent pieces, so she could spend quite a bit a time there once her pension money came in and play the pokies with those 5-cent pieces. But she never won anything; it was just purely enjoyment and a way to pass the time for her. I am not sure I would ever call her a gambling addict, but what I do remember is there being sort of cross words spoken in the house. I was very young at the time. She would always be encouraging her grandchildren, because none of her children ever wanted to go with her, to come down to the bowls club and, as the member for Hastings talked about, get a lemonade or something like that while she would pass the time playing the pokies. It was something that was very much frowned upon in my family.

As the member for Monbulk just talked about, having a punt every now and then is something that so many Victorians and Australians do enjoy, and none more than my brother Ben, who absolutely loves having a bit of a bet on Sportsbet depending on who is playing and what game he is watching. But he is someone that has tended to continue in my Nanna Jean's footsteps. He loves going down to the bowling club when he is home from work and putting money into the pokies but, very sadly, he puts in a lot more than 5-cent pieces. Quite often, I know to the distress of my mother, when Ben actually does win some money on the pokies – he has been known to win quite a few thousand dollars on those machines, never knowing how much he does put in – unfortunately it is not money that he goes home to bank. He is very quick to spend it, and probably a lot of that money goes back into the machines. I am not standing here saying that my brother is perhaps a problem gambler or a gambling addict; he is someone who likes to punt. But I do reflect, now that he has a child, on what his son will see now that he is two and growing up and what his interactions with gambling and perhaps pokies and other things will be and if he will follow in the footsteps of my brother.

This is a really important bill. It takes a look at the tax arrangements that are in place for Crown Melbourne as our city's biggest casino operator. We know that a lot of the findings about the way that Crown operates were that it has been unconscionable; the member for Monbulk talked very passionately about how absolutely abhorrent and predatory in nature that conduct was. The findings of the royal commission did back up those of the Bergin inquiry in New South Wales, which found that Crown Resorts was unsuitable to go ahead and hold a casino licence in Sydney.

Really importantly, in response to the royal commission our government has accepted all of its findings, and we have committed to implementing them in full. This legislation is part of that response. Time and time again we see this government on this side of the house introducing bills to the house

that go about implementing in full our commitments regarding many, many royal commissions that we have introduced in this state.

In fact this is the fourth piece of legislation that deals directly with implementing the recommendations of the royal commission. It is in direct response to the final report being introduced in 2021. Our government quickly implemented nine recommendations through the Casino and Gambling Legislation Amendment Act 2021, and that included establishing, importantly, the special manager to monitor and oversee the casino as well as setting up the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission as the new regulator for the casino. That act went above and beyond the recommendations by making it clear that Crown will lose its licence at the end of the special manager oversight period unless the VGCCC is satisfied that they are suitable to continue operating a Melbourne casino, as well as increasing – and this is really important to have done – the maximum fine to \$100 million.

To top it off, we also removed provisions under the licence's management agreement that would have required us to compensate Crown Melbourne for any change in the regulations to reform their operations, because let us face it – and I think I speak on behalf of all Victorians here – Victorians should not be held to ransom by a casino to ensure that they have done the right thing. It is quite an outrageous notion to even consider really. In 2022 we built upon this and passed the Casino and Liquor Legislation Amendment Act 2022, which delivered a further two recommendations and strengthened the powers and the functions of inspectors and embedded harm minimisation from gambling into the objectives of the VGCCC. We also, importantly, expanded grounds for disciplinary action.

I also just want to touch on and say a few words about the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Act 2022, which just passed in September last year. That delivered a further 12 recommendations with the aim of preventing money laundering at the casino, further reducing gambling-related harm and strengthening corporate ownership and governance arrangements, such as making carded play compulsory on all gambling machines and table games at the casino so that people can keep track of their spending and set fully binding time and money limits. In addition to this, the legislation paved the way for mandatory precommitment to come into effect at the casino. That is going to require all gambling activity to be tracked and cash limits of \$1000 per 24 hours for both pokies and table games.

So you can see here that some of these recommendations and reforms coming through this bill and others that have been introduced to this house are going a long way to setting limits and having further rail guards for people that are struggling, not as problem gamblers but as gambling addicts who struggle to maintain self-control. We are going to step in and provide those rail guards to minimise the amount of money that they are pouring into Melbourne's and Victoria's largest casinos.

This is a really important bill, as I have talked about. There have been many stories here shared in this place about gambling addicts and just punters. I think it is important to talk about the stories of punters like my brother, who does have a lot of fun with his mates down at the bowls club – great social times. I do think that it is okay that he is down there having social activity and that kind of thing with his mates, but this type of legislation quite often does not go to the protections and the safeguards that people like my brother need, it goes to gambling addicts who have a much more serious addiction to gambling and are unable to restrain themselves. So this is very much a bill that I am very proud to stand in this house and speak on, and I commend it to the house.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (12:11): I rise today to speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. Member for Frankston, I thank you for your support over there of me rising to speak about this bill. I congratulate the government on bringing this bill in. I think it is important that we are implementing what the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence has suggested, especially in regard to Crown Casino – we all know that Crown were dodging and weaving for quite a few years. If I had one criticism of the government, it would be that it could have done it sooner. For the best part of the

last two decades it has been a Labor government; we have only been in for four years. But I am grateful that they have taken a positive step forward in addressing the issues with this.

It was interesting listening to the member for Hastings talk earlier about his mate who had a gambling problem, and I have a lot of friends that also like a punt, and there is nothing wrong with that. I used to be captain at the Warragul Country Club and we have a pokie venue there, and quite often I would walk through the venue. I am not a punter myself. I do not use pokies; I find them extremely boring and brain-numbing. But I look in there and I can see people just sitting there and pressing a button and pressing a button and not really knowing what time of day it is. And you hear horror stories where people will leave their kids in car parks and things like that, so I think any reform on gambling is good reform, and I congratulate the government on this.

But I will also point out that there are some positives with gambling taxation, and this brings me back to my local community. The two pokie venues in my community, being the Warragul Country Club and the Warragul Downtowner, are regulated every year to give money back to the local community through pokie revenue. I think it is about \$100,000 a year; I could be wrong. Many of you probably do not know, but through the election campaign last year and on being elected I have actually been working on four units for homeless women in our area. In my district we have about 500 homeless people every night, and quite often older women are the most vulnerable – and this is for women over 55 – because they may not have anywhere to go, they may not have that parent left at home. The community has got behind this project for homeless women, and I would say to date we are pushing in community donations over \$300,000 to get this project completed for vulnerable people. But this brings me back to the Warragul Country Club and the Warragul Downtowner: they got together, and every year they have got to give support, and between the two venues they donated \$6000 to this project. That will hopefully pay for the air conditioning and heating units that are required in the project.

So gambling taxation is not a bad thing, and I think in this instance the government has done the right thing. It does bring us in line with New South Wales, which will give consistency across the two states. But I suppose where I get really concerned is the support for gambling addicts. Everyone in this chamber would know someone that just cannot control themselves when it comes to gambling. Being new to this house, I see the support that the government gives to safe injecting rooms, for example, but I do not know if I see that level of support for gambling addicts. I would actually like the government to go a little bit further with that, because we do know that addiction is a problem. We know that a lot of people cannot control their addiction. You could nearly call it a disease. I would like the government to go further with this. I know they are trying, and I know they are pushing forward on reforms, but gambling addiction and drug addiction are probably two scourges of the community that really do wreck people's lives. If the government can implement a program to support gambling addicts, that will be a positive program. When that comes forward I will support that as well.

It is a 5 per cent rise in taxation, with 4 per cent back to the industry and 1 per cent to consolidated revenue, which I think will end up back in the industry anyway. The industry does need support. It does employ a lot of people, and it has a lot of positive impacts on our economy through employment. People going to Flemington and having a race day out – that is fine; that supports a lot of employment as well. So we do not want to see the industry collapse – that would be a mistake – but we do want to see the industry being proactive in what they do. I go back to that supporting addicts would be a really, really positive step.

When we talk about gambling, we do not want to hang people out to dry just because they have a punt. When you go back to the world wars, we were playing two-up. That is having a punt, and there is nothing wrong with that. But we do have to really bring people back and make them aware that you do not want this to control your life. Like the member for Hastings, I have had people close to me where gambling has destroyed their life. It is sad when people cannot afford to put food on the table for their kids or they cannot afford to take their kids on a holiday because they just get so consumed by what gambling is. As I said earlier, I am not a punter; I do not think I will ever be a punter. I do not mind having a bet every now and again – you have a bet on the Melbourne Cup or you might be out

with your friends and having a bet – but I do like what the government has done here with this bill. I think it is a really positive step forward. I am so grateful they have taken in the royal commission report. Holding Crown Casino to account is an important thing. Their behaviour was abhorrent, as other members before me have said. They need to be brought into line, and the government has done the right thing here with this bill.

In closing, I think what we need to do looking forward, as members of this house, is actually have more bipartisan support when it comes to issues like this. In here we can be red or blue or green, but when it comes down to people that are the most vulnerable in our communities, it is nice to see the whole house come together and say ‘This is a good idea’. I congratulate the government, and I commend this bill in full.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (12:19): I agree with the member for Narracan. It is fantastic to be in this house when we all do agree on something. If I remember the member for Mordialloc’s contribution yesterday, the member was saying that one in five – about 20 per cent – of gamblers have a problem with their gambling. I think he gave another figure, which was that about 70 per cent of people gamble. My quick maths says about one in seven people in this state have a problem with gambling. I presume that is adults – you would hope, although I will get to that in a bit, and I have got another soapbox that I will stand on for that.

It is good to see that this house accepts that this is a good bill and that we all agree on the changes to the point-of-consumption tax (POCT) and rectifying the gaming provisions. Like others in the house I will go to those problems that I mentioned earlier about the problem gamblers. How do we address those issues whilst accepting that this is an industry that has its place in Victoria? Speaker, I know you have done a lot of work with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, and I know other members have also – it was the member for Kororoit who mentioned she is now on there. It is something that members on both sides of the house have worked on and sequential governments have worked on, but the problem will not go away. I think we can accept that for as long as we have gambling – and we will probably always have gambling – we will always have a problem of gambling harm.

The thing that concerns me, and I raised this in this house in the last term of government, is that we have a problem with teaching our young how to gamble in gaming. Loot boxes – for those new members who have not heard me rant on about this, some video games which I like playing and kids like playing have gambling-like behaviour in them. If you play a game like, say, FIFA, a soccer game, you can put real money into the game. You spin the wheel, the lights flash and you get a set of what are essentially digital footy cards, but you have no idea what you are getting. You could get Lionel Messi, you could get the third-string goalkeeper for a team in wherever, who I am sure is very good but he is not Lionel Messi. Effectively that is gambling.

When you look at our Gambling Regulation Act 2003, there is a set of three bullet points, which I do not remember off by heart, that essentially say ‘This is what we deem as gambling in the state of Victoria’. When you consider loot boxes in games like FIFA, they tick those three boxes: something of value is wagered, there is a chance of value returning; I forget what the third is. To me, it is not the same as putting your money in a poker machine, it is not the same as necessarily betting on a trifecta at the races, but it is the same practice. And the same techniques that are used by the electronic gaming manufacturers in pokies – the lights, the buzzers and that sort of dopamine-inducing adrenaline rush that people get on pokies – are the same sort of techniques that gaming manufacturers use in things like FIFA, NBA and other games, and they do that because it works. If it did not work, they would not do it.

To their credit the industry has been put on notice in the last number of years by some other countries. The Netherlands and Belgium have outlawed loot boxes in games. Austria has recently made a change, and in other countries like ours the manufacturers are moving to do some self-management or put in self-limiting features, similar to things that we were talking about in regard to Crown where you can set your own limits. The thing is you can change limits, so whilst it is a good thing, it does not fix the problem.

I am not going to be political here. The classification system for our video games is a federal matter – it is not something that the state has jurisdiction over – and there have been numerous inquiries in our federal Parliament over the last five or six years. Two of them at least have said that loot boxes are an issue and they are an issue that increases and potentially leads to gambling later on, but up until very recently there has been no change.

I was very happy to see – and credit to her – that Minister Rowland in Canberra has put forward a change, which our state Attorneys-General will discuss, that any video games that include outright gambling should be R+, so 18 and over, and any games that include simulated gambling, so loot boxes, should be M+. At the very least that means that when I as a parent go to buy the latest whatever – the new *Zelda* came out; my son was very, very excited last Friday, so he got an early birthday present – and that game includes gambling, I do not necessarily know whether there are loot boxes or whether there is cash that can be exchanged for avatars or whatever. At least with classification I am aware without having to go to Google and look up exactly what is in there. This is a really good first step. I would potentially argue, on a personal note, that we could probably say that that should fall under the POCT, and there would probably be a bit of income coming from the gamers, but they probably do not want me to say that. I hope that our Attorneys-General for this country will strongly consider and agree with what Minister Rowland is putting forward. I think it is a step towards having a further discussion about what we are teaching our kids.

A number of members have mentioned this over the week on this bill and the previous bill. When you have 14-year-old or 15-year-old kids who are talking about how the Doggies are going to beat the Hawks – everyone is going to beat the Hawks at the moment, but anyway – 5 to 1 instead of ‘We’re going to smash ya’, that is how it permeates throughout society. I go back to the Brownlow last year. We all love watching the Brownlow, but it was every ad, every round. I mean, I would ask the AFL and Channel 7 – is it still on 7? I cannot remember – for it to be not on every ad. You do not need to tell me, surely, that I can get a multi on round 15, that these guys played well and that if I am quick I can get in and maybe recoup half the losses I am about to lose. And then I can put some more money in and chat with my friends at the same time. For people who want to do that, great, knock yourself out. I really hope you do not have a problem with it; I hope you can walk away. But for the rest of us watching with our kids, with our teenagers or younger in the room, I do not need you to tell them – and I still want to watch the Brownlow. So I would ask the powers that be that we do not have jurisdiction over to consider that as well.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (12:29): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. Just before I do I would like to reflect on the member for Prahran’s contribution from a little bit earlier. The member for Prahran came into this place, as did other members of the Greens political party, to lecture us, lecture the government, on housing and on homelessness in one of the more extraordinary contributions that I have heard this week, and I have heard many of the contributions from the member for Brighton, so that is indeed saying something. To come in here and lecture us on housing when your federal party is opposing a bill for the largest program for social and affordable housing that this country has ever seen is absurd. When you have Greens councils across Melbourne opposing developments for social and affordable housing, to come in here and lecture us is absurd.

The Greens do not have much of a presence in my electorate of Tarneit, but gee, I wish some of the voters around the inner city of Melbourne – some of the voters around Prahran, Richmond, Melbourne and Brunswick – could come into this place and see how the Greens operate. We know that they do not open their office on a Friday – we know that – but most of the time they do not rock up to work here until 2 o’clock either. The member for Prahran came in, had 20 minutes to speak and spoke for 4 – all of it absolute dross. It is a joke, and the Greens political party is an absolute joke. Now that I have got that off my chest, we can go to the contents of the bill at hand.

Paul Edbrooke: No-one is disagreeing with you.

Dylan WIGHT: This bill does a few things. The Gambling Taxation Bill 2023 consolidates Victoria's gambling taxes; strengthens casino taxation, which is something that is incredibly important; and implements key recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence. That royal commission came about after a New South Wales-based inquiry that found that Crown Casino in Melbourne was not suitable to hold a licence. It made a number of findings and a number of recommendations. This bill, as I said, picks up all of those recommendations and indeed goes further.

Out of that royal commission we saw – it was uncovered – some of the more egregious acts that we have seen in this space, really ever. It found that Crown had improperly claimed deductions in casino tax calculations, resulting in significant underpayments in tax to the state, and the member for Point Cook made an incredibly eloquent contribution around this point much earlier. It resulted in, as I said, significant underpayments – in the tens of millions of dollars. It is easy to just think, 'Oh, they didn't pay their tax. They'll pay it back.' That is money out of the pocket of every single Victorian. That is money that can be used to upgrade schools – indeed to upgrade schools in my electorate in either Tarnet or Hoppers Crossing – to build the roads that we need to get around our great state and to upgrade rail transport as well.

The royal commission recommended amending the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to include penalty and offence provisions for casino taxes payable by Crown Melbourne. This was seen as a necessary measure to ensure proper administration, enforcement and penalties for tax defaults. It also found there were associations with known criminals and money-laundering activity. It was incredibly important that we had this royal commission. It was something of incredible public importance and should have been important to every single Victorian, whether they like to have a bet or not.

What this bill also does, which is of particular interest to me – if those in this chamber have not figured it out yet, I like horseracing – is increase the point-of-consumption tax. I will speak about it in respect to the Victorian racing industry in particular. As I said in my contribution, I believe it was on Tuesday, on the Gambling Regulation Amendment Bill 2023, the Victorian racing industry is something that is incredibly important to this state, not just to people who like to have a bet and not just to people who enjoy the entertainment of horseracing, it is an incredibly important economic driver in this state – \$4.7 billion of economic activity to be exact. Half of that is made up of household income. The racing industry supports 120,000 full-time equivalent jobs, including hundreds of jobs in my area of Wyndham, both at the Werribee racetrack on race day, where there will be hundreds of people employed, and at the adjacent quarantine, veterinary and breeding facilities.

What the increase in this point-of-consumption tax does is increase the contribution from betting turnover from 3.5 to 7.5 per cent, and that will result in additional funding for the racing industry of \$120 million per year. To put that into layman's terms, when we talk about a larger contribution of betting turnover, that is one of the main ways that the racing industry is funded and indeed one of the main ways that the jobs and economic activity in this industry continue to be sustainable. As I said, make no mistake: this industry sustains families through employment. What will happen is that that share of turnover will increase from 3.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent.

I have heard some commentary outside of this place both that this is a tax on punters and that bookmakers and corporate bookmakers will pass this loss onto punters. Just to be clear: corporate bookmakers in this state and in this country have been ripping punters off for years, for as long as they have existed to be exact. Once upon a time when you would go to a racecourse and bet with a smaller bookmaker on course or indeed bet on the exchange, a market would typically open at about 115 per cent and an SP bookmaker would open at about 110 per cent. That 115 per cent means that the margin is 15 per cent, so as long as the book is set right – and make no mistake, corporate bookmakers do not set their books wrong – they will make 15 per cent irrespective of which horse wins.

If you go to Sportsbet or Ladbrokes – pick your poison, it does not matter – and look at race 2 today when that market opens, that market will open at 130 per cent. There is a 30 per cent margin in that

market, so the notion that this is going to be the change that makes odds worse for punters and that it is a tax on punters is absolutely absurd. Corporate bookmakers have been ripping punters off for years, and this change makes absolutely no difference. For those bookmakers that are making hundreds of millions of dollars a year, if they were to pass this small rise on, I think that would be absolutely reprehensible. This bill is incredibly important to support that fantastic industry, and I commend it to the house.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (12:39): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023, and any opportunity that I have to get up and declare that I am a gambler, I will do so. I certainly will profess that I have never been a very good gambler, but I am very consistent. I persist with it until I improve, but I struggle over times, let me tell you. I bet on all forms of racing. I like variety and I do love the horses. I note the member for Tarneit, who has just left the chamber, is a good horseracing fan, and I do love the horses.

Melton is the heart of harness racing in Victoria, if not Australia, and I do get to Tabcorp Park in Melton quite a bit for many events but also to have a bit of a flutter on the harness races. I do remember in my time as an ambulance paramedic when I used to go to the trots at the Melbourne Showgrounds. We would go into the first-aid room when we first got there and we would have our race book marked off by people in the first-aid room with who was going to win that night. I can tell you I went home many nights without backing a winner even though the book was marked by people that thought they were experts. But anyway, these sorts of things happen.

This is the fourth tranche of legislation implementing the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence recommendations. Earlier the member for Preston made a good point: it is a bad look when the government needs to initiate a royal commission to look at an agency and the nefarious and harmful operations and practices that they have. I make reference to the member for Hastings, and I congratulate him on his contribution. He reminded us earlier that there are no new taxes in this bill. This is about making sure that the multinational, tax-dodging, mammoth, global conglomerates are paying their fair share back to this state for the people of this state to benefit from that money that they drag out of the pockets of Victorians and the vulgar profits that they extract from local communities across Victoria.

This bill does many things, and I am very pleased to see our government giving strength to the regulators to regulate. It has been a bugbear of mine for many years that some of our regulators have not regulated well, and I am pleased to see that this bill will allow that.

The bill consolidates and amends various taxation acts, but it introduces new and strengthened casino taxing arrangements starting in a few weeks, at the beginning of the next financial year. It also extends the application of the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to strengthen arrangements and cover casino taxes payable by Crown Melbourne. It also re-enacts provisions to provide a single legislative vehicle to address gambling taxes administered by the commissioner. It will ensure that Crown are lodging their returns and paying their taxes monthly rather than for an extended period of time, and this requirement is going to ensure that there is a regular and enforceable watch on their actions. Obviously it is much easier to enforce something when you see the regularity or any irregularities in what they are supposed to do. We cannot allow the situation of deliberate exploitation to get a hold again. It is something that was exposed, and this is what this bill is trying to address.

A casino operator will be required to register with the commissioner and lodge returns and pay casino tax and the community benefit levy in respect of each month from 1 July 2023. Electronic gaming machines operated by a casino operator will be subject to the same tax structure as electronic gaming machines operated by venue operators with club entitlements.

The bill also provides for the imposition of a keno tax – if you do not know what keno is, I am not going to waste anyone's time explaining it – making sure that keno entities are lodging a return with the commissioner monthly and paying their taxes. This is not a new tax for hardworking Victorians.

It is what keno entities owe, and people that have been into any licensed clubs will have seen the TV screens with keno numbers on them. It is probably a broader version of TattsLotto, to some degree, where you try and select numbers and try and win some money from it. I do not think I have ever seen anyone win on keno. I assume there are people that have won on it, but not in many of the clubs that I have been to.

The bill details an increase in the rate of the wagering and betting tax from 10 per cent to 15 per cent from next year, and I should say that the point-of-consumption tax introduction was a good thing. In 2019 Victoria introduced a point-of-consumption tax for sport and race betting. We now know that this means that all sport and race betting losses by Victorian punters are recorded in Victoria for taxation purposes regardless of whether they bet with a Victorian bookmaker or one licensed interstate. This is information that is published by the State Revenue Office, and it shows that estimated sport and racing betting losses increased from \$1.65 billion in 2019–20 to \$2.58 billion in 2021–22. It is a significant amount of money in regard to betting losses.

Increasing the tax of these tax-minimising vampires – I will call them – not only brings us into line with other states but benefits Victorians in more ways than we can imagine. The Victorian racing industry has been able to stabilise and build on their industry, and these changes are very much welcomed by the Victorian racing industry and their stakeholders. I spoke about the racing industry, and in particular the harness racing industry – about how many jobs it provides. I think in harness racing it is about 4300 jobs. Certainly in the thoroughbred industry it would be that if not more. It is important. The good thing about these industries is that families can get involved. There is a lot of history behind families being involved in regard to these industries – in horseracing and even in harness racing. The taxes are directly redistributed to vital and benevolent funds, like the Anzac Day Proceeds Fund and the Hospitals and Charities Fund, which are two very worthy causes that can be utilised in a very positive way.

I spoke earlier this week about the harm that comes from gambling, and it may help if I quantify it. In the LGA of Melton \$167,460 is spent on pokies every day. That is in excess of \$61 million per year, and we have seven pokie venues in the LGA of Melton with 523 poker machines. That is only half of what they are allocated, so they can have a lot more than the 523. Melton is the thirteenth LGA in terms of highest expenditure on gaming machines across Victoria. They are allowed to have 824 gaming machines. It amounts to on average per day, spent by an adult on a gaming machine in the Melton LGA, of around \$452. That is an average per person. If you factor that in, there are obviously a small amount of people that are spending a lot of money on gaming machines per day, considering that a lot of people would not gamble at all. You have just got to wonder about those people that are averaging \$452 per day on a gaming machine. We go on about the cost of living, yet we are dragging this money out of people's pockets – I would say unnecessarily – without the proper supports and things like that.

Of course there is a lot of enticement of people into these gambling dens. There are a lot of incentives for people to gamble and bet, in particular the online stuff nowadays. It is almost like a magnet dragging money out of your pocket. For someone like me at my age, I cannot get my head around electronic gambling. I have got no idea how to do it. I am pleased that I do not do it, even though I enjoy gambling. I am one of these old-fashioned ones that would fill it out with a pen in a TAB and stick it in the machine and get a ticket back. I love to go to the races and bet with the bookies, because it is easier – it does not mean to say you win, as the member for Tarneit explained earlier – but I just cannot get my head around electronic gambling. I will not get involved with it, and I hate the incentives that they give. I think the younger generation get caught up with it. This is an incredibly important bill. I am pleased that the opposition are not opposing it, and I commend the bill to the house.

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (12:49): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Gambling Taxation Bill 2023. From the outset I thank the Treasurer and relevant ministers and relevant departments and all the teams who have put together this really important piece of legislation. Indeed, also from the outset, I want to just reflect on some of the contributions from speakers: firstly,

the member for Narracan. It was good to hear from him and hear, in a sentiment of bipartisanship, how gambling harm impacts his community and also how he is absolutely in support of this bill. There are some days in Parliament when we all work as a team. It happens probably more often than not and more often is reflected outside these chambers, so it was wonderful to hear the member for Narracan's contribution. The member for Hastings, in his first contribution on a bill, made a fantastic speech and really articulated well some of the tragic stories he heard about the impact that gambling has on families, on individuals and in particular on constituents in his local community. The member for Pakenham spoke about the importance of minimising the harm that gambling causes in the lives of our local constituents and also spoke about that balancing act and the importance of the industry – the Pakenham Racing Club, I believe. And both the member for Pakenham and the member for Tarneit went on to detail the racing industry, the amount of jobs and the economic activity it creates – some billions of dollars. It is certainly not insignificant.

The member for Monbulk rightly pointed out the horrible stuff we saw from Crown Casino – the tax dodging. Obviously this legislation, in response to the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence, goes a long way to addressing those issues with the Andrews Labor government's commitment to respond to those recommendations. She also spoke of her delight at her RSLs not having any electronic gaming machines – not having any pokies. I am happy to report that none of the RSLs in my electorate have any pokies either – the Bayswater and Boronia RSLs. Much like the member for Monbulk spoke about, it is a great pleasure for me that my RSLs do not have any pokies.

Deputy Speaker, in your contribution on this bill you spoke about how the online gambling environment has changed and how gambling itself has changed. I want to come to that point in a tick. Why are we here? We are here of course because of the royal commission in large part. This bill has several elements to it, but it is first and foremost about responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence and strengthening oversight of Crown. The Royal Commission into the Casino Operator and Licence was established in February 2021 to inquire into and report on the suitability of Crown Melbourne to hold its casino licence. Of course the Victorian government initiated the royal commission in response to serious findings in the New South Wales Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority inquiry, which found Crown Resorts was unsuitable to hold a casino licence at the Sydney Barangaroo complex. We know the recommendations from the royal commission's report were delivered on 15 October 2021.

I am really pleased that this legislation is before the house. I am really pleased at the bipartisanship that it has received from most despite some of the amendments from the Greens. I will not get into that. I think the member for Tarneit handled them quite well. I am very pleased to be part of a government that is spending quite some time reforming the gambling industry, understanding that important balance, advocating to other levels of government – Deputy Speaker, you covered some of the levers that are not, obviously, in our reach – and advocating to the federal government for change, as some of the contributions today talked about. Loot boxes – no-one had even heard of that phrase five years ago, if not more recently, to be quite frank. But our government has done a lot of work around some of the things we can do: ads around schools and increasing funding to the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, who do critically important work. And we have made other reforms over the course of the journey through pieces of legislation that have come through this place – for example, the Casino Legislation Amendment (Royal Commission Implementation and Other Matters) Act 2022, passed by Parliament last year, delivered on 12 more recommendations addressing the prevention of money laundering at the casino, minimising gambling-related harm and strengthening corporate ownership and governance arrangements. So that was another important piece of legislation last year, continuing our government's commitment to minimising gambling harm and playing an important role and always continuing to find that really important balance, supporting family and supporting individuals who absolutely need it.

As well, I want to detail some instances from the last 4½ years. I have heard some very, very tragic stories of locals in my electorate who have certainly experienced gambling addiction. It is a very, very

serious thing. I have been no stranger to detailing some of my experiences in life. I had a very interesting childhood, and this was before the time of all the online gambling, so I do not know what it would be like if I had to relive it again but with a whole bunch of ads – just being spammed and targeted, with your data sold and them knowing every inch and every minute of detail of what you do on your phone, finding you on free-to-air TV and all of that.

I remember in my childhood that I would literally have to go down to the ANZ bank – at about 10 years old – I would have to ride down there and I would have to put my dad's second ATM card in before my dad pulled the rest out, minus the mortgage. So I would go down there, and I knew I had to hit 'other account'. I put the number in and I put the PIN in, and I still remember those numbers today. I did that because my father was addicted to gambling. I can say he is doing much, much better now. In fact he hardly gambles at all. He is much like me now. We just put 20, 30 bucks on the Melbourne Cup – in the last couple of years I actually won quite a substantial amount of money – but that is literally my only bet, and that is where my father is now. But back then that was my experience. Rolling up to the ATM at 7 o'clock at night outside of daylight saving was not fun as a 10-year-old.

I remember Mum had her own issues. During school times my dad would literally leave and he would not be back for days, sometimes weeks. On some of those occasions my mum would say, 'Get on your bike and go follow him.' So I would be with my dad while he would be off on his gambling binges, with alcohol et cetera. I would stay in random places, and I would hang with him; that is how I would think about it. I would be with him for three or four days, and I was there to basically make sure that he was okay. That is what gambling does to people. I would stay in random motels, I would be in the licensed venues – and no-one said a thing. I was always there, the 10-year-old – I think potentially even younger. I remember going to the racetrack with Dad, and that was just what my life was.

So it is always important as a government that we continue to understand how the environment of gambling is changing, how we have to continue to use our levers to protect families, like mine growing up, understand – Deputy Speaker, as in part of the contribution you made that I highlighted previously – how gambling has changed and continue that advocacy to the federal government about how gambling advertising works and how it is playing a real role in the lives of people who should not know about gambling. I have got 13-year-olds coming to me going 'You were \$1.70 on Sportsbet last year' or something like that, and I am like, 'How do you even know?'

A member: You were less than that.

Jackson TAYLOR: I got to less than that, you are right. But there is a time and a place, and teenagers and young people should not know about and should not be exposed and privy to gambling ads en masse, continuously. It is really harming our kids, and I have great concerns. I think it is important that we mention that and we continue to advocate to the federal government on those matters.

But of course I am very proud as well that as part of this legislation the point-of-consumption tax is going to guarantee certainty to the racing industry but also is going to help the Hospital and Charities Fund to continue to do their important work. As well, Crown Casino will pay their fair share. The Andrews Labor government has a very bold, positive agenda to deliver for all Victorians, and making sure that Crown pays their fair share goes to delivering things like the Angliss Hospital upgrade and like the rebuild of Maroondah Hospital and the upgrade of Boronia station. It is critically important legislation, but it is not everything when it comes to minimising gambling harm; it is an important step in the right direction. It is a fantastic piece of legislation that does so much, and of course our government will continue to do more. I commend this bill to the house.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:59): Jeez, there are times in this place when you have to reflect upon the power of some individual MPs and their contributions. I have just been sitting here, as the rest of the house has, in stunned silence listening to the member for Bayswater. Thank you for sharing your story. Sitting here in a sterile green chamber – sorry, clerks, I know you try and make it homely

for us – often we talk about legislation that changes people’s lives, but to hear someone from this chamber talking about a piece of legislation for a sector where their life has been changed by things that happened in that sector is incredible.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Public transport ticketing system

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:02): My question this afternoon is to the Minister for Public Transport. Is the minister aware that Conduent, which was awarded the \$1.7 billion contract to deliver Victoria’s new public transport ticketing system, was part of the consortium who was responsible for developing the now failed Myki system?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:02): I am very proud. Last night, with the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Health, we had a great function with the City of Melbourne and the Committee for Melbourne, and I will tell you that one thing that was on everyone’s lips was ‘Well done. Well done getting rid of Myki and bringing in an application for your phone, for your credit card –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, as much as we are interested in the minister’s diary plans, this question related to a billion-dollar failed error, and I ask you to bring the minister back to that question.

The SPEAKER: I will rule on the point of order. The minister had just commenced his answer. I think we should give him time to reply to the question that was asked.

Ben CARROLL: I will be very clear to you, member for Polwarth. You might be aware that Myki is owned by a company called NTT Data. Are you following? Okay? Yes. Do you know where they are from? You are nodding – good.

The SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair.

Ben CARROLL: So – through the Chair – you know they are a home-based company. There is another company out there called Conduent, and there are a few other companies too. They are not based in Japan; they are based in New Jersey in the United States.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:04): My supplementary question for the minister, when he has finished eating with his friends, is: Conduent has now admitted that it cannot fulfil its contract to deliver an open payment digital ticketing system in time for the Paris 2024 Olympics. How can Victorians have any confidence that Conduent will not be another Myki disaster?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:05): We have every confidence in the new ticketing system that will be employed. Can I also say, as a regional member, you should be embracing what we have announced, because under this new system –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition!

Ben CARROLL: It is not Dickie Knee time, it is not *Hey Hey It’s Saturday*; it is question time. It will be a statewide solution that will also service your electorate, member for Polwarth.

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister was not asked to give a short story about my electorate; I am well familiar with my electorate. He was asked whether Victorians could have confidence in a system that is failing rapidly around the world.

The SPEAKER: Order! A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Ben CARROLL: He asked about Paris. You actually fly through, often when you go to Paris, Dubai. You might like to know that Conduent is also in Dubai operating the ticketing system – and in Paris and in Montreal, and they are coming to Melbourne. You will be able to use it on the trams in Hawthorn because you will have more free time, we know, after winter to be on the tram network using the public transport ticketing system.

Members interjecting.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question. It is about the failure in Paris and if we are going to get a Myki 2.0 from Labor, seriously.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister is being relevant to the question. The minister has concluded his answer.

Ministers statements: gender equality

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:08): I rise to update the house on this government's nation-leading work to achieve gender equality. I am really proud to update the house that this government is partnering with the Commonwealth government as regional Pacific partners convening a conference called 'Women Deliver'. That conference is being held in July. It is likely to have over 6000 women from all around the world in Rwanda but, in preparation for this, in three weeks time we will be hosting all the regional delegates here in Melbourne to talk about the importance of a range of issues, particularly women's health. This is only possible because of all the fantastic, great women that we have elected in this Parliament – having half of our caucus women and having more than 60 per cent women as ministers in our government.

How did we do it? Back in 1994 our party adopted quotas, and we kept building upon those quotas to deliver the outcomes we have today. We have more women on our front bench than the Liberal Party have in their caucus as a result of it. On behalf of the women of Victoria, I want to see more women elected and more women at every level of government, and I want to see more women of diverse backgrounds and more women in this place here. I know the Leader of the Opposition agrees with me, because he said on the record last year 'We want more women representation', but only a few days ago he came out saying 'I'm not really a fan of quotas', and we all know that he has managed to only reduce the number of women in his party room. I am a fan of quotas. More women equals better policies, better outcomes and better investment for women. Go on, John, give it a go: more women.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Minister for Women to call members by their correct titles.

Melbourne Airport rail link

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:10): My question is to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to his emphatic statement in the house yesterday that 'we promised those things to the people of Victoria and we will deliver them'. Treasurer, the government promised to deliver Melbourne Airport rail by 2029. Why did you break this promise?

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:11): I thank the member for his question, and I make the point that this government is constantly working to achieve the things that we committed to for the Victorian people. What we say we do, we will do. We will deliver, and they can be assured of that. As the member would be well aware, the federal government has announced a review into any projects that they have not adopted as their own pre-election commitments. That is a reasonable thing to do. Why should the current

government be paying for projects that they have had no capacity first to assess and adopt the view it is entirely appropriate? After all, I am hearing from the partner of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the National Party, that we need partners. We do, and we need genuine partners who are committed to projects that they have done appropriate due diligence about and who have confidence in the integrity of those projects and that they can be delivered and be delivered appropriately and in scope. We know that there are some projects that are struggling. We saw the outrageous behaviour of the National Party, who saw infrastructure as being nothing but a pork-barrel effort, where something like \$130 billion worth of national infrastructure funding –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer knows that he should not debate the question and that he needs to be factual. He was asked why the government have broken their promise in relation to the delivery of the Melbourne Airport rail.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer was being relevant to the question. I remind members that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Tim PALLAS: A partnership actually means that we have to be assured that we are working in coordination with the federal government. They are making a very substantial contribution to the state of Victoria when it comes to infrastructure spending. Over the next four years the allocations to the state of Victoria will hit 23.5 per cent. This is in comparison to the allocations of infrastructure to the state of Victoria that the Liberal–National parties made.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! the member for Evelyn is warned!

Tim PALLAS: In fact we know that during the period 2014–2018 we got less than 10 per cent under the Liberal–National federal government. We did not hear a word of outrage from those opposite. In fact some of them told us we should take our medicine. I do not know what that means, but I will tell you what the people of Victoria come to expect and can rely on with this government: that we will continue to invest in the projects that we promised the people of Victoria were vitally important. We will continue to partner with a federal government that for the first time in years is starting to demonstrate a willingness to work cooperatively and to put their hand in their pocket and resource real projects that grow the state of Victoria. We have at the time of the last budget \$185 billion of projects commencing or continuing in this state, and it will grow the economy. *(Time expired)*

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (14:14): Will the Treasurer guarantee that the government will retain its \$5 billion funding allocation to the promised airport rail link?

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:15): I feel like I should defer to the Premier on this; it would be far more entertaining. Can I say that we have a budget. It is coming up. It will be on Tuesday, and all will be revealed in this budget. I can tell you it will be a budget that –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Evelyn withdrew from chamber.

Tim PALLAS: certainly will continue to grow this economy and honour the commitments that we have made to the Victorian people.

Ministers statements: Migrant Women in Business

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (14:15): I rise today to update the house on inspiring stories of women in small business. In Victoria close to 40 per cent of small business owners are women, and one-third of small businesses are run by migrants. We know that migrant women can face challenges when starting or running a

small business, and that is why on this side of the house we are very proud to support women to achieve their full potential. I recently joined Migrant Women in Business at the Made by Many Minds expo. I met so many fabulous women who were passionate about business growth and success. The Andrews Labor government proudly funded this program, a one-stop shop which provides migrant women in business with support for legal issues, finance, marketing and so much more. This funding plants the seed for countless startups owned and run by migrant women.

At the expo there were over 100 small business owners, all sharing their skills and knowledge, like Laura Alicia, who runs a photography business. A hearing-impaired photographer, Laura has established a successful business and she has learned to lip-read in English. She is now sharing her expertise and that of other migrant women through the platform. These women are talented and resilient, and when given an opportunity to learn and grow, they generate so much social, cultural and economic value for Victoria. When women are given the opportunity, they will put their hands up and rise to the challenge.

We are a government that proudly stands for equality, rights and empowering women. You just need to look across the chamber to see how out of touch the opposition leader and his team are. On this side of the house women will always have a seat at the table. We are proud to support women in small business because it is the right thing to do and it makes Victoria a better place.

Mildura electorate health services

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:17): My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, Octavia from Mildura is two years old and suffering from food aversion and sleep apnoea, and as a result is underweight. She requires urgent surgery to remove her tonsils and adenoids. She is suffering because the public waitlist for this type of surgery is an alarming 819 days. Why is Octavia's life being put at risk because of the ongoing lack of health services available in Mildura?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:18): I thank the member for her question, and my best wishes go to Octavia and her family.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Eildon is warned.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: I am very happy, should the member wish to write to me, to follow-up the best care options that are available for Octavia. But let me say this: at the last reporting of our hospital performance data, what we saw were some really significant improvements. We are seeing the waitlists trending down. We are seeing category 1 surgeries continue to be delivered within the clinically recommended time.

Members interjecting.

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

Mary-Anne THOMAS: We are seeing that for category 2 and category 3 once again the wait times are reducing.

This is a challenge, I might say, that is being experienced not just by our health system here in Victoria but by health systems right around the nation and indeed around the world. But only our government has a \$12 billion pandemic repair plan in place. Only our government is delivering a surgery reform and recovery program that is showing really significant outcomes. It is a pleasure to work with our highly skilled clinicians, with all of our healthcare workers, who are working overtime not just in surgery but indeed in –

The SPEAKER: Member for Mildura, you need to wait for the call.

Jade Benham: Speaker, my point of order is regarding relevance. This question is directly, specifically aimed at surgery in Mildura.

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

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you. As I have already indicated, our government is working to reduce waitlists right across Victoria, because this is a government that governs for the whole of the state. I might say that one of the challenges that the people of Mildura have faced is the fact that the previous coalition government privatised –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister knows not to debate the question. This is an important question relating to a two-year-old child, and I would ask the minister to come back to that important question.

The SPEAKER: Minister, it is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. I ask you to come back to the answer.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you very much, Speaker. As I have already indicated, if the member for Mildura wishes to share more information with me, I will follow up on the best treatment options that are available for Octavia.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:21): So Octavia and patients just like her can receive the treatment that she so desperately needs urgently, will Mildura Base Public Hospital get funding in next week's budget for the return of surgical and specialist –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tarneit can leave the chamber for 1 hour. I would like to hear the supplementary question.

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Speaker. So Octavia and patients like her can receive the treatment that she desperately needs, will the Mildura Base Public Hospital now get the funding in next week's budget for the return of surgical and specialist services?

Members interjecting.

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

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:22): As the member knows, I am not going to pre-empt any of the decisions of the budget, and I will be listening along with everyone else to the budget next Tuesday. But let me tell you this: in this year we are providing Mildura Base Public Hospital with a 6.6 per cent increase in funding. We also delivered more than \$37.6 million in capital grants to fund the infrastructure upgrades that ensured a refurbished ICU, a new paediatric ward and revolutionary theatre equipment.

Ministers statements: women's health

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:23): I am delighted to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to the health of Victorian women. Our government is giving women's health and wellbeing the attention it deserves. Only Labor is a party that listens to women, respects women and elects women, and only Labor can be trusted to deliver these nation-leading reforms, because the more women you elect, the more diverse lived experience you have to draw on, including our experiences of menstruation, endometriosis, fertility care, sexual and reproductive health and menopause, and that means better outcomes for women's health.

I am proud that 64 per cent of Labor's cabinet are women. This progress is reflected in our policy priorities. As part of our \$121 million women's health package, we will create 20 new women's health clinics and expand our sexual and reproductive health service network. We will double surgeries for endometriosis-related conditions, provide scholarships for women's healthcare specialists and establish a women's health research institute. We will also deliver an inquiry into women's pain management and make it easier to access the pill and antibiotics for urinary tract infections. When it comes to supporting women there is no room for name-calling, no room for backflipping or for capitulating to outdated agendas. Our government is united when it comes to listening to women's voices and acting on what we hear.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Lowan withdrew from chamber.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Under Labor access to reproductive choices will always be protected, because members on this side of the house believe that abortion care is health care. Our government will show real leadership on this issue. We know that that is what leaders should do. We know how important it is that women's voices be heard and respected – *(Time expired)*

Parole eligibility

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:25): My question is to the Minister for Police as the minister representing the Minister for Corrections in the other house. Does the government have a policy position to commit to keeping Paul Denyer in jail for the rest of his life?

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:26): I thank the member for his question. I look forward to referring that matter to the appropriate minister in the other place, but I would also say we respect the independent role of the adult parole board, which has made its decision very, very recently. These independent bodies have full support to do their job from this side of the house.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:26): Will the minister apologise to the families of the three female victims who have to relive the trauma every time Paul Denyer applies for parole because the government refuses to lock him up for life?

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (14:27): I thank the member for their supplementary question, and again I will pass it to the minister in the other place, the Minister for Corrections and Minister for Victim Support, who has also met with very many victims in his role. I know right across this house we all understand and respect all victims of crime. They are very serious matters – any crime –

Members interjecting.

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

Anthony CARBINES: Victims deserve the support and the respect and the comfort of all members of this place, and that is exactly what this government stands for. We also stand for making sure that independent bodies charged with their responsibilities are allowed to do that unfettered. They are doing that job effectively and have made the correct and right decisions that they have independently made. We support and respect them just as we do those who rely on the services that they provide.

Ministers statements: women in renewable energy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:28): I rise to update the house on women who are supercharging the renewables revolution. Forty per cent of the renewable energy workforce are women, and we are growing this sector, as will the jobs flowing to women. This compares to 23 per cent in the

oil and gas sector and 16 per cent in the coal sector, and just 30 per cent for those opposite. With our emissions reduction target by 2035 of a 75 to 80 per cent reduction, net zero by 2045 and our 95 per cent target of renewables by 2035, we are enabling the next generation of women in our energy workforce through the creation of 59,000 jobs that will be accelerated by bringing back the SEC.

Women in our energy industry are already making waves. The member for Bayswater will be proud to have Christine Kennedy and Total Solar Solutions in his electorate. Christine is the general manager of Total Solar Solutions, which have taken on two female apprentices through Solar Victoria's \$11 million Growing Our Clean Energy Workforce training and workforce development package. The two apprentices Darcey and Madeline are absolutely excited to be in energy. I met them, and they are so, so excited about the opportunities given to them courtesy of our government. With Christine, this retailer is a powerhouse in supporting women in solar. Along with Bobbi McKibbin and Sophie Wright, Christine is also a member of Solar Victoria's industry and consumer reference group. Their leadership is helping us deliver more than 240,000 installs of solar, PV batteries and hot water systems through our Solar Homes program.

All this shows is that you cannot be a true leader by ignoring more than half the population. With those opposite flip-flopping on quotas and on climate – going nuclear is the only thing that they are actually committed to – this government is absolutely focused on supporting women and empowering them in the energy – *(Time expired)*

Boxing Day test

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:30): My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. Will the government commit to securing a long-term agreement to keep the iconic Boxing Day test at the MCG?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:31): I thank the member for his question. It is the first question I think I have had from the member.

Members interjecting.

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

Steve DIMOPOULOS: I have got to say that the best test deserves the best ground, and it is very, very clear to everybody in the cricket fraternity in this country and globally that the best ground for cricket is the MCG. We will continue to work with the MCG Trust, the MCC and Cricket Australia to –

Daniel Andrews: We're not negotiating on the floor of Parliament.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Exactly right. We will continue to work with them. I have got to say I appreciate the member had to ask the question.

Jacinta Allan: Why?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Because there is a relevance deprivation syndrome, not necessarily from the member but from the opposition –

The SPEAKER: Minister, through the Chair.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Thank you, Speaker. When you run such a compelling major events agenda as this government does, the other side of politics sometimes may feel that they are not landing some blows. But I have got to say to them: when you take a government that invests \$1 billion over 10 years in the Olympic Park precinct – \$1 billion – and when you have the best sporting facilities situated in the CBD accessible by public transport –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, will the government commit to a long-term agreement to keep the Boxing Day test? Full stop.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question. I remind the Manager of Opposition Business that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: What I will not do is flag our negotiating position on anything on the floor of the Parliament and in the media. The reason we are so good at what we do is not just the infrastructure and not just the sport- and culture-loving community, it is because we have the best negotiating position. And the evidence is incredible. We have secured two global events for decades – the Australian Open and the grand prix. We are the only city in the world to have both. We have secured them for decades. Add to that that we have secured the grand final until 2059. Those three iconic events in themselves are worth a mint to the economy and a mint to the cultural capital of this nation.

Daniel Andrews interjected.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: That is exactly right. We are not going to do negotiations in the media. We have good strategic partners. We speak to licence holders all the time about content, but they also know we have some of the best infrastructure in Australia right here, in fact globally right here. Can I just give you one example? The reason the Australian Open this year was the best attended event of all the opens was because of the infrastructure, was because of its location –

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this was a one-sentence-long question about a specific event, not about everything else that is going on in the state, and I ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Premier! I cannot tell the minister how to answer your question. The minister was being relevant.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: My one-sentence answer to the member is: the Boxing Day test has been at the MCG for decades. We will continue to work with licence holders. But I will say to him one thing: look at our record, which is the envy of the world. Look at our record and then tell me you have any doubt.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:35): The Boxing Day test adds around \$100 million in value to the Victorian economy. Will this government's financial mismanagement put at risk this and other major events that are worth hundreds of millions of dollars to cashed-up states like Western Australia and South Australia?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:36): The member may have missed that over summer the top 10 best attended events in Australia were all in Victoria. The best attended grand prix of the entire circuit of 23 grand prix around the world was in Melbourne. The best attended tennis open – again this year, this is just a few months ago – of all the four tennis opens around the world was in Melbourne. At the Anzac Day match the other day there were 95,000 people. The MCG for the footy has been regularly in excess of 70,000 or 80,000 patrons. We are not at risk of any of the Chicken Little situations that the member for Nepean is on about. This is an economic boon. We do it well, and we will continue to do it well.

Ministers statements: women in transport infrastructure

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:37): I am delighted to update the house today on the central role that women are having in building transport infrastructure across our city and state. Just recently, with the members for Greensborough and Eltham, we opened the new Greensborough and Montmorency stations as part of the work on the Hurstbridge line. More trains are running on that line thanks to our project director on that project, Antonia and her terrific team. Last Thursday I visited the Metro Tunnel site with Rail Projects Victoria CEO Nicole Stoddart, where we saw work going on in building a spectacular new town hall station as part of this critically important

project that will not only provide more trains in and out of the city but also connect the communities from Pakenham, Cranbourne and Sunbury through the Metro Tunnel.

On that same day last week I am advised that the member for Oakleigh, along with a colleague from the Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place, visited Glenhuntly to see the removal of boom gates on Glen Huntly Road. Those boom gates were removed by an all-women team, an all-women team who got rid of the boom gates, who have worked incredibly hard –

A member interjected.

Jacinta ALLAN: We know you oppose it – and of course made the streets and communities safer.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the member for Caulfield on a point of order, I will remind the Deputy Premier to direct her response through the Chair.

David Southwick: You have just taken my point of order. Thank you very much.

Jacinta ALLAN: Isn't it a great project to see those level crossings being removed in Glenhuntly? The reasons why we are removing level crossings and the reason why we have more women working on these projects than ever before is because of the deliberate policy settings set by the Andrews Labor government, which stand in stark contrast to others.

I note this weekend in Bendigo there is an event on that is going to demonstrate yet again a failure of leadership from some in our community to stand up and support more women into Parliament. Do you know who has made this prediction? The Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition himself has already predicted he will not get more women into Parliament because he cannot even get it through his Liberal Party state council.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, on an unanswered adjournment question asked on 22 February 2023, 84 days ago, to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to fund and upgrade Clegg Road at the Wellington Road intersection in Wandin North, where there is an accident on average every six weeks, including a tragic fatality recently – it is adjournment matter 53 – I would ask if you could ask the minister to please respond to that overdue adjournment.

The SPEAKER: The matter will be followed up.

Constituency questions

Malvern electorate

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (14:41): (160) Anyone turning 100 is of course cause for a great celebration, and it is no less so for Lloyd Street School in East Malvern. So my question to the Minister for Education is: what tangible support, preferably financial support, will the Andrews government provide to recognise the wonderful achievement of Lloyd Street School on the celebration of its centenary this year? Lloyd Street is a wonderful local school of around 420 students. It runs a successful International Baccalaureate program and has a talented and dedicated staff led by principal John Painter. But the school's facilities could certainly do with an upgrade, and it has not had one in the eight years of this government. I urge the minister to use next week's budget to deliver Lloyd Street School a centenary birthday present that befits the wonderful contribution it has made to my local community since 1923.

Sunbury electorate

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (14:42): (161) My question is for the Minister for Education. Minister, what is the latest information on design and construction for our massive upgrade at Goonawarra Primary School in my electorate? Speaker, as you know, the Andrews Labor government is building the Education State, giving every child every opportunity to be their best. We have of course invested in record terms locally and right across the state. One such investment is the more than \$10 million for Goonawarra Primary School in my electorate, something that was incredibly warmly welcomed by the school community, students, parents and friends of the school. Again I take the opportunity to thank everybody involved – not just in the Goonawarra Primary School but in education right across our state. We are getting on and delivering the Education State. This is a terrific upgrade, and I look forward to an update from the minister.

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:42): (162) My question today is for the Minister for Health, and I ask: when will the government fund a dialysis unit in Benalla? Patients requiring dialysis treatment are currently needing to travel considerable distances to health services in Wangaratta, Seymour, Shepparton and Mansfield. This travel comes with a cost, both financially and in terms of the additional strain on people requiring an essential medical treatment. This treatment burden for dialysis is already significant enough without adding extra travel time on top of this three times a week. Few towns the size of Benalla, with 15,000 people and a functioning health service, are without a dialysis unit, and it is not due to lack of demand. Several of my constituents, including Benalla's 2021 Citizen of the Year June Howard, have raised this issue with me – so much so that funding this unit formed part of our election commitments. Our questions on notice about this matter have been ignored or inadequately answered, with confidentiality unreasonably cited as a cop-out for the lack of updates on this serious matter.

Pakenham electorate

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (14:44): (163) My question is to the Minister for Youth. Earlier this year I had the pleasure of visiting the Lakeside Pakenham Scouts with the minister. We were able to view the plans and check on the progress of the building works at the new Lakeside Pakenham Scouts hall. In partnership with Scouts Victoria the Andrews Labor government is delivering this brand new facility for the Lakeside Pakenham Scout group and the broader community. These works will ensure that more young people across my electorate of Pakenham can use a modern, accessible space that meets their needs and strengthens community participation. I cannot wait to see the finished works on the Lakeside Pakenham Scouts hall and see the young people enjoying this fantastic building. So my question is: can the minister please provide me with an update on the progress of the Lakeside Pakenham Scouts hall, a project that will greatly benefit young people in Pakenham?

Prahran electorate

Sam HIBBINS (Prahran) (14:44): (164) My constituency question is for the Minister for Climate Action. There is a desperate need for EV charging in the Prahran electorate. There is just one station in a public car park. There are none that are being funded through the government's existing programs. With emissions from transport being the biggest growing source of carbon emissions in Victoria and the skyrocketing cost of petrol adding to the cost of living, this lack of EV charging is a real barrier for the uptake of cleaner, cheaper forms of transport. Many people in Prahran live in apartments or houses without driveways and also rent, so there is a need for more public chargers and also kerbside charging in residential streets, shopping strips and of course chargers in existing apartment buildings. So I ask: will the government act to increase the number of EV chargers in the Prahran electorate?

Pascoe Vale electorate

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (14:45): (165) My constituency question is for the Minister for Mental Health, who is in the chair. What are the next steps to progress the election commitment we made to plan for a new mental health and wellbeing local service in Coburg? We know how important it is for all Victorians to be able to access the mental health support they need when they need it. As identified through the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, for too long the system has been too difficult for too many to navigate. That is why I was delighted to help secure a commitment by the Andrews Labor government in November 2022 that we will invest \$10 million to begin planning for 20 new mental health local services across Victoria, including a new one in Coburg. Once operational this new front-door service will provide free and easy-to-access support and care for adults experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges. As identified in the 2021 ABS census, almost 19,000 residents across Merri-bek have experienced at least one mental health condition, including depression or anxiety. That is 11 per cent of locals compared to 8.8 per cent across Victoria on average. I welcome the chance for the department to engage with local key stakeholders as part of the planning process, including Merri Health, local GP and psychology networks and the proposed community health hub at the Coburg precinct.

Polwarth electorate

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:46): (166) My question is for the Minister for Environment in the other place, and the question I have for the minister is: will she be providing immediate support for coastal infrastructure in the Polwarth electorate, particularly between Apollo Bay and Port Campbell? I refer the minister to a few instances specifically where the government, just through poor management and poor maintenance of basic infrastructure, is really letting our community down, most notably, the valuable Port Campbell jetty, which now has its lower platform closed to the public indefinitely until such time as funds are provided. I refer to the iconic Loch Ard Gorge, which has a wooden staircase that takes thousands and thousands of tourists a year down to the beach to experience that wonderful place. It is now closed due to lack of maintenance. I refer to the arch, the iconic arch on the Great Ocean Road, which has for decades allowed visitors to go and visit and see that spectacular piece of scenery. It is also closed due to lack of maintenance. Minister, we would appreciate information. *(Time expired)*

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:47): (167) My question is for the Minister for Environment. The western region currently has the lowest tree canopy cover in Melbourne, and with urban development on the rise, especially in my electorate, the loss of trees and vegetation will only see an increase in average temperatures in the area. More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West is a fantastic initiative by the Andrews government to tackle climate change, grow new green spaces, drive down pollution and create jobs in Melbourne's growing western suburbs, and one that is supported by many of my constituents in Kororoit. Can the Minister for Environment please provide an update on the progress of this initiative, specifically in the electorate of Kororoit?

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:48): (168) My question is for the Minister for Housing. Truemans Road ecovillage in Tootgarook was put into receivership in November 2022, with liquidators appointed in March this year. Residents have been notified that they are required to vacate the property by 2 June and promises of assistance with temporary accommodation have apparently gone unfulfilled. Despite liquidators telling residents they would receive specific offers for their units in due course, it seems increasingly unlikely that offers will be tabled with sufficient time before residents are forced out. There are currently four permanent residents of the park that are facing homelessness in June as a result of the forced end to their leases and a lack of emergency accommodation provisions. I am happy to work with the Minister for Housing; I gave him some more information just before this

question. But, for those residents, will the Minister for Housing intervene to ensure that residents of Truemans Road ecovillage have access to emergency accommodations they need?

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (14:49): (169) My question is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. What plans does the government have to support traders in Mont Albert and Surrey Hills following the removal of the level crossings at Union Road and Mont Albert Road? Last Saturday was a massive day for the communities of Mont Albert and Surrey Hills. For the very first time motorists could drive along Mont Albert Road and Union Road without having to cross the Belgrave–Lilydale line. Removing these crossings has been talked about for many, many years, but it took an Andrews Labor government to actually deliver it. The level crossings in Mont Albert and Surrey Hills were amongst the most complex projects in the entire level crossing program. The depth and length of the trench and the proximity to local streets created an enormous logistical challenge and caused significant disruption to the local residents and traders. Now that the roads have reopened and the shops on both sides of the rail line can be easily accessed, it will be important that these traders are supported.

Bills

Gambling Taxation Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (14:50): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Motions

Education State

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:51): I move:

That this house recognises the work of the Andrews Labor government to build the Education State by:

- (1) making kinder free;
- (2) delivering hundreds of new schools and school upgrades;
- (3) supporting student wellbeing;
- (4) implementing One VCE; and
- (5) putting over 70 courses on the free TAFE list.

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects. I would also like to acknowledge Aboriginal kinder teachers, childcare workers, teachers, education support staff, allied health, engagement workers, principals, vocational training and those that work every day in Victoria's education system for children and young people. I also want to mention the vision that we have had with Victoria's Aboriginal community in establishing the Marrung education plan. The vision for that plan really goes to the heart of acknowledging the cultures and experiences of First Nations people and celebrating the inclusivity, responsiveness and respectfulness of First Nations people.

Before I get into the nitty-gritty of all of the wonderful initiatives this government is doing, can I say happy Education Week to all Victorians. The theme of this year is 'Active learners: move, make, motivate', which celebrates physical activity, hands-on learning and student voice in education. And can I highlight the incredible efforts of our teachers, principals, support staff and school administration

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in being at the forefront of running our education system. I know we could not do it without their incredible work.

Can I take a minute to acknowledge the families and children that were affected by the bus incident that happened in Exford just the other day. I send my thoughts and prayers to those children that remain in hospital, and I extend my huge thanks to the teaching staff at both Exford and Eynesbury primary schools for their fantastic work in not only being on the scene just after the incident happened but also for wrapping their arms around their school community and offering ongoing support over the last two days.

From kinder to a good local school all the way to TAFE or uni, we know that education changes lives. That is why we have made kinder free, so that our kids get the very best start in life. That is why we are building and upgrading schools, so you can count on having a great local school no matter where you live. I want to begin by talking about our Best Start, Best Life once-in-a-generation reform: \$14 billion to transform Victoria's early childhood sector. It is one of the many, many positive deliveries that this government has put in place. We need to make sure that we are boosting our child's education before they even get to primary school. As Minister for Education I am incredibly supportive of these reforms.

On behalf of the minister in the other place, I want to outline some of the key outcomes that we anticipate through this investment and give her a shout-out for the great work that she is doing. We are delivering 15 hours a week of three-year-old kinder for every child by 2029, free kinder programs for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services from the start of 2023 and four-year-old kinder will be transitioning to pre-prep over the next decade. On top of this we are establishing 50 new government owned and operated early childhood centres in areas where we know it is hard to get child care. Under this \$270 million program up to 140,000 children will go to kinder for free this year, saving families on average \$2500 in fees. More than 2750 services in Victoria are offering free kinder this year, and that is 97 per cent of services across the state.

Over the next decade four-year-old kinder will transition into pre-prep. It is a high-quality program that gives four-year-old children greater opportunities to socialise through play and get ready for school. We are investing in child care with these 50 childcare centres. Child care, we know, has not been working for working families, with high fees and a lack of space in the places that most need it. That is why we are establishing these 50 government-owned and affordable childcare centres across the state, co-located, where possible, with schools to avoid that double drop-off and alongside hospitals, TAFEs and major employers to create a convenient way forward for working parents. We know that this will help ease the cost of living and enable primary carriers – predominantly women – to get back into the workforce. We estimate that this investment will enable about 14,000 women to join the workforce over the next 10 years. When we have workforce shortages this sort of investment is extremely important.

But we are not just delivering on early childhood education, we have massive reforms in investment across our entire education system. We have worked hard to upgrade and build new schools. We have invested \$12.8 billion in new schools and in upgrading existing ones across the state. We are committed to opening 100 new schools between 2019 and 2026, 12 of which opened their doors in the first week of term 1 this year. I was really pleased to be with a number of members from this place at the opening of those schools in the first week. We know that this investment means for thousands of students that they are now learning in state-of-the-art facilities and leading the way.

Victoria has built more new schools in Australia than any other state. We make up half of the new schools being built, compared to every other state. It really does demonstrate that we mean it when we say that we are the Education State. We are taking action to end that dreaded double drop-off wherever possible by having multischool facilities on the one site. There are currently 290,000 people living in the City of Wyndham, and we estimate that this will grow by about 500,000 by 2040. It is a real challenge to any government to keep up with that growth and ensure that all of the children in these growth corridors are given a first-class education. That is why last week I had the pleasure of joining

the member for Laverton and the mayor of Wyndham at the new Truganina North education precinct, which will be home to a new primary school, the junior campus of a senior school, a co-located kinder and community facilities. We officially announced the appointment of nine new principals that will head up the new schools in 2024 located across Melbourne's west. I was honoured to be joined by such fantastic, experienced principals that together have over 200 years worth of service. We are investing \$5.4 million into brand new STEM centres for these schools, and we are also investing in major upgrades in every single Victorian specialist school across the state.

We know that around one-third of Victorian families choose to send their children to non-government schools, so our capital funding support also extends to low fee paying Catholic and independent schools through the non-government schools capital grants program. I know there are a number of members in this house that have worked with their local schools to be at the opening of the facilities that this government has funded under that program. We also have the Minor Capital Works Fund, which has supported schools to deliver small-scale projects and improve their learning environment – everything from new synthetic turf ovals to new play equipment at schools, and the refurbishment of toilets, as we have seen at some schools, which is always an important initiative that parents support. Since 2015 we have supported 389 projects with an investment of \$70 million. There are just so many projects underway by this government. We acknowledge there is more to do. We do manage 1570 schools and are building more, and of course our investments in maintenance and minor works are a very important part of our budgets as well.

I want to end by talking about our investment in student wellbeing. This is a major commitment that no other state is making and in fact it is bigger than the spend that the federal government has put in, and that is a massive \$600 million to invest in our children's and young people's mental health and good mental health work into the future, something that I know we will be delivering for many, many years to come. I will no doubt have more to say about these programs in the future. I am particularly proud of our new mental health in primary schools program and the mental health fund that is rolling out to work with schools to get the best setting for their children, because we know when kids have great mental health and wellbeing it is crucial to their learning and development and outcomes.

Finally, can I just touch on our record investment of \$1.6 billion in disability inclusion reforms, which are an Australian first and are rolling out across our school system over three years. To date we have more than 1400 individual profiles that have been completed, with 90 per cent of these profiles having had students themselves participate in the process, making sure kids with disabilities can be accommodated and accepted and can advance in their education in our state school mainstream settings and in our specialist schools.

There is so much more I could talk about in the way of secondary education, VET education and One VCE, but I will leave my comments there and no doubt have many opportunities in this house to unfold those. But to conclude, I am proud to recognise the work of the Andrews Labor government to build the Education State.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:01): I rise to make some comments on this motion, which talks about education. The Andrews government talks a lot about the Education State but does not walk the talk when it comes to actually delivering the basic education that all Victorians need and expect. We are the most expensive state in the nation when it comes to education – \$100,000 per child in the lifetime of that child for a public education that is meant to be free. That is the most expensive of any state. We are the most expensive, and our literacy skills are declining year after year; over a 20-year period we have just seen our literacy skills slip. Just recently we had an article by Adam Carey in the *Age* saying:

Victorian results slip as other states hold steady in literacy test

A major global test of reading skills among year 4 students has found a decline in performance among Victorian children, even as results in other states held steady.

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This is just unfortunately a sign of the times under the Andrews Labor government. We have got to focus. We have got to invest in the basic education needs of our kids when it comes to literacy and numeracy, and we have got to invest in the infrastructure – and it is the most expensive. You cannot just have a slogan on a numberplate, you have got to actually deliver when it comes to substance.

I want to spend the time talking firstly about my electorate when it comes to school upgrades, because the government is boasting about all these fantastic upgrades. In Tuesday's budget we are looking forward to seeing some of these budget upgrades promised being delivered. I want to start certainly in my electorate, where we have \$10 million for Caulfield South Primary School, a commitment that I launched. After a lot of pushing and pulling and persuading of the candidate who ran against me, the government matched that. So I am actually looking forward to seeing \$10 million in the budget for a new multipurpose gymnasium, a hall, construction of a centre for STEAM – for science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, because the education component is so important – and a dedicated, fit-for-purpose library for Caulfield South Primary School. We are looking forward to seeing that in the budget.

We have \$11.9 million for Caulfield Junior College. That school is in desperate need of repair. It needs an upgrade. It needs a gymnasium. It needs an assembly hall. All of their assemblies are held outside in the rain. We have got \$5 million for Ripponlea Primary School stage 1. Again, they do not have a place for the kids to meet. It has all got to be done on the asphalt. It has all got to be done outdoors. We are looking forward to seeing that in the budget. Also we have \$5 million to deliver a play area at Caulfield Primary School – again, they are in desperate need of repair. So I would ask the government to deliver on their promise, to deliver on their talk, to actually walk the talk and to deliver the upgrades in my electorate of Caulfield to those schools – Caulfield South, Caulfield Junior, Caulfield Primary, and Ripponlea. We need to get those away. I know St Kilda Primary School, which is on the border of my electorate and Albert Park, also is in desperate need of funding, so we look forward to seeing that on Tuesday.

But on top of that there are many members from the other side that are looking for funding as well. Certainly we made those commitments, and I would hope to see on Tuesday in the Ashwood district \$35 million for Mount Waverley Secondary College and \$1 million for Solway Primary School to complete an urgent refurbishment of that school. In Bellarine district we are hoping to see in the budget on Tuesday \$20 million for Bellarine Secondary College to upgrade the two campuses.

In the district of Bentleigh – my good friend the member for Bentleigh, I would hope, has been advocating strongly – we hope we will see on Tuesday \$5 million for Cheltenham East Primary School, which is one that I know we fought really hard for. Cheltenham East Primary School desperately need this. They have got a master plan for classrooms, admin buildings, an office and toilets, and I would hope on Tuesday to see in the budget that the member for Bentleigh has fought for his community and we get that delivered.

The Eltham district need \$700,000 for the Montmorency Primary School for a synthetic surface for sports fields and drainage works and \$200,000 for the Eltham North Primary School for refurbishment of the junior school toilet blocks, replacement of the synthetic grass in the play areas and new air conditioning.

In the district of Glen Waverley it is very important that we see \$8 million for Vermont Primary School to rebuild the school, including a new central classroom building and admin facilities; also \$400,000 for Livingstone Primary School for a new car park for the school; \$800,000 for Camelot Rise Primary School to redevelop the playing surface of the oval – the kids desperately need somewhere to play; and \$10 million for Brentwood Secondary College for major upgrades to begin the work on stage 2 of the college master plan and a new performing arts building for a 300-seat auditorium, two classrooms, toilet facilities and a community space – all desperately needed at the Brentwood Secondary College in the district of Glen Waverley.

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If we move to Hastings, we would be hoping in the Hastings district to receive \$3.2 million for the Somers Primary School's new admin buildings and a space for the assemblies. We are looking forward to seeing that in Tuesday's budget. In the district of Mordialloc – and I know the member for Mordialloc is here today – we would be hoping to see in the budget \$3.6 million for Parkdale Primary School for their new grade 2 building and \$350,000 for the Aspendale Gardens Primary School to ensure that we have new shade sails over the playground and upgrades of the basketball court. I know the member for Mordialloc will be absolutely hoping for that on Tuesday, and we look forward to seeing that in Tuesday's budget.

In Narre Warren North we are looking for \$1 million for Narre Warren North Primary School for a new covered outdoor play area and \$10 million for Fountain Gate Secondary College, which desperately needs these facilities, and I am sure that the member for Narre Warren North will be fighting hard and be very happy to announce that on Tuesday with the Treasurer.

The Oakleigh district need \$5 million for Huntingdale Primary School to safely remove asbestos, to develop a master plan and for construction of a new playground and landscaping. Again, I have been out to Huntingdale Primary School, and I know they need that \$5 million, and I hope we see the member for Oakleigh deliver that election promise on Tuesday.

Ringwood district desperately need to ensure \$10 million for Norwood Secondary College for a world-class arts and technology centre, \$500,000 for Marlborough Primary School, \$300,000 for Tinternvale Primary School and \$120,000 for Mullum Primary School. Finally, Yan Yean district need \$700,000 for the Whittlesea Primary School to ensure they get some money as well.

Now, they are just a few. I am sure those members in those seats have picked up the phone to the Treasurer and said, 'You know what, we need to be looking after our schools.' We want to ensure we have a world-class system with the best possible facilities. These are some of the schools that desperately need those facilities. I look forward to the Treasurer being able to announce them on Tuesday on top of fixing the literacy and numeracy issues we have in this state and also reducing the cost – \$100,000 in the lifetime of a student for a public education is too much when people are fighting with cost-of-living pressures, and the government need to do more to ensure we are not the most expensive place in the nation when it comes to our education, and we are not the worst when it comes to literacy, but we turn it around. Let us do more than have a slogan on a numberplate. Let us do more and actually deliver a world-class and quality education system with world-class facilities to go with it.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (15:10): I am really pleased to be able to join this discussion on the education motion before the house this afternoon. I want to note that it is Education Week and thank all of the wonderful staff and teachers in the schools in my electorate. Also, I think it is important to take a short moment, while we are talking about education policy and the differences of opinion that might occur in the chamber, to join with those members who spoke on Tuesday around the bus crash in Eynesbury and the impact that has had on that school community. It is important for us to reflect on the impact that has had on the families, and we hope that those children and those families come through this. We do send our support and our best wishes to everyone involved and thank the people who went to the aid of those children.

I want to reflect on some of the achievements of this government in education and then talk about where we need to go further in education in this state. But it is important to set that in the context of what we have seen from Liberal and National governments historically, both the Baillieu–Napthine governments most recently and some time before that the Kennett government. I know that is some time ago, but it is worth reflecting on, because there is a pattern there in terms of the approach to education of those opposite. I do not mean this to be a pointed political attack, but I think it is worth drawing to the house's attention the difference in the approach of –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Colin BROOKS: Yes, that is exactly right. The member opposite has pointed out that Labor has been in charge of education for some time, and many of the achievements that I will point to in a moment are the direct result of investment by the Andrews Labor government. But the pattern is very clear. When those opposite are in power, there are cuts to education. We saw that with the Kennett government. In my own electorate, there were a number of schools closed that are now housing estates. They were once schools for local children to attend. Then we saw with the Baillieu and Napthine governments a range of cuts to education – over half a billion dollars cut from the education budget.

One of the most disappointing parts of that approach from the Baillieu and Napthine governments at that particular time in history – and it goes to the point that the honourable member for Caulfield was making in relation to improving educational outcomes for this state – was the opportunity at that point to proceed with Gonski reforms. It was a chance to really push forward a national agenda across all states and territories to improve outcomes for all children, wherever they sat on the NAPLAN rankings, to ensure that they were able to progress and that there was a higher degree of equality in educational outcomes. That was a watershed moment in our education policy history, and I remember with some shame the then Baillieu–Napthine governments walking away from the Gonski reforms, and then other states followed that. I think that was a great missed opportunity for Victoria at that particular point in time to actually progress education and be a leader in terms of education, rather than walk away from those important reforms. That was shown in their policy approach to education here in Victoria. I remember very clearly the approach when you talked to schools at that time was that they felt they were all operating independently. Schools did not feel that they were part of a system or they had support from regional offices. They felt that each school basically was expected to sink or swim on their own. It was a different approach to that which the Andrews Labor government has taken, which has been to put those system supports in place and to share the learnings and the things that work well amongst all schools.

The other thing that was I think quite traumatic for many families in my community, and right across the state, was the absolutely devastating cuts to the TAFE system at that particular point in time. We saw over \$1 billion cut from TAFE during the Napthine–Baillieu years. Two thousand teachers in the TAFE system were sacked. Twenty-two campuses were shut, including the Greensborough TAFE campus, which is now in my electorate but was just outside my electorate at the time. I remember bringing a very large petition to this place for people in my local community who wanted that TAFE campus back open again, providing training opportunities for particularly young people in my community.

I am very proud to say that one of the first things the Andrews Labor government did was to reopen that TAFE campus and get people back in there learning. I remember very clearly visiting that empty TAFE campus as a closed TAFE campus to have a look around. It was like something out of *Jurassic Park*. There was an abandoned building, and in the cafeteria there were timetables of the classes on the floor for classes that never happened – classes that should have occurred for young people to receive training, but because the campus had been closed those classes never actually occurred. So it is great that it is back open and we have got young people going through that TAFE again.

I am very proud of the Andrews Labor government's reforms to early years and early childhood education. The Best Start, Best Life reforms are quite profound and probably do not get the amount of attention publicly that they deserve. I think Victorian families understand the importance of this. We get how important it is to provide our little ones with the very best early years education. Parents instinctively understand that that will set them up for later in life. Of course economists and all the research show that if you invest in those early years, it also pays dividends for the economy and for our society down the track as well and we also avoid a whole range of costs in the future. We are delivering 15 hours a week of three-year-old kindergarten by 2029, free kinder programs for all three- and four-year-old children at participating services from the start of this year and the four-year-old kindergarten transition to pre-prep, and that is a great reform. Pre-prep will make a big difference – particularly for many women who still find themselves with the caring responsibilities of young children. They will be freed up with that pre-prep program to get back into the workforce if they want to.

It is not just the early years but school education as well. I will come to the academic reforms, but there are a number of initiatives to support kids in our school system, many of whom are from vulnerable families and need that extra support. So there are breakfast clubs, now at 1000 schools; mental health practitioners in secondary and specialist schools; mental health and wellbeing leaders in all government and low-fee non-government primary schools; and disability inclusion reforms to ensure that those children with special learning needs or disabilities, whether they attend a specialist school or they are in a mainstream school, are properly supported. A big part of that is making sure that teachers have the skills and the tools to be able to support students with additional needs, and I am really pleased to see that disability inclusion reform providing funding to ensure that teachers get those extra skills and the support that they need. A particular shout-out at this point to the I Can Network, which is a great network that boosts pride and confidence in young people with autism in our schools as well. They do some really great work at participating schools.

I am really proud of the One VCE reforms. It was the Labor government that introduced VCAL to increase completion rates to year 12. I think it was Lynne Kosky who might have been the education minister at that time. It was a great Labor reform, and now to see that work taken further, that One VCE reform will make sure that students in those senior years can follow a vocational or academic pathway and complete year 12 with an appropriate qualification and, importantly, set them up for a really good pathway into further training and further education or into a job.

A really important part of investing in schools and education is the capital component. I remember, when the Napthine–Baillieu governments were in power, campaigning very hard for a school in my electorate that was quite run down, Greensborough secondary college. There was one point when the school council had to amend their uniform policy because the heating at the school did not work in the middle of winter. It was only when there was statewide media attention drawn to that issue that the minister allocated some funds to fix the gas heating at that school. I am very proud to say that the Andrews government has now completely rebuilt that school over three stages since we first came to office. It is a great thing to see the wonderful school buildings that are in Greensborough in the northern part of Melbourne.

We have also invested in Bundoora Primary School, again another very old school that has now been completely rebuilt, with one last stage nearing completion. Nearly \$8 million has gone to Watsonia Heights Primary School, a fantastic school community. They will get new classroom buildings with some admin. Watsonia Primary School has had a wonderful upgrade as well, a great school in my electorate. Watsonia North Primary School is building a permanent building to replace portables that have been there for many years. Streeton Primary School, a lovely school that has had some structural issues with termites and flooding, is getting some significant funding to address those issues.

A range of other schools have received funding as well, to improve facilities and playground areas. Particularly I want to call out Concord special school in my electorate, which serves a wide catchment. They have had a \$10 million allocation to improve their facilities as well – and Bundoora Secondary College, \$10 million.

I can see the time is about to run out. *(Time expired)*

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (15:20): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to address the motion put forth by the Minister for Education. While this motion seems to be nothing more than a self-congratulatory gesture by the Labor government, it fails to capture the true reality of the education situation across the state of Victoria, so I am grateful for this chance to give the government a reality check. I urge the Minister for Education to acknowledge and address the pressing issues faced by regional schools as they continue to be neglected by the current government. The irony of the statement ‘building the Education State’ becomes abundantly clear when we witness the inadequate infrastructure in regional Victorian schools.

In the town of Kilmore, a major growth area of our state with a booming population, there remains no public secondary school. The only secondary school in Kilmore is Assumption College, an undoubtedly excellent school. However, for many locals this private school is simply not a realistic option. Fees start at more than \$8500 per year, and as much as \$34,000 for boarding options. Meanwhile, the average family income in Kilmore and many neighbouring towns sits below the state's median. Those unable to afford the fees at Assumption College are forced to send their children to schools out of town, which hardly aligns with the government's claims of supporting student wellbeing. More than 300 students currently living in Kilmore travel to another town to seek education, with additional bus fees, time spent commuting, and a lack of time for hobbies, work and family all adding up. This issue has been raised several times. The Nationals made an election commitment to fund a business case for the school and multiple questions have been posed to the Minister for Education. While a site has been identified for the building of this school, in the minister's own words:

... there are no immediate plans to fund the construction or building of a ... school ...

Meanwhile, neighbouring Broadford, another rising area of our great state, has been turning students away at their local secondary college. The school is at capacity yet is still expected to pick up the slack and support students from towns like Kilmore that remain without a public secondary school. To counter this, we made another election commitment to fund \$8 million worth of upgrades to the school to improve their facilities and expand their ability to welcome students. Yet again this issue has been raised with the minister on multiple occasions. The responses have been inconsistent, to say the least. In February we were told by the minister that the school was not experiencing enrolment issues. Then in March we were told they received an enrolment management plan, limiting the amount of students that could enrol. This government is out of touch; clueless behaviour does not strike me as being worthy of the praise suggested in this motion. Regional students should not have to settle for second best, particularly when the Labor government is boasting about the work they are doing.

The issues faced by Kilmore and Broadford are not isolated incidents. Seymour College continue to campaign for the final piece of funding to complete their rebuild, only to be consistently ignored by the Labor government. The Nationals understand the value these schools hold for their communities, whereas the Melbourne-focused Labor government appears to be out of touch and indifferent to the needs of regional areas.

When it comes to kindergarten and child care, we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the deep-rooted issues that plague our system. The problem with accessibility to preschool and kinder extends beyond the direct cost of tuition. Many areas, including a significant portion of the Euroa electorate, are classified as childcare deserts, where there are less than 0.33 childcare places available per child in our community. It is disheartening to hear stories of parents who are struggling to make ends meet, yet are unable to work because they cannot secure reliable care for their children. The state is experiencing a labour crisis and a cost-of-living crisis, and the lack of accessible child care exacerbates these challenges. The burden falls disproportionately on parents who are financially strained, preventing them from engaging in meaningful work opportunities that could provide economic stability for their families. Our major towns are not inaccessible backwaters, but they are placed at a disadvantage when child care is so rare.

Within my electorate, we have got huge shortages in Avenel, Nagambie and Seymour. While Seymour is receiving a new childcare centre, these issues will not be resolved overnight. Some towns simply do not have any kinder, which has a massive impact on the town's future, with families choosing to relocate most of their lives to bigger centres like Shepparton. In metro areas childcare centres are usually separated from kindergartens, whereas this is not the case in regional areas. An extra kinder place can mean losing a childcare place, and with pressure on both waitlists in places like Nagambie it is just not sustainable for the community, with kids and families continually missing out. I have experienced this firsthand, with my daughter on a waitlist for two years, and we need to have a serious

conversation on reform and simplification to make this process work for our local economy and most importantly our families. I might add my daughter is two years old.

On a last point, I want to bring up the difficulties my electorate has had with changes to TAFE facilities, particularly in Benalla, where my electorate office is based. The government has proudly announced the availability of over 70 free TAFE courses in an attempt to address Victoria's job shortage and bolster education. While this might warrant a high five and applause on the surface by this government, a closer look reveals the stark reality that this initiative is falling short of making any meaningful impact. In Benalla the purpose-built facility that once served the community was closed down and handed over to a local Christian school behind closed doors. In its place an old ANZ bank building now functions as the TAFE, a woefully inadequate environment that is hardly conducive to learning.

Our local education advocate David Moore said that despite Benalla having a large aviation industry, the government has not considered the need for courses surrounding aviation, drones or mechanics. Mr Moore said this oversight only compounds the problem and further undermines the potential for meaningful job growth in the region. Nonetheless, the Labor government unveiled this new TAFE location with much fanfare and self-congratulation, complete with oversize banners and press releases, but the community can see straight through this. The reality is that students have been forced to travel to other towns and campuses to continue their education, further burdening them and their families. In addition to the inadequacies of the current course offerings, the government has prematurely removed some courses before they even had a chance to grow. Mr Moore said this short-sightedness not only stifles innovation but also limits the opportunities for students to find fulfilling careers.

This ill-conceived plan has cost the community much more than just a quality education. TAFE completion rates are plummeting, and dropout rates in the first year are on the rise. One constituent told me this was a backward step in a struggling community. When I hear the Labor government commend themselves on building the Education State, I implore them to remove their Melbourne-tinted glasses and face the stark reality of our education system. They must strip away the facade of self-congratulation and acknowledge the ongoing issues with education in regional Victoria. The current government's myopic, Melbourne-centric perspective has left regional communities neglected, burdened and struggling to secure a promising future for their children. The issues plaguing Kilmore, Broadford, Seymour, Benalla and countless others are not isolated incidents. They are the result of a government that has consistently failed to address the needs of regional Victorians. We must demand better for our students and our families, ensuring that quality education and child care are available for every Victorian.

No longer can we allow regional students to settle for second best. It is time for the government to not just build the Education State in name alone but to take tangible action that delivers real change and opportunities for the people who need them most. Creating a truly inclusive, equitable and thriving education system that empowers our communities, drives economic growth and cultivates a brighter future for all Victorians is imperative. Just finally, I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to the outstanding staff and teachers in my electorate of Euroa. Both our students and parents are grateful for all you do.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (15:29): It is with pleasure that I join to contribute to today's motion that was introduced by the Minister for Education. It is always a great pleasure to speak about education in this house, given the huge investment that the Andrews Labor government has made across all ages in education. Can I start by acknowledging and saying happy Education Week to all the Victorians out there, particularly those who are at kinder and at school.

I am not sure if it was for Education Week or not – it is always difficult seeing family during the weeks that Parliament is sitting – but I know for my youngest son, who is in grade 1, they did organise an excursion this week to the Royal Botanic Gardens, and he was very excited. In the short time that I have actually had to speak with him this week, when our two worlds have collided, I have said, 'What happened? How was the excursion? What did you do?' I think all that I have been able to extract from

him was that the bus was delayed by 30 minutes. I am sure there was a lot more learning that went on other than the fact that the timetable of the bus did not work. He has a keen interest in transport just like his dad, which is terrific, but I am sure that it was a very enjoyable learning experience.

The learning really does start from our youngest Victorians, from three-year-old kinder. It has been a real privilege to be part of a government that has rolled out the three-year-old kinder program, and now there is the commitment to having a full-time, 30-hour-a-week four-year-old kinder program. These building blocks of education are just so important to the education journey that our children and the students of Victoria go on. It really sets them up for a pattern of lifelong learning. There is much academic research to demonstrate just how beneficial the educational advantages of kinder are.

Obviously we have also had the government's policy of getting rid of the double drop-off and co-locating the kinders with the construction of primary schools, which is fantastic news for parents. I was lucky enough to be able to send my children to a school that also had a kinder as part of its single unit, and I must say that certainly benefited me greatly as a parent. But it also greatly benefits the children, and I see that in one of our local schools, which I have spoken about on many occasions, Box Hill North Primary School. They were one of the very first schools, in particular one of the very first government schools, that actually had a kinder which was co-located with the primary school, and they have done that since about the mid-1990s. I have been really pleased that we were able to deliver a significant capital upgrade to that school in the last term of government, which has recently been completed, and that means more classrooms for their prep and grade 1 students.

There really is a seamless transition. Parents can bring their children to the kinders and then from that they can graduate and progress into the primary school. As I said, it is not just the benefit for the parents but the fact that the students, the children there, when they are three and four and they are just starting their journey, can see their older siblings when they are coming there. So they already get a feel for the environment. They can see what the environment is like for their later years, and it makes that transition into prep all that much easier.

The motion also notes that the government is delivering hundreds of new schools and school upgrades, and it would be remiss of me not to reiterate the enormous capital investment that is going into the schools in the Box Hill district. When I came in in 2018 I made a point of visiting all my local schools, as I have done repeatedly since that time, and look, it did disappoint me to see the lack of investment prior to that date. We have worked very hard with all the staff and the parents of those school communities to deliver as much as possible over this period of time.

I want to just again put on record some of the significant investment that we are putting into our local schools. Aurora School down in Blackburn South is a special school for deaf and deafblind children. We are modernising the school to give students better learning facilities. At Blackburn High we completed a \$10 million STEM centre just at the end of 2022. It is just an amazing, fantastic facility. We even managed to officially open that building with a robot, so we were all pretty much unnecessary. The students had built a robot which managed to cut the ribbon, which was absolutely fantastic. There has been investment in Box Hill High, with new three-storey portables to accommodate the massive growth that they have been experiencing and also upgrades to their amenities. Box Hill North Primary School, as I mentioned – new classrooms for the prep and grade 1 students. Kerrimuir Primary School is a growing school. Over 500 students are now at this fantastic primary school in Box Hill North. In the 2021 budget we committed funding for a multipurpose venue and gymnasium, which is something that the school community had been crying out for for many, many years.

Koonung Secondary College – we have finally started work on a redevelopment of that campus. I was very pleased to see that we made an election commitment for stage 2 of Koonung Secondary College, and I am very much looking forward to next week's budget, when I hope that that commitment will be fulfilled. Laburnum Primary School – I think it is our largest primary school in the Box Hill electorate. It was \$9 million that was in the 2022 budget, if I can recall correctly, and that was to

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modernise the school and provide a lot more learning spaces for that school. What else do we have? The Orchard Grove Primary School is a fantastic school down in Blackburn South that is also desperately in need of improvements. We were able to secure a \$13.5 million commitment at the election, which again was something that I know the school community had pushed long and hard for. So I was really happy to announce that, and again I am looking forward to that coming through in the budget. There are many other schools. What other schools do we have in our electorate? Wattle Park Primary School is a school that has come into the electorate. I know that they received funds for the replacement of their LOTE building, which is being rolled out.

In total almost \$50 million in funding was received in the last four years, the last term of government, and it is a real priority of mine to be investing in schools, because I know how much of a difference it makes to these school communities and to all the staff and educators at these schools to have world-class facilities. That is certainly what they need.

Can I just finish my contribution by commending the government for implementing the One VCE program. I was out a month or two ago with the Premier and the Minister for Education seeing this roll out at Box Hill High – one that had not had a VCAL program – and seeing what some of those students were now taking on for the very first time and how much of a difference it is going to make for them. I commend the motion to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:39): I rise to speak on the Minister for Education's motion and go specifically to its elements regarding school upgrades and school infrastructure. I would like to start by putting that into some recent context. The last budget stated that of the 13 new metro school constructions, 85 per cent occurred in Labor electorates; 82 per cent of the 22 schools upgraded were in Labor electorates; and 82 per cent of the metro school upgrades were in Labor electorates. On five out of six occasions in the last budget those upgrades occurred in Labor electorates. And we know that in the budget prior, 80 per cent of the 35 metro school upgrades were in Labor electorates, and 85 per cent of the 78 metro school upgrades announced in the year prior to that were in Labor electorates. Those do sound like numbers, but what they show is that Labor funding skews overwhelmingly to neglect electorates that are not held by the government. And that is shameful. It is shameful that by holding 60 per cent of the seats in this chamber they are directing 80 per cent of funding into those 60 per cent of seats – it is pork-barrelling, and we have seen it in the last three budgets.

Let me tell you why it matters. I would like to specifically start by mentioning the wonderful Brighton Primary School, which has served my community since 1875. It is an incredible school. It is an incredible and big school in my community that serves over 650 young kids. That school has not had any meaningful state government infrastructure funding in anybody's living memory. The last thing that happened at that school was that in the 1970s demountables were brought into the school. Those demountables were placed next to a train line, and those demountables have remained untouched since then – the 1970s, when people were wearing flares. Let me explain, though, why that is such an egregious overlook by the government. Those demountables house and are the place of learning for children with hearing difficulties. It is the place where the school runs their hearing impairment unit, and those demountables are next to a train line. I am sure we can, in this place, understand why it would be so egregious for the government to be overlooking a school and not allowing students who have genuine need to be learning in a place adequate to what they deserve. It is shameful.

I know that the parents and the community are so upset – and that is the right word – by the standard of infrastructure that they have recently spoken out publicly, which is very hard for parents. When parents take the step of talking to the media about their disappointment and frustration, often it just comes out of their genuine upset on behalf of their children, and that is what happened in the case of Brighton Primary. But it is not the only school in my electorate that has been neglected, though you will hear a lot more about Brighton Primary because it is unacceptable for children with hearing difficulties to be in a 50-year-old demountable next to a train line. And you mark my words, you are going to be hearing more about the needs of that school.

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I would also like to refer to Elwood Primary School in Elwood, which is an incredible school as well. It is an incredible school that has been servicing Elwood for almost as long. It is a historic school. Many of the schools in my community are historic 100-year-old schools. That school has effectively no disabled access off the ground floor. There is currently a stairwell chairlift that was installed in the 1970s that takes 20 minutes to go up a floor – 20 minutes. There are disabled children at the school, and every time that chairlift goes up one floor, the entire school cohort has to stop and watch those children go up the stairs, because the stairwell is blocked from access by any other children. It means that any child with disabilities is watched as they go that short distance up the stairs and also misses 20 minutes of their 40-minute class. So if you are disabled at Elwood Primary School, you are watched for 20 minutes as a 50-year-old chairlift goes up one floor, and you miss your class. This issue has been raised with the department because it is unconscionable what is happening. Do you know what the department's response was? 'Well, why not bring all the grade 2 classrooms down onto the ground floor?' – in that case for that one disabled child. 'Why not move all grade 2 classes?' Imagine how that child would feel. It is outrageous. Another piece of advice was, 'Why doesn't someone just lift the child upstairs?'

The advice has been outrageous, and both in terms of Brighton Primary School and Elwood Primary School I think it is fair for both communities to now be saying, 'We have tried to be constructive. We've tried to be reasonable in our wants and requests for adequate government funding', but when they look and see that five out of six occasions of school funding are going into Labor electorates over genuine schools in need, they will speak out, and so they should. They should speak out because it is unacceptable what is occurring for these kids. These kids deserve the type of facilities that any school anywhere else would get – sorry, any school in any Labor electorate would get. Brighton Beach Primary School recently had an audit with 1200 items that need attention – 1200 items. It is a historic school, it is a similarly aged school, doing incredible work in our community – 1200 items, none of them attended to.

The issues in our schools are genuine. When you look on the department's website – I have spoken about this before – the department have a terrific website where they flag school funding. What you see if you look in the southern region is a map of school funding heavily based and slanted towards the seat of Bentleigh. I think that everyone in this place knows that pork-barrelling a number of terms ago occurred in the Bentleigh electorate. But what you see is flags around the southern region, and there is a long gap – a big, obvious gap – in school funding, and that gap is the Brighton electorate. It is not just me saying this. The department is advertising the fact. When you look at the map, you can see the Brighton electorate has been neglected wilfully with funding. Children with hearing difficulties are learning in 50-year-old demountables next to a train line; disabled children are being told, 'You can't have proper facilities to help you learn.' 'Why don't you change the classroom configuration of the school or just lift the kid?' How outrageous. How demeaning. Why? Because that child lives in an electorate that is held by a Liberal member. It is absolutely outrageous.

It is clearly the case that pork-barrelling is occurring in the allocation of school funding. You can see it yourself – the department advertise it proudly on their own website. The electorate of Brighton is wilfully ignored, and I would say to the government as they crow about school funding: how can they do so so unconscionably in saying to children, especially those with difficulties or disabilities, 'We don't want to help you. We don't want to help you because you live in the wrong suburb. We believe you live in the wrong suburb'? It is outrageous.

I understand that the community will now be speaking a lot louder about those inadequacies in school funding, and I will be with those parents and schools, because it is time for the government to be called out and to stop saying to those children who are deserving and in need, 'We don't want to help you.' It is not good enough.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (15:49): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Bills

Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Council's agreement

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak) (15:50): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 without amendment.

Motions

Nuclear energy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (15:50): I move:

That that this house notes:

- (1) the leader of the federal opposition's support for nuclear energy;
- (2) the leader of the Victorian opposition's support for nuclear energy; and
- (3) the resounding support for the Andrews government's goal to hit net zero by 2045 with renewables rather than high-risk and expensive nuclear power.

I rise to speak on this motion and note that there is an absolutely disgraceful commitment to nuclear energy from both the state and the federal opposition leaders that has been made in recent weeks, and I want to make it clear at the start of my contribution that this government does not and will never support the construction of nuclear energy in Victoria. It is dangerous, it is absolutely costly and it is an adventure that the opposition is apparently all too happy to undertake and give a commitment to. When asked if he would support the federal opposition leader's push for nuclear energy last Friday on *ABC Drive*, the Leader of the Opposition here in Victoria said:

I don't think you should ever rule it out.

...

You know, nuclear is going to be part of the mix at some point ...

That was the commitment from the Leader of the Opposition. It was absolutely furthest from the truth in terms of what this government's commitments are. Those opposite have no idea what they are talking about when it comes to energy and emissions reduction. They feign a concern for cost of living, yet they want to support the single most expensive form of energy that is known, and that is nuclear energy.

Firstly, of course we know that they have got a very strong record of being against renewable energy and reducing our emissions. They vote down at every chance our nation-leading renewables and climate action agenda. Then they say that they will open Victoria up to fracking, and now they are peddling the myth that nuclear needs to be a part of our transition away from coal. Well, just because they say it does not mean it is true, and the fact is it is not true.

Those opposite cannot be trusted with our energy system or any part of managing the transition to a decarbonised energy system – one that is affordable, one that creates jobs and one that protects the environment here in Victoria. But just in case they need it to be spelt out to them, I want to spell out why nuclear power is very fraught, quite dangerous, expensive and unnecessary as a commitment to be made. Firstly, it is illegal to open up nuclear here in Victoria, and of course the construction and

operation of nuclear power plants in Australia is also prohibited by Commonwealth legislation. Victoria's Nuclear Activities (Prohibitions) Act 1983, introduced and passed by the then Labor government, also prohibits the construction and operation of nuclear power plants in this state. In all fairness to those opposite, they do have a track record of forgetting about things like this. Who can forget that in the election those opposite committed to an impossible and unconstitutional plan to turbocharge gas in Victoria? In the same breath they committed to a gas reservation policy – one that is absolutely unconstitutional under section 99 of the constitution – and that they would frack our state if given the chance. These are the offerings from those opposite. They flip-flop around a whole range of things, but when it comes to a retrograde attitude and a poisonous attitude to our environment, they are all for it. They are all for fracking, they are all for nuclear power and they are all for increasing people's power bills.

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this is a wideranging debate, but the minister is being irrelevant. She must stay on her own motion. She did write it, so hopefully she knows what she is talking about. But at no point has the opposition ever put this fracking debate out there. The minister is clearly making it up, and she needs to return to the substance of her motion, which is her justification for not having nuclear energy.

Paul Edbrooke: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister at the table has got 26 minutes left on the clock and has only just started setting the context for this debate. I think the debate will be centred around energy, and there are lots of things the minister needs to talk about. I am sure it will be a wideranging debate for those on the other side as well, but in no way has the minister strayed too far from the actual motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): It is a point of debate, so there is no point of order.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Thank you. What I would like to refer to is the CSIRO's most recent *GenCost 2022–23* report, which they prepared for the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). They confirmed that nuclear energy is the most expensive form of power generation available. The cheapest forms of power, on the converse in that same report, are wind and solar, even when coupled with the costs of energy storage and transmission. Victoria's world-class wind energy resources and abundant sunshine make us a global renewable energy powerhouse. We have world-class resources, and we aim to take full advantage of those. We have the opportunity to produce electricity far more cheaply than almost anywhere in the world by harnessing our wind and solar resources. And why wouldn't you do that when it will create 59,000 jobs?

It will absolutely reduce people's power bills because the cheapest form of new-build energy that you can have in this country remains renewable energy, not nuclear. In fact Victoria experienced an entire week of negative wholesale power prices in December last year thanks to renewables. So why would we throw away our competitive advantage by building the most expensive form of power generation available? The finances do not stack up, not for households and not for businesses, and they do not stack up as a state.

Nuclear is expensive to build, and cost blowouts are very common. When you consider that same report, the *GenCost* report, the estimate for constructing sufficient nuclear capacity for a 1600-megawatt capacity power station approximately the size of the decommissioned Hazelwood power station is that it would cost in the order of \$25.6 billion. The same report also found that the cost of nuclear energy creation in Australia would be approximately \$16,000 per kilowatt. Now, how does that compare to wind, and how does that compare to solar? Well, that is four times more expensive than wind energy – four times – and seven times more expensive than solar alternatives. So why on earth would you keep running away from renewables, pretending that you care but not really, and embracing nuclear power when all you are doing is committing every Victorian household and every Victorian business to higher and higher skyrocketing energy prices?

Why would you do that? Well, maybe it has got a lot to do with where their mates are within the sectors of uranium mining and the gas industry – you know, their donor mates that help line the coffers and make a lot of money from digging up uranium and of course gas. I think there is a big connection there, because it just shows you yet again that those opposite are never on the side of Victorian households. They are always on the side of their mates, selling off assets, allowing their big political donors the opportunity to dig up more uranium and more gas, and they do not really care about what the cost consequences are on hardworking Victorians households and businesses, let alone the environmental impacts.

Let us talk about the environmental impacts here. Radiation from major nuclear disasters contaminates massive areas of land, which is irreversible. That is what they want to do. That is their policy commitment. But it is not just about when something goes wrong. When something goes wrong it is absolutely catastrophic, but even a nuclear plant that operates as intended still causes environmental impacts that are with the environment and people forever. There is no such thing as clean energy when it comes to nuclear. Those opposite like to talk about it as if it was the same thing. Well, the waste has to go somewhere. There is waste storage and fuel processing, and it leaves behind a significant footprint requiring excessive site remediation. Nuclear plants consume massive amounts of water, up to around 65 million litres a day. This is an incredible impact and far more than a solar plant or a wind turbine has.

So I am absolutely proud to be a part of a government that does not just talk about our environment but is active in getting things done to protect it, and that is what our commitment is. We know that our environment is under incredible stresses of climate change. We know that biodiversity is really struggling globally because of climate change and a lot of impacts that are human created, which of course are climate change but also a number of other activities. The very least that we can do is say no to nuclear power, because the only good thing that comes out of that is environmental damage, which is irreversible and with us forever, and skyrocketing energy prices for every single Victorian. Why would you do that?

I also want to remind everyone that before the last election four coalition MPs in Victoria, including two frontbenchers, spoke to the *Age* anonymously – because cowards like to do that, speak to newspapers anonymously – and they wanted it to be known, albeit anonymously, that they supported nuclear energy being included in Australia's future energy mix. It is strange, isn't it then, that these four anonymous names also sit alongside the fact, which is known, that people such as Matt Bach in the other place, the Shadow Minister for Child Protection and Shadow Minister for Education, are very happy for us to rip up our nuclear prohibition act. He wants that. Of course Bev McArthur, also in the other place, speaks regularly about her support for nuclear power to be introduced in Victoria. And we know that the Leader of the Opposition has made clear statements about the need, as far as he is concerned, for nuclear to be part of our energy mix.

What is really important here is that we are calling it out. We are absolutely calling it out. We are calling out the hypocrisy of people that cannot land a decent climate change policy and that have voted against every single climate change bill introduced by this government into this Parliament. Every renewable target introduced into this Parliament was voted against by those opposite, and now they want to tell us all that they support nuclear energy. Well, they are as far away from being elected as they ever have been.

That is not our way. Our commitment is really crystal clear. We have got leadership in a government that is absolutely about securing the future for every Victorian when it comes to their environment, when it comes to tackling climate change with real action and when it is about creating the job opportunities that come with that. It is about being a leader and not being afraid to lead and make the changes necessary to transition our economy, and it is about taking people with us, from the most vulnerable to those that are able to manage themselves. That is our way. It is about a safer community, it is about a more protected environment and it is about a future that is decent not just for current

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generations but for generations to come, because we know that walking on this planet has caused a lot of disruption that we all have responsibility for.

Equally we have a responsibility to bring forward the right policies that repair the damage of the past, that set us on a course of being absolutely responsible citizens in an environment that needs to be returned to a better, more secure and healthier state that is good for people, that is good for all species and that is safe. People deserve good leadership that takes them to that very place. It is only those on this side, in this government, that will take them to that place, ensuring that we continue to have prosperity for our people, a jobs future, a renewable energy transition and a decarbonised economy where we can have greater pride in the way that we live on this planet and greater pride in the way that we can make the repairs that are necessary to return our planet to one that is safer and healthier for future generations. That is what our government is delivering.

Those opposite only have one care in the world, and that is to make sure that they keep their miserable, miserable ever-declining circle of mates and friends on a downward spiral, because it is simply about getting into government and doing favours for their mates – never mind that it destroys our environment and never mind that it causes skyrocketing power prices for every Victorian.

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is a wideranging debate and it is an important issue, the reliable supply of energy into Victorian homes and businesses, but clearly the minister has so little to say on it she is finding time this afternoon to go on a rant to talk about the opposition.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: The motion is about you.

Richard Riordan: The point of order is on relevance, Minister. Baseless allegations about who we are friends with or not friends with have nothing to do with this policy. It is clearly not in the motion. I ask you to call the minister back to the motion to stop wasting the chamber's time.

Paul Edbrooke: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister is clearly within the motion. We do not need the opposition to go nuclear on this.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): It is a wideranging debate. There is no point of order.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: I will conclude, because I know that there are so many people on this side of the house that want to talk about all of the fantastic ambitions that we have actually achieved with support for renewable energy and the vision and the leadership that we have shown for every Victorian – which, by the way, they endorsed at the last state election.

We know that bringing back the SEC will accelerate the delivery of renewable energy and will accelerate the creation of 59,000 jobs for Victorians by 2035, plus 6000 new apprenticeships and traineeships, and we will have a trusted government-owned entity to remedy the myriad of ills that were created by privatisation by those opposite.

That is what we have got, a stark choice: those who support nuclear and their ever-decreasing small group of donors to their political coffers versus those who want to ensure that leadership continues under renewable energy, a decarbonised economy, the creation of tens of thousands of jobs and a vision that is about making our environment healthier, safer and more secure for future generations – one that they can be truly proud of.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (16:07): I am rising this afternoon to contribute to this sort of nonsense motion from the Minister for Energy and Resources. Unfortunately the minister has overlooked the fact that Victorians are actually really savvy about this. While there is absolutely resounding support in our communities for renewable energy, and there is no doubt Victorians, Australians and the world generally are keen to explore renewable energy, it is not a magic pudding. Unfortunately this state government is turning the serious discussion that we need as a state on energy

and the supply of reliable, dispatchable – dispatchable, Minister. This is something that this government is politicising. It is politicising it unnecessarily. I refer specifically to some of the outrageous claims that this minister continually makes without any foundation, the magic pudding energy system that she is inflicting on Victorians. Her first and biggest claim is it is going to have 59,000 people. The minister's SEC is going to employ 59,000 people. The minister, in her own words, is committing \$20 million a year to the SEC. Now, I ask you: how do you build billion-dollar wind farms and solar farms, how do you build the transmission lines and build the infrastructure and put the mechanisms in place, with \$20 million a year?

We know this government is very big on making grand commitments – and underfunding and overpromising, ultimately – but this is a nonsense. Energy is the most important thing to the state of Victoria. The state of Victoria built its manufacturing and its business background – the reason we are here and we have been a powerhouse in Australia for a very long time is because we have had reliable, dispatchable, available, affordable energy. Yet this government is on a collision course to not doing that.

I referred just now to the national grid and the energy supply that we have got in Victoria at the moment. I specifically refer the minister to the largest wind farm that we have here in Victoria today. That is the Macarthur wind farm. There are others adjacent to my own electorate that will be coming on stream soon, but just today in the middle of a workday, in the middle of the afternoon, our largest wind farm has a stated capacity of 440 megawatts. It is producing zero, and for the last reporting period, for the last half hour, it has produced no energy at all. Nor have any of the other wind farms in western Victoria. This is not an argument against wind farms, but it highlights the importance that we have to have dispatchable energy.

If we look at Victoria today, 66 per cent of our energy is coming from our existing, traditional coal-fired plants – 66 per cent. They are carrying the burden of the workload. The minister said nuclear is terrible, it is too expensive. However, Minister, when we look at statistics like this – and this is the great deception of the SEC and the great deception of this government's narrative on energy – it is not pound for pound. You cannot equate 440 megawatts at a wind farm with 440 megawatts of coal or gas or nuclear or even hydro, because you cannot turn it on when you need it. That is the big difference. The minister can get all the research and advice from her department, and they will confirm that the conversion factor of renewables is around 22 per cent for solar and around 36 per cent for wind. So it is a nonsense, Minister.

Lily D'Ambrosio: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I actually rise to agree that it is absolute nonsense that the member is spurting, but can I just say that he needs to be more factual with the facts –

A member interjected.

Lily D'Ambrosio: Yes, I think it is quite funny, because he is absolutely delusional when it comes to understanding what an energy system looks like.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, that is not a point of order. It is a matter of debate.

Richard RIORDAN: I would highly counsel the minister that she should in fact talk to the energy suppliers and just see where the energy is coming from in this state. I can assure her that well into her energy revolution we are nowhere near providing the energy we need to. Does that mean we have to have nuclear power plants? No, it does not. But a sensible, responsible, prudent government of any persuasion will look at the options, because we heard earlier today – and it is good to see the Minister for Public Transport at the table – the transport minister trumpeting what they do in France. The transport minister said, 'We've got to have a ticketing system like they have in France, in Paris.' He said, 'That's what they do.' But hey, he does not want to also look at what they do for their energy, because they are 80 per cent nuclear. So it is good enough to follow France when it suits the government argument, but it is not good enough to follow it when it does not suit their argument.

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Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the people of Frankston want to know where the opposition want to put their nuclear reactor.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is there a point of order, member for Frankston?

Paul Edbrooke: They just texted me, Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. There is no point of order. It is Thursday afternoon. We are all getting a little –

A member interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: One moment please, member. It is Thursday afternoon. We are all getting a little restless. But how about we allow the member to continue without too much assistance.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. I concur greatly with that diagnosis. I would point out that the government today are taking their lead from the French when they want, but not when it does not suit their argument. But we are not here to talk about the pros and cons of the way the French do things, because quite frankly that will never aid Victoria too greatly.

But getting back to the point that this government has a magic pudding approach, I mentioned earlier the fact that they are conjuring up jobs that just will not exist. They are conjuring up state-controlled energy companies that will never deliver what they say. But a really important point the minister made was about the prohibitions on nuclear development here in Victoria. I remind the minister very much that if in fact she had taken her previous role as resources minister seriously, she would have been well briefed that Victoria has some of the world's best supplies of copper, rare earths, special minerals and other things that are essential in a decarbonised economy. Victoria in particular – and Australia generally – is in a super position to be at the forefront of new energy technologies. It is a simple fact that the current prohibitions of this government – who, as the minister made quite clear, under no circumstances will talk nuclear, investigate nuclear, look at the options – are not only preventing the opportunity for Victoria to be part of a new energy solution in the world but stopping us from accessing the resources that are evident in the rare-earth materials, in particular in northern and western Victoria.

The reason this is an important factor is because when we have a transition the government often talks about the equity of a good transition that brings along not only those that can afford to pay for the cost here in our own state and our own nation but those around the world. We often talk about energy equity and the need that, when we are decarbonising, it has got to be fair for all – as well as is possible. But in this state we have access to some of the world's best resources that will help the world transition to a low-carbon future, and this government's current policy settings are preventing us from fully accessing and harnessing that.

What we are doing is relying on mines in China and mines in South America and other places to provide the materials that this minister and this government are requiring in order to progress their SEC magic pudding and their renewable energy targets. Quite simply, this government and this minister are keen to talk big but they are not acting nearly as big as what they say. They are not acting because they are all talk and no substance.

What this minister must fundamentally understand is that you cannot compare one jurisdiction equally with another. We have discussed that their new-found friends in France have 80 per cent nuclear and a bit of renewable. We know our friends in New Zealand have a very large reliance on renewable energy because – guess what, Minister – they have large mountains and lots of water and are able to rely heavily on hydro, as do some communities in parts of Europe that have different availabilities. Here in Australia and in Victoria we have other capacities that other states do not have. We have abundant gas, we have abundant nuclear and we have abundant other sources and the capacity for –

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

Richard RIORDAN: We export it to the world, member for Frankston. As a nation we are an active participant in the supply of this material.

Paul Edbrooke interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Frankston.

Richard RIORDAN: That is right. We export the material that allows others to turn their lights on.

By the minister turning her back on these viable alternatives, she potentially threatens the viability and prosperity of Victoria into the future. Sitting here today we have two main installations providing 66 per cent of our energy, and the minister is saying to us here today that she is actively ruling out any other options that we might have to help supplement that. We have seen this minister here incapable of even building a transmission line to hook up two or three current renewable energy plants that are sitting there unconnected to the grid. The question all Victorians will be asking is: if you cannot even build the powerline to connect up the energy you are already committing to, what future have we got here in Victoria?

I say to this house that this motion that has been put forward today is in fact a wasted motion. No sensible, prudent, responsible government should rule out any options that could provide, if necessary, the means for energising, maintaining and supplying the energy that a modern, First World economy like Victoria needs.

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (16:18): The member for Polwarth started so well – you started so well. You got off to a brilliant start earlier. You said that the Victorian voters are savvy – and yes, they are savvy. They returned 56 Labor members in the lower house. When the federal Leader of the Opposition came out against ruling out nuclear, the members and the community of Aston returned a Labor member for Aston. So yes, the members of our community are very savvy. That is why they reject nuclear when those opposite do not. The Leader of the Opposition said:

I don't think you should ever rule it out.

...

You know, nuclear is going to be part of the mix at some point ...

The inevitability of nuclear is what lives opposite us here – the pro-fracking, pro-nuclear coalition that sits on the other side of the chamber. Bev McArthur from the other place said:

Nuclear ... must be considered.

Nuclear must be considered. When will you walk away from being mouthpieces of the Institute of Public Affairs, of those people who fund your campaigns, and get back to supporting the Victorians who deserve –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member that 'you' is the Chair.

Mathew HILAKARI: I apologise, Chair. I will continue. Victorians should fairly of course ask, 'Where would we put a nuclear power plant? Would we put it in Toorak, would we put it in Hawthorn or would we put it down on the coast?' Are these the places that would want nuclear power stations right next door to their houses? Because it has got to go somewhere. If you are going to build it, it has got to go somewhere. The electors of every community would ask the question, 'How good is nuclear? How safe is it?' Well, the more than 33 serious incidents and accidents that we know of say just how unsafe it is.

Fukushima was mentioned a few moments ago. In 2011, more than a decade ago, the Fukushima earthquakes, followed by tsunamis, followed by nuclear accidents, occurred. Both the Fukushima and Onagawa nuclear power plants have never reopened. There is a reason they never reopened. It is because half of the Fukushima power plant blew up. It is never going to reopen.

A member: Due to the tsunami.

Mathew HILAKARI: No, it was not due to the tsunami actually. It was partially due to that, and the Japanese parliamentary inquiry at the time went into this. They said it was collusion between the government, the regulators and the Tokyo Electric Power Company and it was due to the lack of governance. The Japanese inquiry said, 'Yes, the first one would have blown up and was going to blow up as a result of the tsunami and the earthquake prior.' But what they said about the second and third reactors that blew up is that they blew up because of the lack of decision-making to put salt water into the reactors to make sure that they too did not explode – because they were worried about the future profits of that company. Once you put salt water into the reactors, they are unusable – you cannot reopen them. That is why they delayed. That is what the Japanese parliamentary inquiry found. So it is actually all about the dollars in the nuclear industry. This side of the house does not support the nuclear industry, for good reason, because we are not about the dollars, we are about the safety of our community.

I ask those opposite: what are they going to do in Japan about the 1.25 million tonnes of radioactive water? What are they going to do with it? It is sitting on the site of the Fukushima power plant right now. They have no plan for what they are going to do with it. What do we make of those 16 people who died as a result of those explosions? What do we do with the increased radiation that was measured 225 kilometres away in Tokyo? That is the distance from this Parliament all the way to the New South Wales border. Nowhere is safe with nuclear power. What about the sea water that resulted in 1250 times the legal limit of iodine that went into those waters in those communities? The Japanese authorities think it is going to take another 40 years just to do the clean-up and recovery work. It is 10 years on already. Forty thousand people, a community the size of Traralgon – some people here might be interested in a community the size of Traralgon – cannot live there. For generations they will not be able to go back home. That is what a nuclear power industry does. Milk and water in the region continue to have high levels of radioactive iodine. That is what that industry does.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company, who ran the Fukushima plant, have a legacy of poor communication, concealment and misinformation about safety issues. This is an advanced economy. It is an advanced legislative agenda that they have in Japan. They have been running nuclear power plants for years, and yet this is what happened. It is a deliberate deficit of trust, something that it probably has in common with these ideas about nuclear in Australia. The other lesser known events are a cavalcade of nuclear leaks, releases of radioactive material, spilled fuel pellets, heavy water tank ruptures, malfunctions, explosive mechanical failures, severe damage to reactor cores, partial core meltdowns and fuel rods just catching fire and splitting. This industry has serious issues. It is not up to the task. It will not keep the communities safe.

I am sure there is no problem with 35 litres of highly enriched uranium solution leaking during a transfer. These are serious issues. They should be considered properly by a government. They should be considered properly by an opposition. I am sure the workers who have suffered exposure to radiation – some have suffered radiation burns and some fatal overexposures – cannot but be a very human example of the costs of the nuclear industry. And of course we have Chernobyl, the most infamous of all nuclear accidents.

The industry is not up to the job of thinking about the long-term consequences of an industry like the nuclear power industry. In 2019 a steel encasement – 'a steel sarcophagus' they call it – was put in place over Chernobyl. That was the latest fix-up job. Maybe it will last 100 years. Nuclear waste lasts for somewhere up to a million years. How many times will we have to repeat this process? How many problems are we leaving to the next 10,000 generations – not just this generation and not just the next generation?

We are fortunate in Australia that the Commonwealth already prohibits the construction and operation of nuclear power plants. We do the same in Victoria. As the minister mentioned, the CSIRO, in their most recent GenCost, says that nuclear is the most expensive form of power. Nothing could be more expensive. There is nothing fast about nuclear either. It is going to take at least 10 years to develop, and it takes more than a decade to shut nuclear power plants down.

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The UK is building nuclear power plants at the moment. The cost went from \$30 billion to \$60 billion. The costs that are laid out at the start are always well under the actual costs in the end. In France, and I am glad we brought up France a few moments ago, their latest nuclear plant is running 10 years late. It is not producing any electricity. It was meant to be finished in 2012. When you talk about reliable, dispatchable power, it should not be reliable and dispatchable in 20 years, 30 years, 40 years time or whenever they bother to get it done.

I am glad to talk about our record a little bit in the moments that I have left, because since we came to government we have increased the amount of solar energy by 3½ times. That is not in 10 years, that is not in 20 years and that is not in 40 years.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Mathew HILAKARI: Those over there who are having a meltdown over their concerns about their friends in the nuclear industry –

Richard Riordan: You are getting your lessons from the minister here.

Mathew HILAKARI: Thank you. I should be so accomplished.

Our targets of a 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035 and net zero by 2045 should be lauded and do not require the nuclear energy industry to be a part of it. I thank the member for Polwarth for indicating the savviness of Victorians, and may they continue to be just as savvy.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (16:28): I rise to speak on this motion. I suppose in starting off I found it curious during the previous speech that the member for Frankston actually asked questions on behalf of the people of Frankston. I am surprised it was not the member for Tarneit that was asking questions on the people of Frankston's behalf.

Sam Groth: The member for Point Cook.

Peter WALSH: The member for Point Cook, sorry, who actually lives, I think, in Frankston, so he should have been asking questions on behalf of the people of Frankston.

This motion has three components to it, which most people have not stuck to as they have gone through the debate. There has been a lot of trying to rewrite history. The first bit of history that was being rewritten was that somehow the coalition, the Liberal and National parties, were in favour of fracking. We are not in favour of fracking. We have had a policy against fracking, and we had a policy in government against fracking. If you look at the history of gas in this state, it was the Brumby government, the Brumby Labor government, that issued 23 fracking licences in this state. The Labor Party has supported fracking in this state by issuing those licences. They also issued another 70 licences for onshore gas exploration. We actually do need gas as part of the transition to renewables. As our coal power generation ages and is closed down, we do need gas as an on-demand power as we transition to more renewables and the infrastructure is built to do that. The Brumby government, a Labor government, approved fracking licences in this state. The Brumby government approved 70 onshore exploration licences. This side of the house has never, ever approved a fracking licence and had a very deliberate policy against fracking in this state and put that into legislation, which the Andrews government has now continued. So if you are talking about fracking, which the other side have, they have got their facts totally wrong around that.

There have been a lot of people talking about the SEC and what the Liberal and National parties may or may not have done with the privatisation of the SEC. The minister gives us a daily rant about the SEC which is factually wrong, because as the member for Narracan pointed out in his inaugural speech, as an apprentice at the SEC he was made redundant by the Kirner government when they started to privatise the SEC. Again the other side of the house think if they say it often enough it becomes a fact. Fortunately, there is *Hansard* and there are records about what has actually happened in this state, and those on the other side would do very, very well to go back and look at history before

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they make a contribution in this house and before they read the cheat sheet that has been put in front of them – a cheat sheet from the Premier or the Deputy Premier’s office – and take it as a fact that ‘This is what we’ll say, and if we say it often enough, it will become true’. The member for Narracan very clearly set out what the truth was about the privatisation of the SEC in this particular state.

The minister in her rant again today was a one-trick pony. It is the same story, the same story, the same story, the same story – thinking that somehow everyone will buy it. I think what the Leader of the Opposition was saying when he had his discussion on the Neil Mitchell program was that we need to have a genuine discussion about what forms of energy we have in the future. Everyone has reservations around the safety of nuclear, and we on this side have that same reservation around the safety of nuclear. If you step back and look at the facts about product stewardship and look at the costs of the various forms of energy, the facts are there that nuclear is more expensive than the other forms of energy. But I do not believe that necessarily all the forms of renewable energy have a true whole-of-life product stewardship to their particular production systems, because at the moment we have no way of disposing of used solar panels. We have got hundreds of thousands of solar panels on roofs in Victoria. In my area and other parts of Victoria we have huge solar farms now, and the community is very supportive of that infrastructure and understands we need to move to renewables, but what happens to those solar panels when they get to the end of their life in 20 or 25 years time? At the moment those solar panels go to landfill.

If you are thinking about long-term planning and thinking about how you are going to generate the energy that we need into the future, we do need energy, because we are not going to give up our air conditioners or our heaters. We are not going to give up our refrigeration. We are not going to go back to Coolgardie safes. We are not going to go back to all the things that our fore fathers and mothers used to keep cool or keep warm. We are going to have to have energy into the future. So if you are talking about product stewardship and responsible government, you would have a plan where solar panels could be recycled or something could be done with solar panels instead of just going to landfill. We are reinventing the mistakes of past generations with the way that we have put stuff into landfill rather than finding a way to use it. All the items we recycle now used to go into landfill. We are doing the same with solar panels, and I think that is wrong. You need to have full product stewardship around how those products are recycled, re-used, repurposed or re-something other than just being tipped into landfill.

The same issue applies to wind towers. There is the issue about what is going to happen to wind towers when they reach the end of their useful life. Depending on the contract that has been signed with the landholders, in some cases it has now been found that the landholders are going to be responsible for the remediation of those disused wind towers. Someone is going to bear a huge cost in the future as to how those wind towers are actually going to be decommissioned. If you go to California and you drive between San Francisco and Sacramento and you go through what is called Death Valley, there is a high-traffic wind valley there where there are multiple generations of wind towers, and as is the wont quite often with America, no-one thought through what was going to happen down the track. They all rushed in and built these wind towers. You now see brand new big wind towers next to old rusty wind towers because no-one has actually taken away the old wind towers. So again, if you are talking product stewardship and our energy needs into the future, you need to think about what is going to happen to the old wind towers when they are decommissioned.

As someone was saying before as this debate was unfolding, if you have been to Europe, there were out-to-sea wind towers where there was a contract for them to be remediated when they ended their useful life, but the contract was on-sold with no clause that the new purchaser actually had to remediate those old wind towers or pull them down and recommission the seabed where they are. Now you have got an issue where no-one knows whose they are and they are sitting there and rusting. So the minister can give us the daily rant about renewables. I understand it is her role to do that – it is her role to sell the government’s message – but she should go back and have a look at what the government policies are around the whole product stewardship around renewable energy projects that are here in Victoria so we do not find we are actually leaving a huge pollution mess for generations into the future.

Today has been a little bit like a matter of public importance when it is not an MPI. The government have a program where they have got a motion or two every week, because there is no legislative program at the moment. At the start of a term of government, to come to this place and only have two bills to debate each week says the government has no agenda for this term. They have no plan to actually improve the lives of Victorians other than standing on the other side and ranting and raving and wanting to criticise whatever they want to about the opposition, and that is what this is about. I think the Leader of the Opposition was very sensible in saying, 'Let's have a discussion about the forms of power we're going to have in this state in the future.' The other side have a closed mind to whatever may be there in the future, as has been demonstrated in the debate that has come across the table today.

Just in the last minute left, for the Minister for Public Transport at the table, he might go back and research the facts that he quoted in question time today, because as I understand it the operator of the ticketing system in Dubai is not who he said it was. They are in for the tender process, but I am not so sure they are actually delivering those tickets at the moment. So the minister might want to check the record and maybe make a personal explanation next time we sit here. It is very important. Being a minister, there is a responsibility to make sure you get your facts right and do not just on the spur of the moment use things to defend what is a very indefensible decision.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (16:38): Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for Climate Action and Minister for – one of the best portfolios to exist – the State Electricity Commission for moving this motion. The minister and her team have put a tremendous amount of work into making Victoria the leader of the nation when it comes to climate change action. Recently the leaders of the federal and state oppositions have declared their support for nuclear energy, a position that is not supported by the community, the energy industry or in fact our laws. What I find amusing about the Liberals' nuclear plans is that under both federal and Victorian law the construction of nuclear plants is prohibited. But in the words of James Carville, 'the economy, stupid'. The CSIRO's recently released report *GenCost 2022–23* on the cost of electricity generation lays it out in clear language. Solar and wind power are by far cheaper than nuclear. Wind and solar will cost \$83 per megawatt hour in 2030; meanwhile, nuclear energy through small modular reactors is predicted to cost anywhere between \$130 and \$311 per megawatt hour.

Those opposite love to claim that they are the true economic managers, but I am not sure how spending more money on powering Victoria is efficient economic policy when we already have working renewable energy in this state. Not only would nuclear through small modular reactors be far more expensive but the technology does not actually exist yet. The CSIRO has stated that there is 'no prospect of a plant being deployed in Australia' before 2030.

Theoretically speaking, what would happen if we built a nuclear power station? The CSIRO has argued that it would cost at least \$25.6 billion to build a 1600-megawatt capacity power station. For context, this is a similar capacity to the decommissioned Hazelwood power station. The reality is that the estimated cost of \$25.6 billion would most likely blow out. We have seen this happen in the UK, where the nuclear plant they are building in Somerset known as Hinkley Point C was estimated in 2016 to cost \$30 billion. It is now expected to cost the UK at least \$61.2 billion. The nuclear power plant that the Liberals are so obsessed about building would almost certainly cost us more than the pricey estimate of \$25.6 billion.

Furthermore, in case anyone has any doubts, the Liberals have a terrible record on climate change. Since 2014 the Liberals have voted against or tried to gut the following energy bills in this Parliament: the Climate Change Bill 2016, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Bill 2017, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Amendment Bill 2019, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020 and the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Bill 2021. By opposing Victoria's renewable energy targets the opposition has risked thousands of jobs.

We already have several forms of renewable energy active in Victoria delivering energy to the homes and businesses of Victorians. It is cheap, it is efficient, it provides jobs and, most importantly, it exists. It is clear that the Liberals are only arguing for nuclear to distract Victorians from the very real work that the Andrews Labor government is doing to continue the rollout of renewable energy. Unlike the Liberals, the Andrews Labor government has a plan to address climate change while providing stable renewable energy to Victorians. Despite 10 years of failure by the Morrison, Turnbull and Abbott governments, in Victoria we have been paving the way on climate change action. We smashed our 2020 emission reduction target of 15 to 20 per cent. In fact we achieved a 29.8 per cent reduction in emissions, and just a year later we achieved a 32.3 per cent reduction. We have already announced that we will power 100 per cent of Victorian government operations with renewable energy. We have announced six solar projects that will help us get there. Everything from hospitals to metro trains and trams will be powered by clean renewable energy. In fact I was there with the minister, and the Deputy Speaker, when she made that announcement at Wilson Transformers in the heart of my electorate.

It is no secret that here in Victoria we have the strongest legislation on climate change in Australia. We are aiming for a 75 to 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2035 and to reach net zero by 2045. This falls within the Paris agreement targets of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. Furthermore, we have reduced our emissions more than any other state since the Andrews Labor government was elected, and we have also decarbonised the economy at the fastest rate in Australia. In our first two terms of government we have proved to Victorians that we are serious about acting on climate change.

We are leading the nation in adopting several forms of renewables, including offshore wind. Our offshore wind project is set to deliver 2 gigawatts by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040. Such projects are not only good for the environment but good for our economy. Our renewable energy projects are powering the economy, supporting businesses and creating thousands of jobs for Victorians. Last November Victorians overwhelmingly voted for a continuation of ambitious climate targets, once again proving that only Labor can lead the fight against climate change.

I could not get up here and talk about energy without talking about the SEC. The SEC is a vital part of our plan to deliver affordable, reliable and renewable energy to all Victorians. The SEC will help us deliver our ambitious and achievable targets of 50 per cent renewables by 2030 and net zero by 2045, and it will deliver 59,000 renewable energy jobs along the way. Many Victorians remember the days when the SEC was strong, but after the Kennett government completed the sell-off most Victorians saw their energy bills skyrocket. Several decades later Victorians, including those who were not even born when the Kennett government was in power, are feeling the effects of privatisation every time they receive an energy bill. It is why so many of my constituents and I reminisced over the SEC and were determined to see its return.

I am proud to say that after astounding support at the election the Andrews Labor government has brought back the SEC. By the end of this year we will be delivering the first project under the SEC, powering 60,000 homes and delivering at least 100 megawatts of power. Not only will the SEC deliver affordable and renewable energy, it will also create 59,000 jobs, and 6000 of them will be for apprentices and trainees. I am sure the team down at the Electrical Trades Union will be excited about this, as the next generation of electricians will be trained up through the Centre for U. The ETU are working in collaboration with Holmesglen TAFE to train the next generation of electrical professionals. Once again our government is taking action on climate change while keeping the lights on.

Additionally, we have invested \$42 million to install 100 neighbourhood batteries in Victoria. This investment will support up to 25,000 homes in having access to renewable energy and bring down the energy prices for Victorians. In fact Victoria is home to one of the biggest batteries in the Southern Hemisphere. In my old home town of Geelong – go Cats! – we have been given 30,000 home battery rebates through our Solar Homes program. We are helping families buy household batteries, once again saving them money and helping us reach our renewable targets. We are already seeing the benefits of the Solar Homes program, with those who have accessed the program saving an average of \$1073 per year. Additionally, last year more than 510,000 Victorian households and 49,000

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businesses received discounted energy-efficient products and services. This is providing relief for the bills of Victorians while helping us transition our state to net zero emissions.

So why do the Liberals have such strong opposition to renewable energy? Why are they obsessed with nuclear? At the end of the day, it is because they and their mates are unable to make a profit from renewable energy like they currently make from centralised coal and gas. Meanwhile, we are putting power back into the hands of Victorians. From community batteries to solar panels, Victorians are receiving cheaper, localised and renewable energy, and of course we have brought back the SEC. Victorians voted for clean, affordable and reliable energy, not for nuclear power that does not exist. We are not looking for obscure forms of energy, as I have outlined. We are getting on with the job.

To finish, here we are again: every couple of years when things are not going well for the Libs, they float the idea of nuclear. Make no mistake, the idea is always floated at a time to distract people from the Liberal Party's woes. On 12 May last week the Leader of the Opposition, in trying to escape from the nuclear wasteland that is their party room, said:

I don't think you should ever rule it out.

...

You know, nuclear is going to be part of the mix at some point ...

Well, what happened on 12 May? The Liberals tried to protect themselves from something quite radioactive – essentially tried to control a nuclear reaction. I hope the Leader of the Opposition understands the concept of half-life, because this radioactive member has not reached it yet. But one thing we can be certain of is that the opposition is in a state of exponential decay.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (16:48): I was not going to contribute to this debate –

A member interjected.

Matthew GUY: I am not sure who you are, but I am sure you will not be here for more than one term. The last guy I said that to was not.

I was not going to make any comments on this debate, but I was drawn by the minister's claim in this juvenile and stupid motion that somehow all of us on this side of the house are in favour of nuclear energy and that was a fait accompli. This side of the house, unlike the government, believe in debate, community debate. We believe in our country's future being owned and those key decisions being owned by all Australians and indeed all Victorians. A debate on whether nuclear power – as our uranium, some of the finest quality and the purest in the world, is sold to many, many countries for this purpose – is used domestically is not one that should be avoided; it is not one that we should say we should not have. I have not seen any comments from the state or federal opposition leaders to say anything different. It is odd that the government of the day says we cannot have this debate, but it is a signature of this government that we cannot have a debate. Because their decision is the decision; there is no community debate.

Let me be very clear: as the only member in this Parliament of Ukrainian heritage, sitting next to the member for Warrandyte – I think he and I are the only two people in this building who have been to Chernobyl – and as someone in this Parliament who is probably the only person whose family members died from the effects of Chernobyl, I am not in favour of nuclear power at all. I see it as exceptionally efficient, exceptionally clean, exceptionally worthwhile to debate, but the risks vastly outweigh those benefits. No-one, no leader in the Victorian Liberals, has said we have adopted a policy on nuclear energy – that is not true, and the minister's comments demean her, in saying that is the case. For our side, having a debate on these issues is worthwhile. It is sensible. It is what you would expect a Parliament to do. To have juvenile motions on a Thursday afternoon when we should be talking about the crisis in our hospital system or the failings in our infrastructure agenda, which are falling over – they are probably more important.

When I was growing up we used to send many packages to our family in Ukraine, including those who suffered the effects of Chernobyl. They lived 600 kilometres to the east of the reactor. As I said, the member for Warrandyte and I walked through Pripyat. We went through the town of Chernobyl and we went past Narodychi. We saw the effects of what uncontrolled nuclear energy can do, and I know people will say, 'Yes, that's Soviet technology.' Well, Three Mile Island was not, and Fukushima was not. And yes, Western Europe has been powered and much of the United States has been powered off this technology for decades, safely – not entirely – but those risks, to me, vastly outweigh the benefits.

We have for many years sent money back to my second cousin for her daughter, who suffers hearing problems to this day because in utero she carried radioactive particles which have affected her children. Her neighbours are the same. She was the first one of my family I met in that country back in 2008. That was the first time that any of our family went since my mum, her brother and her parents came out from Eastern Europe to Australia. Four of us met again in 2008, and the first person I met over there was my second cousin, who died aged 46, about eight years ago, from the effects of Chernobyl. Do not tell me it is safe.

Let me tell you about life under a socialist regime. It was still snowing on May Day, 1 May – the accident was 26 April 1986 – and on 1 May the kids had to attend the parade for May Day, 1 May. 'С празньком першй мая: you must celebrate 1 May. It is May Day.' And off the kids were, out on the streets. But falling from the sky was a mix of yellow and orange fluorescent snow, and the kids were saying 'Мама мама дивись! What is this, what is this? Look!' That of course was radioactive fallout. Particularly the girls, who were out and forced by the commissars who were in each building and at the end of each street, when the parents were saying, 'You must come inside, this is not safe,' were sent out. They were told by the then government, 'You must go out.' So they went out. Now many of those girls carry the effects within their genes, particularly in their ovaries, and have children who are to this day born with birth defects. A third of Belarus is technically uninhabitable. Where my family lived, 600 kilometres to the east, was on no UN map. My uncle – yes, his name is Victor; they are all called Victor – was a liquidator, and his daughter said to me, 'Watch the Netflix series. He said it's very good, it's very accurate about them throwing the material from the roof.' I think they had 30 seconds or something like that, wearing a lead suit. He is very sick to this day and remains very sick. He is on a government pension, living in the village in the east. He has not been able to work for some time.

That is my view, and I put that as my view – which is different to many – on nuclear power. But I say to people who have this fascination with nuclear energy: it requires a huge amount of water. I would never wish a nuclear facility on my community in Manningham. Therefore I do not think I should advocate it for anyone else's, because if it cannot be in mine, it should not be in anyone else's either. I would not advocate it for my residents. I would not expect it for anyone else's either.

But there is a point, and many on the left say this: to get to climate change targets, one step back for two steps forward is very important. Many on the left say you can adopt safe nuclear technology, which will wipe out your coal fire, be vastly more efficient and be vastly better for the environment and CO2 emissions, and that is true. But the truth of the matter is, in my view – and my view is one person's view out of 88 people's views in this chamber – that the risks outweigh those benefits. We must find other ways. You can debate whether it is this way or that way.

When my family came to Australia they worked for the SEC. I mean, they have got different stories about the SEC than the previous speaker might have. He might not know what the SEC was. I do: we in the Latrobe Valley know what it was. Sure, the member for Morwell does and the member for Narracan does. I do: I have been in those power stations, in those dredges, in the little railway that used to operate through the open cut. We know what the SEC was like. We know what power strikes meant. We know what the cutting up of Yallourn was, where I was christened and where my parents were married, so we know about the SEC as much as we do nuclear power.

MOTIONS

1876

Legislative Assembly

Thursday 18 May 2023

I say to this chamber: I would hope that on a Thursday afternoon we would have motions that come to this chamber that are of genuine debating worth, and nuclear energy should be one. You know my position – most in my party who have asked know my position – but it is not a position I will enforce on others. I think it should be a sensible and genuine debate, not the juvenile rubbish that the minister has put her name to today.

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (16:56): I thank the member for Bulleen for his contribution, although I do think that in talking about having a civilised debate it is probably a good idea not to be rude to anyone else in this place in order to convey the emotion which the member feels about this issue. I agree with him: Вибачте, це кошмар. Or Vybachte, tse koshmar. It is terrible what happened in Ukraine – it is absolutely terrible – and this is the reason why I can never support nuclear energy and I can never support nuclear warfare. Now, there are those on that side of the chamber who are of a similar generation to me who grew up in the 1980s, and there is no way, as a child of the 1980s, that I can support anything that involves the use of uranium and nuclear energy. I am not even comfortable with uranium mining. I do not like it. I do not like the danger that it creates, and I think that the member for Bulleen has spoken incredibly eloquently about how dangerous nuclear can be.

I also agree with the member for Bulleen that we do need to have constructive dialogue and argument and debate about this. It does not help when we have histrionics from either side, but we have particularly seen a fair bit of that from the opposition on this issue. It is not helpful when we have a federal opposition that is so keen to play stupid games with something that is absolutely so important, something that needs to be taken incredibly seriously. Because really when you run out of ideas, what do you do? You go nuclear. Those opposite have gone nuclear, for example, on the Suburban Rail Loop. They do not want it, they do not think we can afford it, yet there are a number of them who think that we can afford the billions upon billions of dollars to build a nuclear reactor that will take decades to build. It is ridiculous.

A member: It doesn't make sense.

Vicki WARD: It does not make sense at all. This is the party that made it almost impossible to build windfarms, yet they think that we are going to find someone's neighbourhood where we can put in a nuclear reactor. The truth of it is, whether you agree with nuclear energy or not, you are not going to find anyone in this state who is going to want a nuclear reactor in their community. They are not. The member for Bulleen is absolutely right: there is no hope in hell you would have a nuclear reactor in my electorate. There is no-one on this side of the chamber who would want a nuclear reactor in their part of the electorate. I wonder if the member for Polwarth wants one in his part of the electorate.

A member: No.

Vicki WARD: Or does he want it on the Great Ocean Road? Does he want it in Loch Ard Gorge? Where would it go? The member for Bulleen is right: it needs a lot of water. It needs to be on the coast. So which National Party-held seat or Liberal Party-held seat would a nuclear reactor go into?

The SPEAKER: Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The member will have the call the next time the motion is before the house.

*Bills***Gambling Taxation Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Tim Pallas:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading*

The SPEAKER: As the required statement of intention has been made under section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975, the third reading of this bill must be passed by an absolute majority. As there are no voices for the noes and there are more than 45 members present in the chamber, I declare the third reading passed with the concurrence of an absolute majority of the whole number of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**Read third time.**

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

Gambling Regulation Amendment Bill 2023*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Melissa Horne:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.**

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.*Adjournment*

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Berwick College

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:02): (181) I raise an adjournment matter for the Minister for Education, and I ask the minister to come out and meet with some students from Berwick College. I had some students do some work experience with me recently, Sanj and Madeline. They raised some issues around their school. First and foremost, I must state that I have been to the school many times. It is a fantastic environment for learning. The teachers there are wonderful; principal Kerri Bolch is amazing. Some amazing students have come out of that school – probably including myself, although I did not quite finish and I do not want to go on about myself too much. They have raised some issues

which come directly from the students, and I would love the Minister for Education to come out because they need some funding to get some upgrades at that school.

Some of the things that these students have listed are desks that are damaged, graffitied and full of chewing gum. The projectors and HDMI ports are faulty, glitch out occasionally and are outdated. Obviously this is affecting and impacting learning. The power points in a couple of classrooms are faulty and do not work. The toilets at Berwick College are broken – the seats and doors have fallen off. We all remember when we got into government in 2010 the then shadow minister Rob Hulls brought in a door from his school signed to say that the school needed repairs forgetting the fact that he had been in government for 11 years. The door happened to fall off the day the Liberals were elected. We are saying this is a problem that the government needs to address.

The air conditioners at the school are old and do not work. If they do work, students cannot even feel the cold and occasionally hot air blows in, again impacting their learning. The chairs in the classrooms are broken with either the backs of the chairs broken or legs somehow missing. The classrooms themselves are portables and are visibly crumbling under the number of students going through. There are currently about 1800 students. What they wish for is for the minister to come and have a look through the school and examine the horrible conditions that these students are experiencing, because they cannot continue in that learning environment.

I will give credit: we have had funding at that school in the past for the health and wellbeing centre, something that I would encourage looking at for more schools, not just Berwick College. It has had some outstanding results. We have had young people go through there who have had a range of mental health issues and have needed extra support to improve their learning, and the school has managed to work with some of those students and get them engaged, which is absolutely magnificent. I put that down to the teachers and principal but also to the new facility, which did come from funding from this current Labor government but also from support we put forward. We started to push for this facility after we had suicides in the area that were quite tragic.

These students want the minister to come out, have a look through and see and experience what is happening at the school to ensure that when the government is considering the budget money comes to Berwick College so we can get it up to the standard these students deserve so they can have the ultimate learning experience.

Big Housing Build

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (17:05): (182) My question is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is that the minister meet with my community to provide a Pakenham electorate update on the Big Housing Build and other programs delivering social housing within my community. Our government recognises that homelessness comes in a myriad of forms for a myriad of reasons, and to begin to address this our government's landmark \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build investment is delivering 12,000 new homes right across the state. This program is changing lives.

In April last year I went to visit some of the new homes being built in Pakenham. These are part of the 24 being built by the Andrews Labor government as part of the Big Housing Build – \$9 million of investment in the Pakenham electorate alone. My area is fast growing, with many younger families and single-parent families moving into the area. Housing shortages are a major concern to many in my electorate, so the work we are doing is vital. Everyone deserves the security and stability of a home.

Can the minister provide an update on these housing projects and supports that our government is delivering in my electorate and take up my offer to come and visit and discuss these important investments with my local advocates?

Regional rail catering services

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (17:06): (183) My adjournment is to the Minister for Public Transport, and the action that I am seeking is for more work to be done on how we can get buffet services onto our long-haul train lines that are serviced by VLocity trains. I raised this with the minister in a question previously, and the answer I basically got back was that it was not going to happen. It is a nearly 4-hour train trip from Bairnsdale, but the answer I got back was that it will take up 44 seats on a carriage to install the buffet services. I am not asking for a five-star restaurant, Minister for Health. I am not asking for a full-blown McDonald's on the train. Surely in half a carriage or less we can put in a counter, a fridge and a microwave and serve a cup of tea, some scones, some cakes or whatever and give people who are travelling for 4 hours something to eat on the train.

I would ask the minister to have a look at that design and come up with something a bit more simple in relation to providing that very, very simple service. We had buffet cars on our trains. The minister said she could remember them. I can remember them, Minister, about 40 years ago when I was very young. Now we are in an era when we have lost that service, and in this day and age it should be back. I am open to discussions with the minister for transport, but I think that that should be investigated for our long-haul trains on these VLocity carriages.

Budget 2023–24

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:08): (184) During my election campaign I continually talked about the importance of having a seat at the table of a sitting government. Having a seat at the table means I get the opportunity to actually have conversations with ministers to talk about my community – to share the goals and aspirations they talk to me about and to talk about how together we can continue getting things done for my community. So I direct my adjournment debate to the Treasurer. The action I seek is for the Treasurer to come down to my electorate of Hastings to meet and talk with local businesses and stakeholders about what the 2023–24 state budget will deliver for them and the wider community.

In my electorate we have multimillion-dollar international companies right down to small mum-and-dad home businesses and everything in between. They are exciting, innovative, creative and energetic, and best of all, they are part of the rich fabric that makes my electorate so special. Talking with those businesses, they want to know what we can expect from the budget and how it will help them to grow and achieve more. With so much going on in the electorate, especially around the Port of Hastings, my community is eager to see what the future holds. I know they would welcome the Treasurer with open arms and a great locally brewed coffee or perhaps a great snag from Somerville Village Meats on bread, with the onion on top.

Stamp duty

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:09): (185) My adjournment tonight is for the Treasurer, and the action I am seeking is for the Treasurer to provide further stamp duty relief to first home buyers in the budget next week. I was pleased to read in the media earlier this week that there has been some exploration of alternative revenue options to stamp duty. Sadly, I think the Premier has told the Treasurer this will not be happening. Of course we know that the Premier does not care about home ownership; it is no big deal to him. He claims Victorians just want to rent. On this side of the house, however, we know that young Victorians want to own their own home.

Stamp duty is a deeply unpopular tax among taxpayers and economists alike, and for good reason. It is an inefficient, distortionary tax, and its greatest impact is felt by those who have yet to break into the property market, principally young first home buyers. Its impact on housing affordability or lack thereof in this state is undeniable, and yet this government is not doing anything to fix it; in fact they are doing the opposite. In the 2021–22 budget the Andrews government raised stamp duty, and last year alone the Andrews government taxed \$10.4 billion in stamp duty, up from \$4.9 billion in the 2014–15 budget – a more than 100 per cent increase in the tax take. This government has introduced

20 new or increased property taxes, and with property taxes making up around half of the state's revenue – stamp duty alone contributing over a third – this government's addiction to property taxes is driving the housing affordability crisis and robbing young Victorians of their chance to own their own home. The Grattan Institute research shows that Victoria's reliance on stamp duty is costing the economy up to \$5 billion a year, while the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry estimates that 340,000 property transactions are forgone annually because of stamp duty.

It is clear that stamp duty is acting as a handbrake on the availability of housing stock in this state, particularly in Melbourne. I call on the Treasurer to provide stamp duty relief for first home buyers in the upcoming budget. Currently Victorian first home buyers are only fully exempt from paying stamp duty on properties sold for less than \$600,000, with concessional stamp duty payable to \$750,000. But the median house price for a home in Melbourne is \$956,000, meaning that many first home buyers miss out on any stamp duty relief. Stamp duty on the median house price for a Melbourne home is currently around \$52,000. After making so many sacrifices to scrape together a deposit, first home buyers need to save tens of thousands of dollars on top of that just to pay the government for the opportunity to own their own home.

Prior to the 2022 state election we committed on this side of the house to removing stamp duty for first home buyers for properties valued up to \$1 million. This better reflects the property market in Victoria and provides first home buyers with hope. We simply cannot afford to deny young Victorians the opportunity to own their own slice of this great state any longer, and I call on the Treasurer to break Labor's addiction to property taxes.

Dardi Munwurro

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (17:12): (186) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Corrections, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit Dardi Munwurro in High Street, Preston, and to hear firsthand about the group-based healing and behaviour change programs that they run for First Nations Victorian men who have had contact with the corrections system. Dardi Munwurro is a beloved organisation in Preston. They have been doing their thing for a long time now, over 20 years, and they run a range of programs that have supported hundreds of First Nations Victorian men. The thrust of their program is a focus on cultural healing, developing pride and confidence and supporting men to understand trauma and to address the behaviours and outcomes that are symptomatic of trauma, including substance misuse, violence, anger, homelessness and employment challenges.

Dardi Munwurro operate across Australia, but of particular interest to the minister will be the work they do in Victoria's correctional facilities and the work they do with men who are in contact with our justice system or our youth justice system. They run week-long behaviour change programs within correctional facilities, and they accept referrals from Corrections Victoria and the Koori Court for their other programs. One very important outcome of the work they do is that they reduce the rates of incarceration for participants in their programs and they reduce the rates at which those participants are subject to court orders, including community correction orders.

The minister's visit to Dardi Munwurro will be an opportunity to hear about this work directly from the organisation's director Alan Thorpe. Alan has run Dardi Munwurro since the very beginning. This is not the first time he has been mentioned in *Hansard*. If you ever check out his LinkedIn, it is wonderfully simple and impressive. It says 'Director, Dardi Munwurro, 23 years and five months', and we hope for many more years and months to come. I am sure the minister will be keen to hear from his wealth of experience.

And while he is there the minister might also take the chance just to head next door to Aunty Alma Thorpe's Gathering Place, which is a fantastic spot to grab a coffee or a bite to eat and does have a great new mural there that was funded through Creative Victoria through this government. On that note, if the Minister for Creative Industries or the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples wish to join us, they would be most welcome given their overlapping portfolios, but we look forward to hearing from the Minister for Corrections in particular.

Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:15): (187) My adjournment is to the Treasurer. The action I seek is for the Labor government to rule out any Victorian government money or support now or in future for the polluting brown coal Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain, or HESC, project. Why is Labor in Victoria doing deals with overseas corporations to expand our brown coal industry? It does not make any sense. In March the Victorian Labor Treasurer announced a \$2.35 billion deal with the Japanese government for a project that takes our brown coal in Victoria to turn it into hydrogen gas for export to Japan. That is brown coal, the most polluting coal on the planet, and yet Labor wants to extend the life of this industry in Victoria. This project is an absolute disaster for our climate. If it goes ahead, it will put out emissions equivalent to 735,000 petrol cars being put on our roads. Right when this Labor government should be figuring out how to transition away from brown coal and away from fossil fuels, and support communities as we do it, instead they are signing deals to prolong the life of our coal industry. Labor says, 'Don't worry. The project won't add to climate change because we'll capture those emissions and we'll bury them underground through carbon capture and storage.' Never mind the fact that this technology – carbon capture and storage – has not been found to work at this scale anywhere in the world.

It beggars belief that Labor in Victoria thinks it is okay to support new coal projects. And this comes after Labor in Victoria has supported gas drilling near the Twelve Apostles; approved a new gas plant at Western Port Bay; lifted the onshore gas moratorium, opening up our land to dozens of new gas proposals; and supported offshore gas drilling in Victoria and seismic blasting. I have said it before in this place and I will say it again because there seem to be quite a few Labor MPs that simply do not get it: supporting new coal and gas in a climate emergency is criminal. It is not acceptable in this day and age to be opening up new coal and gas projects when we are facing climate collapse. We need to end coal and gas in Victoria, not prolong it, and at the very least Labor needs to stop supporting new coal and gas projects. Young people are watching. Future generations will judge us for what we do now in this house of Parliament, and supporting new coal and gas is being on the wrong side of history.

Acland Street and Fitzroy Street, St Kilda

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:18): (188) My adjournment matter tonight is directed to the Minister for Police. The action I seek is for the minister to join me to visit the St Kilda police station to discuss safety concerns on Acland Street and Fitzroy Street. St Kilda is a dynamic community and our local police officers do an outstanding job tackling challenging crime issues to keep our community safe. St Kilda residents recently had the opportunity to have their say on community safety through the community sentiment survey 2023. It provided community members with an opportunity to share safety concerns, how they would like to interact with police and where they think the force should direct its efforts to better prevent crime, because everyone deserves to feel safe in St Kilda. I look forward to discussing the next steps of this survey with the minister and welcoming him to our wonderful community.

Gippsland South electorate public housing

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:19): (189) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Housing, and the action I seek is for the minister to explain why I keep getting reports and requests from my constituents about empty public housing in Gippsland. In the last six months or more in particular, I have been receiving reports semiregularly from people who are concerned that public housing is sitting vacant at a time when we have a significant waiting list for people looking for public housing and there is also pressure on our private housing sector, which of course is putting downward pressure on the public housing market. I have reports of vacant homes in Sale, Foster and Korumburra just in the last few months, and each time we have followed them up, there has been either a reason or an excuse from the department – initially the From Homelessness to a Home program undertaken by the previous minister. Regularly we get reports that a house has just been finished or has just been renovated and is now being tenanted, but these reports keep coming up. It is reasonable that there are

times when there is changeover in tenants; when there is the death of a tenant, sadly; when there are repairs being undertaken; or of course when there is construction.

So some information that I would like to hear from the minister in his response is: what the current number of vacant homes in Gippsland is, what the current time period is that homes are vacant, what the current maintenance backlog is for public housing in Gippsland and indeed what the current waiting list is for the Gippsland region for people seeking public housing, because not only is it the people on the usual waiting list but of course there is the emergency waiting list. There has been a considerable increase in women fleeing family violence during the pandemic and since then women seeking assistance and really struggling to find somewhere to live. It is a concern for me that this is something I did not have reports on in the first seven or eight years of my career, but it has happened in the last 12 months consistently, and there does seem to be either a long period of time when homes are being left vacant or a bigger lag in the time for changeovers. When so many are in need of a house, leaving these homes vacant is criminal, and I would like the minister to give an explanation as to why this is occurring.

Moonlit Sanctuary

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (17:21): (190) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water, and the action I seek is that the minister join me at the opening of the South East Water discovery lab at the Moonlit Sanctuary. The Moonlit Sanctuary is now in the electorate of Bass, and we love it, in Pearcedale. It is an amazing place for locals, visitors, students and families to come and see native Australian wildlife, butterflies and plants – you name it, it is all there – and learn more about their protection.

Pauline Richards interjected.

Jordan CRUGNALE: And birds. Thank you, member for Cranbourne. They have got a great night tour as well, where you get to feed some kangaroos and wallabies. The member for Hastings knows that too. Langwarrin Creek runs right through the sanctuary, and the discovery lab has been built to provide ongoing monitoring of the creek's water quality before it flows into our beautiful Western Port Bay. The discovery lab will also be an education facility and will allow students, volunteers and members of the public to test the creek water quality by surveying water bugs. I am told water bugs are a great biological indicator of the health of the creek and play an important role in identifying pollution in our waterways as well as supporting native wildlife, including fish, frogs, rakalis and even platypuses. This amazing facility has been made possible with \$35,000 from the Moonlit Sanctuary and a \$7000 community grant from our local water corporation South East Water as part of their wonderful community grants program. I would be delighted for the minister to join with me – and maybe the members for Hastings and Cranbourne would like to come along as well – to see this amazing new discovery lab.

Brad Battin: What about over here?

Jordan CRUGNALE: Would you like to come as well? It is going to be a huge asset to our local community.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:23): The member for Berwick has raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action that he seeks is that the minister meet with students from Berwick College to learn about the state of facilities at that college. The member for Pakenham has raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing. The member is seeking an update on the way in which the Big Housing Build is delivering for her community. The member for Gippsland East wants to bring back the buffet car and is seeking that the Minister for Public Transport do that – take action and deliver a buffet car for the people of his electorate. The member for Hastings has requested

that the Treasurer meet with him, talk with businesses in his community and take that opportunity to learn about everything that is going on in Hastings but also to outline the many ways in which the Andrews Labor government is working to support local businesses. The member for Kew had an action for the Treasurer, and she is seeking that the Treasurer provide further stamp duty relief for homebuyers.

The member for Preston has an action for the Minister for Corrections. The action that the member for Preston seeks is that the Minister for Corrections join him at Dardi Munwurro, which is a First Nations healing and behaviour change centre, to see the great work that is happening there to support First Nations men who are at risk of offending or reoffending or who have some challenges with anger management and so on and to see the great work that can be done in the community to support First Nations men to be strong, proud members of our community.

The member for Melbourne has a question for the Treasurer – he has got quite a lot tonight – sorry, not a question, an action. The action that the member seeks is that the Treasurer rule out the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain project. The member for Albert Park has an action for the Minister for Police, and the action that the member seeks is that the minister join her on a visit to St Kilda police, who the member reports are doing an excellent job in the local community, to discuss some safety issues in relation to behaviours on Acland Street. The member for Gippsland South raised a matter for the Minister for Housing, and the action that he seeks is that the minister explain to him and his community some of the issues in relation to public housing availability in his electorate, specifically the number of public housing homes that are currently vacant without notice.

The member for Bass raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water. The member for Bass was full of praise for an initiative of South East Water, specifically the community grants program to establish the Moonlit Sanctuary discovery lab. The member for Bass would really welcome the Minister for Water joining her on a tour of that beautiful part of her constituency.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:27 pm.