



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 4 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

Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

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

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Thursday 4 May 2023

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

Joint sitting of Parliament

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

The SPEAKER (09:33): I have to report that the house met yesterday with the Legislative Council for the purpose of:

- (1) electing three members of Parliament to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation and that Bridget Vallence, Kathleen Matthews-Ward and Tim Read were elected; and
- (2) electing three members of Parliament to the board of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and that Kim O'Keeffe, Luba Grigorovitch and Michael O'Brien were elected.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Notice given.

Committees

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Report on the appointment of a person to conduct the financial audit of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (09:34): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on the appointment of a person to conduct the financial audit of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

Ordered that report be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENT TABLED UNDER AN ACT OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 26.

Motions

Regional sitting

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:35): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) acknowledges the serious impact of recent floods in Victoria;
- (2) meets and sits in a flood-affected community in northern Victoria for one day in October or November 2023;
- (3) requires the Speaker and the Clerk of Legislative Assembly to consult with the Mitchell Shire Council, the Greater Shepparton City Council, the Campaspe Shire Council and other flood-affected local government areas in northern Victoria and parliamentary staff in relation to choosing an appropriate date and specific location for the regional setting to occur; and

- (4) authorises the Speaker to do all things necessary to facilitate the Assembly sitting in northern Victoria in October or November 2023.

Leave refused.

Peter WALSH: I request that my motion be put on the notice paper for future reference.

Standing and sessional orders

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:36): I desire to move, by leave:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow general business, notice of motion 15, relating to the reintroduction of non-government business time, to be moved immediately.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:36): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 16 May 2023.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Trentham and District Historical Society

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:37): I rise today to celebrate some exciting events taking place in the town of Trentham in my electorate. I commend the Trentham and District Historical Society for their dedication and hard work on the Trentham and district story signage project, which opened on 24 March. Located at the old police complex, the project encompasses a series of signs about the people and history of the Trentham district. Dja Dja Wurrung history and culture is featured thanks to the fantastic collaboration between the historical society and Djarra elders and staff. The all-weather display showcases the rich history of Trentham, including the story of our timber workers and potato farmers, and provides a step-back-in-time experience.

Trentham Sportsground Pavilion

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:38): In more good news, the Trentham Saints have marched into their brand new pavilion thanks in no small part to a \$2 million investment by the Andrews Labor government.

Bullarto vintage tractor pull and vehicle display

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:38): I had a great time attending the Bullarto tractor pull and classic vehicle display, another great local event held only a couple of weekends ago. The tractor pull brings together people from all over the region to celebrate a love of agriculture and agricultural machinery.

Trentham Spudfest

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:38): A potato-filled shout-out to everyone at the Trentham Spudfest organising committee. I look forward to this weekend, and I would welcome all colleagues to attend and celebrate all things that are great about the potato at the Trentham Spudfest.

Anzac Day

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:38): I would like to inform the house this morning about the marvellous volunteers and communities right across Polwarth that came out in great numbers on Anzac Day. Right across Polwarth of course it is a bit like Christmas for the local member. You get so many invitations and so many communities doing their best to honour past veterans and commitments by local communities. I would just like to list the communities across my region that came out in force either at dawn services or later in the morning, around 11 or 12. We had the townships of Port Campbell, Cobden, Derrinallum and Lismore, Camperdown, Colac, Cressy, Winchelsea, Apollo Bay, Torquay, Beech Forest, Lorne and Anglesea.

But the one I want to highlight the most is the Timboon community. There is an action group down there, Timboon Action, headed up by Heather Martin, Leeanne Whitehead, Peter Pope and Darcy McGlade. Timboon came together for the first time in nearly 50 years to put an Anzac march and service together, which was a great event in the community, run mainly by younger members of the community. They gathered in volunteers and many others and put a march on and a fine service. So well done to Timboon Action for coming together and joining along with so many other communities across Polwarth.

Les Trigg

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:40): Finally, a shout-out to 102-year-old Les Trigg, who made the Colac midday service on Anzac Day.

Werribee electorate schools

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:40): I rise today to update the house on the progress of the Manor Lakes P-12 College upgrade in my electorate of Werribee. In the 2021 state budget the Andrews Labor government announced \$9.4 million towards the upgrade and expansion of the school. This investment will replace temporary facilities with permanent buildings that will allow the school to offer places to an extra 400 local students. I am pleased to say that the builder has now been appointed for this project and work will commence this term. I also take the opportunity to welcome the college's new principal Scott Dellar and thank outgoing principal Steve Warner for their contributions to this important project.

The electorate, and Wyndham as a whole, is a fast-growing area of Melbourne's west, and it is important that our educational institutions address this growth to ensure that every child has access to quality local education in modern facilities. That is why the Andrews Labor government has opened primary schools at Riverwalk, Riverbend, Ngarri and Lollypop Creek in the past four years, and three more schools are set to open in 2024. Known by their interim names, Lollypop Creek Secondary School, Lollypop Creek Specialist School and Black Forest East Primary School, they are currently under construction, and might I add they are already looking great. I am looking forward to seeing the progress of the Manor Lakes college upgrade and the opening of the new schools next year.

Irymple Primary School

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:41): I rise today to acknowledge and thank the staff and students of Irymple Primary School for inviting me to attend their Anzac ceremony last week. This is a terrific public school with a broad leadership program who laid wreaths to remember our Anzacs, local veterans like Brad McGlashan, who was also in attendance at the ceremony, and those currently serving. I was able to share a small part of our family's Anzac story whilst encouraging these amazing young people to listen to these stories and to never forget. Thanks for having me, Irymple Primary School. Lest we forget.

Dreamtime at the P

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:42): Recently Mildura played host to the Central Australia Redtails in the first ever Dreamtime at the P event at the Mildura Sporting Precinct, an incredibly significant event brought together by a small group of volunteers. To bring the Redtails, along with Kevin Sheedy, Paddy Ryder and Anthony Koutoufides and along with our region's best talent in football and netball, is an incredible effort. Special mention goes to Boozer Robertson, Ben Ridley and Damien Hall for making it happen, and also to Rob and Macca of the Redtails Pinktails Right Tracks program. You are doing amazing work.

Seamus Mitchell

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:43): Also during the break, Robinvale Euston Football Netball Club's own Seamus Mitchell finally made his debut for the Hawthorn Football Club, a terrific story of self-belief, hard work and resilience and an example of 'The harder you work, the luckier you get'. Well done and congratulations, Seamus.

Anzac Day

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:43): Over the past month I have been delighted to attend the numerous events commemorating Anzac Day across my community in Mill Park. In mid-April I had the opportunity to attend the Epping RSL's Anzac memorial march and pay tribute to those who have served our country. I was also able to attend the beautiful dawn service at Epping RSL, held of course on Anzac Day itself. The Epping RSL's committee, led by president Kevin Ind and volunteers, made both of these occasions incredibly special, and I would like to thank them for their continued work in the community.

I would also like to recognise Marymede Catholic College in South Morang for their Anzac Day liturgy service led by college captains Deanna Marychurch and Owen Onyango and the class captains. The service was wonderfully moving and respectfully remembered the Anzac values while also discussing with students how to live these values in their own lives, keeping the Anzac spirit alive. I want to thank principal Tim Newcomb and the wider school leadership team for the invitation.

I am also proud that there were many culturally diverse Anzac Day commemorative events that constituents in Mill Park attended, representing the many diaspora communities in the electorate. I was honoured to be able to attend commemorative events hosted by the Turkish sub-branch of the Victorian RSL, led by president Ramazan Altintas and vice-president Sucettin Unal, as well as the Whittlesea Malaysian Social and Senior Club, led by president Selvakumari Palmer, who combined the celebration with Tamil New Year and Easter.

Sandybeach Centre

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:45): I recently had the opportunity to visit the wonderful Sandybeach Centre on Beach Road in my electorate to visit the community there, who were busy preparing Anzac biscuits. This Sandybeach Centre is a not-for-profit community hub in my electorate that encourages personal and professional development through its wide range of programs for our community. In the lead-up to Anzac Day members of this community together packaged and baked their own Anzac biscuits to then sell at a local community event organised by Bayside council the following day. I was fortunate enough to try one of these biscuits, and I can report to the house that it was absolutely delicious.

Sandringham Hospital

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:45): Last Friday I attended the Sandringham Hospital's annual fundraising Lunch by the Bay at Sandringham Yacht Club together with my colleague member in the other place the Shadow Minister for Health, Georgie Crozier. I am pleased that this lunch occurred in support of our Sandringham Hospital – the caring heart of our local Sandringham community. Having

been born at the hospital myself – I declare that conflict of interest – I am fully invested in the hospital’s future success as well as the urgent funding that is needed for the hospital’s upgrades.

Latrobe Street, Mentone, level crossing

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (09:46): The matter of the closure of the Latrobe Street level crossing in my electorate continues to be of wide community concern and opposition for residents within the Sandringham district. The closure of this level crossing will effectively split Cheltenham and Mentone in two, leading to further traffic congestion on Balcombe Road and Charman Road. The government must not do this.

Anzac Day

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:46): On Anzac Day this year Victorians rose before the sun and united at dawn services across the state and the country. Together every year on 25 April we gather to remember the sacrifice, the courage and the bravery shown on the battlefields of Gallipoli in 1914. We remember the Johnnys and the Mehments who sacrificed their lives in defence of their nations. This year I attended the dawn service at Mount Macedon memorial cross with my good friend the member for Macedon. It was a moving and emotional ceremony as we watched the sun rise through the snow gums and the time-honoured tradition of the last post sounded across the morning. When we gather together on Anzac Day we honour all service men and women in uniform who have served and continue to serve right across our world. Lest we forget.

Budget 2023–24

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:47): As a local MP for Rowville I am aware of the critical importance that each budget has for the community. With the budget due to be released within the coming weeks I think it is important to remind those opposite of the obligations they owe to all Victorians. Recent media coverage has labelled this upcoming budget as one of hard choices owing in no small way to the projected \$165 billion of debt that the Andrews government has created. This Labor government ought to be seriously considering what they are planning to cut in order to get their huge debt under control. Project cost overruns are robbing our state of critical investments, such as improving local schools, repairing dangerous roads and supporting community groups. In the electorate of Rowville we are in desperate need of additional funding towards our schools. At the last election the Labor candidate made election commitments in excess of \$15 million. When will we see this money? The Andrews government ought to stop mismanaging large-scale projects that inevitably end up going over budget and ruining the chance of an average Victorian getting a fair share of the budget. It is my hope that the Treasurer heeds his own words when he said we should be sharing resources to ‘ensure that every Victorian gets a fair deal from their government’.

Uros Rasic

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:48): I rise to acknowledge the contribution of one of my staff members that has been with me for 10 years who is now moving on – my office manager Uros Rasic in my electorate office. Uros started as a curious, bright young work experience student for me 10 years ago with a natural political instinct. Over the decade that he was with me he has built strong relationships with local community groups and been a passionate advocate for the people of Sydenham. If you have had an opportunity to meet him, you will know that he has a genuine interest in the stories and lives of people, particularly our residents. We farewell Uros as he accepts his new role with the union movement. And while I am sad to see him go, I am confident that he will continue to do extraordinary work to improve the lives of workers in his new role. Team Hutchins wishes him all the best.

Power saving bonus

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:49): As the cost-of-living pressure bites, my office has seen a huge uptake of applications for the Andrews Labor government's \$250 power bonus. Just this week my office helped a resident, Boris, to apply for a solar panel rebate. His household is now on track to save on energy bills and contribute to a renewable future. Boris was extremely happy that he had this opportunity to make his home based on renewable energies. We will continue to support households doing it tough, and I want to thank all of my staff for their work in processing hundreds of \$250 power saving bonus applications.

Road safety cameras

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:50): A constituent recently told me that there are currently no red-light cameras at pedestrian crossings across Victoria. There are 287 fixed cameras in Victoria that detect red-light infringements or speeding, or both, and all of these are at intersections or on freeways, tollways and highways. This is concerning given the most vulnerable individuals on the road are those who are not inside a car, particularly pedestrians. I regularly hear of motorists running red lights at pedestrian crossings, and constituents describe cars flying through at high speeds when pedestrians have right of way, endangering themselves and at times young children. Up until 2022 there was one red-light pedestrian-crossing camera installed along the Maroondah Highway in Lilydale, which within 171 days detected over 25,000 vehicles disregarding speed limits or red lights. So these issues clearly extend beyond Brunswick to right across Victoria. I think it is a bit of a mark of this state's priorities that we are using red-light cameras to protect cars but not people. While this may be inadvertent, I am also concerned that pedestrian crossings are somehow less visible to motorists. We need speed and red-light cameras at pedestrian crossings to protect our state's most vulnerable road users.

Greensborough train station

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (09:51): After many months of construction, the trains are back on the Hurstbridge line following the completion of the second stage of that line's upgrades. It was great to join the Deputy Premier and my neighbouring MP the member for Eltham last weekend to open the brand new Greensborough station. A big crowd turned out to this historic occasion as the first trains ran through the modern, accessible station. The station has all the facilities at ground level so that commuters can access these straight off Para Road. They can top up their Myki card, wait in the comfortable waiting area or use the toilets before heading down to the new platforms when their train approaches from one of the brand new platforms via the main stairs or one of the modern lifts. There are still some finishing touches to put on the station, which will happen over the coming months. On top of that, work will shortly commence on the new car park and bus interchange across the road at the corner of Para Road and Flintoff Street. An undercover bus interchange directly across the road from the new station as well as 100 car spaces will replace the old dirt car park that has been sitting idle for many years. But wait, there is more: because of the upgrade to the Hurstbridge line, we will be able to run more trains, more often, and from 28 May there will be an extra 40 services per week on the Hurstbridge line. All of this has been delivered because the Andrews Labor government gets on with the job, rebuilding our infrastructure and delivering for the north of Melbourne.

Lowan electorate health services

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:53): Today I would like to raise some of the key issues around health services in my electorate of Lowan. I am hearing of many, many instances where patients are either being turned away from health services or having to wait for an exceptionally long period of time. Even when they have been delivered by ambulance, they are sitting in the emergency department waiting room because there is not enough room in the hospital. We are seeing this flow-on effect. The People Matter survey came out just late last week – a Friday night special – which indicated that 32 per cent of staff are experiencing very high levels of stress or high levels of stress. We need to see an investment in our health infrastructure and our health workers in this year's state budget. Our

infrastructure simply is not up to scratch. At Horsham hospital we have got an MRI machine in a container in a truck parked next to the emergency department. We desperately need an investment in Hamilton hospital, Mortlake campus of Terang and Mortlake community health service and the Willaura campus of East Grampians Health Service. I really hope the government are listening to our local people and will deliver this important investment at this year's state budget.

Electricity infrastructure

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (09:54): Yesterday the member for Murray Plains, the member for Mildura and I met with the Australian Energy Market Operator to raise community concerns around the lack of consultation regarding the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West KerangLink. It is very concerning, the lack of information and lack of detail that has been provided to the community around the impacts, compensation and the actual route. I urge AEMO to deal more directly with our local people.

Devon Meadows Cricket Club

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:54): All Star Girls they most certainly are – what an energising, enthralling and little bit tense Monday it was at Devon Meadows Cricket Club back in March. It was an absolute delight to meet these magnificent and very inspiring girls who love cricket. It was the under-14s grand final. They played at Officer Cricket Club, and a big-shout out to them too. I was thrilled to be part of the pre-game chat, bat toss and cheer squad at the boundary line. Spectacular fielding, focused bowling and strategic batting – it was on. Surrounded by family, friends and kids, so many donning their Panthers shirts, everyone was loud and super encouraging. It all started two seasons ago when Luke Martin's daughter wanted to play. He got active, got a team together and put his hand up to coach. A big thankyou to him, the over-the-top dedicated committee, volunteers extraordinaire, coaches, families, sponsors and supporters. Before the final, president Mick Floyd said: 'We're proud of the girls. It's been a joy to see their continued improvement and the fun they have each and every week. Regardless of the result on the field, they're winners in our eyes.' They sure are. A big 'Yay' to our 2023 premiers: captain Ella, Jasmine – who rushed back from camp to play – Indiana, Shanyah, Ella, Addison, Hope, Bella and Alisha, who was named Player of the Match and went on to also receive the Casey Cardinia Cricket Association Player of the Year. Well done, keep striving for great heights and have fun.

Anzac Day

Chris CREWOTHER (Mornington) (09:56): For Anzac Day I joined the Mornington dawn service, Seaford RSL gunfire breakfast, the Mornington march and 10 am service, where I laid a wreath with my seven-year-old daughter Yasmin, and Mount Eliza's 2 pm service, where I laid a wreath with my four-year-old Edward – remembering all Anzacs who have served and continue to serve and who have made the ultimate sacrifice. It was terrific to see so many young people involved in all services. Thanks to Mornington Secondary College and Mount Eliza Secondary College, which held Anzac services.

On Mount Eliza Secondary College, I would like to particularly thank them for inviting me to speak and lay a wreath at their Anzac assembly. Well done to all students who ran the event. It was the most enthusiastic rendition of the Australian national anthem I have ever heard. I also toured the school with terrific college captains Chelsea Rix and James Richards. I continue to advocate to the state government for a much-needed redevelopment of the college, with most buildings being nearly 50 years old and facing serious issues.

National Centre for Healthy Ageing

Chris CREWOTHER (Mornington) (09:57): It was also terrific to tour the world-leading National Centre for Healthy Ageing's Ngarnga Centre in Frankston recently. Several years ago I worked with Greg Hunt, Monash University and Peninsula Health to develop the concept for the national centre and secured \$32 million of budgeted funding towards building it. It is great to see it now fully up and

running and kicking goals for Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula and beyond and also looking at a collaboration for a smart ward at the Mornington centre.

Lastly, I will note that it is the – *(Time expired)*

Darebin citizenship ceremonies

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (09:57): I rise to update the house regarding citizenship ceremonies in the Darebin council area. In 2017 the Liberal Turnbull government took away Darebin council's right to hold those citizenship ceremonies in retaliation for council moving the ceremonies away from 26 January. Of course, as the house knows, last year the Australian people elected the Albanese Labor government and new minister for immigration Andrew Giles reversed that decision. As a result of Minister Giles's decision, Darebin council was able to hold its first citizenship ceremonies in seven years last month and welcomed roughly 350 new citizens from 68 different countries.

Of course many of those new citizens are only new citizens in the most formal possible sense, having been part of our community for a long time – in some cases 10 or 20 years. They are very well informed about our society. They are very well informed, I found, about our First Nations history and culture. They are very well informed about the colonial history of this country and its ongoing repercussions. I was reminded in those ceremonies of what it is like to attend a wedding of a couple who have been together for a long period of time. The tone was less one of excitement but more one of purpose and commitment, and it was fantastic to see all these wonderful and diverse people making their commitment to Australia and indeed to Melbourne's northern suburbs.

Pakenham electorate community events

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (09:59): I have been very busy in the Pakenham electorate since I was last in this place five weeks ago. I visited Have a Little Hope, who moved into their new space. They are a wonderful organisation who assist the local community in times of need. I popped into the Pakenham and Officer fire brigades, who were out on Good Friday collecting money for the Royal Children's Hospital appeal. I attended several iftar events and an Eid breakfast with our Islamic community. I joined the Vaisakhi celebrations at Officer gurdwara with my dear friends and at Koo Wee Rup gurdwara a few weeks later.

Pakenham SES held a Women in Rescue training day, which saw women from all over the state attend to be part of training demonstrations. Cardinia library hosted Let's Brick Pakenham, a fantastic event. It was lots of fun building Lego trains with some very creative children who were having a great time in their school holidays.

I joined the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep to visit Konewark integrated child and family centre, located next door to Kurrum Primary School, which will make drop-off and pick-up easier for parents. We also partook in the sod turn for a new Toun-nun integrated child and family centre in Officer.

Pakenham, Officer and Upper Beaconsfield all hosted moving Anzac Day services. The huge turnout for this year's services was great to see.

I had the honour of declaring the new learning spaces funded by the Labor state government open at Lakeside College in Pakenham.

Lastly, I also visited the United African Farm in Cardinia, where members of African descent are bridging the intercultural and intergenerational gap. Thank you to Thuch and Mama for having me.

State Emergency Service Chelsea unit

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (10:00): Recently we officially opened the brand new Chelsea SES unit. The Andrews Labor government provided \$7 million towards this redevelopment, providing modern and state-of-the-art facilities for our dedicated volunteers. Chelsea SES is the longest serving

SES unit, having commenced in 1953, and provides a leading example to our emergency services families. Today the unit is home to dozens of volunteers responding to some 250 requests for assistance across our community. But the boundaries do not end at Kingston; they have answered the call across our state and across our nation numerous times.

But as critically important as new infrastructure is, it is those volunteer legends at Chelsea SES who are the beating heart and the soul of our community. I wanted to recognise unit controller Ron Fitch, who has served our community for more than 30 years, and deputy controller Phil Wall for their incredible leadership on this journey. We also commemorated wonderful volunteers who served our Chelsea SES community but sadly are no longer with us. As part of the redevelopment we opened the Graham Russell memorial meeting room alongside his wonderful family. We also honoured Natasha Drake with the opening of the Natasha Drake memorial garden with her family. Natasha was an incredible person and a highly valued member of the Chelsea SES for more than five years. We want to thank Bunnings Keysborough for donating everything to this beautiful garden, which is a beautiful and fitting tribute to Natasha Drake. They are a wonderful family at Chelsea SES unit. They have got great new facilities, but it is always the people that have made that place the best.

Anzac Day

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:02): A big thanks to Boronia and Bayswater RSLs, who hosted moving Anzac commemorative and dawn services recently to honour our fallen and to remember the sacrifices they made so that we may enjoy the freedoms and liberties that we have today. I also want to acknowledge Wantirna College, Boronia K-12 and Boronia Rotary, who also held wonderful services to mark the day, which I attended. A special mention also to acknowledge Ian Benier, a veteran and a Knox local who spoke at Wantirna College's service about what Anzac means to him and who has over 20 years of service in the Australian Defence Force. His service took him across the globe. We thank Ian and his two sons, who followed in his footsteps, and every person who defends our nation.

Boronia revitalisation

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:02): Boronia just keeps getting better and better, with now over \$4 million of funding delivered by the Andrews Labor government into 20 localised projects as part of the revitalisation. There is lots to be excited about. It was great to see works recently completed on 500 new energy-efficient brighter lights, the Lupton Way upgrade, the latest murals complete and the new Crave and cinema lanes looking absolutely mint. Works will soon start on the Erica Avenue streetscape renewal to bring it to life, and of course I am looking forward to the \$60 million upgrade of Boronia station, which will breathe life into the new CBD.

Ringwood and District Cricket Association

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:03): A big shout-out too to two Templeton cricket club legends in Pat Meehan and Jason Disney, who were recently honoured at the Ringwood and District Cricket Association presentations. Pat, already a member of the hall of fame, was inducted as an RDCA legend, and Jason was inducted into the RDCA hall of fame. Both have made significant contributions to the game locally and are extremely deserving of the honours. Well done.

School breakfast clubs

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:03): Hundreds of thousands of brekkies have been served up at schools locally, so it was great to get out to Wattle View Primary with volunteers to help serve some cereal and toast, among other things, to students to ensure they have got the fuel they need to learn. Cheers to all the local schools running this program successfully.

Commonwealth Bank Fawkner branch

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (10:03): I rise to update the house on important issues in Fawkner today. Last week we had the pleasure of visiting John Fawkner College with the Premier to talk to the dedicated staff and students there. We chatted about the \$14.5 million planned upgrade of the school to build new classrooms and science, technology, arts and food tech buildings. I also had the pleasure of turning the first sod on the \$36.8 million redevelopment of Fawkner Leisure Centre and the new outdoor pool along with minister Ros Spence, Peter Khalil and Merri-bek council.

However, despite this record level of government investment in Fawkner, the Commonwealth Bank have decided to close their branch on 26 May, resulting in a loss of local jobs and leaving residents without walkable access to a bank. Fawkner has a higher than average number of people without internet access, at 24.7 per cent, and high levels of people who speak a language other than English, people with disability and people over 80. Fawkner also has lower than average car ownership and household income. Being able to do one's own banking in one's community is important to local businesses and to many people. We know that financial elder abuse is on the rise, and this is due in part to people without internet access or skills relying on others to help them with banking and finances. I am very disappointed with the Commonwealth Bank's decision despite their incredible profits, and I have let them know of my strong opposition to their plans. I thank local resident and community leader Hassan Gul, who has organised a petition, which so many people signed at our power saving bonus street stall on Saturday.

Ballarat Rural Achiever Awards

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (10:05): Last week I was honoured to attend the 2023 Ballarat Rural Achiever Awards. This fantastic event acknowledges young people in agriculture. The awards were the brainchild of Kerri Gallagher and Shane Zammit and are presented and hosted by the Ballarat Agricultural & Pastoral Society. The secondary student award went to Miriam Drinnan; tertiary student of the year was Jessica White; apprentice of the year was Nash Jones; next generation farmer of the year was Lachlan Wrigley; agribusiness achiever was Asha Shanahan; innovative primary producer went to Sunnybank Farm; and of course, most importantly, rising star – the overall award – went to Tyla Armeni. It is a wonderful event that really celebrates young people in agriculture, and I absolutely commend the pastoral society for putting on these awards.

Ausveg Vic awards

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (10:06): I was delighted to represent the Minister for Agriculture at the Ausveg Vic and EE Muir awards for excellence on the weekend. Nearly half of all of Australia's vegetable exports are grown right here in Victoria, and this is a great night that acknowledges our thriving horticultural industry. I was particularly delighted to see Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh so well represented amongst the winners. It was a really great night. And tonight, I am off to Lambassador.

Better Place Australia, Narre Warren

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:06): Last week I had the honour of speaking at the opening of Better Place Australia, a new children's contact service in Narre Warren. Contact services are so important in supporting separated parents and their families, and I am glad our community has such an incredible resource so close to home. These services are often not spoken about, so I am glad the Andrews Labor government is investing in these critical services that are such a vital family resource. The centre is beautiful, providing child-focused safe spaces for children to spend time with their loved ones.

*Business of the house***Notices of motion**

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10:07): I move:

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

Motion agreed to.

*Bills***Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023***Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Ros Spence:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:07): I am very pleased this morning to have the opportunity to contribute to debate on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. This government, the Andrews Labor government, is of course committed to fairness – to supporting those who are most vulnerable within our community and placing their needs first. This is a bill that is about supporting those who face many varied and complex challenges within their lives, and there are a range of provisions within this piece of legislation that go to addressing some of those. We know that this government, the Andrews Labor government, has a strong record of supporting those in our community with a disability, but of course we know and understand that there is more work to be done.

The Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023, as I mentioned, is about protecting those that are most vulnerable within our community and strengthening their rights. It is central to the work that happens right across government, across all portfolio areas, whether that be within the disability space, education, health or transport – making sure that we are giving the people of Victoria the chance to be their best selves and making sure that we are removing barriers to people's lives within their community.

The bill amends the Disability Act 2006, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018 and the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to bring about critical amendments that will increase rights and protections, improve services and bring about better service coordination and to clarify functions and responsibilities to reduce duplication. The amendments to the acts will ensure that the legislative frameworks deliver the most appropriate and contemporary services and protections for people living with a disability and also for those who are experiencing some of the most challenging times within their lives.

We know that those that work within the disability sector, within our healthcare sector, carers, families, friends and volunteers do an extraordinary job of supporting those who need it the most, and I do want to, as other members have done, put on the record today my thanks and my appreciation for the work that is done within this important sector. Previously as the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, I did have the opportunity to meet with many within our community that are doing some extraordinary work, and I am sure that all members of the house would acknowledge that work and thank those working in the sector for their contribution and everything that they do.

We know on this side of the house the importance of constant improvement to systems where red tape may exist, but we know that reduction in that red tape and removing, if you like, many of those barriers that I mentioned earlier in my contribution goes to the highest quality of service and standards provided by the government. And making sure we are delivering in partnership with the federal government and with local government, the not-for-profit sector and those right across the community, making sure that we are continuing that partnership, that collaboration, is incredibly important to this government.

The bill delivers a whole range of provisions and amendments that go to many of the matters that were addressed in the disability plan 2022–26, which was developed in consultation with the disability sector, those who had lived experience and of course the Victorian Disability Advisory Council. I do thank those who offered their passion, their time, their energy and their commitment to the plan. As a commitment to delivering the plan, this government allocated \$15.1 million in last year's budget, and this has gone toward constructing much-needed Changing Places facilities, encouraging Victorians to create more inclusive and accessible public spaces via the universal design grants program. There are key amendments within this legislation which remain unchanged from 2022, including clarifying residential rights and duties for people subject to civil and criminal orders in disability residential services and parameters for service providers in delivering residential and treatment services, and also ensuring residential rights and protections for people living in specialist disability accommodation that does not meet the current definition within the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

We know that improved service is something that is often raised with members of the government and I am sure with all members of the house and indeed members in both houses. The bill aligns the legislation and removes the duplication, as I mentioned earlier, to ensure the accountability, consistency and approval requirements for the use of some of the restrictive practices for both the national disability insurance scheme and the state-funded disability service providers by addressing some of those gaps and clarifying the criteria and processes for compulsory treatment and placement in residential treatment facilities to support client and operational safety and strengthen clinical oversight. The bill also allows the minister to declare additional categories of disability accommodation so that community visitors can inquire into the quality and standards to support those residents.

As I mentioned earlier, better service coordination is a key element within this piece of legislation. We know that service coordination within this area is incredibly important to the individual, to families and to the wider community, and it is very pleasing to see a number of those steps contained within this piece of legislation. The bill clarifies the function and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to ensure the secretary is only responsible for services that the secretary funds. It also clarifies the secretary's function in relation to acquiring, holding or disposing of land and granting land, and there is also a piece of work around duplication by allowing NDIS workers and the NDIS worker screening clearance in lieu of a criminal history check for voluntary registration of disability workers. There are within this amendment bill many functions and changes which, as I mentioned earlier, go to what are the most important areas in terms of support and in terms of reducing some of that duplication and making sure that the system and the structures around the individual provide a safe framework, and of course this is incredibly important.

During my time, as I mentioned earlier, as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers I had the great privilege of serving as the government co-chair of the task force alongside independent co-chair Susan Pascoe. I want to acknowledge Susan, who really was an outstanding co-chair. I am not sure how we would have gotten through the amount of work, and the way in which Susan conducts herself is just extraordinary. I want to acknowledge that, but I also want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the task force members. Their extraordinary dedication, their passion, their commitment to this space has been – and the work continues – absolutely outstanding. There was of course a whole range of work that needed to be done, that needed to be undertaken, and as I mentioned earlier, that work continues.

We know that being a responsive government, being a government that takes the practical decisions for those within our community who are facing the most tough and challenging and vulnerable areas within their lives, it is our role and responsibility to make sure that the framework that is put in place is about supporting those individuals. I mentioned earlier the work of the task force, but the passion and the drive and the dedication that those leaders within our community brought to that work and those that they work with is something that I know I was incredibly proud of. I just want to again put that on the record. This government will of course continue to work with the disability sector to

positively engage and to ensure that the provisions within this piece of legislation are about ensuring that those people are supported.

We know the commencement of the social services regulatory scheme will be coming in July 2024, and I am confident that we have given the in-scope social services ample time to understand their obligations around the framework and the new regulation. The government of course understands that we have a responsibility to support those within our society and those within our community who need it the most. Whether that is delivering vital infrastructure to create safer communities or investing in services to improve many, many areas in those within our communities' lives, as I mentioned earlier, they really do deserve our support. This piece of legislation is something that continues to build on our commitment around fairness and around equality, and I proudly commend the bill to the house.

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:17): I rise to speak on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. We know that people with disability are some of our most vulnerable community members, and this bill seeks to provide greater safety and security to them, particularly those living in residential services. It is representative of this government's ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of people living with disability. As I am sure you know and we have heard over the course of this debate, one in five, or over 4.4 million Australians, have some form of disability. In Victoria that is 18.4 per cent of our population. It is a category of vulnerability that any one of us could fall into at any time. But that is not why we should care about this bill; we should care because this bill and the changes it seeks to make will improve the safety and privacy of the lives of thousands of Victorians.

Over the years prior to this bill being brought before us we have heard some horrific stories about people having their human rights taken away and being treated with a complete lack of respect for their personhood. At a national level the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability in particular has shed light on some of these acts. There was the story of Hayden McLean, who according to evidence given to the commission was kept in a caged area in supported accommodation and was given psychotropic drugs to control his behaviour on many occasions without consent, and there have been stories of NDIS providers using unauthorised restraints on clients, including sedating them or strapping them down. It is awful. It is just awful, and hearing stories like these breaks your heart. But we can and must do something about it, and that is what this bill is about.

This bill seeks to amend three different acts: the Disability Act 2006, the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 and the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018. The amendments proposed will increase the rights and protections that people with a disability deserve, better coordinate services, strengthen safeguards and clarify the responsibility of service providers. As I am sure you will remember, the Disability Amendment Bill 2022 was first introduced last year. This bill is largely similar to that, with the addition of reforms to the regulatory framework for social services as well as a few minor and technical amendments to the disability reforms which were previously introduced. What makes these amendments really important is the fact that they are informed by voices of people with disability.

This is truly a representative bill. It has been developed with extensive consultation during the development of the initial Disability Amendment Bill 2022, including submissions received from the public engagement with the Disability Act review advisory group, which was formally chaired by the esteemed Graeme Innes AM and centres lived experience and targeted consultation across the sector. We have put that lived experience at the heart of the development of this bill, right where it should be, and we know that stakeholders within the sector are in broad agreement with the proposed reforms. How pleasing it is to see that sort of rich consultation and agreement – truly transformative. We had such a great response to the request for consultation, and it is frankly about time to centre lived experience in the development of policy.

Despite the awful stories that we have heard about disability accommodation, like the ones I mentioned before, there have been spots of hope as the Andrews Labor government has already gotten on with

the job of creating safer environments for Victorians with disability, laying the groundwork for today's discussion. In 2021 we proposed the establishment of a new Social Services Regulator that would streamline and simplify the existing regulation of social services. With today's new bill we seek to further embed safety and security into our social services regulation.

Just last year we launched our *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan (2022–2026)*, setting the agenda for this government's approach to building a more inclusive and accessible community for the more than 1.1 million Victorians living with a disability. That agenda led directly to the bill we are discussing today. So today's bill is one of the key outcomes of the Disability Act review that we have been undertaking since 2018 with the aim of ensuring our legislative frameworks are fit for purpose and contemporary and create meaningful change for Victorians with disability.

In my own electorate of Bass I hear often from parents and teachers and carers and guardians of children with a disability, and they are thrilled with this government's track record on disability services and funding so far. Down in Bass that has included things like significant investment in a number of our specialist schools to help give Victorian kids the best start in life. Bass Coast Specialist School has received \$1.93 million in upgrades. In the neighbouring electorate, South Gippsland Specialist School received \$3.62 million and Officer Specialist received \$3.62 million as well. This year the Clyde Creek Primary School specialist campus is just about to finish and will open, providing 50 spaces for primary school aged students with intellectual disabilities in the bustling and fast-growing suburb of Clyde.

Our electorate is growing every day. Singles, couples and families are drawn to our beautiful part of the world and are calling it home. This includes people with disability, their families and their carers. So with investments like the ones the Andrews Labor government is making, we are keeping a step ahead and creating the services and infrastructure these families rightly expect when they move to this gorgeous area.

Bass is not the only area investing heavily in the wellbeing and support that those students need. Last year we promised a statewide boost to specialist schools and services, including extra after-school and holiday care at every specialist school across Victoria. We also pledged to provide dedicated spaces for allied health services such as OT at the school to reduce the run-around for families and carers. Plus, we promised NDIS navigators in each of the schools to help parents and carers get the NDIS care they need and deserve and funding for training for support animals, which as many of us know, make a world of difference to all of us really. We truly are an Education State. These schools will deliver the best in education, using the latest resources and technology.

Of course it is not just about school. This bill will reduce some of that worry by ensuring that their children will be well cared for should they enter the supported accommodation system. We cannot stop there. Last year I met Josh Latham, the marketing officer at Bass Coast Adult Learning centre. He was organising a free business breakfast, beautifully named the Diverse-Ability Breakfast. The event was all about inclusive employment and showing business owners just how vital an employee with a disability can be. Josh wanted local businesses to know that there was a fresh pool of workers ready to be tapped into – people with diverse ability. Beau Vernon, who lives with a spinal cord injury, was an incredible guest speaker and also part of the panel discussion with industry representatives, including Maxima Joblink. It stands out in my mind as a positive and uplifting event, all about what people with diverse abilities can do, not what they cannot do. Josh said later that organising the breakfast was one of the most challenging things he had ever done, but added:

... I think with my ability it shows that I'm very capable. There's always something people with Diverseability can do.

It was a genuine privilege to be able to attend this event and learn more about Josh's ideas. This government will always focus on how to ensure that everyone, including people living with a disability, can settle in and find their place in our community. The passing of this bill will be yet another demonstration of how the Andrews Labor government cares about its people. It will ensure

accountability and consistency within the disability service system, it closes gaps and it removes barriers and it protects vulnerable Victorians. I am so proud to be part of a government that has the wellbeing of our community at its heart. I commend the bill to the house.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:27): I am delighted to rise in support of this bill. I was really interested to hear about the investment that the Victorian Labor government is making in areas like the member for Bass's electorate in disability support and special education. I think that is indicative of this government's genuine engagement with these issues. It is a physically very large bill, and that reflects the importance, the ambition and the genuine need for the provisions in this bill, which will promote the rights of persons residing in residential services. It will align and reduce duplication. It will improve processes and practices relating to supervised treatment orders. It will provide a much clearer legislative authority to disclose protected identifiable information and clarify the functions of the secretary of the minister's department. It will allow the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers to declare additional categories of disability accommodation – I am going to dwell on that later in my contribution – and it will also amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to address gaps in residential rights and protections for people living in specialist disability accommodation. In a nutshell, this bill is about dignity, respect and care for the most vulnerable Victorians, those who we as Parliament and we as a government have an obligation towards and who we need to ensure are provided with that dignity, that care and that respect.

I thank the minister and her team at the outset for the outstanding work that they have conducted in bringing this bill to the Parliament and for the minister's genuine care and deep understanding, her longstanding passion in this space and her commitment to really impactful reform that is represented by that very large bill on the table. The consultation that has gone into this bill is reflective of that care, and we heard from the member for Bass just before about that advisory group chaired by Graeme Innes AM with Professor Keith McVilly as the deputy chair. I think the consultation with those with that lived experience that has gone into this bill ensures that its provisions are targeted at where the need arises.

I was not going to dwell on this, but it has been really interesting listening to contributions on this bill and in this debate from those who have brought their personal experiences to bear. I think we all approach debates in this house with our personal experiences in mind – it would be erroneous to pretend anything else – but I was particularly struck by the contributions of the member for Yan Yean and also the member for Gippsland South, who talked about their personal experiences. I too bring a personal experience to this debate, which shapes my contribution. I think particularly of my beautiful Auntie Kathy, who is not very well at the moment.

She lives with Down syndrome and has been living in a form of disability accommodation for many decades. Through my Auntie Kathy's involvement with disability accommodation, it has been one of the most instrumental things in my life and in my family's life in terms of our contribution to community, and it has brought us into contact with many other families who have loved ones with disability in their lives. It has exposed me and us to some of the really deep concerns that parents have about what happens to their children when they are gone and no longer able to care for them in the way that they would wish. That is why the provisions in this bill are so important, because they seek to ensure that that dignity, that care, that love is there, irrespective of the circumstances of the life of the person with a disability. When their families may not be able to provide care directly for them there is an obligation on us as a Parliament and as a civilised society to look out for and protect those who are most vulnerable. That is why I am particularly delighted to speak in support of this bill.

I want to acknowledge all of the disability support workers who make such a profound contribution to the lives of Victorians with disabilities. I think of people like my brother, who is now a teacher in the member for Narracan's electorate but spent many years living in communities for adults with intellectual disabilities. Through that I saw the amazing community, the amazing richness and respect, that can exist when the ideal that this bill seeks to create exists in practice. Of course regrettably, and the member for Geelong touched upon this in her contribution yesterday, not everything is going to be

like those communities. There are unfortunately too many instances – one instance is too many, but there are too many instances – where those with intellectual or physical disabilities living in specialist disability accommodation are not cared for, are exploited, are not respected, with their rights not respected, with the human rights that every Victorian should expect as a matter of course not properly upheld. That is why this bill is just so important.

The member for Bass touched upon the case of Hayden, whose mother very bravely gave evidence to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability a few years ago, talking about the experience of her son, who is severely autistic, epileptic, mildly intellectually disabled and highly sensitive to noise and unkindness. He had spent so much of his adult life suffering horribly through physical restraint and chemical intervention that was subsequently found to be illegal. You read stories like that of Hayden and they are heartbreaking. I apologise, but I am mindful of the experience of those in my family and those who do not have the opportunity to be loved and cared for as they should: people like Hayden, people like Ann Marie Smith, who was not a resident of this state and was not a resident of specialist disability accommodation but was an NDIS participant who died having been left to effectively rot in a wicker chair for a year. I think all Australians, when that revelation emerged and when the case of Ann Marie Smith came to light, were appalled, but I raise that now. She was not a Victorian but she was an Australian and she was a person, and that is what really matters. I raise that because it is indicative of what can happen if due care, if due attention, if regulatory systems do not work. If you get system failure, people die, and when people do not die, they live in indignity. They do not have their rights respected, and that is a tragedy. As a Parliament I am delighted that there is support from all sides for this bill. We cannot allow that to happen; it is our job as parliamentarians and, as I say, as a civilised society to ensure that wherever possible and whenever possible those rights are upheld and that people with disability have fulfilling, safe and respected lives. So I want to put on record Ann Marie Smith and her name, because she deserves it.

The dimension of the bill that I think is particularly germane to her story is the community visitors scheme. That is a vital protective measure against abuse and neglect, but there have been instances where the community visitors, who are appointed by Governor in Council, have not been able to go into forms of disability accommodation because they do not fall within the remit of the minister. There has been a bit of a legislative loophole, and I am so glad that the minister and her team have intervened to close that loophole and to make sure that it corrects what Colleen Pearce, Victoria's public advocate, said had been:

a significant regulatory gap and was leaving highly vulnerable residents without oversight and at significant risk of harm.

And that is not an abstract risk of harm. Instances like Ann Marie Smith in South Australia and others which emerged through the royal commission indicate to us that these are real risks of harm, so expanding that community visitors scheme I think is a really important thing to have done, and I am delighted that the minister and her team have worked with those with lived experience and with the sector to ensure that the community visitors scheme is expanded.

I do want to talk a little bit about the work that the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee has undertaken with respect to this bill because things like the community visitors scheme which involve suitably authorised people coming into homes and potentially going into the bedrooms of adults or others with intellectual disabilities potentially creates a risk around breaches of privacy. I do want to assure the house that SARC has very carefully considered that potential breach of rights, but because of the safeguards that have been built into the bill, because of the proportionality and because of the need to reduce risk, SARC agreed with human rights experts and the minister that there is no undue breach. So with that, I commend this bill to the house. I thank the minister. Its provisions are worthy and necessary.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:37): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. Can I just start by saying I came in on the tail end of the member for Greenvale's speech, but jeez I tell you what, if I had been in Parliament for less than a year and I could offer contributions like that in this house – heartfelt with vision and commitment to actually changing people's lives in Victoria – I would be pretty proud, and I think he should be very proud of himself right now.

We have heard from the opposition that they are not going to vote against the bill, which is fantastic. In my contribution I would like to talk about some of the facets of the bill but also talk about one or two misconceptions. There are no Machiavellian games going on, but there are some misconceptions about this bill, and we can touch on that.

I had the absolute pleasure, or 'privilege' would be a better word, of being part of the Family and Community Development Committee, which sat through the inquiry into abuse in disability services in Victoria a few years ago. The current Speaker, the member for Bendigo West, was the chair. The member for Geelong was on that inquiry as well. You know, a few words come to mind – harrowing, neglect, disgust, liability – these were all things we heard from people with lived experience who came, who took the time out of their day, and people who were absolute survivors and talked about their family members or their own experience in the disability services sector. It was very clear from the outset that a lot of improvement was required and a lot of reform was required. To that end, the inquiry came out with some recommendations. This government has acted on those recommendations, and some of those recommendations have actually morphed into what is in this bill as well.

We heard yesterday from the member for Gippsland East, who is a pretty good fellow I reckon, pretty honest. He came into the house and he said something that I thought was pretty interesting. He said we have got this royal commission federally coming out into abuse in disability services, so why don't we wait to sync up the recommendations that they have got with this bill? And for that I would say we have already been through this. We have had the Victorian inquiry. We have got a fair idea of what is wrong in the sector because we have heard from people in the sector, the people that work in the sector, the families and the actual clients themselves, about what is happening in this sector. I personally do not think there is any excuse for us to be sitting on our hands and doing nothing right now. I think it would be a mistake to wait another six months. If there are things that come out in that federal royal commission, there is nothing stopping us from making changes to bills in the future or changes to legislation. It happens every day.

But what I think we will find is that Victoria is leading the way. We will find that the federal recommendations from their inquiry are very synonymous with the Victorian ones, because people with a disability in Victoria are not unlike anyone in the nation with a disability. They go through the same hardships, they go through the same challenges, and so do their families. As a former SST teacher – special school teacher – you are not just a teacher in those schools. You are a family member because you are doing a lot of pastoral care. You are helping clients and school students physically to put harnesses on, getting them into chairs, toileting and administering medications – even per rectal valium. It is one of those industries where the people that work in it are often very, very special people. So we take nothing away from them when we talk about the fact that there are people in these industries that do the wrong thing. They are terrible. We need to make sure that everyone who could be at risk is not at risk because these people are in the work they are.

One of the most shocking revelations that came out of the Victorian inquiry was the fact that we had a loophole as far as people getting police checks. We had people who were not being picked up because the police checks were not of a national and broad variety. To give an example, we heard of people who abused their role in Victoria, and it was later found out that they had moved from another state and there was a pattern of behaviour in that state. Coming from a teaching background, I thought the solution was pretty simple. You have a national police register with a national police check, and you have a system like the Victorian Institute of Teaching has to professionalise a sector of work, and I was very, very surprised that this had not happened. That is when we recommended the disability

worker exclusion scheme. This bill goes a long way to making sure that that is in place but also to making sure that we are not actually making workers – well-intended workers, qualified workers who do the right thing – jump through hoops in getting a police check in Victoria and then getting a national police check for the NDIS. So we are removing that duplication.

We need to make sure, as the member for Greenvale so elegantly put, that these people who are our family, our friends, are looked after in the best way possible and that there is no risk to them. We have heard absolutely harrowing stories of abuse in disability services. I will go on record as I have before to say that if I had my time again with the disability services commissioner, I would have ripped into him more than I did. To hear that a person could actually abuse someone in a care home – and instead of there being consequences the DSC at the time preferred to use the carrot, not the stick. Imagine being a family member knowing that your daughter is being abused, and instead of that person being taken away they are actually coached on their behaviour. They are told that holding a vibrating pager next to the genitalia of a person in their care is wrong and not to do it again.

Hearing that in that inquiry I leant around to the lawyers and said, ‘Are we off the hook here? We can just say what we want, yeah?’ I was just thinking, ‘Is this for real?’ So I read the DSC is no longer required. Personally I think the DSC is a well-meaning position, and I know the government was well intentioned at the time putting that in, but that particular person, that individual, was not up to the task. We should have zero tolerance for abuse in our disability services. We should have zero tolerance of not reporting things. We have community visitors going in who need access to certain places, and again this bill, as we have heard people touch on, gives those community visitors access to rooms that they might not necessarily have at the moment to ensure that people are not living in squalor, to ensure that people are living as people in this house now think they would be and think they deserve to be and think they have a right to be because that is their human right.

It is really unfortunate that we actually have to be in this house looking at this legislation and saying we all agree with it and it should go through. I think most of us in this house would be shocked and surprised, occasionally, by stories that come out of witnesses at inquiries; I certainly was through that inquiry. But to say we need to sit back and wait for a federal inquiry to, once again, most likely – in my opinion – tell us what we already know and probably align recommendations with our inquiry, because they know we have had one, to not actually act on what we have and lead the nation, as the Andrews Labor government likes to do – why wouldn’t we do that? It is a huge mistake not to be in this house right now saying that we are doing the right thing. We should get this legislation through to protect people at risk as soon as possible. There is a chance later on to make sure that if we can improve on this through federal recommendations, we do that. I am sure everyone in this chamber would consider that, and they would not consider it lightly. As soon as those recommendations come out, I know that I for one will be reading through them and seeing what possibly we could improve on, because when we are working in these sectors, when we are responsible for the sectors, we have a duty of care to ensure that we are improving. If we are standing still, we are just going backwards.

There is always something more we can do for the people in our community that are at risk, who are our family members, who are our friends. Hearing stories of abuse that should not have happened is heartbreaking. It changes people’s lives. It changes families’ lives. This bill goes a long way to making sure that we can protect people at risk, protect people who are vulnerable. I know that it is bipartisan in its support, and I commend the bill to the house.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (10:47): It is a great honour and I am delighted to join the member for Frankston and the member for Greenvale to speak on this bill, the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. This is another important bill, one of several in this space that have come through Parliament in recent times. Before I go on I would like to note the heartfelt contribution from the member for Greenvale about his aunty and brother. Yesterday the member for Yan Yean shared the story of her brother. It is a difficult time.

I was proud to speak on the Disability Amendment Bill 2022 late last year, and I am also proud of the many disability advocates that we have in my electorate of Clarinda that have contributed to and advocated for these changes. The Reverend Deacon Andrea Mayes, from the Heatherton–Dingley Uniting Church, as well as Mark Zirnsak, the Uniting Church’s senior social justice advocate, are two that come to mind. There are many more and many that made really meaningful and impactful contributions to the Disability Act review, which I will touch on in a moment. During the Disability Act review and the development of these amendments I had the pleasure of sitting down with both Andrea and Mark to discuss the importance of these reforms and the difference that these changes will make to the lives of some of the members of the Heatherton–Dingley church and community members more generally. These changes here are important reforms that enhance services, safeguards and important protections, and this legislation will deliver the changes needed that were identified by the review.

As I have mentioned before, social justice is a key principle of this government – equality, fairness and promoting an inclusive society and a cohesive society. These are some of the pillars of the government’s agenda. We can see that here again in this important legislation before us here today. The bill forms part of stage 2 of the Disability Act review and will introduce critical amendments to further enhance services, safeguards and protections. That review, as we know, has been an important process in modernising Victoria’s disability legislation and inclusive framework.

The act is an important source of rights and protections for all Victorians with disability, and we have heard that one in six people have special needs or a disability. We need to make sure the Disability Act 2006 and supporting legislation is contemporary and fit for purpose for the more than 1.1 million Victorians with a disability or special needs to ensure that we have legislation that best promotes inclusion and tackles this inequality. So I am happy to see further changes here again today.

The bill will also amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to promote residential rights in specialist disability accommodation and the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018 in relation to worker screening and make several amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 (SSR act) to ensure that it operates effectively to protect the safety of social services users.

This is an important and pressing piece of legislation, and as we heard from the member for Frankston, who put it correctly and nicely, there is an expectation from many stakeholders that this important legislation moves quickly to address gaps in residential protections for Victorians with special needs in disability accommodation and to strengthen equality and safeguards for people with a disability. We see that expectation in the community, and we have also seen that through feedback received through the consultation process on the Disability Act 2006 on Engage Victoria in September 2021. Just on that consultation process, there was a considerable process conducted throughout 2021, and this bill has been informed by submissions received during the public consultation process; engagement with the expert Disability Act review advisory group, which was chaired by Graeme Innes AM, Australia’s former disability discrimination commissioner; and targeted consultation across the sectors and government. This was a broad process, and stakeholders are in broad agreement with the proposed reforms.

The Disability Amendment Bill 2022 was introduced in 2022 to address the critical gaps in residential protections for Victorians in disability accommodation and to strengthen equality and safeguards for people with disability. Unfortunately, the bill lapsed at the end of the 59th Parliament. So I am happy to see this bill here today, and I hope that it has a speedy passage through both houses so that this important reform can be delivered and implemented as soon as possible.

In terms of the two bills, the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023 is substantially similar to last year’s Disability Amendment Bill 2022. The new bill incorporates some key additional amendments, being reforms to the regulatory framework for social services as well as a few minor and technical amendments to the disability reforms which were previously introduced. Just regarding the amendments to the SSR act, there is a provision of powers for authorised officers to enter bedrooms in supported residential services and disability residential services without consent in

limited circumstances, as we have heard. The member for Frankston already alluded to that safeguard. Safeguards are also proposed in relation to interviews or hearings with those in out-of-home care, who are mostly children, under the worker and carer exclusion scheme, to ensure children are not harmed, and similar provisions exist for the reportable conduct scheme and the child safe standards scheme. In addition, there are numerous clarifications and minor technical and consequential amendments. Logically, the default commencement for the bill has been moved from 1 September 2023 to 1 July 2024 to align with the planned commencement of the SSR act.

Further, as mentioned, the bill is substantively similar to last year's Disability Amendment Bill 2022, and I was proud to speak in support of that bill and am proud to speak in support of this legislation before us here again. These are comprehensive changes, important and pressing changes that are very much needed to better promote rights of persons residing in residential services and to address gaps in the residential rights and protections for people living in special needs disability accommodation.

Equality, fairness, promoting an inclusive society and a cohesive society – these are the rights at the heart of what this government stands for. Our goal, and our promise, is to continue to break down the barriers that limit people with disability from truly participating in all aspects of our community, so we see that again here in this important legislation before us today. I am proud to speak in support of this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (10:56): I too am very proud to speak in support of this bill. With more than 1.1 million people in Victoria living with disability, these are people who deserve the fullest support of government in order to live fulfilling lives; to engage, participate and contribute to society and to ensure that their rights, health and dignity are protected at all times.

On that note I want to reflect a little on my circumstances and my caring responsibilities that I have had throughout my life. My mum very bravely took on the caring responsibilities for my uncle. He is a gorgeous man, Uncle Kenny, and many of you in this chamber have met him before. From the day I was born I remember Uncle Ken living at home with us and us taking full responsibility and caring for him. It is not something that is easy to do, but it is something where, if you are blessed enough to be able to do it, you are lucky. But as we heard from the member for Greenvale, not everyone is as lucky, and that is why bills like this are so important.

These amendments will make important and critical changes to enhance services, safeguards, rights and protections for people with a disability. They will address the national disability insurance scheme implementation issues and address unintended regulatory burdens and operational difficulties. An important and sometimes challenging part of government's responsibility to people with disability is balancing their rights to privacy, dignity and respect with their rights to access safe services and to live in safe premises. This extends to being able to properly enforce a person's right to safety and protection and ensure these rights are being complied with by those who have been entrusted with their residency or care.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability took a key focus on what governments, institutions and the community can do to better protect people with disability, and these amendments will ensure that such safeguards are in place for people with disabilities. It also includes additional time-critical amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to support the effective operation of the new regulatory framework commencing on 1 July 2024. With the Disability Amendment Bill 2022 lapsing at the end of the 59th Parliament, this bill introduces these reforms proposed in the bill, which is consistent with the government's ongoing commitment to better supporting Victorians with a disability.

The bill is one of the key outcomes of the Disability Act 2006 review, which has progressed over three stages. With the first stage completed in 2019, the second stage is currently underway. This bill clarifies residential rights and duties for people in disability residential services and increases residential protections for Victorians in disability accommodation, as well as strengthening quality and

safeguards for service providers delivering residential and treatment services. It also ensures residential rights protections for people living in specialist disability accommodation that do not meet current definitions in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Amendments are also being made to ensure that residents in specialist disability accommodation, NDIS and state-funded long-term disability accommodation are afforded residential rights and protections under the Residential Tenancies Act. They will provide protections for persons with a disability living in these forms of accommodation prior to the commencement of the bill who may not have previously qualified for a specialist disability accommodation agreement.

The most substantive of these amendments will enable authorised officers or independent investigators to enter supported residential services and disability residential services without consent or warrant in limited circumstances to ensure that the provider is meeting their requirements to ensure the person's safety and protection. We have all heard the horrific stories over the years of the treatment of vulnerable people in supported residential service settings. It is heartbreaking, and it should never occur. The amendments will protect residents by balancing their rights with the need to ensure that they are not being improperly influenced by proprietors to prevent an inspection and the need to ensure residents are receiving appropriate care. These amendments include several safeguards to ensure the powers are only used when necessary. The authorised officer or investigator must take all reasonable steps to obtain the consent of the service user – that is, the person with the disability – before entering. If consent is unable to be obtained, entry may only be effected if the officer or investigator considers the entry reasonably necessary for the purposes of monitoring compliance with a provision of the act. These legislative safeguards will be further strengthened by operating procedures developed by the regulator, who will regularly review the use of these powers of entry to ensure that they are being exercised properly.

The bill will also allow the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers to declare additional categories of disability accommodation so that community visitors can inquire into the quality and standard of support provided to the residents. The bill also clarifies the functions and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Lastly, the bill removes duplications in the NDIS and state-funded disability provider system. The screening checks for NDIS-registered disability workers are currently duplicated and present needless red tape. This legislation will allow an NDIS worker clearance in lieu of a criminal history check for voluntary registration of disability workers. The bill strengthens information-sharing provisions about changes or cancellations of the NDIS clearance between the board and the NDIS worker screening unit. A variation to the amendments for the lapsed 2022 bill has been made to enable confirmation of the NDIS clearance electronically, and the board will not be required to obtain a physical copy of the clearance certificate. With the majority of disability services now having been transitioned to the NDIS, this bill will also effect the dissolution of the Disability Services Board. The removal of this unnecessary red tape will hopefully encourage more disability workers to register and help to professionalise the disability workforce in Victoria.

I also note that this bill includes safeguards in relation to mitigating any negative effects when interviews or hearings involve children in out-of-home care under the worker or carer exclusion scheme. These provisions are modelled on similar provisions in the reportable conduct scheme and the child safeguards scheme. I feel that there is much more work still to be done in this space of children in out-of-home care and attending to their needs, but I welcome this next step. More significant and complex areas of the Disability Act 2006 are planned to be considered next year as part of the next stage of the Disability Act review, which I look forward to.

On speaking to this bill it would be remiss of me not to mention the work of the Health and Community Services Union and the workers and their members who do so much in this space. I believe the most important thing is that the people living with disability, as much as they can be, and their loved ones in our community are always the ones who are in the pilot seat of any changes which concern them and that are to be made regarding their lives and their welfare. They are citizens who have an equal

stake in an Australian story, and they and their loved ones should expect nothing less than the right to live decent and fulfilled lives with respect. I look forward to conferring with representatives of the disabled community and disability care sector ahead of further legislative changes next year, and my door is always open to them.

I must say that there was not a dry eye in the room during the Premier's announcement last year when he announced our plans as a government to deliver better disability support for families and children in our state, a long-awaited announcement welcomed wholeheartedly by everyone across Victoria. This issue is close to not only my heart, having helped care for my Uncle Ken, but also those of my staff. I see firsthand just how much work is required to ensure that people with a disability are loved and treated with dignity and respect.

Any assistance that we can provide as a government to carers is a step in the right direction and one that I will always support. I thank and commend the Andrews government for their work in the disability sector in introducing this bill, especially the minister, Lizzie Blandthorn, for her work. I commend the bill to the Assembly, and I hope all follow.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11:05): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Human Source Management Bill 2023

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 3, after line 27 insert –
“*client legal privilege* includes legal professional privilege;”.
2. Clause 3, page 3, line 7, after “23,” insert “30C;”.
3. Clause 3, page 6, line 32, omit “application;” and insert “application; or”.
4. Clause 3, page 6, after line 32 insert –
“(d) an application to the Supreme Court under section 30A;”.
5. Clause 3, page 7, line 6, after “23” insert “or 30C”.
6. Clause 4, line 33, after “register” insert “, or apply to the Supreme Court for authorisation to register;”.
7. Clause 10, line 14, omit “23;” and insert “23 or 30C;”.
8. Clause 10, after line 14 insert –
“(ab) the power to approve the making of an application under section 30A;”.
9. Clause 12, line 2, omit “**aged 14 years or under**”.
10. Clause 12, lines 4 and 5, omit “who is aged 14 years or under”.
11. Clause 15, line 2, omit “**14 years of age or under**”.
12. Clause 15, line 4, omit “aged 14 years or under”.

NEW CLAUSE

13. Insert the following New Clause after clause 15 –

“15A Prohibition on tasking a human source where information subject to client legal privilege

A police officer must not task a human source who is registered for the purpose of a police officer obtaining, or obtaining and disseminating, information from the human source that is subject to –

- (a) client legal privilege; or

(b) client legal privilege in respect of which there is an exception to the privilege.”.

14. Clause 16, lines 8 to 12, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –

‘(1) A police officer, during any interaction with a child concerning the potential registration of that child as a human source, must ensure the presence of at least one of the following –

(a) an Australian legal practitioner;’.

15. Clause 16, lines 24 to 31, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –

‘(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the police officer must –

(a) consult the child before determining who will be present during the interaction; and

(b) if an Australian legal practitioner is not to be present during the interaction, inform the child and the child’s parent, guardian or independent person that the child may express their wish to have an Australian legal practitioner present at any time; and

(c) take reasonable steps to facilitate the child’s wishes in this regard before any interaction with the child takes place or before any further interaction with the child takes place (as the case requires).’.

16. Clause 17, lines 3 to 8, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –

‘(1) A police officer, during any interaction which constitutes human source activity with a child who is a human source, must ensure the presence of at least one of the following –

(a) an Australian legal practitioner;’.

17. Clause 17, lines 20 to 33, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert –

‘(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the police officer must –

(a) consult the child before determining who will be present during the interaction; and

(b) if an Australian legal practitioner is not to be present during the interaction, inform the child and the child’s parent, guardian or independent person that the child may express their wish to have an Australian legal practitioner present at any time; and

(c) take reasonable steps to facilitate the child’s wishes in this regard before any interaction with the child takes place or before any further interaction with the child takes place (as the case requires).’.

NEW CLAUSE

18. Insert the following New Clause after clause 17 –

‘17A Protections for a child – emergency registrations

(1) A child is entitled to the presence of the following persons during any interaction between the child and a police officer concerning the potential registration of that child as a human source –

(a) an Australian legal practitioner;

(b) either –

(i) a parent or a guardian; or

(ii) if a parent or guardian is unavailable or it is not appropriate for a parent or guardian to attend, an independent person.

Example

It is not appropriate for a parent or guardian to be present if the child is to provide information about the parent or guardian or the presence of the child’s parent or guardian may place the child or any other person at risk.

(2) A human source registered on an emergency registration who is a child is entitled to the presence of the persons specified in subsection (1)(a) and (b) during any interaction between the human source and a police officer concerning the child’s role as a human source.

(3) A human source registered on an emergency registration who is a child is entitled to request the presence of a person referred to in subsection (1)(a) or (b) (or both) during any other interaction between the human source and a police officer.

(4) A police officer must inform the child of the entitlements in subsection (1) before any interaction concerning potential emergency registration of the child takes place between the human source and the police officer.

- (5) A police officer must inform the child of the entitlements in subsections (2) and (3) before any interaction concerning registration or deactivation takes place between the human source and the police officer.
- (6) The police officer must take reasonable steps to facilitate the presence of each person entitled to be present under subsection (1) or (2) or whose presence is requested under subsection (3).’
- 19. Clause 18, line 8, after “register” insert “, or apply to the Supreme Court for authorisation to register,”.
- 20. Clause 20, after line 34 insert –
 ‘(3A) If it is not appropriate for the parent or guardian to give consent to the child’s registration, a police officer must ensure that an independent person is present at the time the child gives informed consent.’
- 21. Clause 21, page 22, before line 1 insert –
 “(1A) A police officer must not apply to the Chief Commissioner to register as a reportable human source a person who is reasonably expected to have access to information that is subject to client legal privilege or information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege, for the purpose of obtaining, or obtaining and disseminating, information of that kind.”
- 22. Clause 23, after line 22 insert –
 “(1A) The Chief Commissioner must not register a person as a reportable human source under this section if –
 (a) the person is reasonably expected to have access to –
 (i) information that is subject to client legal privilege; or
 (ii) information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege; and
 (b) the purpose of the registration is for a police officer to obtain, or to obtain and disseminate, information that is subject to client legal privilege or information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege.”
- 23. Clause 24, line 22, after “Monitor” insert “to the Chief Commissioner”.
- 24. Clause 25, line 28, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
- 25. Clause 25, page 26, line 7, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
- 26. Clause 25, page 26, line 10, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
- 27. Clause 26, page 27, lines 5 to 8, omit all words and expressions and insert –
 “(2) Subsection (1) does not apply if the information that the person is to be registered to provide is subject to –
 (a) client legal privilege; or
 (b) an exception to client legal privilege or any other privilege.”
- 28. Clause 27, line 12, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
- 29. Clause 28, line 3, omit “The” and insert “Subject to any conditions imposed by the Supreme Court under section 30B, the”.
- 30. Clause 29, line 12, after “months” insert “or, if applicable, the period fixed by the Supreme Court”.
- 31. Clause 29, line 15, omit “the registration” and insert “a registration under section 23”.

NEW CLAUSES

- 32. Insert the following New Division after Division 3 of Part 3 –
“Division 3A – Application to Supreme Court to register a person as a reportable human source for certain purposes
30A Application to Supreme Court for the registration of a person as a reportable human source for certain purposes
 (1) A police officer, with the approval of the Chief Commissioner, may apply to the Supreme Court for an order authorising the Chief Commissioner to register a person as a reportable human source for the purpose of a police officer obtaining, or obtaining and disseminating, information that is subject to client legal privilege or information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege if the police officer is reasonably satisfied –

- (a) that the use of the person as a human source –
 - (i) is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement objective; and
 - (ii) is proportionate to that objective; and
- (b) that the risks associated with the person's registration as a human source have been identified and can be adequately managed; and
- (c) that the registration of the person as a reportable human source is otherwise appropriate and justified; and
- (d) of either of the following –
 - (i) that –
 - (A) there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person; and
 - (B) registering the person as a reportable human source is immediately necessary to respond to the threat; and
 - (C) the information or assistance that the person is expected to provide if registered as a reportable human source cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means; or
 - (ii) the information is subject to an exception to client legal privilege of a kind that permits its disclosure to law enforcement officers.
- (2) An application must –
 - (a) specify the name of the applicant; and
 - (b) specify the name of the person in respect of whom the application is made; and
 - (c) specify the information proposed to be obtained, or obtained and disseminated; and
 - (d) specify the reasons why the information is likely to be the subject of client legal privilege or subject to an exception to client legal privilege; and
 - (e) specify the required duration of the registration; and
 - (f) if the application is made in writing, be signed by the police officer making the application; and
 - (g) unless the police officer making the application reasonably believes it would be impracticable to do so, be supported by an affidavit setting out the grounds on which the application is made.
- (3) If the police officer making an application under this section reasonably believes that it is impracticable for the application to be made in person, the application may be made by telephone or other electronic communication.
- (4) An application that is made without a supporting affidavit must be accompanied by any information requested by the court.
- (5) A police officer who makes an application without a supporting affidavit must provide a supporting affidavit within 24 hours after making the application.

30B Supreme Court may authorise the registration of a person as a reportable human source for certain purposes

- (1) The Supreme Court may make an order of a kind referred to in section 30A(1) only if the court is reasonably satisfied –
 - (a) that the use of the person as a human source –
 - (i) is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement objective; and
 - (ii) is proportionate to that objective; and
 - (b) that the risks associated with the person's registration as a human source have been identified and can be adequately managed; and
 - (c) that the registration of the person as a reportable human source is otherwise appropriate and justified; and
 - (d) of either of the following –

- (i) that –
 - (A) there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person; and
 - (B) registering the person as a reportable human source is immediately necessary to respond to the threat; and
 - (C) the information or assistance that the person is expected to provide if registered as a reportable human source cannot be obtained through any other reasonable means; or
 - (ii) the information is subject to an exception to client legal privilege of a kind that permits its disclosure to law enforcement officers; and
 - (e) in the case of an application that is not made in person, that it would have been impracticable for the application to be made in person; and
 - (f) in the case of an application that is not supported by an affidavit, that it would have been impracticable for an affidavit to have been prepared and sworn or affirmed before the application was made.
- (2) In considering whether the court is reasonably satisfied of the matters specified in subsection (1), the court must consider the following –
- (a) whether the person is reasonably expected to have access to privileged information or privileged information in respect of which there is an exception to the privilege and, if so, whether that information is related to the information the person is expected to provide to a police officer if registered as a reportable human source;
 - (b) whether the person is reasonably expected to have access to information that is subject to a legal obligation of confidentiality and, if so, whether that information is related to the information the person is expected to provide to a police officer if registered as a reportable human source;
 - (c) any specialist advice regarding the registration of the person as a reportable human source;
 - (d) the person's age;
 - (e) the person's health, including the person's mental and physical health;
 - (f) the purpose for which the person is proposed to be registered as a reportable human source;
 - (g) the conditions that would be imposed on the registration;
 - (h) the length of time for which the person is proposed to be registered as a reportable human source;
 - (i) mitigation of any risk to the safety of the person if the person is registered as a reportable human source;
 - (j) the adequacy of the risk assessment and any other material provided in support of the application;
 - (k) any rewards that are proposed to be given to the person if registered as a reportable human source;
 - (l) if the person is a child –
 - (i) whether registration as a reportable human source is in the best interests of the child; and
 - (ii) any expected impact of registration on the child's wellbeing; and
 - (m) any submissions made to the court by the Public Interest Monitor.
- (3) An order must specify –
- (a) whether the information that is proposed to be obtained, or obtained and disseminated, is likely to be subject to client legal privilege or an exception to client legal privilege of a kind that permits its disclosure to law enforcement officers; and
 - (b) the purpose for which the Chief Commissioner may register the person as a reportable human source; and

- (c) the date of making of the order; and
 - (d) the maximum period for which the registration of the person in respect of whom the application is made may be in effect, being a period that is not longer than 7 days; and
 - (e) any conditions to which the order is subject.
 - (4) An order must not –
 - (a) authorise the registration of a person as a reportable human source for the purpose of tasking the person; or
 - (b) be varied, extended or renewed.
 - (5) If an order is not made in writing, the court must provide the police officer with a copy of the order as soon as it is practicable to do so.
 - (6) An application under this section must not be heard in open court.
- 30C Chief Commissioner may register a person as a reportable human source following court order**
- (1) The Chief Commissioner may register a person as a reportable human source if the Supreme Court makes an order under section 30B authorising the Chief Commissioner to register the person.
 - (2) Before registering the person, the Chief Commissioner must ensure that the person has given informed consent to the registration and that the Chief Commissioner has a record of that person's informed consent, as required by section 20.”.
33. Clause 38, line 18, after “registration” insert “or a registration under section 30C”.
34. Clause 38, line 30, after “registration” insert “or a registration under section 30C”.
35. Clause 40, after line 20 insert –
- “(1A) A police officer must not apply to the Chief Commissioner for emergency registration of a person as a human source a person who is reasonably expected to have access to information that is subject to client legal privilege or information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege, for the purpose of obtaining, or obtaining and disseminating, information of that kind.”.
36. Clause 41, after line 21 insert –
- “(1A) The Chief Commissioner must not register a person as a human source on an emergency registration application if –
- (a) the person is reasonably expected to have access to –
 - (i) information that is subject to client legal privilege; or
 - (ii) information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege; and
 - (b) the purpose of the registration is for a police officer to obtain, or to obtain and disseminate, information that is subject to client legal privilege or information in respect of which there is an exception to client legal privilege.”.
37. Clause 45, after line 20 insert –
- “(4) Despite subsection (3), in the case of a registration under section 30C that is the subject of a further application to the Supreme Court under section 30A, the Chief Commissioner must suspend the registration of the human source at the expiry of the registration period determined under section 29(1) until the further application has been determined by the court.”.
38. Clause 47, page 44, line 2, after “registration” insert “unless a human source registered under an emergency registration has unexpectedly provided information which is subject to client legal privilege or information that is subject to client legal privilege in respect of which there is an exception to the privilege”.
39. Clause 50, line 24, after “23,” insert “30C,”.
40. Clause 52, line 8, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
41. Clause 52, after line 17 insert –
- “(ab)to appear at the hearing of an application under section 30A to test the content and sufficiency of the information relied on and the circumstances of the application;”.
42. Clause 52, page 47, line 20, omit “(a).” and insert “(a); and”.

43. Clause 52, page 47, after line 20 insert –
 “(c) for the purpose of performing the function under subsection (1)(ab) –
 (i) make submissions to the court by telephone or other electronic communication; and
 (ii) ask questions of any person giving information in relation to the application; and
 (iii) make submissions to the Supreme Court as to the appropriateness of granting the application.”.
44. Clause 54, line 11, omit “an application” and insert “any application”.
45. Clause 54, after line 12 insert –
 “(1A) The Chief Commissioner, as soon as practicable after the making of an application under section 30A and in accordance with the regulations (if any), must provide the Public Interest Monitor with –
 (a) a copy of the application; and
 (b) a copy of any affidavit in support of the application and of any information provided to the court.”.
46. Clause 54, line 18, after “is made” insert “to the Chief Commissioner or the Supreme Court”.
47. Clause 54, line 19, after “Commissioner” insert “or the Supreme Court”.
48. Clause 54, line 20, after “application” insert “(as the case requires)”.
49. Clause 55, line 5, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
50. Clause 55, line 17, after “source” insert “under section 23”.
51. Clause 62, page 55, after line 13 insert –
 “(ga) the number of times the Public Interest Monitor was notified under section 54 of an application to the Supreme Court under section 30A; and”.
52. Clause 65, after line 12 insert –
“Note
 See section 5 of the **Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011** in relation to the meaning of police personnel misconduct.”.

NEW CLAUSE

53. Insert the following New Clause after clause 72 –

“72A Chief Commissioner to report on applications to the Supreme Court

The Chief Commissioner must give a report to IBAC at least once every 3 months which specifies the number of applications made under section 30A and, of those –

- (a) the number that were granted by the court; and
- (b) the number that were refused and the reasons each was refused.”.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (11:06): I move:

That these amendments be agreed to.

In doing so, I would like to speak briefly in relation to these amendments. As members would know, the Human Source Management Bill 2023 introduces the most robust human source management framework in Australia, and it does acquit the 25 recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. This framework now means that decisions made by the police to register human sources will consider the risks and provide appropriate levels of oversight. The bill does not change lawyers’ existing obligations to confidentiality. I also point out to the house that it is the government’s position, as it has always been, that lawyers should not be informing on their clients. What this bill does is give Victoria Police a clear framework on what to do when they get highly sensitive information, instead of relying on internal policies. Unfortunately this is a point that was missed by the opposition. This bill actually makes it more difficult for lawyers to give information to police. It will be the only jurisdiction in Australia with this level of oversight and this level of rigour. Indeed, as I indicated earlier, it is consistent with the findings of the royal commission.

The opposition voted against this bill when it came before the house and subsequently moved amendments in the other place, which were comprehensively defeated. I know the member for Malvern will, I dare say, follow my contribution, but the opposition proposed an alternative model for how this bill could operate – namely, to restrict the use of lawyers as human sources. The effect of this change would have actually made it easier for people – this is an important point – with access to legally privileged information to be used, because it would have left people such as paralegals without the necessary and highest levels of safeguards. There may be very rare circumstances where Victoria Police could consider the registration of a person who has access to privileged information, such as a lawyer. It is a clear finding of the royal commission and a point the commissioner has repeatedly supported. Under this bill, they will be subject to multiple stages of independent oversight with regular reporting, as specified in the government’s amendments, which we developed in close consultation with the crossbench – and we thank the crossbench for their consideration and work on the amendments that have been passed in the other place.

I will go into a bit more detail on the amendments that the government is agreeing to. The new application process to the Supreme Court for information subject to client legal privilege, division 3A – we acknowledge that the new application process goes beyond the process set out by the royal commission. It does so in response to stakeholder feedback. The robust system of safeguards will ensure that appropriate scrutiny is applied to police use of the source – this includes a maximum registration period of seven days; that the registration is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement purpose; that it is proportionate; and that there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, to the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person. The court must also consider submissions made by the Public Interest Monitor. The effect is that this will be the hardest jurisdiction in Australia to register lawyers.

The second amendment relates to the prohibition on tasking a human source where information is subject to client legal privilege. This means the police are prohibited from asking people with access to client legal information to proactively undertake activities that would benefit police, such as wearing a wire. We have also clarified the definition of ‘legal privilege’. This avoids any doubt about the nature of information protected.

In relation to those amendments moved by the Greens political party in the other place, the government has supported these amendments, which introduce additional protections for children who interact with police and clarify IBAC’s existing functions with regard to monitoring compliance with the framework introduced by the bill.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Attorney-General for her work on this. I know an enormous amount of work went into landing this outcome. I know she worked incredibly hard to try to ensure that the recommendations of the royal commission were addressed, while also working with stakeholders to come up with a workable solution. It is for those reasons that the government is very happy to accept those amendments moved in the other place.

Michael O’BRIEN (Malvern) (11:11): I think the Assistant Treasurer would regard himself as being a logical man and an intelligent man, but did he really listen? Did he really read what he just read out? Because he said the government’s position is that lawyers should not be used as human sources against their clients, yet he has introduced amendments to this place which allow exactly that to happen. You cannot have it both ways. If the government’s position is that lawyers should not be acting as informed sources, as human sources, against the interest of their own client to whom they owe professional, ethical obligations, then why on earth is the government allowing it to occur?

The better answer would have been to accept the opposition’s proposals, which say lawyers cannot wear two hats. You cannot represent a client and inform on that client to police as a human source. Just to knock on the head any suggestion that our position would put public safety at risk, legal rules already provide that a lawyer not only may, but really should inform police when their client advises them of anything which is going to be an imminent threat to the life or safety of any other person. So

when I was practising, if a client said to me, ‘I can’t stand that person. That person’s going to be a witness against me. I’m going to deal with them’, I would have an obligation to report that to police. But – and this is important – I cannot then keep acting for them. If you are going to inform on your client, you stop acting for your client. That is the rule, and that is the way it should be.

This government is arrogantly putting Victoria on a collision course with the High Court of Australia, because the High Court has made perfectly clear that it will not and does not accept lawyers informing on their clients to police. From the Lawyer X Nicola Gobbo judgement, whatever you like to call it – formally called *AB v. CD; EF v. CD* by the full court of the High Court of Australia – let me just read an extract from that judgement, a unanimous judgement, at paragraph 10. The court had previously talked about, usually, the importance of protecting the identities of police sources, but the court made a different decision in this case. Where I refer to ‘EF’, we now know that the person referred to as ‘EF’ in this judgement was in fact Nicola Gobbo:

Here the situation is very different, if not unique, and it is greatly to be hoped that it will never be repeated. EF’s actions in purporting to act as counsel for the Convicted Persons while covertly informing against them were fundamental and appalling breaches of EF’s obligations as counsel to her clients and of EF’s duties to the court. Likewise, Victoria Police were guilty of reprehensible conduct in knowingly encouraging EF to do as she did and were involved in sanctioning atrocious breaches of the sworn duty of every police officer to discharge all duties imposed on them faithfully and according to law without favour or affection, malice or ill-will. As a result, the prosecution of each Convicted Person was corrupted in a manner which debased fundamental premises of the criminal justice system.

Could you get a more damning indictment, unanimously by the highest court in this country, of a practice which this government proposes to allow, facilitating it through this bill? Why would you not respect the decision of the High Court that you cannot get away with this instead of trying to legalise it? But that is exactly what this arrogant government is seeking to do.

What have been the consequences of Lawyer X? Criminals have walked. People who have been locked up for a long time have had convictions quashed. We still have Tony Mokbel, that notorious drug dealer, now trying to get out of jail based on what happened with him where his lawyer acted against him for the police – and this government wants to allow that to happen all over again. The government cannot say, ‘We don’t think lawyers should inform on their clients’ and then introduce a bill which allows exactly that to happen.

In Victoria’s Court of Appeal, in the case of *Faruk Orman v. the Queen*, 26 July 2019, President Maxwell, Justice Niall and Justice Emerton had to consider one of Gobbo’s former clients, who was informed on by Gobbo to the police, which resulted in his conviction. Here is what the Court of Appeal of Victoria said:

The Director –

meaning the Director of Public Prosecutions –

concedes that Ms Gobbo, while acting for Mr Orman, pursued the presentation of the principal evidence against him on the charge of murder. Self-evidently, that conduct was a fundamental breach of her duties to Mr Orman and to the Court. We refer, as did the Director, to the following statement of the High Court in *Tuckiar v The King*:

Our system of administering justice necessarily imposes upon those who practise advocacy duties which have no analogies, and the system cannot dispense with their strict observance.

On the facts as conceded, Ms Gobbo’s conduct subverted Mr Orman’s right to a fair trial, and went to the very foundations of the system of criminal trial. There was, accordingly, a substantial miscarriage of justice. The appeal must therefore be allowed.

Why is this government – this Andrews Labor government – flying in the face of what the High Court of Australia and Victoria’s Court of Appeal have said: if you use a lawyer as an informant against their own client and you pursue a conviction on that basis, you have perverted the course of justice, you have undermined the right to a fair trial, you will not get the conviction and, if you get it, it will be quashed. How many crooks, how many murderers, how many drug traffickers are going to walk free

in Victoria because this government is arrogantly dismissing the decisions of the High Court of Australia and the full Court of Appeal?

Brad Rowsell: Shame!

Michael O'BRIEN: It is absolutely a shame, member for Sandringham. I have never seen a government so arrogant. It is there in black and white. Surely to goodness there are enough lawyers in the Labor Party that can read a judgement and understand you cannot do this – you cannot get away with it. I do wonder how many months or years it will be, but at some point a court will have to come back and read *Hansard* on this bill. Let me say to those future judges: we know what you meant – we know what the Court of Appeal meant, we know what the High Court meant. We know that this is wrong. We know that what the government is proposing will undermine the rule of law, will subvert the right to a fair trial. We know it and we have warned the government about it, but they and the Greens are so arrogant they believe they know better than the courts of this country and the courts of this state. It is on the government's head. When people are locked up unjustly, it is on the government's head. When criminals who should be locked up walk free, is on the government's head. When every Victorian, when they are speaking to their lawyer in what should be a position of utmost trust and confidence, now has to worry 'Is my lawyer going to rat me out to the police?' it is on the government's head.

The Victorian Bar Council does not support this government's bill. The Law Institute of Victoria does not support this government's bill. The Centre for Public Integrity does not support the government's bill. This is what happens when the government is so arrogant it believes it does not have to listen to anybody. I am not suggesting the government should necessarily listen to me, but listen to the bar council, listen to the law institute, listen to the Centre for Public Integrity. These are important civic organisations. They do not have a political agenda. They support the rule of law and the right to a fair trial, and this government has ignored them. The government says, 'Oh, we're putting in safeguards.' If the police want to use a lawyer to inform against their own clients, you cannot just tick and flick. It is a process. You do not have a process for something which is fundamentally wrong. If anything is more obvious as a conflict of interest, it is that when you go to a lawyer that lawyer acts for you. A lawyer has an obligation to the court first and foremost, and they have an obligation to their client second. They cannot be compromised in those fundamental duties and obligations by also being an informer to the police – not if they want to continue acting to represent that client. This is so obvious it should go without saying, but the government does not seem to care.

The purported safeguards contained in these amendments do not fix the mischief in the bill. This is a bad bill. It is the wrong bill. It will lead to undermining the rule of law in this state. It will lead – I have no doubt – to people going to jail who should not, and it will lead to people who should be in jail getting out. This is on the heads of the Andrews Labor government, because the Liberal and National parties do not support this bill. This bill is wrong. The High Court has told you, the Victorian Court of Appeal has told you, we are telling you, and you should be ashamed of yourselves.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (11:21): I am very pleased to speak on the Human Source Management Bill 2023 amendments today. I did hear the word 'arrogant' a lot, but I would like to speak to the subject matter of the bill because that is what we are here to discuss rather than lots of flourish and flounce when in fact it is really a sensitive and serious matter. I am concerned that the member for Malvern is actually debating the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants final recommendations. He has made a lot of allegations here, but actually what has he just been doing for the past few minutes? That is what I find perplexing. I think we should think about the time line here because that is highly relevant. The royal commission was established after these High Court decisions and took these matters into account in its final report. They also specifically recommended no blanket ban on any profession but rather to ensure a clear framework.

It is actually deeply troubling. It is as if the member for Malvern is pretending we did not establish a royal commission that provided 111 recommendations. I do not know what is happening here and why he has elected to go down that pathway. Perhaps it is because the serious weaknesses in his proposals

have been unveiled, and maybe that is making it a little bit concerning for him to have to speak to this particular bill and where it has landed with where we are at here and now.

I should say that we acknowledge that this amendment goes beyond the process proposed by the royal commission. If you look at the extent of the rigour, we should not be diffusing and diminishing in any way the extent of the rigour that has been undertaken to get us to this point in time with this bill. The commission considered concerns around allowing lawyers to be human sources in its final report but concluded that while it is rarely appropriate for police to seek privileged information from a human source – this is the clincher – there might be ‘exceptional and compelling circumstances’ where it is appropriate to do so, such as a need to respond to a significant threat to community safety.

Are we meant to just walk away and pretend that such a risk could not prevail? Yes, it could. I think any lawyer knows – I say this with the greatest respect, and I completely appreciate the sensitivity of this legislation and the subject matter – that we have to account for all foreseeable circumstances. The need to respond to a significant threat to community safety is, arguably, absolutely foreseeable and hence cannot be ignored in these circumstances. And I will reiterate: a blanket ban – here is the second limb that is absolutely vital in this discussion – would not eradicate the risk of confidential or privileged information being provided by a human source, nor would it equip officers with the skills to respond appropriately when this occurs.

Another matter that I did want to cover is that the bill does not change lawyers’ existing obligations to confidentiality, but it gives Victoria Police a clear framework for what to do when they get highly sensitive information instead of relying on internal policies, and that is absolutely paramount and that is why this legislation is so very important. In the rare circumstances – because I think there was a lot of embellishment and exaggeration about the likelihood of these circumstances occurring, but we do allow for those, so I should say ‘in the rare circumstances’ – in which Victoria Police may be allowed to consider the registration of a person who has access to privileged information such as a lawyer, they will be subject to multiple stages of independent oversight and regular reporting to the Attorney-General and Parliament and will be required to consider legal advice, all of which was not there before.

We know that this bill introduces the most robust human source management framework in Australia. If we had listened to the previous discussion from the member for Malvern, we would have thought completely the opposite. And it acquits 25 recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. The reason why I am emphasising that is because I think, out of respect also for the incredible work of the Attorney-General, the dismissive nature of that discussion of the legislation and where it is today is almost offensive, to be honest with you, because it diminishes the incredibly nuanced and sensitive work, and also the work of the royal commission, because it is putting down the 111 recommendations that were put forward as if ‘Oh, well, they don’t mean anything’. We know that it is exactly the opposite. This framework means that decisions made by the police to register human sources will consider the risks and provide appropriate levels of oversight. That is also fundamental – it is that oversight that we must not be so dismissive of simply for political gain or win. I think there is risk of that, and we do not wish to go down that path, I would have thought, on a subject matter that is so very serious.

I would like to take the house through the concerning amendments proposed by the opposition. For the benefit of the house, let us examine them. I will say, respectfully, I appreciate the member for Malvern’s intent with his amendments – I do appreciate that – but we note that there were significant technical issues. So rather than flounce or flourish, let us go to those technical issues. Firstly, amending the definition of ‘privilege’ would have removed critical safeguards. We note that his proposed new clauses 11A and 11B would have restricted the use of lawyers, but this would weaken protections for other people who are reasonably expected to have access to privileged information. You can see here I am explaining technical flaws, as opposed to flounce and flourish. Secondly, the commission emphasised the importance of focusing on the kind of information a person has access to rather than their profession when assessing the risks of registering the person as a human source, and this is where we see the difference in what has been proposed by the member for Malvern. For example, a paralegal

could have provided legally privileged information without the appropriate levels of safeguards of the requirements for police to obtain legal advice or advice from the Public Interest Monitor (PIM). It would have also meant less regular reporting to IBAC. This would have significantly lowered the threshold of oversight from what the commission recommended.

I think it is incumbent on us – and we have taken this absolutely on board – to follow recommendations from the royal commission. Using a former judge as part of a new entity for registering reportable human resources would have lacked clarity, would have had financial implications and would have been inefficient. It is also unclear whether the issuing authority would have been subject to the direction of the minister or independent from such direction. This is inconsistent with other establishing acts and does not provide sufficient detail on the type of entity the issuing authority would constitute under the Public Administration Act 2004.

The appointment provisions did not provide for situations where the issuing authority may wish to resign or for their suspension or removal from office, and here we can see foreseeable elephants that must be taken into account. It also did not account for situations where the position of the issuing authority may be vacant. The issuing authority would have had no oversight or role in key points of risk during a reportable human source's registration. For example, the issuing authority would have had no role when the Chief Commissioner of Police exercised their power to change the conditions of a human source's registration – again, keeping on the technical elements, standing away from the political flounce and flourish. You can see where I am headed here.

There were insufficient provisions for the issuing authority to receive and deal with the highly secretive information. This is in contrast to existing arrangements for sharing information between police, the PIM or IBAC, which have been developed over considerable time and are supported by complex legislative and regulatory frameworks, policies and systems.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:32): I am pleased to rise to say a few words on the amendments to the Human Source Management Bill 2023, but I begin by indicating to the house that I start at a bit of a disadvantage because I missed the start of the Assistant Treasurer's contribution. But I did catch the member for Malvern explaining that the Assistant Treasurer had said that the government's view is that lawyers should not inform on their clients. I am sorry, member for Malvern, that does not make any sense. That cannot possibly be what he said, because that is exactly what this bill does. This allows them to do so. I am astounded. As I heard the member for Malvern say, we would have thought that the Assistant Treasurer is a man of logic, a man of some intelligence, but clearly not. How can you say that the government's policy is that lawyers should not inform on their clients to police and then introduce legislation that not only allows that but codifies that – puts it into the law – I might add in the context of behaviour that the High Court has already found is wrong and indeed 'reprehensible conduct'? This is just astounding, and from a government that I am sure prides itself on being pretty politically savvy, pretty across these things, it is really quite bizarre that the government is doing this, that in response to the scandal that was a high-profile lawyer informing on her clients with obviously the full cooperation of Victoria Police the government's response is to make sure we do it better. That is the thing that astounds me.

I said in my contribution to the substantive debate that there are I am sure many of us who look at these situations and say, 'Well, the cops got the bad guys, that's the good thing. Let's not worry about it.' But, as the member for Malvern has very eruditely presented, this is a fundamental legal privilege situation, and one of the conventions that have been the bedrock of our legal and political system for centuries is that there is a privilege relationship between the client and the lawyer. The bill obviously extends to areas further than that to include doctor-patient relationships, faith leaders and their parishioners, and potentially journalists and their sources. The very strong difference with journalists and their sources is that a journalist is not meant to be representing that source. When it comes to the lawyer situation, a lawyer is meant to be looking after the interests of their client, and if they are then informing on that client to the prosecution, that is a fundamental breach of the lawyer-client relationship and, as the High Court said, an example of reprehensible conduct.

The other couple of things I would like to pick up from the Assistant Treasurer's brief comments are that he noted that this legislation with the amendment there we are now debating will make this situation in Victoria the strongest of all the states. With respect, Assistant Treasurer, the other states have not had the problem of the Lawyer X scandal. To suggest that somehow we are now leading the nation when we are the laughing stock of the nation when it comes to the issue of lawyers informing on their clients is just a debacle. And the political commentary that I would like to add for the Assistant Treasurer is just the unfathomable hypocrisy of the cosy relationship that the government has with the Greens. We see the Assistant Treasurer time and time and time again get up in this place and excoriate the Greens on every possible issue, and yet 'When we need a couple of votes, we'll do a cosy little deal with them' – a cosy little deal, even if it allows a continuation of activity that the High Court has indicated is 'reprehensible conduct'. It is embarrassing for the government, but I cannot let the Greens go unnoticed. They are paragons of virtue and integrity when it suits them, but when the government tickles their tummy they roll over every time and just do exactly what the government wants.

So these amendments, I think, the government stands condemned for. It is an amazing situation to have the government strongly pushing this legislation and now these amendments in the face of opposition from so many organisations. As the member for Malvern said, you do not just have to worry about what the opposition says when you have got the Victorian Bar Council, the Law Institute of Victoria, the Centre for Public Integrity, the High Court – which has ruled very, very clearly 7–0 in this situation – and the Victorian Court of Appeal. To have the government pushing this is just a disgrace and a surprise. So the amendments that we are debating now will go some way perhaps to making a very bad bill slightly better by providing that Supreme Court oversight rather than just having the Chief Commissioner of Police authorising the use of an informant, but that in itself does not make it right. It certainly improves it, but it does not make it right. I am staggered that the government is pursuing this line of inquiry. It is clear that only the government and perhaps Victoria Police are in favour of this, and I think quite rightly various other organisations with no political interest in this other than the interest of the legal system are strongly opposed to it.

I place on record again our support for Victoria Police. We support them in principle, and we will always support the requests of police for more resources and for changes to legislation where appropriate, but it is not a 100 per cent one-way street. The action that was taken in the Lawyer X scandal has rightly been condemned, and to actually have the government bringing forward legislation and now these amendments to legalise that conduct is a very sad day for our legal and political systems. The government I think will come, one day, to rue this legislation.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (11:39): I am pleased to rise once again to address the house on the Human Source Management Bill 2023. I am glad to see this legislation before us here again today with some further amendments. This bill, as well as multiple pieces of previous legislation, demonstrates the government's dedication to implementing all of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. These recommendations are crucial as they address the core of the Victorian justice system and the manner in which the police utilise informants who have confidentiality obligations. As I have mentioned on several occasions here in this place regarding the justice amendments and the like, lawyer–client privilege is a cornerstone for our legal profession and is vital to maintaining the integrity of our justice system.

As we know, lawyer–client privilege enables clients to have open and honest conversations with their lawyers, knowing that what is discussed will be kept confidential. This privilege also allows lawyers to offer their clients the most effective legal counsel possible. It is a crucial aspect of ensuring that clients can freely and sincerely communicate with their legal representatives, and it promotes trust and faith in the legal profession and in our judicial system. As we have heard, the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants uncovered significant historical shortfalls in the criminal justice system. The government has been working to deliver the recommendations of the royal commission to address those shortfalls and to strengthen and restore public confidence in our justice system.

In the progress report tabled in December we heard from the Attorney-General that the government has delivered so far, in full, 23 of the 55 recommendations directed to it. We will see that increase significantly here today with another 25 recommendations. The report also cites that work is well progressed to deliver the recommendation to introduce mandatory reporting requirements for lawyers to report suspected misconduct as well as to progress amendments to the Inquiries Act 2014 to ensure documents subject to public interest immunity claims can be produced to royal commissions. Overall, 63 of the 111 recommendations have been delivered by responsible agencies and significant progress has been made on the remaining recommendations.

As mentioned, some of the recent significant achievements include the establishment of the Office of the Special Investigator and an independent implementation monitor as well as delivering reforms to enhance and strengthen disclosure practice. So again, the government's commitment here remains clear: we are committed to delivering each of the recommendations directed to us and to supporting the delivery of all of the commission's recommendations. This important work continues here today with the Human Source Management Bill, ensuring further and final consideration.

I just would like to revisit the bill's objective, which is to regulate Victoria Police's registration, use and management of human sources, to provide a clear framework for police to obtain and use information from human sources and to ensure that they are used in an ethical and justifiable manner. The bill sets out the process for the registration, use and management of human sources by providing all necessary powers, responsibilities and decision-making processes to Victoria Police. As we have heard, the bill includes a rigorous registration and oversight framework which is aimed at preventing the events that led to the commission from ever happening again. In the rare circumstance in which Victoria Police may be allowed to consider the registration of a person who has access to privileged information such as a lawyer, they will be subject to multiple stages of independent oversight, with regular reporting to the Attorney-General and to Parliament and will be required to consider legal advice – all of which was not a requirement previously.

I thank members of the other place for their contributions to the bill. The government has worked with all the members there, answering their questions. It heard their concerns, and we see some of the resulting amendments here today. These include a new application process to the Supreme Court for information subject to client legal privilege, division 3A – namely, where Victoria Police intend to register a person with access to legally privileged information as a human source. The police must be authorised from the Supreme Court. If authorised, the extensive system of safeguards will ensure that appropriate scrutiny is applied to police use of the source. Further to this, the amendments include prohibitions on tasking a human source where the information is subject to client legal privilege, meaning that police are prohibited from asking people with access to client legal information to proactively undertake activities that would benefit police – for example, wearing a wire. There is also clarification of the definition of legal privilege, as well as further protections for young people, all of which I am pleased to support here today.

As we have also seen, there has been extensive consultation in the creation of this bill. Key justice stakeholders, including Victoria Police, IBAC, the Public Interest Monitor, the Victorian Inspectorate, Victoria Legal Aid, the Commission for Children and Young People, the police informants royal commission implementation monitor and the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs, were consulted during the bill's development. The consultation process was conducted through various channels, including regular meetings of the implementation task force recommended by the commission, and this bill has garnered widespread support among those stakeholders and others.

I just would like to finish by saying that I again express my gratitude to the diligent members of the Victoria Police force for their exceptional efforts in safeguarding our community. The most recent crime statistics are a testament to their hard work, and we have seen a significant decrease in crime rates due to the highly visible and proactive policing efforts across our community, supported by the government's record investment of \$4.5 billion in Victoria Police. I am very proud that this investment is providing Victoria Police with the necessary resources and tools to keep our community safe,

including the ability to respond to incidents of family violence and provide better outcomes for those affected by it.

The number and rate of family violence incidents have also decreased, and we are also prioritising the challenge of family violence with a \$2.9 billion investment implementing every recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence to reform family violence systems and support victim-survivors while holding perpetrators accountable. We have seen the commitment of this government to delivering the recommendations of both royal commissions, ensuring the safety of Victorians and ensuring trust and confidence in our justice system. This bill marks another crucial step toward that process, and I commend the bill to the house.

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (11:48): I rise again to speak on the Human Source Management Bill 2023 with amendments by the Legislative Council. I also rise in support of the comments and speech made by the Shadow Attorney-General and member for Malvern, as the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Justice and Corrections, and also the comments and speech made by the member for Gippsland South. This bill, with the amendments, includes a new clause 17A, which is an amendment that ensures that children are accompanied by adults when they are registered or used as human sources and are interacting with police. This bans police from 'requesting, procuring or inducing' children to become human sources and prohibits officers from tasking children who are human sources.

This bill still gives police discretion though to register lawyers, journalists, doctors, priests, parliamentarians and judges as human sources, albeit with a higher threshold. There are numerous injurious consequences to allowing lawyers to act as human sources, which have already been discussed at length. As communicated by many legal professionals, this should only be in exceptional circumstances, and we have had organisations such as the Victorian Bar Council, the Law Institute of Victoria and many others outline how potentially dangerous this bill is, even in its current form, to the way our legal and justice system works and indeed the rule of law.

As the member for Malvern mentioned as well, this bill still in its current form will result potentially in situations where people go to jail who should not and people do not go to jail who should. Primarily, there may be irreparable damage to the perception and reality that the individuals involved in criminal or civil proceedings are independent from the prosecution. And there are many consequences to allowing lawyers to act as human sources, which have already been discussed at length. As noted, it undermines our justice system, and as mentioned when I spoke previously on this bill, it essentially frames the trial as a contest between the prosecution – the state's representative – and the defendant, tipping the scales of justice even more in favour of the state. Clients who go to a lawyer should be able to trust that their communications are kept confidential, that their interests will be promoted by their legal advocate and that the advocate will always disclose to them any conflicts of interest that may compromise the advocate's ability to freely and fearlessly advocate on their behalf. To sabotage this sacred relationship of trust and to allow cracks in the foundation of the house of justice will surely have an impact on our justice system as a whole because of this piece of legislation.

I know that many lawyers are concerned, including a number of lawyers that I have worked with in the past when I as a lawyer represented clients in criminal law matters before the court. I certainly would be concerned, if I were still working in the future, with this bill as to the client and lawyer relationship that should be there and should be protected. The Legal Profession Uniform Conduct (Barristers) Rules 2015 and the Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015 – the uniform rules – also provide that barristers and solicitors owe a primary duty to the court and the justice process. They also provide that lawyers and barristers must not disclose client information. Dr Matthew Collins QC, the former president of the Victorian Bar association, said that:

All Australians are entitled to know that, when they seek legal advice, the information they provide to their lawyer will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Of course client legal privilege is not meant to be strictly absolute, and there are circumstances where a lawyer can disclose confidential client communications, particularly if the client threatens the safety

of another person and there is a reasonable perception of risk to any person's safety. In the case of Nicola Gobbo, Ms Gobbo's communications were not limited to discrete instances where her clients threatened imminent harm. The information that she provided acted in breach of the rules relating to confidentiality, loyalty and acting in the client's best interests. This legislation with the amendments does now impose a higher threshold of serious and imminent threat to national security, the health or safety of the public or a section of the public or the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person. Again, though, it is important that we protect the lives of all, and when we are reasonably convinced that lawyer-client privilege should be lifted to save a life, this is permissible. Yet in other circumstances, ones that do not necessarily threaten the lives of others in a substantial way, it is hard to justify. As noted by the member for Malvern, once a lawyer has informed on a client – when they find out that they might harm or kill someone – they stop acting for them.

This bill not only targets the lawyer-client privilege relationship but also other important relationships of trust, subverting journalistic privilege, doctor-patient privilege and religious privilege. A strong journalist-source privilege is essential to the maintenance of an independent press and ultimately to a well-functioning society. A strong priest or pastor and parishioner privilege ensures that all people of faith can trust their faith leaders to carry out their religious obligations, and a strong doctor-patient privilege ensures again that people can trust their doctors. Each of these privileges are rooted in the philosophy that open communication is important to the functioning of society. In the absence of a privilege, such communication will be inhibited and the cost to the legal system, in particular of losing access to privileged information in unexceptional circumstances, is ultimately outweighed by the benefit to society of open communication.

Delving deeper into the Human Source Management Bill and these amendments, we have got, as mentioned before, the important clause 17A, which as mentioned before imposes further protections for children concerning their registration as a source. Clause 15A prohibits police officers from tasking a human source subject to client legal privilege, exception or no exception, with higher thresholds where there is a serious and imminent threat to national security, the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person, as mentioned before. While I see that these amendments will provide further protections to the relevant parties, I still fear that the bill will give rise to another Lawyer X predicament with the criteria above, specifically the threshold for which a human source can be registered being too broad and encompassing a number of different situations.

I want to emphasise again that this bill, despite the amendments, still gives police discretion to register lawyers, journalists, doctors, priests, parliamentarians and judges as human sources. And as I have previously raised, there are a number of consequences to allowing lawyers to act as human sources, which should only be done in extremely rare circumstances. Primarily I am concerned with the irreparable damage that this legislation would likely do to the perception of the public that those involved in criminal proceedings are independent from the prosecution and are protected by their lawyers.

Ultimately with this bill there could be another circumstance where the leviathan of the state will contest with vulnerable and/or under-resourced citizens. Clients who go to a lawyer should be able to trust that their communications are kept confidential and that their best interests are looked after. Sabotaging this sacred relationship of trust, allowing cracks in the foundation of our justice system, will certainly be a risk with this piece of legislation. So again I join the comments in the speeches made by the member for Malvern and the member for Gippsland South, and I ask that the chamber and fellow parliamentarians note my concerns and the concerns of fellow colleagues about this bill.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (11:57): I too rise to speak on the amendments to the Human Source Management Bill 2023. Indeed, as previous speakers have suggested and as the Minister for Government Services suggested in his opening remarks, this bill introduces Australia's most robust human source management framework, indeed the most robust framework of any jurisdiction in this country. In the state of Victoria and indeed in Australia we have royal commissions for a reason. You know, there is an issue that happens in the community, and we go and have a royal commission. So

after doing that, and the royal commission making its recommendations, it confuses me why we would then ignore those recommendations. What this piece of legislation does and what the amendments do is acquit 25 recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, and it is incredibly appropriate to do so.

This framework means that decisions made by police to register human sources will consider all of the risks and of course provide appropriate levels of oversight as well. What this bill does not do, however, is change a lawyer's existing obligations to confidentiality, which is an incredibly important aspect of this. What it does do, however, is give Victoria Police a clear framework on what to do when they get highly sensitive information. It puts in place that framework in legislation so they are not just relying on internal policies. In the very rare circumstance in which Victoria Police may be able to consider the registration of a person who has access to privileged information, such as a lawyer, they will be subject to multiple stages of independent oversight, with regular reporting to the Attorney-General and Parliament, and they will be required to consider legal advice.

This is not the first time that we have debated this bill in this place. It obviously got sent to the other place and has come back with amendments. As always, this government has engaged with the crossbench in the other place. It has done so in this case, and as I said, the government has worked with members of the crossbench on the bill to answer some of their incredibly important questions and also to hear their concerns. We listened to these concerns, and as a result a number of amendments have been proposed for the bill. The government introduced amendments adding a further, stricter layer of scrutiny for the very rare and exceptional instances where a lawyer would be used as a human source. Given the recommendations that came out of the royal commission, I think those amendments are incredibly appropriate.

Where Victoria Police intends to register a person with access to legally privileged information as a human source, police must obtain authorisation from the Supreme Court. If authorised, a robust system of safeguards will ensure that appropriate scrutiny is applied to the police's use of the source. I just thought I would run through the safeguards quickly in some of the time that I have remaining. The safeguards include that a lawyer may only be registered to provide information subject to client privilege for a maximum period of seven days, after which the source registration must be deactivated. There must be satisfaction that registration is necessary to achieve a legitimate law enforcement purpose and is proportionate, and that there is a serious imminent threat to national security, the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, the life of a person or of serious physical harm to a person. There must be consideration by the court of submissions made by the Public Interest Monitor. This process now significantly raises the threshold for what must be satisfied before registering a lawyer as a human source. As we spoke about earlier, it is the highest threshold and has the most robust safeguards of anywhere in this country.

What I would like to do finally is once again acknowledge the work of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants. It is entirely appropriate that we acquit those 25 recommendations made by that royal commission. Indeed these further amendments go even further than those recommendations made by the royal commission, and for that reason I would like to commend this to the house.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (12:03): I rise today to speak on the Human Source Management Bill 2023, which we have seen return to the Assembly after some tweaking in the other place. I believe the aim was to improve the contents of this bill and ensure we do not see incidents like those which this piece of legislation is designed to stop ever occurring again, but frustratingly these amendments do not go far enough. I note when this bill was in this place back in February a reasoned amendment was moved by the Shadow Attorney-General and member for Malvern which was unfortunately defeated by the government before the bill was put in front of the Council. This proposed amendment was important to improving the functioning of this legislation. It was clear this bill needed some work, with both the Victorian Bar and the Law Institute of Victoria expressing concern over the contents of the bill off the back of the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants.

This bill is designed to implement a framework for the registration, use and management of human sources by Victoria Police, provide for external oversight of Victoria Police's use of human sources and consequentially amend the Victoria Police Act 2013. The language used in February by Law Institution of Victoria president Tania Wolff was strong:

... if we have learned anything from the Royal Commission, it's that lawyers should never be used as human sources.

She also outlined how the use of lawyers as sources is contradictory to the trusted role they play in the integrity of our legal system:

We are opposed to the idea that lawyers could ever be used as human sources or that they should covertly inform against their clients. To do so is contrary to a lawyer's role as an officer of the court and violates many other ethical duties that a lawyer owes to their client.

As outlined by the member for Malvern, when this bill was first presented to the house there was no check against the type of appalling behaviour or, as the High Court called it, 'reprehensible behaviour' engaged in by Victoria Police and Nicola Gobbo. Of concern was also the lack of guarantee that a court would allow evidence gathered through the subversion of privileged information to be used, given how strongly this has been denounced by both the High Court of Australia and the Victorian Court of Appeal.

I thank the member for Malvern for his extensive consultation on this bill, which was consistently negative, driving the amendments originally placed before this house. What we see is that the government is set to allow this bill to become legislation and allow for Victoria Police to register a lawyer as a human source and breach the legal privilege owed to a client. The bill in front of us allows this conduct to continue – a fundamental undermining of legal processes. As outlined in the other place, the coalition provided support for a broad range of amendments to improve the functioning of this bill, despite the amendments moved by the coalition with support of certain crossbenchers being defeated.

Providing some broader context to this bill, it is important to remember why this bill is before us, what occurred leading up to today and why further changes were needed. This bill arose following the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, which delivered its final report to the government in November 2020. This royal commission was established in light of the Lawyer X fiasco, something that drew considerable scrutiny and media attention and introduced new concerns over legality and due process. In the Lawyer X situation criminal barrister Nicola Gobbo was used by Victoria Police as a human source to provide information in relation to criminal investigations, including against the interests of her own clients. While being used as a human source, Ms Gobbo gave police information about her own clients, which resulted in several convictions. Her involvement was not disclosed at the time of the trials of her clients either.

The High Court of Australia's examination of the matter declared that acting as an informer against a client involves fundamental and appalling breaches of the obligations of a barrister and described the actions of Victoria Police as 'reprehensible conduct'. I do want to add that while the actions of the police in this situation were well below what is expected, I want to thank all our officers for the excellent work they do in keeping our community safe. The fallout from the Lawyer X fiasco led to the overturning of several convictions which had been facilitated through the use of Ms Gobbo as a human source.

In its final report the royal commission recommended the Victorian government implement legislation to regulate the registration, use and management of human sources by Victoria Police and establish an external oversight regime much like what has been put forward in this bill. In total the royal commission made 111 recommendations, with 55 of those directed to the state government. Then Attorney-General Jill Hennessy announced on 30 November 2020 that the government would implement all of these recommendations. While we have seen some of these recommendations introduced and implemented, there is still so much to be done, and this bill falls short in key areas.

Rather than prevent it, this legislation would permit the type of appalling behaviour – the 'reprehensible conduct', as the High Court called it – engaged in by Victoria Police and Nicola Gobbo.

The bill will provide police enormous power to subvert relationships of trust and confidence, such as between a lawyer and client, a doctor and patient or a faith leader and parishioner. But it is the trust in these well-enshrined relationships that is essential to their success. There already exist provisions in place that allow a lawyer who receives privileged information about a future threat to the safety of a person or persons to report that to authorities. This is not something that requires further codifying.

The bill also gives sweeping powers to the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, with effectively no room for appeal. The oversight suggested from the Public Interest Monitor and IBAC is limited to recommendations which the chief commissioner can choose to ignore. The question needs to be asked if a court would even allow evidence gathered through privileged information. Both the High Court of Australia and the Victorian Court of Appeal have already made it very clear where they stand on that matter.

The member for Malvern has attempted to give this government an opportunity to strengthen this bill and protect Victorians' right to a fair trial. He raised that lawyers should not be used as human sources, yet this bill goes so far as to encourage this practice. If this is the case, this legislation would not even achieve the purpose the government intends. We have also seen an overwhelmingly negative response from the stakeholders who were consulted. Legal professional bodies, journalists, former judges and many more have strongly criticised the bill. The only support seems to be from Victoria Police and the Labor government. While the government has said the bill is consistent with the recommendations of the royal commission, this legislation would instead enshrine and safeguard an appalling practice that has led to several miscarriages of justice, the ramifications of which are still working their way through the courts. Due to the several shortcomings in the legislation, we strongly oppose this bill.

Motion agreed to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Michaela Settle): A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them of the house's decision.

Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ros Spence:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (12:11): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023 following some of the really stellar contributions from members of the government this morning. If you want an example of the Andrews Labor government's values and support for an inclusive Victoria, you just had to listen to some of those contributions, the reflections by members about lived experience, which is a really important part of the disability action plan and the work that we do.

This bill has its origins in the lived experience of people with a disability, the 1.1 million Victorians who need that extra care and support in our community. As an inclusive society we need to do all we can to make sure that our services are supporting people with disability and that we understand and appreciate their lived experience and strive for better outcomes. If anyone looks through some of those harrowing lived experiences of people who were subjected to horrific outcomes and abuse as part of previous reviews, they will see that we have so much work to do to protect some of the most vulnerable in our local community.

These reforms are part of a series of stages, and the second part of the legislative reforms were introduced last year to the Parliament. The first stage of course was the national disability insurance scheme, such an important thing for people with disability across Australia. Indeed Victorians' lives and their outcomes are greatly improved from what the NDIS has delivered. That was a federal Labor government reform, its origins in the work of former Prime Minister Gillard and the member for Maribyrnong Bill Shorten, who has passionately talked about and advocated for strengthening that

system into the future and making sure that we leave no Australian behind. All the elements of this bill are to make sure the safeguards are in place and the protections are in place to make sure people are supported and protected at all times.

I had the great privilege and honour when I was Parliamentary Secretary for Schools to work in the inclusive education space. For the one in five students in our education system, the million that interact with schools and kinders across Victoria, inclusive education is all about being more accessible and supporting kids with additional needs to get the very best outcomes. One of the best elements of that change and reform goes to the culture and the heart of supporting people with disabilities. That is a strengths-based approach to this policy area in consideration, not a clinical deficit model. It is a strengths-based approach that looks at what we can do to empower people with disabilities and to support them to achieve their ambitions, their potential and their outcomes into the future. It was great to travel around Victoria to see how schools and communities were more inclusive and supportive across regional and rural Victoria and in metropolitan Melbourne, whether it was the Inclusive Schools Fund or whether it was upgrading some 83 specialist and special developmental school settings.

What you find as well when you sit down with parents, carers, guardians, grandparents and elders is that our education system and our education support staff do such a wonderful, wonderful job in supporting kids with disabilities, but there is a real anxiety when you come to the end of high school years or the equivalent – what that looks like beyond and into the future and how we support Victorians with a disability who enter adolescence and then move on from our education settings. How are they supported as they grow and as they go through changes in life, and how do we support them as best we can? This is the heart of this bill. This is really at the heart of parents' and guardians' anxiety and concerns, and what is replayed to us as members of Parliament and as advocates in our community is: how do we support those family members who might be vulnerable? And then you see all the reports and reviews that have been undertaken and the abuses that we have seen uncovered and the lived experience that has been shared. This is what hopefully provides that comfort and reassurance. The Andrews Labor government – and indeed the Parliament, because I would see this as a bipartisan-supported approach as well – supports and provides those safeguards and protections. Some of those key elements of this bill, the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill, go to that.

The bill clarifies residential rights and duties for people subjected to civil or criminal orders in disability residential care and the parameters for service providers in delivering residential and treatment services. This is a really vulnerable setting and cohort here, and we need to ensure that the rights and protections of residents are upheld as well. It also ensures that residents' rights are protected for people living in specialist disability accommodation that does not meet the current definitions in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, so that is a really important reform that my community welcomes in this change. It also improves services and the experience of people in this setting. The bill aligns and removes duplication and ensures accountability and consistency of approval requirements for the use of restrictive practices for both the national disability insurance scheme and the state-funded disability service providers.

We saw, quite significantly and importantly, in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System the discussion, the evidence that was heard and the lived experience of people who were subjected to restrictive practices or subjected to various treatments as well that was put forward, and importantly, how the consultation and proper oversight and assessment of that should always be provided. So at the moment these legislative reforms work to address the gaps and clarify the criteria and processes for compulsory treatment and placement in residential treatment facilities to support clients and operational safety and strengthen clinical oversight of admission and extensions of admissions. We are going through that right now in the royal commission into mental health space, where the issues of compulsory treatment, of safety and the rights of individuals, is such an important area for consideration. We saw, as I was saying, that in the royal commission into mental health there were a number of recommendations of how treatment in that space should be really scrutinised and protected into the future as well.

This bill allows the minister to declare additional categories of disability accommodation so that community visitors can inquire into the quality and standards of support provided to residents. The other thing I want to place on record is something that the current Minister for Mental Health and former Parliamentary Secretary for Volunteers really showcased as well in her work with carers and families: 700,000 Victorians care for and support another Victorian. That is an extraordinary number of people each and every day who go about their business, without any fanfare or anything, in their support and love of others, whether it is family or friends or as guardians supporting their fellow Victorians. Obviously this sector in our community, the disability support space, is filled with wonderful Victorians who care for and support others. We acknowledge their work and their service with our gratitude for the engagement and work that they do in supporting others in our local community. We see that and hear their experiences; it is a really tough space to be in, but they do an incredible job, and we place on record our appreciation as well.

I want to also just acknowledge in this bill some of the things that have been discussed around where we are up to with the disability action plan and how this fits into the landscape of an inclusive Victoria. The most recent plan runs from 2022 to 2026. We really should be quite resolute and quite urgent in our work to get towards reforms in this space. So many people in our disability community in Victoria are still subjected to over-representation in disadvantage. Whether it is access to employment, whether it is the physical limitations in accessing various services or engagement, we need to do all we can to make sure that we are truly inclusive into the future to support the more than 1 million Victorians who are living with disabilities.

In conjunction with the support that comes through the national disability insurance scheme, we need to also make sure that in every segment of government policy the disability action plan is at the forefront of our efforts to support people with disabilities into the future. I talked about that in education and how powerful that is, but just to reiterate the anxieties of parents, grandparents, guardians and elders as people leave the school system and go on to adulthood, that is the challenge – that feeling of safety and security – and this bill goes a long way towards reassuring people and providing those safeguards into the future.

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (12:21): I also rise in support of these amendments. I would like to echo the sentiments just made by the member for Mordialloc in terms of the anxiety that parents can have regarding their children. We know that for any of us who have got adult children – for example, they get their car, we are anxious; they move out of home, we are anxious. To add another layer of vulnerability to that, which you can have when you have children with disabilities, is difficult. That anxiety never leaves you, that concern never leaves you. To know that our government is putting things in place to help alleviate that anxiety and help make the lives of those parents just that little bit easier or that little bit more comforting or to give them the confidence to know that there is a government that is trying to wrap support around them and their children is very important. I am very glad to be a part of a government that values this.

This bill is one of the key outcomes of the Disability Act review, which has been underway since 2018 and is a priority government reform aimed at ensuring our legislative frameworks are fit for purpose and create meaningful change for people with disability. We are promoting the rights of people residing in residential services and addressing how we can support them to be happier, safer and healthier.

A number of people in this place probably would not know that I have worked in the disability sector. It was a very long time ago; I was much younger and had different-coloured hair. I really enjoyed the work that I did at Kew Cottages and was really interested to see the environment that was there. This was just before deinstitutionalisation was brought in; that is how old I am. It was an interesting space. There was a wonderful community that was there in Kew for those people living there who were able-bodied, who were able to get around and who were able to have relationships with other staff, with admin staff and so on, but for a number of those residents, those people that were living there, their lives were extremely narrow, extremely limited, and they were not able to really get out into the wider community and learn and experience what was out there. This experience with Kew Cottages helped

open up my younger eyes to another layer of inequality and another layer of where government is important in actually helping to construct scaffolding around lives that really need it.

We fast forward to now, where I have a nephew with a disability, a nephew that will indeed be quite likely to need supported housing or at least some kind of structure around him to help him in his adult life. I know the stresses that his parents have in thinking about the life that he will have as an adult, the kinds of supports that he will have and, most importantly, how a safe and supportive environment can carry him through his life. Knowing that we are making these changes, that we are putting through amendments that will actually give adequate protections for people with a disability and making sure that their rights and safety are paramount, is incredibly important.

With your indulgence, I also want to talk about Lachie. Lachie is a young guy who came to my attention last year. I am sure that there are others in this house who might have young people like this in their community who develop an affection for posters of politicians. Lachie, who is a vibrant student at Diamond Valley Special Development School, wanted one of my signs, which was really lovely, so we had a photo with Lachie; in fact we had a big billboard of me with Lachie. The joy that he gave by coming to our election night party and being a part of our celebration and just wanting to be a part of something that was fun and exciting and interesting and colourful – it was wonderful to have him there and to know that our government is supporting his family; that our government is rebuilding his school; that our government is going to put in place a variety of supports, including, as the member for Mordialloc was talking about, all of the work that we are doing within our schools, within both special development schools and schools more broadly; that there is a safety net; and that there is something there to help Lachie on his life's journey. He is a fantastic young man – a beautiful young man with a wonderful smile.

There are so many people in our communities like Lachie who should not have to worry about advocating for themselves at every turn, especially when it comes to something as fundamental as addressing safe and secure housing. It is for us as members of Parliament to listen to people with a disability directly about the kinds of reforms that are required to improve our health and housing services, so I am very happy that this bill is yet another outcome that has come directly from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

I really want to thank, as the member for Mordialloc did, those many people working in the disability sector. I know through my own experience that there can be a lot of joy working in that sector, but it can be tiring, it can be difficult and it can be emotionally draining. These people who are educators, who are support workers and who are physical therapists are wonderful people who care so deeply, who give a great deal of themselves and who always go above and beyond to support this cohort, and I really do express my gratitude.

We have talked about Lachie, a young person, but I want to talk about older people as well. We had an opportunity in my community a number of years ago for Nillumbik council to be involved with some supported housing, which unfortunately did not go ahead, but it really exposed me to the grief and the fear that elderly parents in particular face around their adult disabled children who are living with them and what the future could hold for them. So I am pleased to see that we are still continuing to make steps. I am disappointed that Nillumbik was not able to facilitate that integrated housing, but I know that we will continue to work towards creating even more, and I welcome the social housing initiatives, for example, that this government has supported.

I particularly also want to talk about the Lower Plenty Dance Group. I had a wonderful experience a couple of weeks ago going and being a part of the Lower Plenty Dance Group's Tuesday night. You might think that maybe there are people there learning how to do Pride of Erin or other dances, but no – this is the most wonderful night of unbridled joy, of people getting their disco king and queen on and shaking it out and just having the best time. It was wonderful, and I would encourage anybody in this place who has got something like the Lower Plenty Dance Group to please go and spend the night with them, because you will not get the smile off your face. To be surrounded by so much joy, so

much energy and so much life was just fantastic. It is contagious. It is just wonderful, and to be able to have structures around people like those who were in the Lower Plenty Dance Group supporting them is fabulous. They gather weekly in Greensborough, and it is a safe and inclusive place for people with a range of physical and intellectual disabilities who come together and spend hours just getting their groove on. I was so pleased to attend it. We had their reconnecting celebration at the Rosanna Golf Club in March, and this was supported by the North East Link Program. I am really grateful to them for putting the money towards this. They were lucky enough to get one of their grants, and I can tell you, it was money well spent 10 times over.

By bringing people together through dance they provide social connections that are so important for people with disability, giving them an opportunity to express themselves through dance – and express themselves they do. I really want to thank the Lower Plenty Dance Group president Liz Mildenhall and secretary Cheryl Meredith for inviting me to be a part of the celebration and to all of the board members and volunteers who work tirelessly to continue to support people with disability by creating these safe and fun spaces. This dance troupe has been going for decades. It is amazing how many volunteer hours have been spent supporting this fabulous dance troupe. They are just terrific, and the work they do is wonderful. It is just one example of the wonderful people in all of our communities who are out there supporting people and just really making sure that inclusion is there, that people feel good about themselves and that they are part of the wider community. I really want to congratulate the Lower Plenty Dance Group and thank them for all of the work that they do, and I look forward to attending even more dances. Winding up, I just want to put forward again that I am so grateful to be able to support these changes and the work that we are doing as a government. We are out there supporting people who need us the most.

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (12:31): I too am honoured to contribute to this debate in support of the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. It is great to follow on from the member for Eltham, who showed her real passion for disability – those dances sound terrific. Likewise with the member for Mordialloc – another excellent contribution from him, which is always most welcome. I would like to thank the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers in the other place, her ministerial office and the department for the work that they have done to bring this legislation to the house, as well as the previous minister and his office. The policy area of disability is very important to me, and I believe protecting the rights of people living with disability and supporting them and their families is a critical role and responsibility of government. I know this firsthand because my extraordinary mum Trudie Dickinson worked for more than 40 years as a physiotherapist in the disability sector in Ballarat and the region, particularly working in early intervention for young children with disability. I am very proud of the great work she did improving the lives of patients she treated and their families.

I wish to pay tribute to all workers in the disability sector, especially our Health and Community Services Union members and our teachers supporting students in schools. You are unsung champions of our community, and I thank you for all that you do. Just last week I was delighted to visit the Ballarat Specialist School, where our government is providing better facilities for students with disability with a \$10 million upgrade to the school's infrastructure. It was great to be at the Gillies Street campus with principal Sam Sheppard to see the building works well underway and to hear that the new bus loop is working very well at the senior farm campus in Norman Street. Thank you to the teachers and the students for welcoming me into your classrooms and sharing your experiences. It was wonderful to meet so many students and have a chance to hear about the great programs and activities being offered at the Ballarat Specialist School.

The Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023 seeks to reinforce the right of residents in specialist disability accommodation through amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. It proposes amendments to the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to ensure its effective operation in addition to improvements to the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018 and other legislation. But its primary purpose is to improve the services, safeguards and protections legislated by

the Disability Act 2006. This is in line with an ongoing review of the Disability Act, a three-stage process to ensure that relevant legislative frameworks are fit for purpose, modernised and creating meaningful change for people with disability. It forms a key component of our *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–26*, which seeks to build a more inclusive and accessible community right across our state. The Disability Act review's first stage was completed in 2019. It focused on defining the roles and responsibilities of both the Commonwealth and the Victorian governments, as well as ensuring the smooth transition of regulatory responsibilities regarding the national disability insurance scheme.

The current second stage of the review is strengthening safeguards, rights and protections for Victorians with disability as well as further clarifying rights and responsibilities. The bill before us today is a result of much of the work done in this stage to date. Additionally, as a part of stage 2 reforms, late last year an exposure draft of the disability inclusion bill, a nation-leading, contemporary, proactive disability inclusion framework, was released for public feedback. Following this, the third stage of the review is intended to consider more complex safeguards and forensic disability provisions within the act.

Returning to the bill before us today, the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill seeks to implement several key legislative improvements which are grounded in the experience of service providers and participants. Together the proposed amendments will enhance rights, clarify responsibilities and improve regulation concerning the provision of disability support services. This includes providing for residential rights within specialist disability accommodation where they are not currently provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act. It additionally clarifies the rights and responsibilities of those in disability residential services who are subject to civil or criminal orders, as well as duties of the relevant service providers. This bill also simplifies various processes for service providers and workers alike. The requirement for approving the use of restrictive practices within state-funded services will be aligned with the requirements under the NDIS, ensuring clarity and consistency for services funded by both.

Duplication is further reduced for disability workers seeking voluntary regulation, who will no longer be required to undergo additional criminal history checks where they have already been cleared in NDIS screening. The operation of disability services will be further improved regarding compulsory treatment processes and oversight, facilitating and safeguarding critical information sharing between providers and the accessibility of a range of services by community visitors. Finally, the role, functions and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing are clarified in relation to the management of both services and related land.

This bill and the broader Disability Act review form part of our government's continued commitment to supporting Victorians with disability right across our state, and I have had the honour of seeing this in action on several occasions recently within my electorate of Wendouree and across Ballarat. Recently I had the opportunity to accompany the Minister for Regional Development with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Ripon and you, Acting Speaker Settle, the member for Eureka, to Ballarat West employment zone with the very good people from McCallum Disability Services. McCallum has recently merged with Ballarat Regional Industries, BRI, and is now the largest social enterprise in western Victoria, employing over 300 people with disability. I am delighted that McCallum will be moving into BWEZ, a precinct co-funded by our government and the City of Ballarat which will allow them the space and the modern amenities to continue their essential services. Once complete, McCallum will move into a new facility where it will have room to expand, creating 275 new jobs – exactly what our Ballarat West employment zone is all about.

I would also like to mention that Acting Speaker Settle and I will both be meeting with Pinarc Disability Support services next week. Pinarc are yet another organisation doing fantastic work to support people with disability in our community, and I am really looking forward to that meeting next week. I would also like to give a shout-out to the organisers of the Ballarat Community Fest 2023. On 18 February I had the privilege of joining a group of disability service providers as well as local businesses and community members at the Ballarat Community Fest 2023. My thanks go to Gellibrand Support

Services for hosting this successful and thoroughly enjoyable day. Notably, the community fest was held at the Goods Shed within the recently transformed Ballarat station precinct, an accessible venue now well equipped to accommodate the phenomenal people and organisations that attended.

Elsewhere in the Ballarat railway precinct, in October 2022 our government committed \$50 million to upgrade the accessibility of the 160-year-old Ballarat train station. This will include passenger lifts on both platforms as well as a connecting pedestrian overpass. I am so proud that we are delivering this important and necessary project which has been campaigned for by many organisations and individuals across Ballarat and the region, including Grampians Disability Advocacy, who do great work advocating for and supporting people with disability across the Grampians region. I would particularly like to recognise and thank Grampians Disability Advocacy and their amazing executive officer Deb Verdon for their leadership and the work that she does. I cannot overstate how significant the accessibility upgrade is and the benefits accessible and inclusive public transport at our central train station will bring to the Ballarat community and visitors to our city in the future. It is particularly important with the Commonwealth Games and the para events to be able to make sure that we have a very, very good accessible train station as people catch the train up to Ballarat for the Commonwealth Games athletics. I commend this important bill to the house, and I thank everyone for supporting it. It is a great step forward.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (12:41): I too rise to speak on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023. I remember this bill was initially introduced in the last term of Parliament but lapsed at the end of the sitting period. In fact I recall speaking on the bill and its importance for the 1.1 million Victorians that are currently living with a disability. Since I was first elected to this place five years ago, we have seen how the Andrews Labor government has been committed to improving the lives of Victorians who live with a disability. When I last spoke on these changes, I made reference to the fact that we were delivering much-needed upgrades to every single specialist school here in Victoria, which at the time included Warringa Park School in my former electorate of Tarneit. In the Laverton electorate, which I currently represent, we are fortunate enough to have four of them – those being Sunshine Special Developmental School in Sunshine West, Rosamond school in Braybrook, and of course Jennings Street School and Western Autistic School in the suburb of Laverton.

Colleagues in this house will know I am very passionate about going to my local schools – meeting kids and talking to principals and teachers about what is happening there in the schools. Attending these specialist schools that are now in my new electorate of Laverton is something I feel very passionate about, and the visits that I do attend at these schools stay with me, because the type of work that the principals and teachers and teaching support staff offer very, very vulnerable students in vulnerable areas of Melbourne's west is absolutely extraordinary. There are students and children there with a very diverse range of disabilities, but each and every single one of those children from what I saw was very well catered for and very well looked after. I was very pleased to be able to assist many of these schools in relation to a review of the bus services in the western suburbs that take students to and from these schools. It was something that was really important to me, and I hope it has been able to afford a better and shorter trip for those children – to jump on the bus in the morning like every other child and go to school.

Having gotten to know so many of these new specialist schools over the past year and a half, the work that they do quite often goes unthanked and is perhaps unnoticed by the broader community. A lot of people in our broader community may not have stepped inside one of these specialist schools if they do not have a child with a disability. It is such a special place to step inside and see the absolute care and dedication of teachers. I was very pleased to find out that at Jennings Street and Western Autistic in Laverton so many of the teaching staff are actual residents in the suburbs of Melbourne's outer west, in Truganina and indeed Tarneit. It was wonderful to see faces that I had seen before and to learn and see in action the true dedication and commitment to the students in the room – helping them get the best possible education regardless of their disability and the best possible start to life to thrive in life

no matter what these children and these students go on to become. Each and every single one of those schools is very much deserving of the funding that they have received to date.

In addition to this of course there is our government's *Autism Education Strategy*, which is really important, and we introduced that in November 2020. The strategy aims to ensure that students with autism can go ahead and receive an inclusive education in mainstream learning environments, because they deserve the same education opportunities that every other child in Victoria does. I know this is something I have talked to many parents about, and particularly when I talk to parents who send their children to a specialist development school or indeed send their children to a government-funded mainstream school in Melbourne's west, what strikes me is that parents like to have the choice depending on the impacts that autism has had on their child and that they are living with.

I have also spoken to many, many parents over the years who have really talked to me about the need to go ahead and deliver more specialist schools, particularly in Melbourne's west, because as I have stood here and said time and time again – and as my good friends the member for Point Cook and the member for Tarneit will indeed stand here and talk about, and have talked about – the extreme growth in Melbourne's west means we need to go ahead and build more specialist schools just as we are doing with our government-funded schools to keep up with that population growth. Every child is different. Every child has their own individual set of challenges but also opportunities, and it is really important to be able to address and harness both of those, whether your child will be at a mainstream school or indeed will go to a specialist school. So I was really happy to see a new specialist school – I think it is opening in Werribee next year – and it is something that provided a great deal of comfort to folks even in my electorate of Laverton that they would have another option if they chose to send their child there.

It is also really important for some of those kids, especially those who would absolutely benefit from mainstream education and thrive at their local school, that we went ahead and introduced our government's *Autism Education Strategy*. It is really important that the teachers at these mainstream schools have the skills, most importantly, that are needed to help address some of the challenges, but to harness those opportunities and give the kids the best possible education that they can get.

Of course it is not just kids that live with disabilities. It is really quite interesting that when I talk around disabilities I think about the 1.1 million Victorians that currently live with a disability in this state and about my personal interaction with anyone in my family that was considered to have a disability. It is quite interesting because I always look at my nanna, Nanna Jean. Nanna became deaf at age 50 – completely; we used to call her stone deaf, so completely, completely deaf. She was never able to learn sign language and communicate through Auslan. She actually lip-read, and she was the perfect lip-reader. There was nothing that could possibly escape her. I even remember growing up, being quite young and seeing my mum, my aunt and my uncle sitting there as all good children do when they come to visit their mother with all of the grandkids. They would be trying to talk a little bit like this, with a hand over the mouth, but she could pick up anything. But Nanna never considered the fact that she could not hear a single thing as a disability, and it saddens me to think that she never actually ever heard any of the voices of her grandchildren. The funny thing about Nanna, and I think this is why we never saw her as having a communication barrier or a disability, is that she used to say, 'I know exactly what you sound like. I know and I can feel the sound of your voice in my mind.' I always thought that was an interesting way in which she lived her life. Going deaf at age 50 there would have been huge barriers that she had to overcome, but indeed being the very, very, very tough matriarch of my family, she certainly overcame and broke down a lot of them.

In the short time I have got left, I just want to reflect on a couple that I met that had quite a profound impact on me very early in the stage of my being elected here to this place as the member for Tarneit. I do want to mention them here again. It was an elderly disabled couple. I remember when they both came to my office. One was in a wheelchair but both were unable to speak. They were both deaf. We had an interpreter with us. It was quite incredible in a way, and the first time I had really communicated in this way – because remember I said Nanna could lip-read – was with this couple to help assist them. They came to see me because their private rental was in a state of disrepair because the landlord was

unwilling to go ahead and accommodate the needs of her wheelchair. It was something that she came to us to assist her with, and we were able to assist with a better home for this couple to go to. I have not seen them since – it has probably been four years – but I quite often reflect on them when I talk about bills that come to this house, about trying to achieve greater fairness and equality and doing the right thing for people who are considered vulnerable in our community. That may also include people, 1.1 million Victorians, living with a disability.

These sorts of bills that come before the house are really important, and I am very pleased to stand here this afternoon to make a contribution. I commend the bill to the house.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:51): I rise to speak on the Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023, and in doing so I do want to acknowledge all the contributions that have been made from all sides of the house in relation to this debate, some very thoughtful, heartfelt contributions, particularly from the member for Greenvale, who I would like to acknowledge in that respect. Labor has long been committed to supporting and empowering Victorians with a disability, and since 2014 we have continued to work for Victoria to be a national leader in realising the social, economic and civic aspirations of people with a disability. As part of this, Labor has continued to drive outcomes so that people with a disability have full equality, inclusion and participation in our community. This is an essential and crucial part of building a community that is inclusive for all Victorians.

However, before I turn to the substance of this bill, I would like to provide some historic context in relation to how we arrived here today. I think it is important to touch on some of the history regarding the abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation that people with disability have experienced in years gone by, which demonstrates just how far we have come but still demonstrates how far we have to go. In this respect I refer the house to page 51 of the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability: Interim Report*, which states that:

For much of history in the Western world, people with disability have lived on the margins of society, subjected to discrimination, segregation, exclusion and violence ... many 19th and early 20th century leaders in Australia joined others globally in attempting to remove ‘defective’ humans from society (that is –

basically –

the practice of eugenics). This occurred largely by segregating people with disability from the wider population and sometimes by sterilising girls with disability ...

During the 19th and much of the 20th centuries in Australia, many children born with disability were taken from their parents and locked away for life in large residential institutions. Adults with disability were sometimes reduced to begging to stay alive. Adults considered ‘lunatics’ –

a category that did include people with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities at those times –

were sent away to asylums. While the philosophy behind the creation of these institutions was that they would protect people from a life of poverty and exploitation on the streets, in reality they were oppressive and people with intellectual, physical and psychosocial disability had little or no control over their own lives. They typically suffered poor medical and health treatment and poor diets, and received minimal education. They were subjected to violence and sexual assault, and had no way to report the abuse and seek redress through the justice system. Women and girls with disability were sometimes sterilised without consent.

Through to the 1960s and in some cases beyond, people with disability living in the community were also kept out of sight, unable to access many public spaces. Those who were visible were pitied and often mocked, and sometimes paraded in circuses and ‘freak shows’.

That is a shameful, shameful, horrific history, but one that we must never forget because it was not actually all that long ago, and it is one that we as parliamentarians must remain mindful of as we continue to consider matters of fairness, equality and inclusivity.

However, as outlined in the royal commission’s interim report, through the disability rights movement that began to form globally through the 1970s and 80s, campaigns did begin to change attitudes and

practices that contributed to discrimination against people with a disability. These campaigns led to a series of law reforms, including the development of anti-discrimination laws in Australian states and territories and the introduction of the landmark Disability Discrimination Act 1992 by the then Keating Labor government. The key objective of the Disability Discrimination Act of course was to eliminate discrimination against people on the grounds of disability and ensure that as far as practicable persons with disabilities had the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community. The Disability Discrimination Act was built on the foundations of previous keynote legislation, including the Whitlam Labor government's historic Racial Discrimination Act 1975, legislation of historic significance putting Australia on the road to reconciliation with Indigenous people; the Hawke Labor government's Sex Discrimination Act 1984, which reflected the commitment to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; and the establishment of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1986, again under the leadership of the Hawke government.

Standing on the shoulders of these historic Labor reforms, I am proud to say that I continue to be part of a movement that has very much a longstanding history of taking real action to help the marginalised and the most disadvantaged in our community. Whether it be recently through the Rudd Labor government ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 or the creation of the NDIS under the Rudd–Gillard governments, whether it is through Labor's leadership and unity as we now strive to deliver constitutional recognition for a voice for First Nations people, which will culminate in a referendum later this year or whether it is through this bill, which will continue to improve the treatment and rights of people with a disability, Labor has always stood on the side of communities who need it most.

Despite these important advances, people with disability in Australia still experience a lot of disadvantage. People with a disability are two times more likely to live in poverty and six times more likely to have poor health outcomes. This was highlighted again by the royal commission in its interim report, which basically talks about how a lot of issues are still ongoing. One particular piece of work that was submitted previously by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council tragically highlighted that for far too long the abuse of children with disability, violence against people with intellectual disability in group homes and the sexual assault of women and men with a disability are far too common. That work reported on human rights violations and the neglect of basic survival needs. This bill aligns our response directly to these key areas of focus by the royal commission, some of which I just touched on, particularly within disability accommodation and tenancy settings.

Following the full rollout of the NDIS the Victorian government commenced a review of the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to help ensure Victoria's disability legislation remained contemporary and fit for purpose. It was through this process that various reforms and improvements were identified and are contained in this bill. It forms part of stage 2 of the Disability Act review, which will introduce critical amendments to enhance services, safeguards and protections. The main purpose of this bill is to amend the Disability Act 2006 in relation to the sharing of information about a person with a disability; persons subject to restrictive practices, supervised treatment orders and residential services; and the compulsory treatment of persons with an intellectual disability. The bill also seeks to amend the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to promote residential rights in specialist disability accommodation, the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018 in relation to worker screening and the Social Services Regulation Act 2021 to ensure that it operates effectively to protect the safety of social service users.

Fundamentally the aim of this bill is to ensure Victoria continues to have a contemporary and modern legislative architecture to complement the ambitious reform agenda that we have previously outlined in *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026*. This bill is built on the strong and ongoing stakeholder and community consultation that the government has continued to be engaged with. I acknowledge and thank all involved, including the minister who has led this process and previous ministers who have been involved too. Indeed this bill complements a suite of commitments that the Andrews Labor government has been delivering to improve the lives and wellbeing of people with a disability across the state and also across my community of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and Brunswick West.

In my community, as outlined by the 2021 ABS census as well as some work recently by the Merri-bek council in this space, 20 per cent of locals have a disability – or even around one in three households – and 18 000 of my local residents provide unpaid assistance for a person with a disability. That is 12.7 per cent of my local population compared to around 11.9 per cent across Australia.

Earlier I referred to the state disability plan, and I would like to draw the house's attention to section 2.3 of the plan, which specifically outlines the government's commitment around making housing more accessible for people with a disability, including through social housing. Along with this plan I am delighted at the real action and real investments that we have been delivering to make this aspiration a reality in my electorate through the Big Housing Build project and the Harvest Square project in Brunswick West. Formerly known as Gronn Place, which was home to 82 outdated and run-down public housing dwellings, the new Harvest Square project is a groundbreaking \$86 million redevelopment proudly being delivered by the Andrews Labor government, which will deliver an additional 116 dwellings overall and consist of a total of 198 new social and community housing and affordable and accessible homes, with 111 social housing homes and eight community housing homes included in that. Currently it is supporting 770 construction jobs as it is under development. Importantly, it is a project that makes provision for a certain percentage of fully accessible homes that are consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Sitting suspended 1:00 pm until 2:02 pm.

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Ministerial responsibilities

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Planning. When was the minister advised of the Deputy Premier's new secret portfolio of minister for precincts and land coordination, which will remove powers from the minister's portfolio?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Eltham is warned. The Assistant Treasurer is warned.

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:02): I thank the member for his question. This is the difference between this side and that side, isn't it. On this side we actually work together. Our focus is actually delivering for Victorians – how do we improve the lives of Victorians? What is it that we need to focus on in making the lives of all Victorians better? How do we support them? How do we support them in getting the housing and the housing choice that they need – affordability of housing? How do we support them to get the jobs that they need, to choose where they live, close to services?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South Barwon is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 58 on relevance, the minister was asked when she was stripped of her portfolio responsibilities. I ask you to refer the minister back to that important question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked. The Minister for Planning to continue, without assistance from the house.

Sonya KILKENNY: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, on this side of the house we are focused – and I am very focused as the Minister for Planning, as the title suggests – on planning for the future of Victorians. It is about planning the homes for future Victorians. It is about planning where those jobs are, where industrial land will be, preserving and protecting our green wedges, growing Victoria, growing the homes –

Peter Walsh interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Nationals is warned.

Sonya KILKENNY: making sure that we are working together, that we are coordinated in delivering all of that and that we are leveraging off the extraordinary investments this government has made in infrastructure across our Big Build, across the Suburban Rail Loop and our level crossing removals. We are working together on this side, and as Minister for Planning I am absolutely focused on delivering for Victorians across this state.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:05): Why is the minister allowing this new portfolio to remove third-party rights from communities on local planning and development decisions?

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (14:05): I thank the member for his supplementary question. As I have said, my focus is on delivering for Victorians. It is about delivering a planning system that works for all Victorians, as we build more homes for Victorians, as we look to the future and ensure that people have choice about where they live, that homes are affordable, that people can age in place and that they can live close to family and friends.

Peter Walsh: On a point of order on the issue of relevance, Speaker, the question was very clearly about why the minister was allowing communities to lose any say in planning decisions. If the minister is so dedicated to the job, why is she vacating the space for the Premier-in-waiting?

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order.

Sonya KILKENNY: I actually reject the premise of this question. No decisions have been made to take away third-party rights at VCAT. As I have said, my focus as the Minister for Planning is on delivering a planning system that works for all Victorians as we look to the future to ensure –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order. I am having trouble hearing the Minister for Planning.

Sonya KILKENNY: As I said, no – *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: LGBTIQ+ support

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:07): I am saddened to have to rise to make a statement to the house in relation to quite shameful conduct out at the City of Monash last week and decisions that, very sadly, the CEO and the mayor of that council have had to make in relation to cancelling a number of events – events that are about celebrating diversity, events that are about sending a message to often some of the most vulnerable people in our Victorian community that they are loved, they are respected, they are safe and they are supported by their government and their community. I make this statement not just as the Premier of a state where equality is not negotiable; I also make this statement as a long-time ratepayer in the City of Monash. I do not know how many of these protestors, with not an exercise of free speech but an exercise in hate speech, violence, bigotry, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, the list goes on – these were ugly scenes by any measure, including, can I say, death threats against council officers and councillors – it is a disgrace, it is shameful. My message to those people is, very clearly: if you want to behave like the worst elements of the Floridian Republican Party, get to Florida. Head over there, where your hateful views might be worth something. They are worth nothing here. We will not stand for this sort of ugly behaviour. It is appalling, and I again make the point: it is not about free speech. This is hate speech plain and simple. It is wrong. It is out of step with the values of fair-minded, decent mainstream Victorians. It is on the fringe.

But enough about those people. Let us send the clearest message that equality is not negotiable, and despite the carry-on and the shameful behaviour of a small few, this government and this community remain committed to every single Victorian no matter who they are or who they love.

Ministerial responsibilities

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:09): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Why was there a need for the government to keep the Deputy Premier's precincts and land coordination portfolio secret, even to the extent that it was described by an anonymous cabinet colleague as a Morrisonesque move?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:09): In answering the Leader of the Opposition's question I am going to reject outright the allegation that there has been some secret kept on this matter. I am going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to allow me to explain why his question is just flat out wrong. I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition has been a bit distracted in the lead-up to question time today. He was very focused on 2 o'clock today for reasons other than question time – very different reasons.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on standing order 58 on relevance, Victorians deserve to know why the Deputy Premier kept the portfolio secret. It is an important question and the Deputy Premier should answer that important question.

The SPEAKER: A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question, Manager of Opposition Business. The Deputy Premier had strayed somewhat from the answer, and I do ask her to come back to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: In providing information to the house about this coordination role, as the Minister for Planning has outlined, there is important policy work to be done across transport, across planning, across housing, across local government, across regional development, across suburban development. Indeed there is a lot of deep work that needs to be done to support more Victorians to be able to have access to an affordable house. That is exactly the coordination work through machinery-of-government changes that was publicised to the entire public service. Fifty thousand Victorians who work in the public service received an email about these changes when the machinery-of-government changes came into effect on 1 January.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Sandringham withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: Such a secret was kept that we created the new Department of Transport and Planning, such a secret entire department, which I am proud to work in with the roads minister, the public transport minister, the planning minister and our parliamentary secretary – who was obviously naughty yesterday and is not in the chamber – for transport. We work together collectively on these really important issues around land use, planning and how we can support more Victorians to have a home. The reason why we need to do this is because as of a couple of weeks ago, whether you count

Melton in or out or not – we count Melton very much as in – Melbourne is now bigger than Sydney. By the late 2050s Melbourne will be a city of 9 million people. We need to take action now to make sure that there are more houses for people to live in. We are building the transport connections people rely on, not scrapping the Suburban Rail Loop like those opposite took to the last election, and making sure that the work is done in a coordinated way.

We know the Leader of the Opposition is worried about terrorists in his own team; that is what he is focused on. We are not focused on titles, we are focused on doing the hard work, the policy work, the coordination work that Victorians expect from the government, particularly on the issues of housing and planning.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Gippsland South withdrew from chamber.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:13): Is the purpose of this secret portfolio to compulsorily acquire homes and forcibly take away the rights of local residents for development centred around transport infrastructure projects?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:14): The answer to that question is just a flat out no. Those opposite, because they did not do anything with the precious gift they had during their four years in government, clearly have no idea – no idea – about the very clear requirements that go around land acquisition, that go around planning, that go around delivery –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier knows not to debate the question. This was an important question about a portfolio that was kept secret from the Victorian people.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier was being relevant to the supplementary question. I ask the Deputy Premier to come back to answering the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: That is why – as the Minister for Planning has already identified to the house and as I did to the substantive question that was asked – we will continue to work on this significant priority area of reform for government. I think that is what Victorians expect of us: to work together on priority areas that are important to them and that they see their government working collectively to do this hard work. You might be more interested in the bickering on your team; we are more interested in getting the work done.

The SPEAKER: Order! Can I remind members not to use the word ‘you’ – it is reflecting on the Chair.

Ministers statements: gender equality

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:16): I rise to update the house on this government’s proud work in gender equality – leading the nation. That is why we set up an independent inquiry into economic equality for women, and we are getting on with delivering the recommendations out of that. As a result of this inquiry, next week the Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty and I will be meeting with stakeholders from the manufacturing industry to discuss ways to attract and retain women in the male-dominated manufacturing industry. This builds on the work that has already been done by this government on women in construction and women in transport, and I look forward to partnering with the minister for energy on bringing more women into the renewable energy sector as well.

But we are not just partnering in the private sector, we also leading the way in the public sector. Our Gender Equality Act 2020 was the first of its kind in Australia, and last year we welcomed the first

baseline report of gender auditing done anywhere in this nation. This was delivered by Victoria's first gender equality commissioner Niki Vincent. To date 300 public sector entities have submitted gender equality action plans, which allow us to track their progress. The plans look at closing the gender gap across these organisations, promoting women into leadership and addressing sexual harassment and bullying of women in the workplace. Maybe those opposite could benefit from a gender equality plan in their party. As a government we also lead by example, with more than 50 per cent women in our cabinet room – the first time achieved in Victoria's history – and parity on our government boards, thanks to our women on boards policy, because we know quotas and affirmative action work. The Andrews government works and will continue to work at every level to make workplaces fairer and more equitable.

Jarrah Resource Management

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:18): My question is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Yesterday in Parliament the minister failed to answer a question about whether she considered it appropriate for a Mick Gatto-linked company to be involved on taxpayer-funded projects, stating:

... it is a requirement of contractors to engage with their subcontractors to deliver these projects and ensure that they comply with all the relevant provisions ...

Can the minister confirm that the Mick Gatto-linked company complies with all the lawful requirements?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:18): As the member indicated in his preamble to the question, this question was asked yesterday – was answered yesterday. I appreciate your question time preparation was a little unsettled today. I appreciate you are a bit distracted.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, question time is not the time to debate questions but to answer them, and I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. I ask the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to direct her comments through the Chair.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, the relationships between contractors and subcontractors are a matter for those subcontractors and contractors, and there are very clear provisions within federal law, federal legislation, for those companies to comply with those laws. If the member has any evidence to the contrary, he should provide it to those relevant agencies instead of trawling back through yesterday's questions, given you had no time to get ready for today.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:20): Has the minister taken any action to restrict organisations with links to organised crime from gaining access to contracts on projects being delivered by Major Projects Victoria?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:20): The answer to that question lies substantially in the answer to the substantive question that was asked by the member for Caulfield. If he has any evidence that he wants to provide, he should provide it. There are the relevant bodies that would take that information, and I have nothing further to add.

Ministers statements: family violence

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (14:20): I rise to update the house on the important work that the Andrews Labor government is undertaking in the prevention of family violence. We know that gendered violence remains the leading cause of death, disability and illness for women under 45.

It is our leading law and order issue, with Victoria Police responding to a family violence incident on average every 7 minutes. We are leading the world in family violence reform, with more than \$3.7 billion invested – more than every state and territory combined. There is no doubt that this huge investment is important, but we also know that to prevent violence against women, behaviours and attitudes need to change. We know this because the royal commission found that the attitudes of individuals and communities towards women are what enable violence to be excused, justified and condoned.

Last night I along with the shadow minister attended the heart-wrenching candlelight vigil for families of victims of family violence. We heard from families of those who have been killed as a result of family violence, including Boyd, whose daughter Katie was murdered at 29. Boyd reminded us that not all men use violence, but all men can be bystanders and call out inappropriate behaviours and attitudes. We know where violence against women has its origins, and sadly we know where it can end. We all can be and should be the bystanders that Boyd calls for and say no to the poor attitudes and behaviours towards women that can excuse, justify or condone violence towards women. We can all do our bit to prevent the loss of another Katie and save the grief of another Boyd. Prevention is not just about dollars; behaviours and attitudes matter.

Nicholas Building

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:22): My question is to the Minister for Creative Industries. The iconic Art Deco Nicholas Building in the CBD is home to over 200 artists and small creative businesses. Working in these tiny studios you might find independent jewellers, tailors, art galleries, tattoo artists, amongst many other gems. Affordable rents mean it is a space unlike anywhere else anywhere in the country; it is uniquely Melbourne. But it is now also under threat. The building is up for sale, and huge rent increases have already forced many tenants out. The local council and tenants association have approached the state government for assistance a number of times, but their pleas have so far gone unanswered. Will the state government intervene to save the iconic Nicholas Building?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:23): I thank the member for her question. I know it is something that she is genuinely interested in, and I have met with the leader of her party and her team in the past about this. I have got to say there is a range of creative workers right through Victoria that we support through our creative infrastructure program. We support creative hubs all around Victoria. We had a \$6 million infrastructure program in the last budget to support creative workers' accommodation needs. Our concern is about favouring one over the broader Victorian community of creative workers, so our interest is in ensuring that all creative workers have a home, not just those in the Nicholas Building. I understand the Nicholas Building has new owners – I am not even sure if the building has been actually sold or if it is in the process of being sold. I understand that there are market forces at play. Our job as the Victorian government is to provide enough capacity for all creative workers around Victoria, from the little Myrtleford town hall where we partnered with the local council to provide opportunities for theatre productions and for musicians to practise and perform, right through to ACMI, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, where we provide creative spaces for games developers. We do this work; we just do not do it for one landowner, we do it across the board.

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (14:25): Minister, this is a building that the government puts on tourist brochures for Melbourne, and communities like this take decades to build up – they do not just happen overnight. But if nothing is done, this creative community will be lost to Melbourne forever, and what an incredible shame that would be. I am aware that there are a number of options that have been presented to the government. They include the state government buying the building or working with the city council and tenants to look at the other creative solutions that they have come up with. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stop this building being sold and turned into a soulless commercial space – we do not want to lose it from our city. Will the minister join me in a visit to the Nicholas Building in person to meet with tenants to hear for himself just how important this unique community is?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:26): I thank the member for Melbourne for her question. The member may not be aware that I have been to the Nicholas Building, and I did have a look around, but of course I am happy to meet with Nicholas Building tenants, whether that be in the office or on site. We will have to make arrangements according to the diary. But can I just give the member a couple of examples. I am not saying this because the Nicholas Building tenants are not important – of course they are important – but there are thousands and thousands of creative workers around Victoria. I went to the Goods Shed in Castlemaine in the Speaker's electorate. We provided capital upgrades for that facility. There is the Footscray Community Arts Centre, Montsalvat in Eltham and the Emporium Creative Hub in Bendigo – \$6 million in the last budget. We will do more, but I am happy to meet with the tenants of the Nicholas Building.

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) (14:27): I rise to update the house on this government's commitment to creating a safe and secure energy industry for Victorian women. The energy sector has traditionally been male dominated, with a locker room culture in many workplaces, but as we move away from fossil fuels, we are also changing workplace culture through programs to encourage and support more women to join the renewables revolution. About 40 per cent of the employees in renewables are women. This compares to 23 per cent in oil and gas and 16 per cent in coal, and also less than 30 per cent for the Victorian Liberal party room. We have a long way to go, and some have a further way to go than most, but through programs such as Solar Victoria's Growing Our Clean Energy Workforce we are seeing more women join the renewables industry.

We are providing subsidised apprenticeships, professional mentoring and access to ongoing education for Victorian women entering the solar industry. This is creating safe and secure workplaces for women. It is helping women like Mel, an RACV solar apprentice who changed career to join the rapidly growing renewable energy workforce. The package is inspiring women to join this rapidly growing renewables workforce and also the next generation of women in renewables as we deliver of course on net zero emissions by 2045 and 95 per cent renewables by 2035. It is about helping them to get their fair share of the 59,000 more jobs that we will be creating and accelerating by the introduction of the SEC – bringing that great institution back.

And of course we have reformed Energy Safe Victoria, which is a woman-led commission. They have turned around the culture of the ESV and are making the industry safer for women to work in through their example out in the field. This government always backs women in industry and the workplace.

Transport infrastructure projects

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Yesterday in Parliament the minister failed to respond as to whether she would take any action to address coercive union tactics by the CFMEU against Indigenous firms on state transport infrastructure projects. Why is the minister turning a blind eye and refusing to condemn coercive union tactics by the CFMEU against Indigenous people on state transport infrastructure projects?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:30): Again, as the member has indicated in his question, this question and a couple of others, if I recall correctly, were asked on this matter yesterday. I disagree with the presentation from the member for Caulfield that those questions were not answered yesterday. They were answered yesterday. The member for Caulfield has not provided any new information or any new material in his questioning today, therefore I stand by my answer to yesterday's question in answering today's question.

But what I will reaffirm is that we are very, very proud on this side of the house of the work that we are doing, as part of our delivery of transport infrastructure, in supporting Victoria's First Peoples to be able

to get a job and supporting their businesses with our program. Because of the deliberate policy settings we have put in place, now more than 3 million hours have been worked by Indigenous people on our projects and more than \$116 million has been invested in Indigenous owned and operated businesses.

The member for Murray Plains knows this very well because thanks to the work we did on delivering the Echuca–Moama bridge project, a project that I was pleased to see celebrated last night at the Australian construction awards, one of the reasons why it was celebrated last night was because of the way it supported local Indigenous people in the Echuca–Moama community and also meant that there were local Indigenous businesses that could not only get work on this project but be able to set up and go and bid for other work on other projects, because the Andrews Labor government has a pipeline of projects across the state. That is the work we are going to keep on doing, and that is why my answer to today’s question remains consistent with yesterday’s question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Treasurer can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Assistant Treasurer withdrew from chamber.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:32): What action is the minister now going to take against the CFMEU for the appalling coercive union tactics used against Indigenous people on state transport infrastructure projects? Do not just talk about it, let us see the minister do something about it.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:33): If the member for Caulfield – and I saw the Leader of the Opposition also make some comments about this matter last week – has got any evidence, provide it. If you have got any evidence of wrongdoing in terms of the question that was –

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

Jacinta ALLAN: Sorry, Speaker. If there is any evidence of wrongdoing, the member should provide it, and maybe they should provide it to the relevant authorities, because so far all those opposite have is a newspaper article. What they are trying to do is undermine the good work that is happening by Indigenous people to win Indigenous business on our program. On this side of the house we do not have to have a party room debate about whether or not we support Indigenous Victorians. We do not need to debate this on our side. They do, and we will continue to work to support Indigenous Victorians.

Ministers statements: Victoria’s Big Build

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:34): I am now pleased to rise to update the house on the enormous contribution women are making to the Andrews Labor government’s Big Build program. We do not shy away on this side of the house from making sure women are supported, that they have got the policies and the programs and the workplace environment to feel very, very well supported and to help them to achieve whatever their career aspiration might be –

Wayne Farnham interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Narracan is warned.

Jacinta ALLAN: the professional pathway that they want to pursue. We make sure that we have the policies, the programs and the workplace environment to support women to achieve their very best. As part of that, we know well on this side of the house how important initiatives like targets and quotas are to making sure cultural change is addressed in the workplace. Our *Building Equality Policy* is bringing that to great effect. I also want to acknowledge the great work from the member for Eltham and my parliamentary secretary, who is still not back, the member for Sunbury, for the work that they

have been doing on the women in transport program, because this is making a real difference as well. We are lifting the number of women involved in the transport and construction sector, and the member for Kororoit knows this also very well from her prior life experience – more women in the rail industry, more women as train drivers, more women working in occupations that have otherwise not necessarily been as available to them.

When you have deliberate policies and deliberate programs in place, you can drive real change, and this was something that the member for Footscray and I commented on yesterday when we were at the West Gate Tunnel site. We made the comment as we were leaving that site. There would have been hundreds of workers on that site, and we made a comment as we were leaving about how great it was to see so many young women on this site. That is what it takes. It takes the hard work, the commitment and making sure that women get the right to speak in their workplace.

Constituency questions

Murray Plains electorate

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:37): (130) My constituency question today is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: would the minister be able to advise one of my constituents as to what action is being taken to reduce the \$1400 minimum threshold for people whose cars have been damaged by the government's failure to do enough to fix our state's roads and more recently our flood-affected roads in particular? My constituent reported to me that she has hit yet another monster pothole, costing her around \$1000 for a new tyre and rim, for which she will be out of pocket for the whole cost. She saw the pothole coming, but with her daughter in the car she faced a head-on collision if she swerved into the oncoming lane or a wild uncontrolled crash through a fence and into a paddock if she dodged the pothole to the other side. She has asked me to find out what is being done to reduce that threshold so country people in particular are not out of pocket for hitting the monstrous potholes that this government has left in the roads.

Frankston electorate

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (14:38): (131) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. On behalf of my constituents I ask the minister for some information and advice regarding the vision for some of our local Frankston schools. I have recently visited Frankston Heights Primary School and Naranga School, both in the amazing electorate of Frankston, and I also attended the school council meeting at Frankston Heights Primary School, where increasing student numbers and their current master plan were discussed. The previous school upgrade looks amazing, and further upgrades are now being spoken about. The Naranga School is yet another school already funded in the 2022–23 budget commitment to upgrade all special schools. On behalf of these school communities I invite the Minister for Education to visit both Frankston Heights PS and Naranga School. I know she would love to meet the members of these school communities and chat about their visions for the future.

Croydon electorate

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:39): (132) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the question I ask is why the Department of Transport and Planning are taking so long to reinstate the existing 40-kilometres-per-hour school speed signs along Croydon Road, Croydon, and putting students who attend Croydon Community School at risk. The Croydon Community School relocated to the new facilities on Croydon Road in term 2 of 2022, moving from their former campus on Mount Dandenong Road. The site they now occupy is the former Melba College junior site, and as such the school speed signs had been in use. Once Melba College moved in 2017 those signs were covered up and the electronic signs decommissioned. My office contacted the former roads minister in October 2022, and Croydon Community School contacted the department of transport in August last year and in April this year seeking an update on the reinstatement of the 40-kilometre-an-hour school zone signage. Disappointingly, the department of transport have said they are exploring opportunities to reinstate these signs; however, they have basically said they will consider this as part

of a future program. Even though the electronic signs were decommissioned, the static signs are still there. However, they are covered up. I am asking that the safety of students be made a priority now.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:40): (133) My question is also for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what consideration has her department given to modifying or improving the roundabout at Boldrewood Parade and Broadway in Reservoir East? I draw her attention quickly to three challenges with this busy intersection. First, it has five roads going into it, including Strathmerton Street, which intersects at a very close angle to Boldrewood Parade, making it hard for users to judge where vehicles are exiting. It is, secondly, a two-lane roundabout, which is a generally unfriendly format for pedestrians and cyclists, and it is situated close to a number of community facilities that people walk and ride to, including a primary school. Thirdly, it has above-average speeds due to its slope, its generous cornering and its current 60-kilometre-per-hour limit. Those things in combination would raise the eyebrows of traffic engineers and road safety experts. Generally, they are a source of concern for nearby residents and all of us that use the intersection. I thank the minister for her consideration.

Berwick electorate

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:41): (134) My question is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and I ask for information around the completion of the works for O'Shea Road in Berwick. I have been contacted by Robert, who has raised some very important issues in relation to what is supposed to be a completed project already. It continuously has to be closed at night with lane closures, detours and disruptions as part of the planning process, which appears to be a very poor planning process. He has complained about the issue with the artist's impression versus what the final product is; the landscaping – they were promised 43,000 native plants but they appear not to have been put in through the area; the signage through the area, which is poor and could potentially cause an accident; and the speed at which cars enter into O'Shea Road from Wordsworth and Riviera drives, which could end up in a major collision. Robert said he tried to raise this with the former representative for that area, who was from Labor, but was dismissed, and he hopes it will get a response this time.

Greenvale electorate

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (14:42): (135) My question is for the Minister for Veterans. Last week the minister and I had the pleasure of attending the Anzac eve dinner arranged by the Turkish sub-branch of the Victorian RSL and its indefatigable president Ramazan Altintas and vice-president Sucettin Unal. The work of Ramazan, Sucettin and the Turkish RSL sub-branch upholds the memory of Gallipoli and the dignity of the fallen. They do so much to support Victoria's strong relationship with Türkiye and ensure that we recall the tragedy and losses of the Gallipoli campaign as friends and allies, not as adversaries. Their commitment to the memory of Anzacs and all who suffered during the Gallipoli campaign recalls those famous and gracious words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who spoke of the fallen Anzacs with respect and reverence and assured that they would lie in peace on Türkiye's soil forever. Could the minister please inform me how the Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize is also helping to sustain the legacy of our service men and women and how the young people of Greenvale can enter this wonderful and worthy competition.

Lowan electorate

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (14:43): (136) My question is to the Minister for Police, and I ask how the minister will guarantee there will be sufficient police available to ensure that trucks that are taking pigs to the Benalla abattoir will have unimpeded access. The Farm Transparency Project is planning a protest at Benalla abattoir on Mother's Day to stop trucks carrying livestock from entering the business. I have got a lot of pig farms across the Lowan electorate, and local growers are very concerned that their pigs will not be able to get to the abattoir in a suitable time frame. Of course leaving this stock on a truck for a prolonged period of time is stressful for the animals. They do not

have access to water, they do not have access to feed. The protest group are actually encouraging people to touch the animals – again, a massive risk to biosecurity. So I ask the minister: how will he ensure that there are sufficient police to make sure these trucks can get to the abattoir unimpeded?

Bellarine electorate

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (14:44): (137) My question is to the Minister for Community Sport. With the latest round of the state government's sporting club grants program having opened in February this year, I would like to know how many clubs on the Bellarine Peninsula have received funding from previous rounds of this program. As the new local member, I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to meet with sporting clubs across the Bellarine and talk to them. They clearly understand the importance of what funding opportunities like this program offer to clubs. The grants mean that they can purchase essentials, like uniforms, or equip their volunteers with the skills and knowledge to successfully manage their club. The importance of sporting clubs to communities, especially in rural towns across the Bellarine, cannot be overestimated, as they provide not only a game of sport but also inclusion and connection to the community. I thank the minister for her consideration in how many clubs on the Bellarine Peninsula have received funding from previous rounds of this program.

Narracan electorate

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:45): (138) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Residents in Drouin are desperate for intersection upgrades and road improvements. They are part of the Baw Baw shire, which is the ninth fastest growing local government area in Australia and the fifth fastest in Victoria. One project the community believes could be delivered quickly and provide immediate relief is the reopening of the former highway on and off ramps between the Princes Highway and Buln Buln Road. This would give new estates in Drouin East access to the highway without the need to come back through residential areas. Many intersections in Drouin and Warragul are unsuitable for traffic. They have new estates opening almost weekly. Action needs to be taken now, as well as planning for the longer term. Drouin residents want to know: will the minister take immediate action to reopen this highway access to give traffic relief for this community?

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:46): (139) My question is for the Minister for Health, and I ask: how are our nursing and midwifery scholarships supporting Victoria's healthcare workforce? Tomorrow is International Day of the Midwife, an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the incredible work of this dedicated group of healthcare workers. Midwives and nurses are there for us during some of the most joyful, challenging and transformational moments of our lives. I recall my own experiences of giving birth and how the reassuring, steady expertise of the midwives and nurses gave me comfort and strength in those beautiful, terrifying moments. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the midwives and nurses in my community and in Victoria more broadly, who bring empathy and skill to this rewarding and challenging profession every single day. It is more important than ever that we continue to invest in, grow and strengthen our midwifery and nursing workforce. That is why our free nursing and midwifery scholarships are so important. This \$270 million project is removing the financial barriers to study and helping recruit and train more than 17,000 nurses and midwives into our health system.

*Bills***Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment 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***Energy policy**

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:47): I move:

That this house notes the overwhelming support at the 2022 election for the Victorian Labor government's plan to:

- (1) bring back the State Electricity Commission;
- (2) reach 95 per cent renewables by 2035 and net zero by 2045;
- (3) install 100 neighbourhood batteries across Victoria; and
- (4) create 59,000 renewable energy jobs.

I am absolutely delighted and proud to speak on the nation-leading agenda in energy and climate action here in Victoria. Victorian people endorsed this program and this set of policies at the last election: bringing back the State Electricity Commission of Victoria; our ambitious and achievable emissions reduction and renewable energy targets; and our absolutely wildly popular commitment to neighbourhood batteries. These are all commitments Victorians enthusiastically embrace. We have not wasted a moment in delivering on our ambitious and achievable election commitments, including bringing back the SEC.

Last week I was delighted to release the *SEC Pioneer Investment Mandate*. This will deliver the first SEC projects by the end of the year, accelerating the renewable energy transition and ensuring Victorians get their fair share of the profits of this massive investment in our zero emissions future. The project will be in Victoria and will be at least 100 megawatts, powering around 60,000 homes. A week after we announced that pioneer investment mandate, the registration for interest is now well and truly open. We are looking for projects and partners as the SEC accelerates the build of new renewable energy to meet our 95 per cent renewable target by 2035 – and this is only the beginning.

Back in February the Premier and I announced the interim expert advisory panel, which will provide governments with expert energy and financial advice, and they have been doing a wonderful job in that. They are developing their advice for the SEC's 10-year strategy and ongoing investment mandate, which will be released later this year. The SEC will accelerate the delivery of our ambitious renewable energy targets: 65 per cent by 2030 and, as I said earlier, net zero by 2045.

The State Electricity Commission will play an absolutely pivotal role in helping to deliver 59,000 more jobs for Victorians by 2035. Through the publicly owned SEC we will be delivering 4.5 gigawatts of renewable power, the equivalent replacement capacity of Loy Yang A; the new SEC centre of training excellence; and 6000 positions for apprentices and trainees. And we will be holding the SEC energy jobs forum in June, bringing together unions, industry and training providers to ensure that we have a strong and sustainable pipeline of workers in safe, secure and meaningful jobs.

We will enshrine the SEC in the constitution this year, protecting the SEC from those opposite, whose only record on energy is selling off our public power assets to for-profit companies, their mates. When Kennett sold the SEC, prices increased, workers were sacked, energy companies made huge profits and power bills skyrocketed. And we saw record disconnections – people in homes, vulnerable people, losing power connection because of a heartless private sector that controlled our energy assets.

The SEC will push wholesale energy prices down by bringing on 4.5 gigawatts of new power, the equivalent replacement, as I said, of Loy Yang A, through renewable energy projects – 100 per cent renewable. Because the government will own this, the State Electricity Commission will not be run for shareholder profits but for Victorians. Three decades later the modern Liberal Party that we have opposite – and I use that word very, very advisedly and very loosely – is still hungry to privatise anything and everything, including the SEC. They are addicted to privatisation, already committed to selling off the SEC. They have learned nothing. They are still defending the decisions that they made 30 years ago.

Victoria is unequivocally the nation's leader in climate action and the transition to renewable energy. In 2022, 35 per cent of our energy here in Victoria came from renewables, more than three times the 10 per cent we inherited in 2014, and we will be making sure that we keep building renewable energy with our 95 per cent renewables target by 2035. That, through the SEC, will accelerate the creation of 59,000 more jobs, driving billions of dollars of investment and delivering lower power bills.

We are decarbonising at the fastest rate in our country, and since this government was elected at the end of 2014 we have cut emissions by more than any other state in the country. These things do not happen by accident. They happen when you have got ambition and you have got a plan and you have got the guts to do it, and that is exactly what we have been doing – and we are not going to be sitting back and allowing others to do nothing. We have got the strongest climate change legislation in the country, and Victorians voted overwhelmingly for the next steps in our ambitious agenda.

Our targets of reducing emissions by between 75 and 80 per cent by 2035 and of course bringing forward our net zero emissions target to 2045 align Victoria absolutely with the Paris goals of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. These targets are delivering the most rapid reduction of emissions in Australia, unlocking billions of dollars of investment and creating thousands of jobs. We know that being early movers in decarbonising our economy, done well with always a very clear eye and ensuring that people do not fall through the gaps, which only a Labor government has ever committed to doing, ensures that we get the economic benefits of that to be shared across our state.

We are investing almost \$2 billion in programs to reduce emissions. We have set a nation-leading offshore wind energy target that will see at least 2 gigawatts of offshore wind energy coming on line by 2032. We are doubling that to 4 gigawatts by 2035 and more than doubling that again, 9 gigawatts, by 2040. We have announced six new solar projects that will help us power 100 per cent of government operations on renewable electricity by 2025. In two years time every police station, every hospital, every Metro train, every tram and every government operation will be run on 100 per cent renewable electricity.

Supercharging renewables is key business for this government – unlike those opposite, who have voted against every climate and renewables target that we have brought forward into this place. Every single one of those targets was voted against by those opposite. We know what they are interested in. It is not renewables, it is not a decarbonised energy future, it is about taking Victoria back to the days of being a backwater where no-one wanted to invest, jobs were lost to other states and people fled the state because they were embarrassed to have those opposite run a government that effectively ran our economy into the ground. That is not our way. Proudly, Victoria is not just leading the country – we are absolutely showing international leadership when it comes to renewable energy creation, the jobs that come with it and decarbonising our energy system. That 75 to 80 per cent emissions reduction target is not only nation leading, it is world leading.

Those opposite turned their backs on the car industry. They talk about manufacturing – what do they care? When they were in government, they saw a passing parade of job losses and closures, and all they said was ‘We have sympathy for people’. They did not lift a finger or stand against their mates in Canberra who dared the car industry to close down – you dared them to close down, and they did exactly that, because you are not interested in people. They never have been, they never will be – and that is not our way. In terms of some of the comparisons, if you like, in terms of their lack of genuineness when it comes to growing renewable energy – because we know it is good for the planet, we know it is good for people’s bills and we know it is good for the economy and jobs, absolutely – the opposition repeatedly promised that their policies would bring down power bills, including the then opposition leader of course, who claimed that he would deliver \$1000 off bills, simply saying that our renewable energy targets were reckless and were actually going to increase bills. There is absolutely no logic there. They said it was going to risk all these jobs – well, all I can see is jobs, jobs, jobs being created through our policies. The member for Caulfield had to walk back comments made by his own leader and say that there was no commitment to lower prices under their policies. All the opposition knows how to do is sell, sell, sell – sell off, sell off, sell off – increase bills, increase disconnections and hurt ordinary Victorians. That is their way. They do not care. They never have and they never will, because it is in their DNA.

During the election the only solution those opposite put forward was to open up the state for fracking. Fracking, fracking, fracking – that is what their commitment was, and they should be absolutely ashamed. They did a dirty deal with their mates in the gas production sector: ‘Come in, mates. Come in. It’ll be all yours. Just open up. Bring in your wells, bring in your drills. Frack away. Frack away. Don’t worry, there’s plenty of gas.’ If you frack it, there is plenty of gas, but we know that if you do not frack, there is not much gas onshore – none at all that we can find; no-one can find it. So that is their way. They announced that they would turbocharge gas production in Victoria. There is only one way to do that. The member for Bellarine knows very, very well that there is only one way you can turbocharge gas production onshore in Victoria, and that is if you frack your way to it. And that is exactly what they were offering Victorians, but Victorians saw through that. They saw absolutely through that. The science backs it up. We know that our way will lead us to more jobs, greater prosperity, lower carbon emissions and a clean energy future. The other way is basically saying yes to people making more profit on the back of carbon fuels that will only benefit one group of people – and it ain’t Victorians, it will be the gas producers that they have chummed up to.

Who knows when they cooked up that plan. How many years back did they cook that up? ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry. We’ll say we’re not supportive of fracking, but don’t worry, we get through. We’ll just leave it.’ But then: ‘There’s plenty of gas there. Go for it.’ That is the way they have always done it. Victorians are enthusiastic about the agenda that we have got, embracing our renewable revolution, and the election outcomes showed that: they are embracing new and emerging technologies. Our neighbourhood battery program shows just that, and that is absolutely exciting, because we know that no matter where people are in Victoria, they want to be part of this revolution. They can have solar panels on their roof, a battery in their home or solar hot water, or they can have neighbourhood batteries or they can have large solar farms and wind farms in regional Victoria creating those fantastic local supply chain jobs that are benefiting Victorians right across the state. Victorians are champing at the bit to have their own neighbourhood battery, joining of course Fitzroy North – that community has got a fantastic battery – Tarneit and Yackandandah. The list goes on, and it will go on under this government, which is why we are absolutely excited about delivering on our election commitment to install and create 100 more neighbourhood batteries across the state. We will invest \$42 million to install those, tripling the number of homes with access to batteries and providing crucial extra storage capacity for local communities. Everyone will have the benefit of these technologies. These neighbourhood batteries will return power into the hands of local communities.

Increasing storage capacity will mean more households can reap the rewards of returning surplus solar-generated electricity to the grid through feed-in tariffs. It means more households will have access to cheaper renewable energy, even if they do not have their own solar panels. We know of course that

there are a number of homes that do not necessarily have an independent roof – they may be apartments – which then constrains the opportunities for people. But these types of policies and programs are designed to make sure that Victorians, no matter what their circumstances are, can be part of this revolution – and it is indeed a revolution that they are loving.

I do want to say a few more things. The neighbourhood batteries will store clean, cheap energy when it is abundant, during the day typically, and feed it back into the grid when it is needed at night, keeping the lights on and power bills down. These things cannot be separated out. The future is renewable, a decarbonised energy system, and we have got the programs and election commitments to ensure that we can deliver the transition so that it is of benefit to Victorians no matter where they live. We have built the biggest battery in the Southern Hemisphere in Geelong.

A member interjected.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: The Victorian Big Battery, that is the name of it. Why wouldn't you call it the Victorian Big Battery? Because that is exactly what it is, and in fact it is the Southern Hemisphere's biggest battery.

Paul Edbrooke: Energising Victoria.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Absolutely, energising Victoria. And that was only made possible by our government assisting with the procurement of that installation, which is providing additional support as we transition our energy system to 95 per cent renewables by 2035. Not only that, we have given over 13,000 home battery rebates to help families buy household batteries through the Solar Homes program, and of course we have delivered more than 215,000 solar panel rebates altogether for Victorians. We have launched the world-leading energy storage target of 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage by 2030 and we are then moving that to 6.3 gigawatts of storage by 2035 – enough renewable energy to power around half of Victoria's current homes at their peak energy use. But we know that it is more than that. It is about providing that security of supply, that stability of electricity that complements renewable energy so that everyone can be confident that we have got a plan that we are implementing that will not just keep the lights on but get us off coal-fired power generation by 2035 and it is about creating the jobs and decarbonising at the rapid rate that we are. This government has hit the ground running, and we are not taking our outstanding support from the Victorian people for granted. Our renewables and our climate action agenda show that we are delivering.

I do want to finish on this: the SEC is an entity that has absolutely struck a note in every heart, in every Victorian. It may be that the younger generation may not have necessarily been alive when the SEC was at its full flight, but they certainly know about their mums and their dads or their grandparents, their uncles – whoever – being supported by the SEC, knowing that it is an essential service. The provision of electricity is an essential service. Reflecting on the fact that there is a lot of unhappiness today – a lot of unhappiness and dissatisfaction – and a lack of fairness generally speaking from what was the country's biggest privatisation experiment back in the 1990s –

Paul Edbrooke: \$22 billion.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: \$22 billion left our country to overseas businesses that were mates with those opposite that sold off these assets. They sold them off, and Victorians paid for it through increased bills. They paid for it through record disconnections. I mean, how obscene – an elected government was more than happy to let it rip and have people turn their heaters off, struggle during the cold, bitter winters and ultimately not be able to stay connected to their power and then just without any heart whatsoever allow these companies to disconnect people from an essential service such as electricity. Shame on them. If they had the chance to do it again, they would do it with bells on, because we believe never on any day – on all of these days that have transpired between the Kennett years and now – have they ever said 'We're sorry', 'We were wrong' or 'We went too far', never. In fact it was only very recently that they said they had no regrets and it was the right thing to do. Well, the right

thing maybe by your donors and your mates in the big energy companies but not for those Victorians who had to suffer and be harmed by your policies.

Through our ambitious agenda of growing more renewable energy – those billions of dollars that will be invested, those 59,000 jobs that will be accelerated through our 95 per cent renewable energy target by 2035 – the SEC will ensure that Victorians will have a stake in, an ownership of, electricity creation into the future. They will have their own dividends coming back for Victorians – 100 per cent renewables, the SEC acting on their behalf for Victorians, renewable energy for Victorians, the SEC owned by Victorians. We will be releasing our 10-year strategy towards the end of the year, our long-term investment mandate, and there is so much to come.

I really wonder what those opposite really think about that failed global experiment of privatisation when they are stuck on the margins of debates in our community, when they are off with whatever strange, weird, side agenda that they have got – trying to repeat the golden years of coal and gas and their mates and the privatisation of essential services. They had a plan. They went to the last election with a plan to sell off our water authorities and our sewerage system. That is what they did, because they are addicted to it. They are absolutely addicted to privatising our essential services, harming Victorians as they go, because at the end of the day they do not give a damn – they never have, they never will. That is the case. We are bringing back the SEC – the 100 per cent government-owned SEC investing in 100 per cent renewable energy, a stake in the future. We know that we are going to be creating thousands of giga –

Members interjecting.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Sorry, thousands of megawatts, absolutely, of new energy generation. We want to make sure that Victorians have a stake in that – a stake in the future that they own, that is for them, owned by them, one that they can be proud of, knowing all the while that the SEC is coming back. We are going to be providing those 6000 apprenticeships and traineeships. We are going to be putting people's interests first, ahead of profits that go to the big corporations and global interests, which have sucked away – how much was it, member for Frankston?

Paul Edbrooke: Twenty-two.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: \$22 billion left our shores since they killed off the SEC and ripped the heart out of Gippsland, ripped the heart out of the Latrobe Valley. We have got a great deal of work to do. We have done the figures: \$22 billion has left our shores.

Danny O'Brien: No, that's Bruce Mountain's figure. They're not yours.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: What, you sold off a dud? You sold off a lemon, did you? You did not sell off a lemon. You sacked how many thousands of workers in the Latrobe Valley? You forced people's power bills up. You have got no plan for new energy. You have got no plan. We know that essential services, when they are sold off, harm Victorians. We are about creating the energy supply of the future. The more energy we create, the more downward pressure there is on prices, and the cheapest form of new-build energy is renewables.

They went to an election not all that long ago committing to build a new coal-fired power station. That is what they did. Fancy what that is going to do to our emissions. Yet they claim they support emissions reduction. There is a pea and thimble trick happening over here. I do not know who has got the pea. I have not seen the pea yet. It does not appear anywhere, because it is all an illusion and it was all to get them through an election. Victorians saw through that. They saw through that loud and clear. They knew that an elected Liberal–National government was simply going to be fracking its way through Victoria, privatising our sewerage system – our water system, effectively. That was the foot in the door for that, and that is what they do. They have learned nothing. They are committing themselves to oblivion. They are tearing themselves apart. They are dealing with issues on the fringe rather than trying to work out –

James Newbury: We're dealing with it. That's what we're doing.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Oh, you are dealing with it internally? What happened at 2 o'clock? Have they issued the writs yet?

A member: A bit more bullying today, or what?

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Exactly. This is a motion that is absolutely important to Victoria, very important to Victoria. This is what our economy is built on. The Victorian economy was built on affordable power for many, many decades, and I will always be the first to say this: our manufacturing base in this state was built because we had a philosophy that governments had an active role to do good for community – and I dare say that previous iterations, a long time ago, of those opposite had an inkling of that, had a semblance of that. I think it finished when Rupert Hamer left. You have gone downhill since then, I can tell you now. There was an inkling of that, but we also had a really strong manufacturing base. We were the manufacturing base for the country because we had cheap power, and we had cheap power because we had an abundance of brown coal. But those days are gone now, and we have to accept that for the good of people's health, for the good of our environment, for the good of the planet and for the good of future generations. Doing nothing or holding on to the past will actually cost us more than taking the actions that we are taking, and that is why we know that this mission that we have got, this authority that we have been given by Victorians, will be about what is good for our economy in Victoria: building our economy, the future economy of Victoria, on clean, affordable power. The more of that we can produce, the better off everyone will be.

The electrification agenda is so critical to that. We will clean up our electricity system, 95 per cent by 2035, and at some point of course we will need to deal with the other 5 per cent. But definitely our commitment is 95 per cent by 2035. Electrification will mean right now people's bills will go down, because gas, which is their solution – fracking gas – is more expensive. They want to increase power prices by fracking. They want to increase energy prices by fracking because gas costs more than electricity. What is good for the economy, what is good for people's bills – whether they are households, small businesses or medium or large manufacturers – is to electrify and seek those decarbonised fuels. That is the best way to support our economy for the future. That is why we support renewable energy, that is why we support electrification – because it is good for people's pockets. It is good for their pockets, it is good for jobs, it is good for decarbonising our energy system and ultimately also giving us a planet that we can actually support and save.

All of these things are important to feed humanity. We are not individual economic units. The Liberals and the Nationals would like us to think that politics and government are only about divvying up whatever is good in an economic unit way – that we are all just individual economic units: 'What's for me, or what's for my mate that will give me a donation?' Right? That is right. That is why the policies that we brought to government and the motion that we have got in front of us go to the very heart of a good economy, a good state, one that is supported and one that has a good, prosperous future to be shared by every Victorian no matter what their circumstances and where they live in this state. An energy system that supports economic development and an energy system that supports affordability, lower bills and produces renewable energy, clean energy, is good for everybody, and everyone wants this. That is why I am absolutely proud to speak in support of this motion. It is a motion that will sustain us into the future and will help us drive the change and the energy transition that we need. We have an obligation to not just this generation but future generations, and it is only forward-thinking governments that are prepared to lead and make hard decisions sometimes that need to be made that will actually deliver this.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (15:17): It is a pleasure to rise and speak on the motion by the Minister for the State Electricity Commission. I had thought that this motion might come up as part of an MPI, a matter of public importance, but given the government has run out of business and has not got much on the agenda it has come up as a motion. It is one that I am pleased to be able to make a contribution on and certainly put the record straight on some of the things we just heard. There are

certainly some things where we have common ground here, so I will certainly mention those, but I will also use the opportunity to correct the record and put some facts on the table to address some of those outrageous claims that the minister made in her contribution.

First and foremost – we might as well get off to a good start – Minister, I do note in your motion ‘the overwhelming support at the 2022 election’. It did get support. There is no argument there. It was a very clever policy politically. You can even look at the media release; some of the language was perfectly written:

A re-elected Andrews Labor Government will bring back government ownership of energy – delivering cheaper power bills and lower emissions while putting power back in the hands of Victorians.

Very appealing; who could argue with that? The media release talks about the cost of living. It talks about how in the past:

... sold off public power assets to private, for-profit companies.

An appeal to the emotions there.

... sent much of the profits offshore ...

...

We’re at a critical point ...

the media release says, and that the plan was

... to keep the lights on, bring bills down and create thousands of jobs in renewable energy –

all reasonable things. And it says it will

... bring back public ownership ...

The media release goes on to talk about:

Unreliable, privatised coal will be replaced by clean, government-owned, renewable energy.

There is a theme littered throughout the media release on that:

... deliver cleaner, cheaper energy, with all profits invested back into the network – making sure it’s the Victorian public, not offshore coal companies, who enjoy the returns.

...

... deliver more renewable energy, lower power bills and reduced carbon emissions – it’ll also create jobs.

Of course the media release took every opportunity to go on about greedy energy companies. The media release ticked all the boxes. All that language was very colourful. Ask anyone if they want cheaper power bills, ask anyone if they want to lower the cost of living – all the language was brilliant. It was well crafted, it was clever, it was cunning. It was Machiavellian. It was calculated language to appeal to the voters, and it did. It did get support, no doubt about that.

We are all for renewables – where we differ is on the path to getting there, and I will come across that in my contribution. But at the end of the day, it is –

Lily D’Ambrosio: When you work it out, let us know, okay? Because we haven’t seen it yet.

David HODGETT: Well, when you work it out, Minister, let us know, because this brings me to my next point: where are all the details? It was a clever policy, thought up, scribbled down on the back of an envelope and announced without any details at all – zilch, none whatsoever. The government just thought, ‘Here’s a great policy. It’s going to appeal to people. Let’s put all the colourful language in a well-crafted media release. If we go out there and ask people if they want cheaper prices and lower cost of living, what do you think the answer’s going to be?’ But of course there were no details. Like the Suburban Rail Loop, Labor’s SEC has no date, no realistically known costs and no business case. Labor’s record net debt position means it has no real plan to fund its SEC. Private equity will be vital, and I will come back to one of the things the minister said late last year. Without realistic funding or a business case, the thousands of jobs promised from Labor’s SEC will never be delivered for the

Latrobe Valley; they will never be delivered at all. Fifty-nine thousand jobs – I think the only figure that has come out from the minister's office is that there might be 5000 or 6000 jobs by 2035. Just give us some detail on where the 59,000 jobs will come from. We are all for jobs, we are all for apprenticeships, but where is that all coming from? Where is the detail other than a couple of pages of media release?

The Premier claims that the SEC will deliver cheaper power prices, but with Labor's record of cost blowouts on major projects, how can Victorians trust that it will not lead to higher power prices? Give us some evidence of how you are going to deliver this and how it is going to deliver cheaper power prices. Labor's financial statement 2022, released two days before the election day, allocated only \$20 million of recurring funding for bringing back the SEC over the next four years, with no date provided for the commencement of construction. This is typical of Labor. They have got some good people involved, I must admit; I looked at the list of the people that are involved, and they have got some good people. But they open the office, they run the flag up the pole and they paint the picture that they are open for business. It is all about the optics: 'We've brought back the SEC. We've got an office open. Here we go.' And then nothing much happens at all until people start to cotton on that nothing has happened or the government has got no details. It is all about the optics with this government, to show that the SEC is back by just putting a few million dollars in, getting some good people around and opening up the office.

Since then the government has indicated an investment of a billion dollars in capital, which will be used to leverage private sector capital. An independent costing of this election policy has not even been undertaken. Again, it was written on the back of an envelope and announced pre election with no details. No recurring funding for the SEC is allocated in 2026–27, which indicates that Labor has no plan to deliver meaningful progress on the SEC before the next election. It will be one of those announcements they trot out again at the next election: 'We've got the office open in the Latrobe Valley. We haven't delivered cheaper power prices, but we're going to do it. We're going to bring back the SEC.'

We all want to see cheaper energy bills for Victorian households and small business. Without doubt, cost of living and energy costs are front of mind for everyone. We spoke about it a lot earlier this year when the companies indicated what price increases we would all be facing. So it is front of mind. We all want cheaper energy bills for Victorian households and small business, to reduce their costs. But now we want to see the details of it. A number of questions have been asked. How much will the SEC thought bubble really cost? How will this ultimately be funded with the government's growing net debt position? I am sure the Shadow Treasurer, the member for Sandringham, if he gets to speak on this, will certainly make some comments around that. How will it ultimately be funded with the government's growing net debt position? And how is the proposed ownership structure of the SEC going to work with 51 per cent government ownership and 49 per cent private equity share? The minister could not even get that right.

Back on 20 December the election policy was announced: the SEC was going to work with 51 per cent government ownership and a 49 per cent private equity share. Then on 20 December in this house, not even a month after the election, we asked the minister in question time about this. When asked if the Andrews Labor government would guarantee that energy prices would not continue to rise, the minister stated that the SEC would be 100 per cent publicly owned and that it would be operated for profit. But both of those statements have proved to be untrue. The Andrews Labor government has stated that the SEC will be 49 per cent owned by superannuation funds and it will not be operated for profit. So which is true? You have had two different positions on this. If your minister cannot get the basics right, how on earth will she successfully run a multimillion-dollar energy company?

And then they have flipped again. The government has flipped again. Yesterday the minister launched the *SEC Pioneer Investment Mandate* and said that they have been in discussions with potential investors. Well, who? Is it going to be 100 per cent government owned, or are there going to be investors? Is it one or the other? At least you could get that right or perhaps provide details along there

so that industry, business, the public, the voters and the Parliament all have confidence in what the government is proposing to do. That is the ownership structure we are trying to get the details around. How is this SEC proposal going to guarantee supply and put downward pressure on prices? What is the time frame? When can we expect the Andrews Labor government to take action to ease energy prices for all Victorians? They would love to know that. When can we expect cheaper energy prices – a reduction in energy prices? They have said it is going to deliver it – so when? Everyone wants to know how the government is planning to intervene in the retail energy market with a government-owned electricity retailer.

How can the government be trusted, as I said before, to manage this project, given the delays and overruns on every one of the government's projects? And there is a long, long list that is not part of this motion, but one example is the North East Link. It was promised for \$5 billion. A Victorian Managed Insurance Authority evaluation of the current North East Link Project is \$18 billion, so the current budget blowout is \$13 billion. The government said it would be \$5 billion. Its current blowout is \$13 billion and counting. So how can the government be trusted to manage the SEC project? It gives no confidence to anyone.

We really need to see more detail. Who will be allowed to invest? What will the rate of return on the projects be? Will taxpayers underwrite the rate of return, particularly in the early, loss-making years? These are long-term investments. They need to be supported and they need to be explained before you can ask the Victorian taxpayer to pay for them. That is a reasonable position.

A mix of energy sources will continue to be needed as we move to a non-fossil fuel environment. We need to keep the lights on and bills low as we transition to renewables. As I said at the outset, I do not think you will get much argument from anyone in this place about moving to renewables, where appropriate and where suitable, but it is the transition there. The government seems to just want to force that process or speed up that process by turning all the power off and turning the lights off – so hurry up and get the renewables up and running. But we believe there is going to be a longer road in that transition, and I will come back to speak a bit more about that. But we certainly support a mix of energy sources, and they will continue to be needed as we move to a non-fossil fuel environment.

We want to see the fine detail of this project and how the government intends to deliver it on time and on budget. I do not think they have ever delivered a project on time and on budget. Certainly, they cannot manage money and they cannot manage major projects, so we have no confidence in that. But if we could see some fine details of the project, we might get an idea of what that might look like. There are serious concerns and questions regarding the government's intervention in the Victorian energy markets that will likely crowd out or discourage private investment. The minister would know this. She is talking to companies at the moment. There is uncertainty about investment and about some of their long-term decisions because they have got no idea of what this might look like and what the government's plan is. Who is going to invest? I have already said that – who is going to invest? To date the Andrews government has failed to secure support from both the federal government and superannuation funds for its SEC plan, so who is going to invest?

The government's planned investment of the so-called billion dollars as flagged at the state election will amount to only a fraction of the total investment required for the 4.5 gigawatts in renewables capacity that the government has indicated. Based on the cost of recent projects – again, the minister's department would surely have furnished these details to her, rather than others just working out these figures by themselves – it is estimated that \$10 billion or more could be required for such a planned increase in renewables capacity. The government's ideological demonisation of gas, as the minister went on about before, is staggering. As recently reported in the *Australian Financial Review*, a study of three leading universities, including Melbourne University, Princeton University and Queensland University, has found that to meet net zero Australia will need to double its gas-powered generation capacity as a firming measure for when renewables are not viable – that is, no wind, no sun, and batteries only have a limited, short-time supply capacity.

Lily D'Ambrosio interjected.

David HODGETT: Well, I am happy to table an article written by Mark Dunn back in November, Minister, that talks all about gas, which disputes everything that you have said in your contribution today. This study supports not only the Liberal and Nationals position that gas is a vital transitional energy source, it supports it as a long-term requirement. Victoria has significant new gas reserves that need to be tapped to support the state's transition to renewables – to support the transition to renewables, not to replace it and not to go down the renewables path, but to support it. No-one is suggesting delaying it at all, but supporting it. Yet the Andrews Labor government's only plan for gas is to shut it down, and that is where we differ. As I said before, we still see gas playing a part in that transition to renewables, and I think the government is kidding itself that it will not be a part of that.

Labor is all spin and no answers on these energy prices. They have failed to answer one simple question: when and by how much will their SEC plan lower power prices? We know this year Victorians are facing energy cost increases of up to \$1000, adding further cost-of-living pressures to already stretched household budgets. And again, when asked directly in Parliament back on 7 February, Andrews government ministers could not give a date of when or a figure as to how much energy prices would fall under their promised \$1 billion SEC plan. I think Victorians deserve a simple answer to a simple question: when will power prices be lower? The fact that the government cannot come clean on this demonstrates they are making it up as they go along.

I want to talk a little bit about privatisation, because as my colleague the member for Gippsland South interjected during the minister's contribution, the government is hypocritical when it comes to talking about privatisation – or anti-privatisation, however they want to talk about it. So let us get some facts on the record. I know the member for Narracan, who I think is down to make a contribution on this, will raise this in his contribution should time permit and he gets up to speak today. He raises this at every opportunity when the matter is raised of privatisation of electricity assets. Firstly, let us have a look: Labor and the Premier and the government are hypocrites for characterising themselves as anti-privatisation. You look at a handful of Labor privatisations, which my colleague here mentioned: this government privatised or sold off the Port of Melbourne 50-year lease for \$9.7 billion; the land titles office, a 40-year lease for \$2.9 billion; VicRoads modernisation program, a 40-year partnership for \$7.9 billion; and Victoria's share of the Snowy Hydro, a federal buyback of a 29 per cent equity share for \$2.1 billion.

Joan Kirner's Labor government also started the privatisation of electricity assets when she sold 51 per cent of Loy Yang B in 1992. Those opposite either refuse to believe this or just take for granted what they are told by their ministers or the Premier. I am happy to make available the media release from the office of the Premier of Victoria dated 11 June 1992. I am happy to table it.

Danny O'Brien: Who was the Premier?

David HODGETT: It was Premier Kirner – Premier Joan Kirner. It is in the Parliament of Victoria library, dated 12 June 1992, 'Loy Yang B Bill Passed by Parliament':

Legislation paving for the way for an historic partnership between the Victorian Government and U.S. power company Mission Energy passed through State Parliament late last night.

The Loy Yang B Bill authorises the Government to enter into a contract with Mission Energy for joint ownership of the new Loy Yang B power station in the Latrobe Valley.

The Premier, Ms. Joan Kirner –

who was Labor –

said the successful passage of the Bill provided the framework for an exciting future in Victoria's power generation industry.

"Loy Yang B will be a state-of-the-art power station," Ms. Kirner said. "It is required for the energy requirements of Victoria in 1993."

“The Victorian Government’s decision –
it should have been the Victorian Labor government’s decision –
to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

“The presence of Mission Energy in the Latrobe Valley will ensure Loy Yang B is completed on time and on cost ...

something the government knows nothing about.

“There are enormous benefits for Victoria as a result of this sale – particularly, continued reductions in the real price of electricity to Victorian customers and improved customer service.”

Ms. Kirner said the Government was now moving towards finalisation of contracts and completion of the transaction.

“Following a keenly-contested bidding process, we now have one of the world’s foremost power station operators working in partnership with the State Government –

state Labor government –

to help deliver a more efficient and price-competitive power industry.”

Importantly, the “Gold Book” detailing commercial principles for the transaction has been fully agreed to and signed by all parties – that is, Mission Energy, its banking group, the State Government and the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.

All outstanding issues with Mission Energy and its bankers have been successfully resolved, Ms. Kirner said.

In particular, the form of State support to be included in the State Agreement between the State of Victoria and Mission Energy has been agreed.

“There have been intensive discussions throughout this and other matters, such as electricity price,” Ms. Kirner said.

“It is indicative of the enthusiasm of all parties involved that these outstanding matters have been worked through successfully.”

Ms. Kirner said the Government expected to launch final contracts for examination by Mission’s banking group later this month, with a view to settlement shortly after.

The Labor government from the office of the Premier of Victoria, 11 June 1992. So when the mushrooms up the back get told ‘Oh no, it was the Kennett government or someone else did this’ and believe that, I would suggest they actually go and do their own research and check out the facts, because they are getting told lies about this and they should not just accept that – they should not do it.

There are a number of things I want to get into my contribution, particularly notes from conversations, information and documents from experts. I might come back to them if I have got time because I do just want to put in a couple of things into my contribution. Let me turn my attention to the Australian Energy Market Operator website. I love to look at it to see what is actually going on around the country. Here are a few examples – it would pay for those opposite to have a look. This is on the website. It is an example of one day, 21 April 2022, where it has the mix by time across the country. On that day solar accounted for 2 per cent of our energy needs. Wind created –

A member: I wonder why you chose that date?

David HODGETT: There are other days, do not worry about that. Wind accounted for 3 per cent. I have got a good example here; I have got a great example here from South Australia. And here is a good day: 28 April. This is a good day. On a good day solar accounted for 3 per cent and wind accounted for 8 per cent. Also on 28 April – the minister would be aware of this – last week, since Liddell shut in New South Wales, New South Wales has been importing power. So you cannot just turn these off and expect renewables and storage and that to pop up overnight. Yes, move in that direction, but have a plan for how you are going to get there. Here is a good example from today – this morning, 4 May. I looked at South Australia, which is held up as a good example here – demand versus generation. Demand was 1542, generation was 1523. It looks pretty good.

Members interjecting.

David HODGETT: Megawatts. It looks pretty good. Then you look at the spot price per megawatt. How much do you think the spot price on that was this morning? Nearly \$13,000 per megawatt – \$12,922.49, to be precise. Do not take my word for it, get onto the website. If you look at South Australia, this morning at 7:50 am, 4 May, if you look at their total breakdown of fuel used, 74 per cent was gas and 19 per cent was diesel generated to produce that. They have got the blinkers on.

A member interjected.

David HODGETT: Yes, I know. There you go. I will put a few things on record – just conversations. I had a gentleman that wrote to me and said:

I enclosed an article below from the UK, but you could submit it for Victoria or Australia. It is not just shutting down coal-fired generators and stopping gas supply with no adequate backup, we are also loading the electricity grid up with much more demand as we are forced to move from coal to oil-based energy. It is a massive engineering and financial task for which I see no credible transition plan being put forward by our state government as to how we will achieve the transition here in Victoria.

Another comment:

As in no engineering time line how the transition will actually work so we have no energy shortfalls and no financial budgeted cost. And where will the money come from? And no projection as to what the consumer will be paying per kilowatt for our power by 2030 or 2050. All Victorian industry needs gas. Many processing plants in Victoria and small businesses have to have gas. It cannot be easily substituted by electricity.

And this comment:

Enclosed is the annual federal department of energy report as to where we actually derive all our energy from sources. I draw your attention to pages 19 and 20, which show both total energy needs by state and what type of energy is being used by state. Victoria presently has about 90 per cent of its energy coming from oil, coal and gas. This means it is a massive job to transition us away from fossil fuels. I am not arguing that over time it needs to be done, but let us have an honest conversation about how and at what cost and inconvenience to the taxpayer, the consumer and business.

That is a reasonable request to have a conversation, an honest conversation, about how and at what cost – but of course the government does not want to engage in that. The gentleman went on to say:

I would suggest the minister and the Premier have never actually read this report and worked out what it really means to their plans for the transition to wind and solar. We are heading for an absolute energy train wreck in this state, which will also cost us even more money the longer we have. It absolutely terrifies me and keeps me awake.

That is from an expert in the industry. In the time left –

A member: Who?

David HODGETT: Oh, you will know. They have written the same thing to you.

Danny O'Brien: She does not read anything from outside, just from the department.

David HODGETT: No, she does not read. That is right. You could have read it on the plane. As I said at the outset and as I have said during my conversation, we are all for renewables. We need a plan for reliable and affordable energy while reducing emissions. We need real solutions for our climate future – affordable, reliable and clean energy. We need a plan for energy about ensuring reliable and affordable energy while delivering a practical and achievable pathway to reducing emissions, not something just on the back of an envelope and announced in the lead-up to an election that is unfunded, uncosted, without a business case.

Where we differ is how we get there. As I have said, we see a role for both gas and coal-fired power in the transition, a longer role – not to be shut down and have jeopardised security of supply. We think there should be a longer time frame, and I am happy to have that conversation with the government. We are for conventional onshore gas exploration and production. We are for a hydrogen strategy –

ever heard of that? We are for modernising our transmission system. We are for solar panels and home batteries and for solar panels across public infrastructure, something you guys would not even consider. And we are for maintaining the current ban on fracking and coal seam gas extraction and reject the government's continued scare campaign, their lies and misleading of people about fracking. That is a very clear position; let that go on the record.

While I am talking about gas, I will just spend my remaining couple of minutes quoting from Mark Dunn in the media, who wrote an article back in November just before the state election entitled 'Victoria's untapped gas supplies could power state for next two decades':

Victoria is sitting on enough untapped gas to help bolster supplies into the 2040s but unless the reserves are accessed the state will increasingly be forced to rely on imports from Queensland and elsewhere, according to a report commissioned by the Andrews government.

With the end of a nine-year moratorium banning onshore gas developments in Victoria from 2012, a range of exploration wells drilled and geological surveys have identified up to 830 petajoules of untapped gas in Victoria's Otway and Gippsland basins.

Just one petajoule is enough gas to fuel a population the size of Warrnambool for a year.

While Victoria – the biggest gas user in Australia – consumes about 200PJ per year across two million homes and 65,000 businesses, a report by Ernst & Young for the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions found the onshore reserves would supplement Victorian needs; not hamper the state's target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050; create 6400 new jobs; provide cheaper gas for regional industry and potentially add \$7.6bn to gross state product over the life of production.

...

Despite Premier Daniel Andrews repeatedly calling for a domestic gas reserve – where Australian gas is reserved for Australian consumption before any surplus stocks are offered for export – the Andrews government has taken a hard line against the gas industry and undermined new investment as a result of its Gas Substitution Roadmap that removes all government support for new residential gas use from the end of 2023.

"The best way to put downward pressure on prices is to bring on new gas supply that is close to where it is found because the cheapest gas is the gas closest to the customer – and Victoria is a perfect example of where this basic principle has gone wrong," ...

Gas Energy Australia chief Brett Heffernan said the Andrews government should be backing more gas not just as a transition fuel, for electricity generation as coal exits and as the only fuel that can suit thousands of industrial processes that require heat above 800 degrees C, but also as the sector develops cleaner and recycled gas, such as biomethane.

As I said at the outset, we are all for renewables, we all for decarbonisation. I think where our positions differ is on how we get there. The government has no plan, no details and no budget for how they are going to deliver the SEC.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (15:48): What an excellent motion we have before us today. Our Labor government is bringing back the SEC, and my goodness it is exciting: energy back in the hands of Victorians once again, 100 cent renewable energy, 59,000 renewable energy jobs, huge wind and solar projects and profits going back to the people, driving down emissions and protecting our climate. This is exciting stuff – not for the Liberal Party, though, of course. They are not very excited about this. The member for Croydon honestly seemed a little bit baffled about how we are doing this, which is unsurprising from those who could not figure out how to do a single thing when they had the chance. We expect nothing less from the party that would sell off the SEC in an instant if they had the chance, because that is exactly what happened in the 1990s, and three decades later this lot is still hungry to privatise everything they can get their hands on. What happened since our power assets were sold off to big private companies? Prices increased, workers were sacked and these big private companies made huge profits.

Well, our Labor government is turning this around. This year we will enshrine the State Electricity Commission into our constitution to protect it from those opposite. The SEC will massively accelerate our transition to renewable energy. In fact by 2035 an incredible 95 per cent of Victoria's energy will

come from renewables. Consider that in the context of where we came from. When Labor came into government in 2014 we inherited a state in which only 10 per cent of energy came from renewables. Let us not forget that the Baillieu government had dumped Victoria's emissions reduction target in 2012 as they steadfastly refused to invest in renewable energy or prepare our state to transition out of fossil fuels. Not only that, their huge exclusion zones had ground private renewable energy investment to a halt, so we were basically starting from scratch.

In the space of less than a decade, we have more than tripled our renewable output to 36 per cent, far outstripping even our own targets. We are on track to reach 40 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030. Then, in a little under two decades from when we came into government, we will reach 95 per cent renewables by 2035 – 95 per cent renewables. That is huge – it is huge. It makes us unequivocally the country's leader in climate action, even a global leader. We now have the strongest climate change legislation in the country, and we are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country. We have cut more emissions than any other state, and our emissions reduction targets of 80 per cent by 2035 and net zero by 2045 put us well and truly in line with the Paris goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees.

As you know, Northcote is where I was born and raised, and we are proudly diverse, progressive and climate conscious. We know that there are challenges ahead of us and that at the very base of those challenges is ensuring we have a safe climate for the future. This has always been a priority for me, and I have been proud to push this consistently and use my voice in the Parliament to push for ambitious climate policy and sustainability. Make no mistake, bringing back the SEC is exactly that, and it is exactly what Victorians voted for in 2022. Our community and our state chose a government that can deliver real action and real reform. We chose a government that will deliver for people now and for future generations. We chose security, equality and hope, and we rejected the scare campaigns and the slogans and the relentless pessimism.

The worst enemy of progress is cynicism, and though I have spoken about the damage wrought by the conservatives, there is yet another threat to the climate cause that lurks on the opposite end of the political spectrum, and that is the Greens political party. No-one will ever forget the federal Labor government's original Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, which was defeated by a vote in the Senate by a coalition of conservative and Greens party senators – a vote that set our national climate change response back at least a decade and gave us Tony Abbott. This is not old news, it is the playbook of the Greens, and we almost saw it play out again federally when the Greens sought to sabotage Labor's emissions reduction plan and safeguard mechanism. In the words of the Australian Workers Union national secretary Daniel Walton at the time:

Whenever the Greens have a choice between achieving a real, practical advance on climate change or destructive moralising you can always bet on the path they'll choose.

Now we are seeing the exact same thing as they seek to block Labor's \$10 billion social housing fund – critical homes for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. It is very easy for minority parties to talk about climate action. Easier still is composing marketing campaigns which simultaneously criticise any steps we take forward while taking credit for them. Harder is doing the actual work that will deliver impactful policy and real change. So as much as I cringe when I see the conservatives push back on every single climate policy that we put forward, I am equally disgusted at the callous and self-serving theatrics of the Greens.

Reform does not happen by chance. It takes years of perseverance, engagement and policy refinement to get the balance right, fairly, inclusively, with the science and without leaving Victorians behind. That does not mean virtue-signalling rhetoric or disruptive vandalism. It does not mean grandstanding media ops or mass email campaigns calling for donations to your party or coming into this chamber to ask showboating questions or blocking progressive bills. Our community deserves more. Victorians deserve more.

Curbing the impacts of climate change is going to take every single one of us, yet right now the Greens are the single biggest threat to real climate action in this country, because their sole purpose is not

progress but power. Make no mistake, they will undermine progressive Labor governments to get it. What they do not want us to know, their dirty little secret, is that every time we have a Labor government getting on with the job of our progressive reforms, they become more and more irrelevant. That is their dirty little secret and why time and again they will cynically feed right into the hands of conservatives. I cannot think of a more disingenuous, destructive, dangerous way of doing politics.

Energy and environment policy is a complex space, and it deserves more than simplistic solutions. My community know and understand that if we are going to move forward in climate action, we cannot afford to be dragged into more climate wars. We cannot afford the ideological wrecking ball that leads to progress halting. That just alienates communities and makes it harder to galvanise the support we need for real change. If we are truly going to harness consensus around climate action, we need to bring people with us, and that means people should never be made to feel guilty or, worse, morally inferior just for wanting a job or trying to make ends meet. Transition cannot only be for some and not for others. That is why at the heart of our transition is supporting workers, securing our energy supply, driving down bills and assisting Victorians with the cost of making homes energy-efficient. Our power saving bonus, Solar Homes program and Victorian energy upgrades program are all delivering real cost-of-living savings to Victorians right now at a scale not seen before. Public ownership of renewables through our SEC means we can keep the lights on, drive down bills, grow secure jobs, lower emissions and protect our climate.

The rate and scale of our transition in Victoria is enormous. We are effectively embarking on a wholesale transformation of our energy sector, a shift in our industries, our economies, our transport sector, our homes and our way of life. Take offshore wind as an example: our government's offshore wind targets will deliver Australia's first offshore wind farm and a massive 2 gigawatts of energy by 2032. That is equivalent to about 20 per cent of Victoria's current energy needs, enough to power 1.5 million homes. By 2040 our offshore wind farms will exceed 9 gigawatts, well and truly setting us up to power our entire state with renewables. That project alone is a game changer, and it is not the only one. We have world-leading energy storage targets, the biggest battery in the Southern Hemisphere. We have a circular economy strategy that will divert 80 per cent of waste from landfill by 2030. Six new solar projects will help us power 100 per cent of government operations on renewable electricity. Neighbourhood batteries are going to forever shift the way we power and store energy and how it is distributed. There are urban farming and recycling projects. We are growing more tree canopy and protecting our waterways. As the member for Northcote I will always push for those transitions to happen more comprehensively, more equitably and more rapidly, but none of this progress happens by accident. It does not arise out of thin air or the urgency of a slick slogan. It happens under Labor governments acting to make changes to Victorian law and investing in the transition of our economy and our energy sector.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:58): I am very pleased to rise to speak on this motion moved by the government and to speak on the biggest political con job that has been delivered since 2014, when someone said that a contract was not worth the paper it was written on. I am reminded through this debate so far of Anna Bligh's comment about the debate on fracking, saying it was the worst debate ever. Well, Anna, I have got news for you: it has been superseded. It has been superseded by the absolute political and policy rubbish that comes from this government when it comes to the commitment to bring back the SEC – which, if you actually knew anything, you would know never went away. It has been there for a long time. It still exists.

Richard Riordan: They don't even own the logo.

Danny O'BRIEN: They do not even own the logo. But why this is a con is because the government sold the SEC to Victorians who remembered it as being a government-owned system, a system where the government produces all the power, where the government owns the distribution, where the government owns the transmission and where the government owns the retail. But that is not what this government is going to deliver. That is not what the SEC policy of this government is. The SEC policy of this government is to dabble a little bit in some generation. It is an absolute con. We actually heard

the minister in Parliament yesterday talking about how private investment was flocking here because we have got such great policies. We heard the member for Northcote just now talking about how there are these great offshore wind farms, none of which require the state to invest.

So I ask the question: why does the taxpayer need to have a single cent invested in this when the private sector is already doing it? The member for Northcote outlined the offshore wind projects, and it is interesting to note how many people are claiming offshore wind. The minister will actually tell you about 'our offshore wind projects'. I have got news for her: I first met with Star of the South in 2017. There was not a press release from the government about Star of the South, the offshore wind farm, until 2021, and now they are claiming it as their own. The point is, though, there is Star of the South, there is Corio, owned by Macquarie, there is Greater Gippsland offshore, there is Seadragon, owned by Flotation, there is Shell, there is Esso – there are about 20 or 30 companies that have just put in a bid for offshore wind acreage in Bass Strait, all of it, pretty much, off my electorate, and not one of them has said, 'We wouldn't be able to do this unless the state government invested with us'. They are doing it anyway, and we do not need the state government to risk taxpayers dollars, because we know that is what would happen. Can you imagine this government giving its dollars, taxpayers dollars, across to the private sector? It is going to be a disaster.

While I am on it, unfortunately the member for Northcote has now gone out, but she did me a favour because she once again mentioned the fallacy that the previous Liberal–National government banned windfarms onshore by its exclusion zones. So I just want to point out to all of those members opposite – and I will not be as cruel as the member for Croydon, who referred to them as mushrooms; I will not do that – that the current planning guidelines for onshore wind farms in Victoria, as established by the current Labor government, prohibit wind farms in the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, the Bellarine and Mornington peninsulas, the Great Ocean Road area within 5 kilometres of the high-water mark, the Macedon and McHarg ranges –

Wayne Farnham: No!

Danny O'BRIEN: I think someone behind me has picked up that there is a political theme happening here – the land within 5 kilometres of the high-water mark of the Bass Coast west of Wilsons Promontory –

Wayne Farnham: Another Labor seat.

Danny O'BRIEN: it is a Labor seat, member for Narracan – but not east of Wilsons Promontory, all land west of the Hume Freeway and Goulburn Valley Highway and all land within 5 kilometres of the high-water mark of the coast east of the urban area of Warrnambool. I mean, to say that we have banned wind farms – if they are so good, why have you banned them in all the areas that you live, work or play in? It is such a Melbourne-centric policy to say, 'We can have wind farms everywhere except where we live and where we like it.' So that is a scam, for a start.

We have got the government's hypocrisy, the absolute hypocrisy, on privatisation. We heard very clearly from the member for Croydon about how it was in fact the Kirner government that started the privatisation of the power industry. The member for Narracan is on the list. I suspect he's not going to get a go, but he has already belled the cat on the fact that – you were actually at the SEC? He was actually at the SEC when that privatisation began. I am a valley boy; I grew up in the Latrobe Valley, and I know that the numbers that were reduced in the SEC started in 1989. If you do not believe me, have a listen to Tony Wood from the Grattan Institute, who wrote on 28 November 2022 about the SEC policy:

The SEC's restructuring meant that the numbers employed in electricity production in the valley fell by more than 50 per cent between 1989 and 1995 ... before the SEC was privatised.

From 1989 to 1992 – who was in government then? Does anyone remember?

Wayne Farnham: Joan Kirner.

Danny O'BRIEN: Joan Kirner was in government, and I remember it. Do not tell me that all the job losses in the Latrobe Valley were caused by the Liberals and Nationals. Have a look at Joan Kirner and the mess that that government made of the state and the power industry.

I want to just pick up a couple of other things on that: as I said, the hypocrisy of a government that hates privatisation in the energy sector but is very happy with it with the Port of Melbourne sale, with the land titles office, with the VicRoads registration division, with Snowy Hydro. And when we talk about Labor – I mean, Qantas, Commonwealth Bank – they are a bunch of hypocrites, they are an absolute bunch of hypocrites. Speaking of hypocrites, we heard from the minister again the absolute fallacy, the absolute untruth, that she ran time and time again in the election campaign about fracking. She might actually have to go and talk to her colleague Natasha Fyles in the Northern Territory, who approved it yesterday. There is no unity ticket from the Labor Party nationally on this. We were told this despite our policy, as the member for Croydon has outlined, on opportunities for us to develop our onshore gas reserves in Victoria and help with the transition to renewable energy. Again I place on the record that I support the transition to renewable energy in a considered fashion.

You can actually look up the government's media releases. Here is one from 16 June 2020. It is from the Honourable Jaclyn Symes, the former Minister for Resources. The headline is 'Onshore Conventional Gas Restart a Green Light for Jobs'. Well, the minister does not want to talk about that. She does not want to look at it. She says it is wrong and factually incorrect. Well, here is the Minister for Resources in 2020, and there are several more media releases, including one from 2021, where the government talks about the opportunities for gas.

It has gone very quiet over there. They do not want to hear the facts. It is very inconvenient to look at the facts from the past, whether it is Joan Kirner starting the privatisation, whether it is Paul Keating privatising Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank or whether it is your own government talking about the opportunities in gas production. It is just extraordinary that this government cannot do that. While I am on hypocrisy, we know there is a transition. We know the Minister for the State Electricity Commission is very committed to that transition, but why won't she tell the public what her deal is with Yallourn and EnergyAustralia? She knows that there is a risk that we are going to run out of power, the lights are going to go off, if there is a problem at Yallourn energy. So she has got a very commercial deal with Yallourn and EnergyAustralia, but she will not tell anyone what that deal is. I suspect it is because she knows the power system is a risk under this government's policies and they are going to have to step in and underwrite Yallourn if it does go off.

The SEC policy is a sham. Yes, it was politically successful, but I want to point out to you – I mentioned I grew up in the Latrobe Valley; so did a bloke I know – the people who knew the SEC the best did not fall for it. That is why the bloke over there by the name of Martin Cameron is actually sitting there as the member for Morwell, because the people in the valley did not fall for it; they understood it was a sham, because they understand the power industry better than anyone. The SEC policy is not what Victorians were sold. It will be, in the long-term, a failure, and it will be Victorians that will pay the cost.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (16:08): Yes, I think I am feeling revved up here, because we have just had a little trip back to the 1950s and I want to bring us back to 2023. How about that? How about we come here and now? They are back in the past, and that is why they get so angry and cranky about this stuff. They know it is a winner, and it is a winner because it is providing a clean energy future. And that is exactly what Victorians want. I think the member for Gippsland South was saying, 'Oh, investment, it all just magically came to Victoria – magic, all on its own.' Legislated Victorian renewable energy targets, the Victorian renewable energy target auctions; VRET1 and VRET2 help us meet our renewable energy targets by providing long-term contracts that create investment certainty to build new energy-generation projects. That is not magic, that is excellent government policy delivering for Victoria. Okay, we have ticked that off. It is not magic but real investment, real policy. You would not know anything about that, would you, over there?

I heard the member for Croydon querying the impact of renewables on power prices. I want to quote from the *Guardian* article ‘Record renewables help bring down Australia’s energy prices and emissions’:

Australia’s record levels of renewable energy helped extend the slide in wholesale power prices in the first three months of 2023, displacing fossil fuels and sending carbon emissions from the sector to new lows for the first quarter.

Fancy that!

The latest energy dynamics report by the Australian Energy Market Operator (Aemo) showed wholesale spot prices in the national electricity market (NEM) averaged \$83/MWh, down more than a 10th from the December quarter and two-thirds lower than the record average \$264/MWh in the June quarter last year.

Rooftop solar output alone averaged almost 3GW for the March quarter, up 23% from a year earlier. That increase contributed to a drop in “operational demand” in the NEM to an average of 14.38GW, or the lowest since 2005. Low demand records were set in –

get this –

Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

Who knew!

“Growing renewable output across the NEM helped drive a first-quarter record with 12% of dispatch intervals having negative or zero prices,” the Aemo chief executive, Daniel Westerman, said. “Between 9am and 5pm, wholesale electricity prices were negative in South Australia and Victoria 60% and 55% of the time, respectively.”

I hope that that allays some of the concerns of the opposition as to why we have an aggressive transition to renewables, not only for the benefit of the planet but also to put downward pressure on power prices. Maybe they did not watch the news over the past week or so, I do not know, perhaps because it was inconvenient – an inconvenient truth.

Secondly, they were querying also about the jobs projected with regard to being supported through the State Electricity Commission. The total figure comes out of modelling which we released – no secrets here – that is created by hitting the 95 per cent Victorian renewable energy target and is online for all to see. We have already created more than 5000 jobs in large-scale renewables. So if you look at what we have already achieved, you can see that we will continue on delivering, because we have already delivered. I think also the member for Croydon was querying our government with regard to delivering on major projects, and I was thinking of all those level crossings that we have delivered already to date, and I was thinking, ‘Hey, didn’t they pay attention to those?’ No, again it is an inconvenient truth because they know we deliver, and actually the electorate knows that we deliver. We have done it over and over again. And guess what, we are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country, and since this government was elected in 2014, we have cut emissions by more – get this – than any other state. So if you need proof that we know how to deliver on this issue, just look at our record. It is there for all to see. We have the strongest climate change –

Members interjecting.

Nina TAYLOR: Get this – again, it is not just magic, it is actually practical policy implementation. We have the strongest climate change legislation in the country, and Victorians voted overwhelmingly for the next steps in our ambitious agenda because they are not silly. I have heard some comments over there about Victorians not understanding about the SEC and that they should know better. I think they understand very well, thank you very much. I trust the electorate on this one. Our targets of 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035 and net zero by 2045 align Victoria – get this – with the Paris goals of limiting global warming to 1.5°degrees Celsius. I tell you what, the electorate – at least I can speak for the constituents of Albert Park – absolutely care about this. And I do not think it is only in Albert Park, I think it is actually across the state. They genuinely care about the future of their children. On the one hand they want to put downward pressure on power prices, but they also want a clean energy future so they have a planet that is actually worth living on.

We know that our targets are delivering the most rapid reduction of emissions – get this yet again, because we have had all this querying about delivery. Well, I will tell you now: we are delivering. Our targets are delivering the most rapid reduction in emissions in Australia. I will repeat, because I do not think they are listening. They are not listening again. They are not getting it, so I am going to repeat this: our targets are delivering the most rapid reduction of emissions in Australia, unlocking billions of dollars of investment and creating thousands of jobs. Again, it is not just magic. It is not just because somebody randomly decided to come here and invest but because of a significant amount of very bold reform that our government has undertaken since coming back into government in 2014. We are investing almost \$2 billion in programs to reduce emissions, so you can see it is not magic but a clear and considered and pragmatic approach to transitioning to clean energy. And we make no apologies for moving away from fossil fuels, okay. I felt like we were back in the 1950s because of all this talk about gas, gas, gas. Well, hang on a minute, have you looked at what the world is doing? They are going for renewables, and why? And querying this offshore investment – why? This is the way to go. We have set a nation-leading offshore wind target that will generate 2 gigawatts of offshore wind, and it will come online by 2032. But guess what, we cannot just kick the can down the road, and I think that is what those opposite want to do. We have to do the investment now, now, now. Now is the time for the future of the children of Victoria. It will generate 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040.

Let us have a look at those opposite when it comes to renewables. This is why we get all this scoffing over there. When last in government the opposition increased retail electricity prices by 34.1 per cent – that was quarter 4 in 2010 versus quarter 3 in 2014. Under the previous Liberal government gas and electricity disconnections doubled – 28,959 versus 58,503 – leaving vulnerable Victorians without power and heating. Since 2014 the Liberals have voted against or tried to gut the following energy bills in Parliament: Climate Change Bill 2016, Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Bill 2017, Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Amendment Bill 2019, Energy Legislation Amendment (Licence Conditions) Bill 2020, Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Bill 2021. By opposing Victoria's renewable energy targets, guess what, those querying the jobs that are being supported through the SEC were actually putting thousands of jobs at risk – how ironic. But it is true to form when you look at the massive opposition, the consistent opposition, by the opposition to any transition to renewable energy. You cannot take them seriously when they say, 'Oh, no, we really support clean energy, but' – there is always a 'but'. They do not get it. They are stuck in the 1950s, and the electric – the electorate – knows this.

Members interjecting.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, pardon the pun – electric. The electorate knows this, and that is why we are charging ahead with investment in clean energy supported through the SEC.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:18): I was actually hoping the Minister for Energy and Resources would be at the table because, as old sparring partners in the energy portfolio, I was hoping to kind of pick her up on a couple of little points on this particular motion. It is great to see the government up and about really talking about smoke and mirrors, because that is what we have got here with the State Electricity Commission of Victoria – nothing but smoke and mirrors.

We had, just in the kick-off to the election campaign, a big talk about this fantastic shiny new product called the SEC. We were all ready to go on this shiny new product, and then we were a little bit disappointed because the Premier did not turn up in his North Face jacket but in his SEC jacket, because what we got was not a business plan but an SEC logo. So that was effectively what the plan was – no detail, no substance about the SEC, but a great logo to replace his North Face jacket with his SEC jacket. So here we are months later all raring to go, are all raring to find out about what this detail is that is finally going to bring down energy prices, give us security, give us reliability and transition us to renewables. We are all ready to go, what, six months in, and what do we have still – an SEC jacket. That is about all we have got – no detail, no substance, just a logo. And let me tell you, a logo is not going to bring down energy prices. A logo is not going to keep the lights on. A logo is not going

to actually ensure that people are going to be able to pay those energy bills – those who are suffering in Victoria more than anyone in any other state.

This minister and this government talk a really big game when it comes energy about how wonderfully they have done and what they have done. All that this government has done is push up energy prices, and the most vulnerable Victorians are paying the price for the high energy prices. On this side we all agree in a renewables transition. It is really, really important, and we have got to look at energy for the future. But you need a plan to get to energy for the future, not just a logo, and that is what this so-called SEC idea is all about.

I heard the member for Albert Park talking about ‘back to the future’. Well, this is very much back to the future in terms of the SEC, because it did not work back then under the Cain–Kirner governments, which actually created and shut down the SEC. They shut it down because it was not working. The Labor government under Joan Kirner shut it down. Never let the facts get in the way of a good story, but all of a sudden it was Jeffrey Kennett’s problem. I can tell you, as we have reminded this government and will continue to do, it was Joan Kirner that actually switched the lights off on the SEC – and fair enough, because what we needed at the time was to transition into competition. We needed to ensure that we had people coming in to deliver in a competitive way a solution that would bring down prices and deliver security, and that is what we need to do today. We need to ensure we actually get people investing in the energy of the future, whether it be solar, batteries, wind or whatever it may be, even hydrogen. We need to be looking at all of these opportunities in terms of that investment. When you have got the government effectively saying they are going to take out competition, it just simply does not work.

Even in the very first parliamentary sitting and the very first question time, the minister did not have a clue about what the SEC was going to deliver. The minister herself has not been over the brief of her own portfolio. She got up in the first question time and she said that the SEC was going to be 100 per cent controlled by the government – publicly owned, 100 per cent – when initially in the lead-up it was 49–51, with the government owning 51 per cent. Now, at the first sitting of Parliament in this term of government, when they can really talk up their big game on the SEC, beyond the logo, to a plan, it was going to be 100 per cent owned, and she had to correct that. She also said in that first press conference that it was going to bring down prices, and within a week we saw a 30 per cent hike in prices. So this is not working.

We saw, as the member for Gippsland South said very eloquently in his contribution, that the government during the election spoke about how the opposition are going to frack. ‘There’s no gas.’ There is no gas? So why are we talking about onshore gas when there is no gas? The government themselves, prior to the election, issued additional licences for bringing on onshore gas and then said there were not any. You cannot have your cake and eat it too. There either is or there is not, and do not use it when it suits you. We know that the Minister for Energy and Resources has an ideological opposition towards gas. She thinks it is an all-or-nothing proposition, but what she does not understand is you need a sensible transition. That is what you need; that is what people expect. We are all for that transition, and that is why the Liberal–Nationals have been talking about this for a while. When you switch off coal, you cannot all of a sudden just switch on the wind and batteries and solar and make sure it is all going to work. You need to transition to firm up the energy when the wind is not blowing, when the sun is not shining and the batteries have run out. That is what you need to do. You also cannot cut households off from gas. You cannot cut them off from gas, and that is what this government want to do – they want to cut vulnerable Victorians off from gas. They said, ‘What we’ll do is we’ll give you a couple of thousand dollars, and that will sort it.’ Well, that will not hold.

The minister has come back – that is fantastic. I have got the minister for energy back. That is terrific. What was wonderful was the minister for energy was up and about during the election, and they even ran a truck around our electorate talking about fracking. And do you know what, I thank the minister for what she did in terms of diverting all of her energy into my electorate, because I got a bounce – it

actually increased my margin, because the minister was so focused on me and not worried about herself. I am not sure what the actual minister's own margin was after the election, but I am pretty sure it went down by about 10 points.

James Newbury: 10 points?

David SOUTHWICK: Yes, about 10 points. The minister was so focused on running around ranting and raving during the election, sending trucks and talking pork pies about fracking around the electorate, not focused on what she should be doing. That is where this government really loses the game and the focus.

What Victorians are dealing with at the moment are high energy prices. What Victorians are dealing with at the moment is uncertainty. What Victorians are dealing with at the moment is a government that has no more than a logo when it comes to the SEC, and this will not stack up when it comes to a future that Victorians need. When you look at the issues about so many people that are sleeping rough, so many people that are on the poverty line, so many people that cannot afford to pay their energy prices in Victoria, that is what this government should be focused on.

What we should be talking about today with this motion is how the government plan to deliver lower energy prices, certainty and a future – how they plan to do it, not ideology but a way that we work together on this. You talk about how we actually ensure we firm up with gas, you look at where hydrogen comes in going forward and what other solutions there are and you make sure this stuff is connected. The biggest joke in what this government did when it came to any renewables is they located these renewable projects all across the state and you cannot connect them up. You have got idle solar and you have got idle wind farms because they are not connected. It is like having a Ferrari and no road to run it on or having an EV and having no road to run it on, and that is what they have done.

Now they are talking about 'Oh, you know what? We'll look at potentially offshore' and whether that is going to be connected. Seriously! The good member for Morwell knows that you have a plan. Sir John Monash had a plan, and what he did with the Latrobe Valley was he located energy together and ensured that it was all pumped right across the state. Where is the government's plan? An SEC logo on a jacket – that is where their plan is. Unfortunately all of those projects or many of those projects, wind and solar, are still not connected. They are still not connected, and the cost of connecting them is outrageous.

This is why it is very concerning, because you have got to ensure you have a plan, that you connect things up affordably and that you work with the community as part of doing all of this – all the stuff that has been neglected by this government. We have a government that does no more than actually things by press release. We have a budget that is going to be a horror coming up in the next few weeks, which all Victorians are going to have to pay the price for. We have blowout after blowout after blowout. Do you seriously think that this government should be trusted to actually set up the SEC when you have got major projects with \$30 billion so far of cost blowouts? You want to trust this lot to have a go at the SEC? I do not think so. The Andrews Labor government could not manage a chook raffle. They could not manage anything. They cannot manage money. They cannot be trusted. This is another joke. It is another press release. It is another logo without substance, and again this whole motion is a joke – just like the minister for energy is a joke.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (16:28): For those watching at home, there is nothing wrong with your speakers. That background noise is a very embarrassed and shamed opposition who have had a horror week and are here speaking against one of the signature policies of the Andrews Labor government. But before I get stuck into this motion, I do want to just make the observation that for some reason I am usually following the member for Caulfield. I do not know why, but I am usually following the member for Caulfield in the speaking list. I do not know how many ladders I have walked under to deserve that, but it means that I have to listen to at least part of his speech. So I have listened to many contributions by the member for Caulfield. Look, he is not a bad guy. I will admit he

is all right, he is okay. But you know what? When you are a Liberal MP who starts celebrating the fact that they did not lose the seat of Caulfield, you know they are in a very bad way – a very bad way indeed. But you know what?

A member interjected.

Nick STAIKOS: On the motion, that is right. Do not worry, I am getting to it. Come on. Look, it is nearly the end. I bet you are all very pleased it is nearly the end of the parliamentary sitting week, because it has been a pretty bad week for you, I have got to say, and it is only going to get worse.

There are four points to this motion, and the first point is celebrating the fact that this government is bringing back the SEC. From those opposite we are always hearing a complete rewriting of history – that it was not the Kennett government that privatised the electricity system. Well, the thousands of workers in the 1990s who lost their jobs know who privatised that system. It was those opposite, and they opposed bringing it back into government hands. This government has the credentials to do that. We have a renewable energy target that leads Australia – to reach 95 per cent renewables by 2035 and net zero by 2045 – and we are already on our way there. We are already on our way there because we have targets of 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035 and net zero by 2045, which align Victoria with the goals in the Paris agreement.

We are doing this at both a macro level and a local level. The last four years we have had something called, for instance, the Solar Homes program, which has been embraced by Victorians right around our great state. In my own electorate I think we have had 1500 or so installations covered by a rebate under the Solar Homes program, so it has obviously been taken up by a number of residents of the Bentleigh electorate. What that ultimately means is we have got more Victorians contributing to the grid. Part of this motion talks about the government's policy of installing 100 neighbourhood batteries across Victoria, which will triple the number of homes with access to a battery and provide crucial extra storage capacity for local communities. These batteries will store this clean, cheap energy when it is abundant during the day and feed it back into the grid when it is needed at night, keeping the lights on and power bills down.

It does not take a genius to work out how a battery works, but I do want to relay a bit of a story from election day. Obviously I, like many Labor candidates across the state on polling day and throughout the pre-poll period, was very busy pushing our SEC policy quite proudly, because it is a proud Labor policy. I think I was at the McKinnon Secondary College booth, which is the largest booth in the Bentleigh electorate.

A member: Massive. They love you there.

Nick STAIKOS: They do love us there; 66 per cent we won at the McKinnon Secondary College booth. That is no surprise, no surprise at all. But of course, given it is the largest booth, I did end up there with my opponent. Somebody came up to me to ask about energy policy, and we started talking about our policy on reviving the State Electricity Commission. Part of that was a discussion on batteries, at which point my opponent sort of intervened in this discussion, and she really did, I would say, bag our policy of 100 neighbourhood batteries. I pointed out to her that she drives an electric car, and she said, 'Yes, but I have to charge it.' Yes, you do have to charge a battery, and you can charge it with renewable energy. This government is investing heavily in renewable energy, and that is the point – that all of these households that have taken advantage of our Solar Homes project are then able to feed into the grid.

This government, I think it is clear, has a vision for a big Victoria, whether that is in transport – whether that is the Suburban Rail Loop, whether that is the Metro rail tunnel, whether that is creating a public transport system that is befitting of a great city of the world, and that is what Melbourne is – whether that is in health and education, whether that is in commercialising innovations from our world-leading universities here in the state of Victoria or whether that is in being a leader in green energy. We do have a big vision. That is why we are making this investment.

The SEC is not just, as the member for Caulfield said, an emblem on a shirt or a bit of window-dressing; the SEC is actually already working. The minister has not wasted a day in reviving the State Electricity Commission. In fact she has recently announced that the government will deliver the first SEC project by the end of the year, which will accelerate renewable energy transition and ensure Victorians get their fair share of the profits of this massive investment in our zero-emissions future. That project will be in Victoria and will be at least 100 megawatts, powering around 60,000 homes. It is already making a big difference.

We have talked about how those opposite privatised the energy system and a lot of people lost their jobs. Bringing back the SEC is going to support 59,000 jobs, which is absolutely significant, and the central mission of this government over the last eight years has been to provide jobs and opportunities for Victorians, using the power of the state government as the biggest purchaser of goods and services in this state to provide jobs and opportunities for Victorians. That has been central mission in everything we have done. It has always been a policy that has made sense. What never made sense is that those opposite in the 1990s sold off the system. It did not make sense.

Sam Groth: Don't do it.

Nick STAIKOS: I will do it, and I will keep doing it, member for Nepean, because it is what happened in the 1990s, and all it did was create billions of dollars in profits for multinational companies. And what have the Victorian people got to show for it? Ageing infrastructure and higher prices. Well, we are doing something about that. We are already doing something about that. There are many people in my electorate who have taken advantage of the power saving bonus – about 15,000 people, I believe, in the Bentleigh electorate have already applied for and received the latest round of the power saving bonus. We are doing something about investing in renewable energy, bringing back the SEC and using the profits of the SEC to bring power prices down for hardworking Victorians. I commend the motion to the house.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (16:37): It is a pleasure to speak to this motion. I am hopeful and optimistic to hear about the SEC. I do have a few questions, though. We should think a little bit about the original SEC, the one that some of us are possibly old enough to remember. It was 100 per cent government owned – 100 per cent of generation was government owned, 100 per cent of power transmission was government owned and 100 per cent of retail was government owned. There was no shopping around, there was no need to go online and get 250 bucks to help you choose between different companies – there was just one, and it was the SEC. What is being proposed now is of course a very different thing, but you have got to start somewhere, and I imagine from what the budget might be looking like in a few weeks, there will not be the spare cash to just shell out and renationalise the whole lot.

But why are we so interested in this renewable energy? Even if the SEC is starting small, it is starting on renewable energy. It is said to start with 51 per cent of 4.5 gigawatts. Just to give you a sense of that, currently Victoria is generating and consuming about 6 gigawatts, so if the SEC is to have 51 per cent of 4.5, we will have just over a third roughly in the SEC of the generation capacity. That is when the renewables are going at full tilt, which of course they will not be all the time. So why renewable energy generation? Why is that important now? It is important because of climate change. Too often we are hearing spin from the government about the SEC as the solution to climate change, but we all know that climate change is due to emissions from transport, from farming, from construction and from burning coal and gas, and only some of that is for generating electricity.

We have actually got quite a good story to tell in Victoria about the reduction in coal being used to generate electricity. When I last looked, we were down to about 100,000 tonnes of brown coal a day. We have clearly got a long way to go. It is hard to imagine what 100,000 tonnes of brown coal looks like, but if it was on a train, that train would have 1200 wagons and be 21 kilometres long, and we would be burning through that train load of coal every day. It is pretty much all carbon. It all goes up into the atmosphere, and it stays up there for over 100 years. That is a prodigious sum. It is hard to

imagine that much coal all being burnt in a single day and all going skywards, and at the rate we are going it is going to take well over a decade before we close that down.

It is worth thinking about Victoria's brown coal. It is the most polluting coal in Australia. Collectively our three coal-fired power stations put about a tonne of mercury into the atmosphere as well as disease-causing sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. The sooner we get off coal, the healthier the people of the Latrobe Valley and surrounding areas will be. However, when we get to the magic 95 per cent renewables by 2035, which is discussed in this motion, we will stop burning coal for electricity, but we will not stop exploiting coal, because unfortunately the government is sanctioning a large project to turn brown coal into hydrogen – a multibillion-dollar project to produce hydrogen to create clean energy in Japan while leaving all the resultant CO₂ here in Australia to be stored by the untried carbon capture and storage methods, which are really not working at economic scale anywhere. So I really think a great job for the SEC would be to expand sufficiently so that projects like this are not necessary. We do not want to continue exploiting coal for anything – whether it is hydrogen or electricity – after this decade.

I have got a few questions for the SEC. Remembering that the original SEC owned transmission and retail, will this SEC confine itself to generation? After all, we have already got a lot of privately owned renewable generation, but transmission, which is one of the big bottlenecks – getting electricity from the sun-rich north of Victoria down to Melbourne – is a natural monopoly. A great place for the SEC to get involved would be in building and owning the transmission capacity that Victoria needs for the renewable transition.

The other question I have got is: when we get to 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035, that is just for electricity; what about the 2 million Victorian homes that are heated with gas? Local gas supplies are diminishing, and the government is unfortunately opening up offshore and onshore gas exploration, including around the Twelve Apostles. More than that, they are entertaining the prospect of gas import terminals in Corio Bay. And where would that gas come from? Most likely from northern Australia, from places like the Beetaloo Basin, where the gas will be obtained by fracking. It is unfortunate that we went to so much effort to end fracking in Victoria, and there is a distinct possibility that we will be importing fracked gas to Victoria in a few years, when in fact – here is a great job for the SEC – Victorian homes could be racing to get off gas. The SEC could be electrifying homes, electrifying heating and electrifying hot water so that Victorians do not have to burn climate change-inducing gas to heat their homes.

Again, I am old enough to remember some houses near where I lived that had a gold medallion stuck up on the wall near the front door, with the characteristic sunray logo of the SEC. These were 100 per cent electric homes: if you had a 100 per cent electric home, there was some SEC promotion where you got this gold medal. I have no idea why people did it, but they did. Right now that gold medal would mean something. If we could put gold medals on homes that got off gas – SEC gold medals, why not – that would be a real blow in the fight against climate change. With the right sorts of incentives for home energy efficiency and for electrification of heating and hot water we could get all of Victoria's homes plastered with gold medals and get them off gas.

The idea that gas is essential for the transition is an idea that comes from people who have not heard of batteries. The SEC is proposed to fund 100 community batteries, which is a good idea, although we will need a good deal more than that. Fortunately, there will be very large batteries in many driveways before long as people take their new electric vehicles home, and I am very keen to hear from the Minister for Energy and Resources what use the government will be making of privately owned electric vehicles in storing energy generated at lunchtime to power our cooking and our lights at dinnertime. One of the biggest challenges, apart from transmission, for the transition away from coal and towards renewable energy will be how we shift the glut of renewable energy from the middle of the day to the shortage of renewable energy in the evenings, and privately owned electric vehicles will be part of the solution. I am keen to hear what the SEC will do to assist with that.

We have just heard about how the SEC will create jobs building renewable generation, but we need to hear about jobs being created – investing in transmission and in other kinds of storage, not just batteries but pumped hydro. I was disappointed to learn that the Snowy Hydro 2 has had a major setback with the collapse of a tunnel-boring machine. Another area that the SEC could get involved in is electricity demand management. Quite a lot of industries consume a lot of electricity. Think about Alcoa. Victoria's biggest electricity customer is the aluminium smelter in Portland. Retrofitting that so that it can shut down for a few hours or overnight, as has been done in some aluminium smelters in Europe, would allow the smelter to act as a kind of reverse battery, operating – making aluminium and making money – during the day when there is plenty of renewable energy and shutting down overnight when there is not. So demand management is an important role for the SEC.

Owning 51 per cent of 4½ gigawatts, which is what the SEC is said to do, is a good start, but it is not enough. Until the government answers some of the questions I have put up this afternoon we will not know how much the new SEC is contributing to our fight against climate change. I will conclude by saying I am full of hope and optimism. I just do not want to be let down by the SEC.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (16:48): I rise today to support the motion under consideration. Last year Labor promised the Victorian people that a re-elected Andrews Labor government would bring back the State Electricity Commission. We said we will reach 95 per cent renewables by 2035 and net zero by 2045. We promised we would install 100 neighbourhood batteries across Victoria, and along the path to a more sustainable future we vowed to deliver 59,000 renewable energy jobs. The Victorian people resoundingly endorsed this platform at the 2022 state election, making clear that Victoria is committed to a renewable energy led future.

Thirty years ago our essential services were sold off to private multinationals. These private companies increased prices, sacked workers and have charged Victorians \$23 billion – far more than they paid. They made huge profits while dramatically increasing power bills. The Liberals have shown over and over again that they cannot be trusted to stand up for the Victorian people when it matters most. That is why I am proud to support the government's plan to not only bring back the SEC but also enshrine it in the constitution so those opposite cannot sell it off again.

One of the highlights of the campaign for me was when I first got the call in late October about the government's plan to bring back the SEC. It truly made my Labor heart sing. Last week I had the pleasure of visiting John Fawkner secondary college with the Premier, and we talked to kids in the vocational major class, two of whom are keen to be electricians. It is our government's plan to bring back the SEC, which will give students like these secure and well-paid jobs to aspire to. I remember my friend's dad, Bill from Hadfield, who was a proud SEC linesman, and his sons followed in his footsteps until the Liberals gambled with the future of Victorians and sold off the SEC. Our new SEC will help train the next generation of maintenance workers, electricians, welders and mechanics – highly qualified, sought-after and highly paid workers. The Labor government has committed to delivering \$424 million in energy and training packages to help workers upskill and 6000 positions for apprentices and trainees. To train these new workers our government will establish an SEC centre of training excellence. The centre will coordinate and accredit courses in clean energy; it will connect our TAFEs, registered training organisations and the industry. The government is also committed to adding clean energy to our VCE vocational major. We know the SEC will again provide good, secure jobs for Victorians and particularly the kids in the Broadmeadows electorate. I am thrilled by the idea of the SEC recruiting the workers of the future at career nights across our schools.

The SEC will not only provide secure jobs for our apprentices but also provide huge opportunities for manufacturing in Victoria and Australia. We have a chance to ensure that we can manufacture high-quality Australian-made components locally. We can make sure that we are not reliant on overseas products to deliver essential services to our people. This again is very important to electorates like mine with manufacturing bases already in place. As manufacturing comes back to our state, communities like mine have the most to benefit. We are already transitioning to advanced manufacturing. We have got the skills, we have got the people, we have got some real partners in CSL,

Brite Industries and Kangan TAFE and we have got the know-how to help power this state and make sure our kids have good jobs to aspire to and a clean and secure government-owned energy supply.

The clean energy future is not reliant on coal, and the coal-powered plants are getting old, breaking down and closing. Last year AGL announced that they will be closing Victoria's biggest power station a decade earlier than previously anticipated, having reaped billions in profits from Victorians. In June last year the Western Australian government made the decision to close the state's two remaining coal power stations by 2029. We are at a critical point as a nation. Our energy supply chains need to be independent of corporate interests to ensure energy security and resilience. In a highly turbulent world we need to ensure that our energy supply is not vulnerable to supply disruptions, price volatility and geographical risks. In June 2020 the Australian Energy Market Operator forecast that up to 60 per cent of coal-fired capacity in the national electricity market across the eastern states would retire by 2030. To deal with the loss of this coal-fired capacity the market operator says that the amount of large-scale renewable energy in the grid needs to rise ninefold by 2050 to keep up with the increasing demand for electricity, and the best way to ensure this happens is through a government-owned SEC supercharging our transition to a clean economy and a greener future.

Public ownership of energy resources through the revival of the SEC as an active energy market participant will build new renewable energy projects and give us the energy security we need. The SEC will become an energy market proponent under this government's 10-year plan to deliver cleaner, cheaper energy, with all profits invested back into the energy system. We will finally be able to make sure it is the Victorian public, not offshore coal companies, who enjoy the returns. The SEC will enable us to produce more electricity than the closing AGL plant, and it will be able to deliver that through renewable energy products.

As growth in renewables continues to drive demand for batteries, this government is moving quickly to ensure that we have neighbourhood batteries that will store clean energy when it is abundant during the day and feed it back into the grid when it is needed at night, keeping the lights on and the power bills down. The state government is installing 100 neighbourhood batteries across Victoria, tripling the number of homes with access to a battery and providing crucial extra storage capacity for local communities. I was very pleased to hear that two of these batteries will be installed in Merri-bek and Hume city councils, which cover my electorate. These neighbourhood batteries will return power to the hands of local communities. It means that more households will have access to cheaper renewable energy even if they do not have their own solar panels.

The cost of living keeps going up, and Victorian families are paying the price. The Andrews Labor government is working every day to drive down energy bills and emissions, and putting electricity back in the hands of Victorians will help us achieve that. This government has a plan to keep the lights on and bills down. The SEC, our renewable energy targets and neighbourhood batteries are all indeed a part of this government's agenda to lower bills for Victorian households. The government has launched multiple programs to provide direct assistance to people who need it most. The power saving bonus is a hugely popular program that has received millions of applicants from across the state. For some families the power saving bonus has effectively meant \$500 in immediate relief to battle the rising bills since July last year, and I cannot tell you how popular it has been in my electorate, with our office helping hundreds of people access the power saving bonus and find a better deal on their electricity through the only trustworthy and government-owned comparison website in the market.

The energy assistance program is another key service that has helped people across the state. In my electorate of Broadmeadows a large number of people do not have internet connection and struggle with applying for grants, concessions and other benefits they may be eligible for. The energy assistance program offers one-on-one help to understand the available energy information supports. It helps you navigate the energy market and make informed decisions about your providers, and it is available on the phone, which is really helpful. It has helped eligible customers, including a constituent of mine, to access a concession that they had previously not been claiming. Concession card holders in our state are eligible for a 17.5 per cent discount on their electricity bill all year. 925,000 households in Victoria

receive the electricity concession every year, and it is only fair that everyone in our state has equitable access to it regardless of their digital literacy.

It is internationally agreed that we face an urgent need to act to reduce emissions and manage climate change. Labor has not just talked about climate action, we have gotten on with delivering on it. We have cut emissions by more than any other state, tripled the amount of renewable energy and created thousands of jobs. We are leading the country on climate action. We have wasted no time in getting on with replacing unreliable and privately owned coal power with clean government-owned renewable energy. Victoria has risen to this challenge, doubling its renewable energy in the past five years, but there is much more to do. To achieve Victoria's target of 75 to 80 per cent reductions by 2035, we need to be bolder and move faster. We need to do more to secure a 95 per cent renewable electricity target by 2035 and aim to reach net zero by 2045. Under the new plan for the SEC, the government will hold a controlling interest in each of these projects. Renewables will replace coal, and these new power stations will be owned by every Victorian to benefit every Victorian. We are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country, and since this government was elected in 2014 we have cut emissions by more than any other state.

While Labor has been working hard to secure a more sustainable future, the Liberal Party has refused to participate in this progress. Since 2014 Liberals have voted against or tried to cut critical pieces of legislation, including the Climate Change Act 2017, the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 and the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Fairness) Act 2021. By voting against these bills, the Liberals have continuously risked the future of thousands of Victorians. Labor knows that the people of Victoria want a more sustainable – *(Time expired)*

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (16:58): I rise to make a brief contribution today on the notice of motion put forward by the Minister for the State Electricity Commission, Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action. I want to begin by commenting on some of what she said in her opening remarks. She talked endlessly about the Liberals being addicted to privatisation and how that is what we are all about, and I have never heard greater hypocritical comments, ever, because we have seen the Andrews Labor government flog off over \$22 billion worth of state assets because they have run out of money. This is what happened when Joan Kirner began the sale of the SEC: the state had run out of money. We have had an almost \$10 billion windfall from the sale of the Port of Melbourne, \$3 billion from the sale of the land titles office, the \$2 million they got for the sale of Snowy Hydro to the federal government, \$7.2 billion not so long ago with the VicRoads 'modernisation' sale, and then we have had a lot of rats and mice. We have had the sale of other land packages, the \$265 million –

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

Bills

Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

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.

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2022*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:**

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: A message will now be sent to the Legislative Council informing them that the bill has been agreed to without amendment.

*Address to Parliament**Address-in-reply***Debate resumed on motion of Martha Haylett:**

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

Governor:

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

And Tim Read's amendment:

That the following words be added to the end of the motion: 'but respectfully regret that the speech fails to announce a ban on new coal and gas projects'.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That such words be added.

Those supporting the amendment by the member for Brunswick should vote yes.

Assembly divided on question:

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

Noes (73): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Martin Cameron, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Annabelle Cleeland, Sarah Connolly, Chris Crewther, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Sam Groth, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, David Hodgett, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Emma Kealy, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Tim McCurdy, Steve McGhie, Cindy McLeish, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, Tim Pallas, John Pesutto, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowsell, Michaela Settle, Ryan Smith, David Southwick, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Peter Walsh, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Kim Wells, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson, Jess Wilson

Question defeated.**Motion agreed to.**

The SPEAKER: I will make arrangements to present the address-in-reply to the Governor's speech to the Governor in due course. I will inform members accordingly and invite you to accompany me.

Bills

Disability and Social Services Regulation Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Ros Spence:

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.

Lower Glenelg River camping

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (17:09): (151) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment, and the action I seek is for all the canoe camps along the lower Glenelg River to be reopened; for the installation and reinstatement, with investment, of floating pontoon launch pads to protect the riverbanks at those camps and also access to toilets; and further, to take action to fix significant errors with the campsite booking system. I met with lovely Ali – Alicia Rentsch – of Paestan Canoe Hire just last week when I was on my mobile office trail down in the south-west of the electorate of Lowan. Ali is running a fabulous canoe company. They take a lot of school groups up and down the lower Glenelg River, and she really does do a fabulous job in making sure that young kids are able to get out and about and enjoy the lower Glenelg in a way that really helps them to connect with nature, to be productive and to really get out and about and enjoy what our environment has to offer.

However, there have been so many issues recently. A number of the camps have been closed down with absolutely no notice. This has meant that schools have not been able to continue with their bookings or, because the camp sites are closed, it is too far a distance for young children to be able to utilise the river. When young kids are canoeing it can be quite hard, especially when there is a headwind, and when these camp sites are closed it means that it is just too much for particularly primary school aged children to be able to enjoy this really important activity. It is a great school camp. You get on the canoe, camp for a couple of nights, spend some time with your mates and get some good life skills as well. There are also significant issues around the camp booking system. You can only book one student at a time in the canoe camps. Ali has to advise people, 'Well, yes, we know that you can't book 12 at once.' You have to actually go in one by one by one, which is exceptionally challenging for everyone who is trying to book. In fact they think, 'Well, I can't get on the river; I won't be able to do that.'

I would like to just thank so much the members of this chamber from the Labor side who are spending a lot of time listening to how good it is on the lower Glenelg River. I hope they are down in that part

of the state soon. We have also had Deuschers camp closed with no notice at all. There are significant issues. While Parks Victoria appear to be shutting down use of the river on the lower Glenelg, which is in a very controlled wide bay, by an accredited canoe operator, at the same time Ali is having people come to her own private property because she has got Crown river frontage, so it would be people coming to access the river in another section which is completely uncontrolled and without any toilets. I urge the minister to look at this area to make sure all these canoe camps are reopened and that we fix the booking site. *(Time expired)*

Early childhood funding

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (17:12): (152) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place. The action I seek is that the minister provides me an update on the Andrews Labor government's rollout of our 50 new government-run early learning centres across Victoria, including in the Loddon, Maryborough, Creswick and Clunes areas in my electorate. I am beyond thrilled that we will deliver brand new early learning centres across Ripon. Our commitment to these centres last year came as a welcome relief for so many families who struggle with lack of access to child care across our region.

I recently met with a group of mums in Wedderburn who have been campaigning for child care options in their area for the past two years as there is currently no child care in the whole of the Loddon shire. Many of them currently work through the night while their babies sleep so that they can keep their businesses running. Some rely on grandparents and even great-grandparents for help. Others have to take their kids to work because there are no other options. I am with these mums all the way, and I am eager for the government-run early learning centres in the Loddon shire to be part of the next rollout of centres. I welcome an update from the minister on how our government is delivering early learning centres across our communities so that our kids can get the best start in life no matter where they live.

Darlingford Upper Goulburn Nursing Home

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (17:13): (153) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers in the other place, and the action I seek is urgent. I ask that the minister ensure funding continues to be provided to Darlingford Upper Goulburn Nursing Home up until the agreed date of 31 October 2023, and I greatly appreciate the support of the Minister for Health today. The Darlingford Upper Goulburn Nursing Home chairman has been informed by the Department of Health that there is no further funding available for the nursing home. This is despite the department previously confirming in writing on 10 August 2022 that financial support would be provided until 31 October 2023. It was on this basis that Darlingford were able to continue operations. The guarantee formed the basis for Darlingford to sign off on their annual audited accounts. Darlingford feel that for the Department of Health to walk away from that commitment five months prior to its expiry would be both ethically and morally wrong.

Without this financial support the nursing home will be declared insolvent and forced to cease operations. Residents will have to be relocated and the staff will lose their jobs. The closure of Darlingford would be a disaster for the residents, staff members and surrounding community, leaving them without this crucial service. It is a not-for-profit nursing home and is one of four in the Murrindindi shire, with two in Yea and one in Alexandra. There are currently 34 residents living at the aged care facility and 80 staff members, including nurses, personal care attendants, food and domestic services and administrative staff members.

The Eildon community is a low socio-economic area with a predominantly ageing demographic. It is so important for the Eildon township to provide an aged care facility to accommodate elderly community members. Darlingford have notified me that they will run out of funds completely by the end of May. Darlingford need urgent short-term financial support to keep the aged care facility operational. They feel the health department is trying to fob off the funding responsibility for nursing homes to the Commonwealth government and back out of its written commitment. The department have suggested the option of an amalgamation with a public hospital. I am not sure that this is

something that is feasible or on the cards. Particularly, residents would still have to relocate away from their home and families and the local employment rate would still decrease.

They have found that Commonwealth grants have continued to trend below budget expectations, driven by low occupancy, which has declined from 77 per cent in March 2022 to 64 per cent in April. The closing of the nursing home would have a negative effect on the Eildon township. It would limit employment opportunities. Families are more likely to leave the area to accommodate their elders, and it would be less enticing for new people to move to the area. And it would certainly be one less care facility in Eildon and the Murrindindi shire.

I do hope the minister can see the significance and urgency in this matter, because it would be a very sad day if closure is the only outcome. As I said earlier, I do thank the Minister for Health for her assistance today.

Clarinda electorate chain of parks

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (17:16): (154) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Environment. The action I seek is for the minister to provide the latest update on the sandbelt chain of parks. It has been a privilege working together with the minister, the City of Kingston, my good friend Cr Steve Staikos and groups and individuals in the community to make the sandbelt chain of parks become a reality.

For many years the residents have lived with historical landfill sites in the City of Kingston, and together we have worked toward the vision of transforming that remediated land into a series of linked parks. It is an ambitious vision, some 355 hectares of parks that offer a wide range of recreational facilities and open spaces within our green wedge, creating networks or chains of parks, but it is one that the Andrews Labor government proudly committed to in 2018. It was an amazing commitment, 355 hectares from Warrigal Road in Moorabbin to Braeside Park in Dingley Village, with walking and biking trails and an adventure play area for local kids, an amazing commitment that we are delivering.

Last year we acquired 83 of the remaining 118 hectares. These parcels were acquired in Heatherton, Clarinda and Clayton South and will be protected from development. Once rehabilitated, the parcels will form a connected chain of parks, trails and open spaces through the Clarinda district. This is an amazing result for the community, hundreds of hectares of connected parkland for families to enjoy and explore, with bike trails and walking trails so they have even more opportunity to get active together. I thank the minister, and I am looking forward to her response.

Berwick electorate police resources

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:18): (155) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police. I ask the Minister for Police to come out and meet community representatives from Berwick and Clyde North in relation to some of the issues around crime through the area. What we have seen is an increase in cars that have been stolen and in people being fearful in their homes with some of the break-ins down there. The community is starting to come together and talk about this. It is not just online; they have been approaching our office now and also their local media about, when they call police, the call-out times – how long it takes Victoria Police to arrive – and some of the issues with people hanging around in the street and, when they call in suspicious behaviour, whether the police have the resources to turn up or not. I think it is important that the minister comes out and meets with this group to talk to them about some of the issues. We would like to actually have some proactive discussions around ways we can put things in place to try and prevent the crime, but police numbers would be the number one.

One of the issues through the area is the Clyde North police station, which was committed to be open and operating by the 2018 election and then was recommitted again to be done and open by the 2022 election. Now the only thing that has been done for that police station is there is a sign saying that it will be ready by 2025. I know all the members that represent that area have seen growth in such numbers

that most infrastructure will not keep up with it, but the infrastructure around ensuring we have safety should and must be put in as a priority.

The land is available. We have been calling on the government to build the station for a long period of time. If we had the station, we could start putting Victoria Police in there, and I think then you would actually start to see people would feel safer. The perception of safety would be higher, and we would be able to have a police vehicle responding through those areas which are difficult to get to. We have got Narre Warren police station and Cranbourne police station. Both do a wonderful job. They do struggle with numbers at the moment. Both of them have vacancies that are causing them some concerns. The difficulty with both those stations is that with roadworks that are going on in the area, when they are called out to respond that can delay them. That is not their fault. Obviously when you get onto Clyde Road and Clyde Road is partly closed or to some of the intersections that maps show you can go through but when you get there you cannot get through, it makes it a real challenge for the response times for Victoria Police down there.

We at the last election committed to bringing in response times. I know the Police Association Victoria want response times, and maybe that is something that we could have a discussion around. If we brought in response times, what would be the reaction from the government and from Victoria Police then when there is something on record, the same as fire and ambulance, when they have to start to have a response time that is acceptable to the Victorian community? Maybe then management may start to have discussions around what their minimum service response is and minimum service requirements. If we could get it to that position, I think that would be fantastic. I ask the minister to come down for a constructive conversation with my local community to talk about police response times and Clyde North police station.

Montmorency Eltham RSL

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (17:21): (156) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Veterans, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Montmorency Eltham RSL in my electorate. I invite the minister to come and learn more about the amazing work the Monty Eltham RSL do in assisting those who have served or who are serving and their families, people who may be seeking friendship, support, information, advocacy and advice. Last month I attended the moving Eltham Anzac Day dawn service and the Were Street, Montmorency, Anzac Day march and service run by the Montmorency Eltham RSL sub-branch.

I give my thanks to the Montmorency Eltham RSL president Glen Ferrarotto, senior vice-president and secretary Andrew Hall, vice-president Graeme Munro and the broader RSL committee, Michael, Kate and staff, for their tireless work. Thank you also to Montmorency service MC Ken Hodgson and Eltham Rotary volunteers for their help with and support of the dawn service, particularly MC Ken Paynter and president Mike Englefield.

A number of local schools also played an important role in these services, and in particular I acknowledge Evey Hunter, Aislinn Tham, Alex Hardy and Scarlett Magnanini from Catholic Ladies College; Mila Berry, Rueben Kelly, Cedric Vivian and Silvie Jenkins from Briar Hill Primary School; Zach Driscoll from Eltham College and choir members Olivia Bhatia, Molly Brennan, Anahatt Kuar Chhina, Jessica Doody, Lucinda Fandert, Peter Gallagher, Lucy Moxon, H Reiger Morrice and Bethany Riggs; Maisie Walsh, Kris Van Der Kamp and Maddie Azzopardi from Eltham High School; Eltham East Primary School; Ryan Lawrence from Montmorency Secondary College; and Matilda Walpole from St Helena Secondary College for the important role that they played in these services. A big thankyou goes to Campbell McKinnon and young Lucas Shen for their exceptional playing of the last post and rouse.

The work the Montmorency Eltham RSL sub-branch does in our community is pivotal not only for the mental health and wellbeing of service people and veterans in our community but also for the community building they do. I invite the minister to come and visit Montmorency Eltham RSL sub-branch to see the incredible work they do firsthand.

Richmond electorate community organisations

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (17:23): (157) My adjournment is for the Treasurer, and the action I seek is to review the funding model and adequately fund our crucial community organisations. Now more than ever the people in my electorate of Richmond are relying on community organisations for support, for advocacy and for advice. Richmond is home to some incredible, crucial community organisations like Cohealth, the Wellington, North Richmond Community Health, Fitzroy Legal Service and the Victorian Public Tenants Association. Others, like the disability resource centre and Women with Disabilities Victoria, provide important advocacy and services to the people of Richmond and across Victoria. But in my short time as the member for Richmond I have heard from countless organisations who are struggling to meet the ever increasing demand for their services with short-term and inadequate project-based funding.

With the state budget set to be released shortly I have written a number of letters of support to the ministers of this government seeking funding for organisations that do critical work for our local community and also for the statewide services based in Richmond that provide support to thousands of people across Victoria. The reality is that these organisations are perpetually battling with uncertainty. With the current lapsing funding model they cannot employ ongoing staff and they cannot plan programs for more than a year or two because they just do not know whether they will be able to pay for them into the future.

These critical organisations should not have to jump through hoops every year and be biting their nails every state budget. They achieve so much with their little and insecure funding. The result of this is not just on the organisations, but it hurts our community – their ability to seek support as tenants, their capacity to flee family violence, their ability to access the health care that they need and their basic rights to a home, to safety and to health. I call on the Treasurer therefore to support these organisations to do their best work with ongoing substantial core funding.

Home building industry

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:25): (158) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs and concerns the recent collapse of Porter Davis. The action that I seek is that the minister provide me with information on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting affected constituents in my electorate of Narre Warren South. Buying a house is the biggest and most important purchase of most people's lives. Saving a deposit takes time, dedication and determination and involves many sacrifices – let alone when the building starts, with the daily stresses of meeting targets and payments and making sure that you get what you want and need for your home. That is why the collapse of a building company has a huge emotional and financial impact on families and communities, including mine in Narre South.

Thankfully, the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority have been set up to protect homebuyers from such collapses, and I understand they are working through hundreds of sites that need to be finalised alongside the liquidators, Grant Thornton. Unfortunately, we now know that many deposits were received by Porter Davis without the mandatory domestic building insurance being taken out. This has devastated many throughout Victoria, including in my electorate. To that end, I would appreciate if the minister could provide further information on how the Andrews Labor government is supporting hardworking families in my electorate who have been affected by the collapse of Porter Davis, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Home building industry

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:27): (159) My adjournment is for the Assistant Treasurer, and the action I am seeking is a full and comprehensive review of Victoria's building insurance scheme, including a full audit of current residential building contracts to ensure the requirements for builders to take out domestic building insurance have been met. Recent events have highlighted the significant regulatory failures in this space that are undermining Victorians' confidence in the residential construction

industry when building their own home. The minister will of course be aware that over 500 Victorian families paid a deposit to Porter Davis prior to its collapse. These families were effectively stranded when it became clear that they did not have domestic building insurance taken out on their behalf.

While the coalition welcomes the government's decision last month to compensate these families for their clear regulatory failure, other customers in the same situation have been unfairly carved out of the eligibility criteria simply because they used a different builder. In particular, there are a number of families who have found themselves in exactly the same situation as Porter Davis customers when their builder Hallbury Homes collapsed earlier this year. Yesterday I met with the Hallbury Homes customers on the steps of this place to hear firsthand the incredibly distressing situation they find themselves in. They are simply seeking to have the insurance they are legally entitled to and that they paid for as part of their deposit honoured, just like those Porter Davis customers. As one of these Hallbury Homes customers has since written to me:

We felt despondent as our dreams of building our own house were shattered ...

When the announcement came out to assist Porter Davis customers in the same situation as ours, we felt unnoticed, and discriminated against, as our situation was not considered in the same way.

It defies both logic and fairness that there is one set of rules for some homebuyers and another for other homebuyers. The government needs to take responsibility for its regulatory failure and provide insurance to any customer that has paid for it. And I welcome the Assistant Treasurer's indication, given in this place yesterday, that the government will consider other homebuyers, such as Hallbury Homes victims, on a case-by-case basis.

It is clear, however, that the rot in the building insurance framework extends beyond the Porter Davis and Hallbury Homes victims. I have been contacted by many Victorians whose experiences with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority and the Victorian Building Authority paint a stark picture of a regulatory and compliance framework that is quite simply ineffective. Customers have told me of stories of months or even years of waiting for VMIA claims to be actioned and processed. The Porter Davis and Hallbury Homes insurance fiascos are just reflective of the broader policy and enforcement issues of the VMIA.

Despite having these clear issues brought to his attention nine months ago and being presented with options to de-risk consumers in this space, the Assistant Treasurer has failed to take effective action. We are in the midst of a housing affordability crisis in this state, and we must restore confidence to the home building industry if we are going to tackle housing affordability. To do this, Victoria's building insurance scheme must be fully reviewed so that we have a system that works to protect Victorians into the future and homebuyers can be certain that their deposit is insured.

Northcote electorate small businesses

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:30): (160) I am delighted to direct my adjournment tonight to our excellent Minister for Small Business, who is working every day to put small businesses at the very heart of Victoria's economic agenda. The action that I seek is for the minister to visit the shopping strips of Northcote and Fairfield to meet and hear from our local traders and celebrate their achievements. Small businesses have faced significant challenges over the last few years, but what has shone through is their perseverance, innovation and just how much our community love to support and shop local. Whether it is Cedar Bakery, Captain Robbo, Think Thornbury, the Northcote Social Club, Moon Dog, Briki Cafe, Three Locals, Tickled Pink or Frank's barber shop, the inner north is buzzing with vibrant and diverse businesses that are the lifeblood of our local economies and precincts.

As the member for Northcote, I have been proud to support some really exciting initiatives that will showcase the talents and offerings of our local traders, creatives and musicians while bringing new visitors to the area and turbocharging our local economy. Plans are in the works for our iconic High Street, Northcote, to host a fantastic family-friendly festival next year, with a \$300,000 grant from Business Victoria, and I give my thanks to Zowie Minchin, who was the president of Northcote Rise

for many years and has just stepped down recently. She has done an outstanding job leading Northcote Rise, and I wish her well for the future.

Later this year the whole tramline through Northcote, Thornbury and Preston will be alive with the Eighty-Six music festival, backed by a \$600,000 grant from the Victorian government. This music festival is going to be extraordinary. It is being curated by the extremely talented Woody McDonald, former program director for the Meredith and Golden Plains festivals, along with Johanna Greenway, who has decades of experience in the industry. It will well and truly put Northcote on the map as a live music destination, and we are backing it.

This is just a snippet of what is going on in the inner north. Down in Fairfield the traders organise a wonderful family fun day that draws in over 1000 people each year. Up north new businesses like the Keys vintage bowling alley have opened their doors, offering unique experiences for everyone. I encourage anyone who is interested in coming to this awesome vintage bowling alley to get down to Preston. The Small Business Bus will also be coming to Thornbury next week and will offer free business advice to traders or anyone thinking of starting a small business in the inner north.

We are so proud of our community, and we look forward to welcoming the minister and hearing firsthand from our traders about their work, their aspirations and how we can support them to continue their outstanding efforts.

Responses

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (17:32): The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, as did the member for Clarinda. The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. The member for Eildon raised a matter for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. The member for Berwick raised a matter for the Minister for Police. The member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Veterans. The member for Richmond raised a matter for the Treasurer. The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs. The member for Kew raised a matter for the Assistant Treasurer. The member for Northcote raised a matter for the Minister for Small Business. I will refer them accordingly.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:33 pm.