



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 22 June 2023

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60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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Paul Hamer, Michaela Settle, Meng Heang Tak and Jackson Taylor

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Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

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Emma Kealy

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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 ¹	Ringwood	Ind	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
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

¹ ALP until 5 August.

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 22 June 2023

The SPEAKER (Maree Edwards) took the chair at 9:33 am, read the prayer and made an acknowledgement of country.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, I just wish to raise a point of order with you about how the call is allocated for procedural debates in this house. My understanding is that on procedural debates such as the government business program the call is allocated to three speakers on each side of the house, 5 minutes each, which often leaves the crossbench members of this house unable to speak on procedural motions or having to negotiate amongst only three spots. I seek your guidance on whether there might be a more proportional or fair way to allocate the call on procedural motions going forward.

The SPEAKER: I will take the member for Melbourne's point of order on notice. However, I do believe that that would be a matter for the Standing Orders Committee to determine.

Bills

Public Administration and Planning Legislation Amendment (Control of Lobbyists) Bill 2023

Introduction

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:34): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Public Administration Act 2004 and the Victorian Planning Authority Act 2017 to provide more control over lobbyists.

The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission handed down a very important report. They handed down a very important report in relation to Operation Clara. It was tabled in February earlier this year, and it revealed that lobbying behaviour in this state was not as it should be. And though the Premier used words that played down the importance of this report, what Victorians saw in plain-speaking language was corruption occurring in this state.

The coalition will be moving to clean up what the government should have cleaned up and has not cleaned up. The report found a number of important things, and I refer directly to those findings. The report found that a former Victorian minister, Theo Theophanous, improperly lobbied in favour of the proposal on behalf of the education city, including by misusing his position as a member of the board of the Metropolitan Planning Authority, which later became the Victorian Planning Authority. He failed to declare a conflict of interest and to comply with the requirement to register a lobbying client. In lieu of direct payment for his lobbying, he obtained benefits from the Australian Education City and its associates in the form of donations to his daughter's campaign for election to the Victorian Parliament – a Labor member of this chamber. The Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, after making those important findings, made four recommendations, and I will quote each of those recommendations, because it is important when considering whether this bill should be introduced that the house understands the recommendations of that report. On recommendation 1, IBAC recommends that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet amend the ... *Remuneration Guidelines* to specify:

- a. lobbyist (as defined in the Lobbyist Code of Conduct) is ineligible for appointment to a public entity board that has functions which relate to any matter, on which the lobbyist has represented the interests of third parties in a specific period (with reference to the NSW provisions)
- b. the declaration of private interests template require that the declarant indicate if they are on the lobbyists register ...

On recommendation 2, IBAC recommends that:

The Department of Premier and Cabinet revise the Lobbyist Code of Conduct to:

- a. prohibit public entity board directors from engaging in lobbying activities on any matter that relates to the functions of the public entity

- b. require that public entity board directors comply with integrity requirements, including conflict of interest provisions in relation to representations they have made prior to their appointment ...

On recommendation 3, IBAC recommends that:

The Victorian Public Sector Commission revise the Code of Conduct for Directors to:

- a. prohibit public entity board directors from engaging in lobbying activities on any matter that relates to the functions of the public entity
- b. require that public entity board directors comply with integrity requirements, including conflict of interest provisions in relation to representation they have made prior to their appointment ...

On recommendation 4, IBAC recommends that:

The Minister for Planning amend the VPA Act to specify that proceedings for a summary offence may be commenced within the period of three years after the alleged offence.

All of these findings are the core contents, the sole core contents, of the bill the coalition is proposing to introduce today. These are recommendations made by one of the most important integrity agencies in this state, findings of an inquiry that uncovered a level of corruption occurring in this state that no Victorian would have expected or accepted. No Victorian, certainly, would accept the behaviour, and to find out that they uncovered findings that relate to one of the members of this chamber is deeply concerning – and the practices and behaviour, frankly, of the Department of Premier and Cabinet in the way they operate integrity and oversight in the state. These are important recommendations that need to be introduced into this chamber in the form of this bill, and the coalition will be moving the bill this morning because Victoria needs to see sunlight.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:40): The government will not be supporting the introduction of this bill, and the reason for that is because there are already well-established practices in place for the consideration of all reports that are made by our integrity bodies. So we will address this report in the way that we address any and indeed all of the reports that are made to government from those integrity bodies. I will take this opportunity, while I am on my feet, to again condemn those on the other side for the outrageous attacks on the member for Northcote that have been made in this house.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the house is considering whether an important integrity bill be introduced into this place. We all were here when the Premier attacked a member of this place, but that is not the subject of debate and I would ask the Leader of the House to return to the issue.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand your point of order. I ask the Leader of the House to come back to the introduction of the bill and the debate before the house, which is a procedural debate.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you very much for your guidance, Speaker. I was indeed talking about the introduction of the bill because it was in relation to this bill that the outrageous, scandalous and indeed completely untrue comments were made in relation to the member for Northcote. But again, I rise to let the house know that the government is opposing the introduction of the bill on the basis that we already have well-established processes for the management of and response to reports from integrity agencies.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (09:42): I do not understand why the government would not be opposing the introduction of a bill to give effect to recommendations made by the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. IBAC is supposed to be the integrity watchdog in this state. The Parliament has already seen correspondence from the former IBAC Commissioner Robert Redlich saying that he was concerned that members of the government were undermining IBAC, and now we see that the government is trying to block the implementation of IBAC recommendations.

Members interjecting.

Michael O'BRIEN: The Leader of the House says, 'No, we're not' –

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the House will come to order.

Michael O'BRIEN: The bill that the member for Brighton is seeking to introduce directly implements IBAC recommendations in *Operation Clara*. There is a lot of sensitivity, I detect, on the government side because we do know it was a Labor mate, Theo Theophanous, who was the subject of Operation Clara. It was Theo Theophanous who was exposed by the IBAC investigation for misusing his position on government boards, which he had been appointed to by this government.

Tim Richardson: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Malvern knows that he cannot be going that far into character assassinations on the member for Northcote and others. He should be sticking in the lane of what the member for Brighton put forward, but instead the member for Malvern in his relevance deprivation is straying very far from the content –

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Malvern to stick to the procedural debate before the house.

Michael O'BRIEN: We need to implement this bill and we need to do it now, because corruption in this state can no longer be allowed to flourish and there are people here –

A member: That is not a point of order, Speaker.

Michael O'BRIEN: She has already ruled on the point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Malvern, did you want to raise a point of order?

Members interjecting.

Michael O'BRIEN: She has ruled on the point of order.

The SPEAKER: Member for Malvern, on the procedural debate before the house.

Anthony Carbines: How did that go at the last election? Increased majority over here – how did you go?

Michael O'BRIEN: I increased my majority too, thanks, Carbs.

The SPEAKER: Member for Malvern, I will sit you down.

Michael O'BRIEN: The touchiness of members opposite is extraordinary. Why are they so opposed to the member for Brighton bringing in a bill to implement recommendations of the broad-based anti-corruption commission to clean up lobbyists in this state, to clean up Labor mates in this state? Because Operation Clara showed it was the position which Mr Theophanous had been appointed to by this government on the Victorian Planning Authority that was misused by Mr Theophanous to lobby on behalf of Australian Education City. And instead of payment, what did he seek? In lieu he sought contributions to his daughter's election campaign. This is a matter of public record, and it is appalling. For this reason we need to implement these recommendations now. Who knows how many other Labor mates are sitting on boards at the moment who are also acting as lobbyists and are doing dodgy deals to line their own nests, to line their own pockets at the expense of the public.

This bill needs to come in now. Where is the delay? The IBAC recommendations could not have been clearer, could not have been simpler to introduce. I mean, even the opposition with our limited resources have been able to craft a bill to implement the IBAC recommendations. With all the resources of government, with all the tens of thousands of public servants, the government has not been able to bring forward a bill to this house to implement the IBAC recommendations. You have to ask: what are they waiting for and what have they got to hide? This could be done tomorrow. In fact it can be done today, and we call for it to be done today.

We know this government has a major phobia about supporting anything put forward by the opposition, be it bills to keep Paul Denyer in jail or be it bills to implement IBAC recommendations,

but this is too important to be swept under the carpet. This bill should be introduced today, it should be debated today, it should be passed today, because we cannot afford to have corruption continue to flourish in this state. Victorians are tired of a government that puts themselves and their mates' interests ahead of every other Victorian.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

Michael O'BRIEN: Well, the Leader of the House may think that an election victory is licence for corruption. Let me tell you, Joh Bjelke-Petersen won a few elections, and how did that wind up for him and his government? Your government, Leader of the House, will go exactly the same way.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Malvern, through the Chair!

Michael O'BRIEN: And if you want to arrest that decline, one way to do it is to support the member for Brighton's bill and let this bill be introduced today.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (09:47): I think it is important that we do remember that we do have integrity bodies that are well established with principles in place – governance and transparency and other protocols – in order to be able to assess matters that are important to the state of Victoria, and it is not for individual MPs to go on a flight of fancy in the chamber according to whatever might suit the political agenda of the day. I think we do need to have respect for those bodies, and we allow them to do the job that they do so well.

In relation to Operation Clara, I should say that the government will support in principle each of the recommendations and stands ready to make any further necessary changes. And so I should further say that our government could have gone further on matters very personal with Mr Wakeling –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am having trouble hearing the member for Albert Park.

Nina TAYLOR: but of course we elected not to do so. But I can see that those opposite are quite inclined to go as low as they can in a very personal way with families as well. So, you know, these things can be shared, can be duplicated. But you will see –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a procedural debate not an opportunity to sledge, and I would ask you to ask the member to return to the motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I am having trouble hearing the member for Albert Park, so I do not actually know what she is saying.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes. I am glad that the member for Brighton has remembered –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am still having trouble hearing the member for Albert Park. The house will come to order.

Nina TAYLOR: I am glad that the member for Brighton has suddenly realised that this is a procedural debate. I might have tapped into something that they are a little bit uncomfortable about, because they can dish it out but cannot take it back, and they might want to take a leaf out of our side of the chamber when it comes to matters digging into very personal spaces, as I said before, with Mr Wakeling and otherwise.

Brad Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Berwick!

Nina TAYLOR: If that is where you really want to go, well, that is your choice.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member knows not to make reflections other than by substantive motion, and I would ask you to bring the member back to the motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! Like I said, I am having trouble actually hearing the member for Albert Park, but I do ask the member for Albert Park to speak to the procedural motion before the house.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes. And thank you, Speaker, for reminding me of that point. I think it is good across the chamber if that due respect is paid by those opposite as well. I was merely making the point that if they want to stoop as low as they purport to be stooping, then they had better be prepared that there might be a bit of a balancing in that regard – dishing it out but cannot take it. It is important that they recognise that there are integrity bodies in place and show a little bit of respect for those bodies and for the governance and other elements which are being enforced, as they should, and then we can actually have a debate which is of a calibre that is appropriate for this chamber.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:50): I am happy to make a contribution to this debate on the Public Administration and Planning Legislation Amendment (Control of Lobbyists) Bill 2023 introduced by the opposition. It is rather concerning how reluctant the government is to debate, let alone pass, an anti-corruption bill. It has been over four months since the *Operation Clara* report was released. The government have had over a decade to reform the regulation of lobbyists and they have not done so, so they can hardly be upset when another party has a go at it. The Greens would be delighted to see this government step up and do anything on integrity, even just debate the issue, but so far all we have had from them are vague notions that something might happen after the Operation Sandon report gets handed down. That is a cunning plan, because if we have to wait until every integrity report on this government gets handed down, we could be here for a while.

No government or political party is immune from scandal, but most, whatever their colours, take some level of actual responsibility about effecting meaningful change in response. By ‘actual responsibility’ I mean taking remedial action and imposing consequences, not the Premier’s practice of just announcing that he takes responsibility and then moving on and doing nothing else. This is why other states in Australia are onto their fourth or fifth generation of integrity reforms, whereas Victoria is still, according to integrity experts, the clear laggard.

The bill put forward for debate is modest in scope, simply implementing the four recommendations of Operation Clara. Essentially IBAC has written the bill for the government. Effectively, all it seeks to do is prevent people holding positions on public boards when they are also lobbyists in relevant areas. It is important that we debate this bill, because IBAC found a shocking level of political corruption by the former Labor minister Theo Theophanous while he was a board member of what is now called the Victorian Planning Authority, the VPA. Theophanous improperly lobbied in favour of a consortium known as the Australian Education City, AEC, to build a project in East Werribee, the plans of which look like they have been lifted from season 2 of *Utopia*. IBAC found that Theophanous failed to declare a conflict of interest or register the AEC as a client on the Victorian Register of Lobbyists. But because we have the weakest laws in the country, I suspect this is not uncommon in Victoria.

Debating and then passing this bill would also prevent more serious corruption of the sort identified by IBAC in this case, in which Theophanous tried to advance his private lobbying business by telling clients he had access to staff and information within the VPA, Theophanous sought payment from the AEC and in lieu of receiving payments for his lobbying activities he obtained other benefits – namely, a \$10,000 political donation and other in-kind campaign work and donations carried out for Labor’s campaign in Northcote. Despite resigning from the board of the VPA, Theophanous is unrepentant, which should not fill us with confidence, given how many ex-ministers are handed positions on the boards of public entities post career.

Debating this bill would be a good way to start Parliament’s response to this behaviour. It is true and important to say that IBAC found that there was no evidence that the current Labor member for Northcote was aware of her father’s actions. That is despite the remarkable appearance of thousands

of dollars in her campaign budget. But it is also true that the member for Northcote directly benefited in monetary terms –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a narrow procedural debate, and I ask that you bring the member for Brunswick back to the point. I also note that the report was very clear that the member for Northcote has done nothing wrong. She is a strong and effective member for Northcote.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Brunswick to come back to the procedural motion before the house.

Tim READ: Debating this bill would give the Labor member for Northcote an opportunity to condemn the kind of corruption from which she benefited in monetary and in-kind terms and hopefully give us some assurance that she has donated the proceeds of this corruption.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (09:55): We should be adjourning this debate off, because this is the tactic that we see from the coalition – rather than contributing to substantive legislative reforms that are on the government business program today, that have been put forward on mental health and wellbeing and on drugs, poisons and other controls, they have gone home for a political stunt. They have gone home before the winter break to once again not follow the procedures of this house. And while old mate O'Brien over there, the member for Malvern, might turn around – 16 per cent, mate; you would not say it outside, would you?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc will come to order! The member for Eildon can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Eildon withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, this is a tight procedural debate, and the member is straying and making a number of reflections on members in the chamber. I would ask you to bring him back.

Tim Richardson interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc will come to order. Your point of order has been made, Manager of Opposition Business. The member for Mordialloc will stay on the procedural motion before the house.

Tim RICHARDSON: As I was saying, in the procedures of this house and also when reports land, whether they are from integrity, from IBAC, from the Ombudsman or from parliamentary committees, there is a well-worn path towards how they make their way here on legislative reform. Sometimes that can be six months in response. It is a substantive process to get to any legislative reform and program, so to then cut corners and have a precedent that says that, based on the feelings that they have or attacks on particular members of Parliament, 'We're going to bring legislative reform' is a very strange precedent to set. Acknowledging your procedural ruling, the member for Brunswick strayed right into character assassination. It is not procedural at all to start reflecting on members.

We have got important work to do this week. We have got the Mental Health and Wellbeing Amendment Bill 2023 that is a substantial amount of legislation. So many members on this side of the house have contributed. We actually ran out of speakers on that side, not because we exhausted the list. No, they literally are not fronting up on behalf of their communities, so maybe for the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Authorising Pharmacists) Bill 2023 they will. I know the member for Lowan carried the team. That is fair enough. There were a lot of contributions from the member for Lowan, and 60 minutes of contribution during that time, but then to waste time, waste government business time, I tell you what –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I understand why the member does not want to debate the motion before the house, but the motion is a procedural debate not a reflection on whether or not the Premier has never spoken on a second reading.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc was referencing other bills before the house. I think that is part of the procedures of this house, therefore I will not allow the point of order. The member for Mordialloc is to stick to the procedural motion before the house.

Tim RICHARDSON: The context of why or whether something should be adjourned off is about the time that we spend in this place. It is about the contributions and what is important. This is not to say that the report that has been put forward is not important. As the member for Albert Park said, the recommendations will come forward, and the government will approach that in the time and under consideration but not with character assassinations coming in here based on what is going right or what is going wrong at one particular moment from the opposition. It is about that structure and putting that forward rather than character assassinations, as the member for Brunswick absolutely strayed into.

We have got to get on with the mental health and wellbeing bill and the drugs, poisons and other controlled substances bill and give members an opportunity to actually front up on behalf of their communities and start talking on behalf of them on what these bills mean rather than wasting time. We have seen this, and I do not know whether we need to consider this more – procedural motions – but we have seen it consistently, for hours upon hours. Obviously, the member for Sandringham had his moment in the sun the other week really impacted because he did not get to do his Shadow Treasurer speech in time, because the member for Brighton was filibustering and not allowing the intellect of the member for Sandringham to burst through and shine. I know there is a bit of bayside rivalry but give him a go – let him have a go. Do not let procedural motions get in the way of the business of this house. We have got to get on with it. Let us get back to the substance of government business.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (29): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Noes (53): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Mathew Hilakari, Melissa Horne, Natalie Hutchins, Lauren Kathage, Sonya Kilkenny, Nathan Lambert, Gary Maas, Alison Marchant, Kathleen Matthews-Ward, Steve McGhie, Paul Mercurio, John Mullahy, Tim Pallas, Danny Pearson, Pauline Richards, Tim Richardson, Michaela Settle, Ros Spence, Nick Staikos, Natalie Suleyman, Meng Heang Tak, Jackson Taylor, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Petitions

Progress Street, Dandenong South, level crossing removal

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong) presented a petition bearing 756 signatures:

The petition of:- *The businesses and workers of Nathan and Fowler Roads, Dandenong South, and the logistics providers and drivers for these businesses:-* Draws to the attention of the Assembly that proposed permanent closure of the negligible risk (according to documents obtained under FOI from the Office of the National Railway Safety Regulator) and uncongested level crossing (according to locals) in Progress Street, Dandenong will divert all traffic over 1km down twisty Fowler Road which will in turn put more than

7500 heavy haulage and over dimensional vehicles and day down an already congested street and into an even more congested South Gippsland Highway. Having this volume of over-dimensional heavy Haulage, Australia Post motorbikes and cars mixing on a curved, parked out and low visibility side-road is going to cause accidents. It will also add at least 4 minutes (probably much more) each way for each of the more than 1,000 employees of the 20 or so major manufacturing and distribution hubs in the Nathan Road Industrial area - including Australia Posts' largest letter sorting centre. At least one business will be compromised in their ability to get their over dimensional cranes onto the Princes Highway with any safety due to the unsuitability of Fowler Road and its intersection onto the South Gippsland Highway. Fowler Road is not suitable for the sizes and volumes of traffic to be diverted.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.: Calls on the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, to immediately suspend the permanent crossing closure at Progress Street. This is on the basis that closing it is actually much more dangerous and creates congestion. The petitioners support a level crossing removal solution that improves access to the industrial area – such as a rail overpass or connection to the – still to be built – Dandenong bypass extension. Implementation of any new solution is requested to be done with genuine consultation, in advance, with the businesses in area to ensure all requirements are delivered for their special heavy manufacturing and distribution needs.

Preston Market

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) presented a petition bearing 4693 signatures:

The Petition of residents of Darebin and Victoria draws to the attention of the House that our much loved 50-year-old Preston Market is under existential threat from demolition. New plans proposed by the Victoria Planning Authority (VPA) will allow 80% of the market to be bulldozed to let 20 storey high rise towers to be built consisting of 2,200 apartments.

These plans are a massive overdevelopment designed to give the developer excessive flexibility to build what they want to maximise their profits. It will irreversibly damage the local character of the area and the heritage significance of Preston Market. The VPA's plans fall drastically short of the community and traders' expectations.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on The Hon Richard Wynne MP, Minister for Planning to immediately scrap the VPA's proposed plans, commence compulsory acquisition of Preston Market to put it in public hands and ensure the market is not demolished but refurbished instead.

Ordered that petition be considered next sitting day.

Documents

Department of Premier and Cabinet

Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2022

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (10:07): I table, by leave, the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2022* and domain 1 to 6 data tables.

Committees

Privileges committees

Appointment of a Parliamentary Integrity Adviser for the 60th Parliament

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:07): I have the honour to present to the house a joint report from the privileges committees of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council on the appointment of a Parliamentary Integrity Adviser for the 60th Parliament together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

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

Auditor-General:

Correctional Services for People with Intellectual Disability or an Acquired Brain Injury – Ordered to be published

Principal Health and Wellbeing – Ordered to be published

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – Documents under s 15 in relation to statutory rules 51, 58

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 – Notice of amendment to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for an assessment of forest values in the Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland under s 26C

Victorian Inspectorate:

Annual Plan 2023–24

Inspection Report 2021–22 on controlled operation records and reports under the *Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act 2004*, *Wildlife Act 1975* and *Fisheries Act 1995*.

*Motions***Parliamentary integrity adviser**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:09): I move, by leave:

That:

- (1) Professor Charles Sampford be appointed as Parliamentary Integrity Adviser, from 31 July 2023 to the day that is four months after the next general election, under the terms and conditions of appointment in appendix A of the privileges committees' joint report on the appointment of a Parliamentary Integrity Adviser for the 60th Parliament; and
- (2) a message be sent to the Legislative Council requesting their agreement.

Motion agreed to.*Business of the house***Adjournment**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:09): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 1 August 2023.

Motion agreed to.*Members statements***King's Birthday honours**

David HODGETT (Croydon) (10:10): I recognise those in our community who have been awarded the Order of Australia Medal for their unwavering service.

Donald Mackay was awarded for his incredible efforts to the local arts industry. Donald has been involved in the arts for 70 years through his work in various aspects of theatre, drama and radio. He has extensive knowledge of the industry and has been appointed to a number of committees working with groups such as the Australian Children's Theatre Foundation and Arts Victoria.

Dr Keith Skilbeck was awarded for his service to his local community. Keith has worked at Wicklow Avenue Medical Centre for over 40 years, providing valuable care and consultation to the community.

He has also spent time working in Mooroolbark Baptist Church, where he has been a parishioner for over 40 years, and he is also a member of various professional associations sharing his expertise.

Melinda Spencer was awarded for her service to community health. Melinda worked for Victoria Police for 17 years and received a range of police service awards. She co-founded Different Journeys, a charity dedicated to supporting autistic youth to decrease mental illness and social isolation in the autistic community along with enhancing education and employment opportunities. She has also been part of the Pathways for Carers program.

Robert Steane was awarded for his service to local government and to his community. Rob worked as a police officer for 17 years and has since been awarded for his service. Following that he served with Maroondah City Council, being the mayor and a councillor, and he even founded the Maroondah community safety committee. Rob has also given time working on various boards and at local banks, schools and foundations. Congratulations to all recipients. You have done amazing things that have benefited the community around you, and you should be extremely proud of your efforts.

Keith Kelly and Margaret Pitson

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (10:11): I rise today to pay tribute to and celebrate the contribution of Keith Kelly and Margaret Pitson to the Huntly Memorial Hall committee and the wider Huntly community. Keith joined the men's committee in 1969 and Margaret joined the women's committee in 1977, both because they wanted to support and be connected to their local community. In 1981 those two committees came together, and since that time they have both dedicated hours and hours of commitment and service to the Huntly community over that period of time. When I saw Keith and Margaret on Anzac Day this year, they advised me that they had both planned to step down from their executive roles at the upcoming annual general meeting in July of this year. In paying tribute to Keith and Margaret's contribution, I particularly want to identify the work they have done each and every Anzac Day since 1993, when they held their first service. Over that period of time they have not only held annual Anzac Day services that are now attended by large, large numbers of people from across not just the community but the district, they have also established the Huntly Garden of Remembrance, which is a wonderful tribute in recognition of people who have served their country in wartime and are remembered by their local community in their local community. The hall celebrated its 100-year anniversary last year as well. All the best to Keith Kelly and all the best to Margaret Pitson for their work.

Sustainable Plastic Solutions

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (10:13): Last week I had the great pleasure of visiting Sustainable Plastic Solutions, a start-up business in Hamilton which has done a fabulous job in looking to recycle plastic products produced by the agriculture industry. They have been able to raise about \$4 million, mostly through local farmers believing in what they are doing, and what they are doing is transforming bailing twine, grain tarp and silage wrap into plastic pellets to be remanufactured into those exact products. So it is not a downgrading use of plastics, it is taking plastics out of landfill and actually using those plastics to make a new product. At the moment they are saving about 3000 tonnes a year of plastics going into landfill. With a small investment they would be able to, within two years, upgrade that to four times that amount to about 11,000 tonnes a year. At present they have not been able to receive any funding grants or low-interest loans from the government, and so I therefore ask the government to look at the Sustainability Fund – there is about half a billion dollars in there – and to provide the investment into Sustainable Plastic Solutions to help Elisha and Matt transform that business into something that is really making a difference to take plastics out of landfill and put them into useful products in the wider agricultural sector.

Western Highway duplication

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (10:14): We know that the Western Highway duplication has been held up for many, many years. It was supposed to be finished by 2016. I urge the government to get on with it and start the build of the Ararat-to-Stawell section as soon as possible.

Australian Red Cross Lifeblood

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (10:14): I rise to acknowledge to the house the incredible efforts of Lifeblood Red Cross in my electorate in Werribee. Last Wednesday was World Blood Donor Day, and I recently visited the Werribee Donor Centre in celebration of this important day. The centre had many people giving blood or plasma or waiting for their turn to do so. There were people of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds, truly capturing the wonderful diversity and spirit of the Werribee community.

One in three Australians will rely on blood or plasma donations throughout their lifetime for a range of conditions, such as cancer and support of traumatic events. There are 1624 active donors in the electorate of Werribee, including Steve, who is a 75-year-old local hero who has been donating blood regularly for 15 years. It is donors such as Steve who have helped save 17,151 lives in the past 12 months alone.

World Blood Donor Day seeks to acknowledge the generosity of such individuals and encourage others to also take part in this life-changing act. The Werribee Donor Centre has the capacity to welcome new donors, with 2000 appointments vacant over the month, and I encourage the community to take up the call to donate blood or plasma. I thank our donors and the wonderful employees of Lifeblood for the important work that they do.

Firewood collection

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:16): I rise this morning to once again raise the very important issue of the sustainability of the firewood industry in regional Victoria. The recent decision by the Andrews government to basically abandon all native forest timber management means that the firewood industry, which is a multi-hundred-million-dollar industry across Victoria, has been left in limbo. They have no clarity. I met with some multigenerational timber firewood harvesters on the weekend. Young Daniel Heinze is a fourth-generation firewood merchant who supplies a really important energy service to people right across my electorate.

Firewood of course is used still – very, very commonly – by people as a source of heating, hot water and cooking. These are basic energy requirements that people have. This government has put no measures in place and no support in place to provide any sort of transition, not only for the firewood merchants but for the people who require this energy. One of the things that is very disappointing is this energy source has traditionally been a low-cost, easy and manageable system of energy for a whole raft of rural people. At this time, in the middle of winter, I urge the Andrews government to come out and be clear and give direction to this industry and to the people that rely on this form of energy so they know where they stand this year.

Joanna McNeill

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (10:17): I recently met with Joanna McNeill in my electorate office – a wonderful, vivacious woman and a single mum of two little girls – who unfortunately has recently been diagnosed with silicosis, a deadly disease that causes irreversible scarring and stiffening of the lungs. I acknowledge that she is here today with us. She was exposed at Boral's Montrose quarry between the years of 2013 and 2019. Over six years she was exposed to dangerous silica dust. They failed to provide her with respiratory protection equipment. Boral knew of the risks and ignored them for six years. Boral has since been fined a measly \$180,000. For a company of this size that is just pocket money. As time progresses Joanna's lung

capacity will diminish until she has to struggle every single day breathing. Boral's neglect was avoidable, yet they have destroyed her health, her life and the future she has with her daughters. I am absolutely outraged that Boral has failed its workers, ignored basic health and safety and exposed staff like the beautiful Joanna to this disease. They should be absolutely ashamed.

Joanna is a brave fighter. She does not know how much longer she has to spend with her little girls, but using what time she has left to protect and stand up for workers is absolutely admirable. I thank her and the AWU for their advocacy.

Football Federation Sunraysia

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:19): Today I want to recognise and congratulate the incredible football talent in the Sunraysia region. I am not talking about AFL, I am talking about the world game of soccer. Congratulations to the Sunraysia under-18 boys, who were recently undefeated and champions at the Victorian country league's junior championships in Ballarat. It was an extraordinary effort. Also congratulations to the under-15 boys, who were runners-up; the under-18 girls, who were runners-up; and the under-12 boys, who also made the semifinals. Congratulations.

Buloke Shire Council

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:19): Also the incredible efforts of the Buloke Shire Council were recognised with a national award in Canberra last week. During the floods Buloke Shire Council ran an amazing initiative, the Paddock Run, delivering biscuits and information cards to farms around the region, and they won the national local government award in the category of disaster preparedness at the local government assembly last week. I send my sincere congratulations to Alan, Wayne, Jo, Bart and the whole team.

Motorsports

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:20): I also need to acknowledge how amazing it was to have three of Mildura's current motorsport champions in the same place last weekend at Hidden Valley. Thankfully everyone is safe, despite Cam's Mustang catching fire. Josh finished second overall and maintains his lead in the superbikes championships. So well done, Cam, Josh and Phil. You make Mildura extremely proud. I will say it again: we put champions on racetracks, in Mildura.

King's Birthday honours

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:20): Finally, huge congratulations to those who were recognised in the King's Birthday honours list: Leonie Burrows, Jayne Sunbird and Stefano de Pieri. It was truly deserved, and a huge congratulations to all of you.

King's Birthday honours

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:20): Just picking up from the member for Mildura in relation to the King's Birthday honours list, I want to acknowledge the Honourable Jenny Macklin AC, well known to the member for Bundoora and many in this house for her work in our local electorate and the community and her leadership around the NDIS and Indigenous policy in Canberra; the Honourable Pat McNamara as well, a former Deputy Premier, who I have worked with on many community projects; Ian Caldwell OAM, in Belmont, who has been a good friend over many years; Imam Alaa Elzokm OAM, who runs and shows great faith leadership at the Elsedeq mosque in Heidelberg Heights; Dr Julie Edwards OAM, of Jesuit Social Services; to our great friend, who shows great leadership too, Emma King OAM, the CEO of Victorian Council of Social Services; to Sandra MacNeil – I know the member for Eltham is here, and she along with the member for Bundoora will be congratulating Sandra MacNeil for her great community leadership over a long period of time; and of course the amazing Gwen Rosengren OAM in Ivanhoe, who has shown great leadership and worked around the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in education.

Macleod statewide child and family centre

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:21): The Minister for Mental Health is here, and I am really pleased to thank her for opening the new \$7.3 million statewide child and family centre in Macleod in Grieve Street, where I was able to turn the first sod about a year ago with the Premier. The centre is one of two new facilities to be built in Victoria in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System providing great services and care for families and children 24/7 around the clock. It is a great service.

Rotary Club of Brighton

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:22): The Brighton Lunch organised by Brighton Rotary has become a key annual Melbourne charity event. The recent lunch shone a light on those who have experienced domestic violence. Speakers like Rosie Batty shared their stories. The lunch raised \$176,500. This remarkable achievement was made possible by many, but especially the Brighton community. Congratulations and thank you to Geoff Bentley and his team.

Carmelina Corio

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:22): Brighton has welcomed Carmelina Corio to her new role as principal of St James Catholic Primary School. Carmelina leads a wonderful team that care for 165 treasured students. Together the school and I have been working on a number of important issues, including safety around North Road. Congratulations on your new role, Carmelina, and good luck with the Vinnies CEO Sleepout tonight.

Moorabbin Kangaroos Football Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:23): I am not sure if I will ever run out onto the football field in my own right, but the Moorabbin Kangaroos Football Club recently invited my daughter and me to join them as they ran out onto the field. The Kangaroos are a community club with a big heart and have been waiting too long for upgrades to their facilities. Thank you to club president Muhammad Kiki for your leadership.

Bayside Community Drum Circle

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:23): Most politicians march to the beat of their own drum, but I recently joined the Bayside Community Drum Circle and we drummed a beat together. The circle is run by talented musician Peter Vadiveloo, a 30-year performer. The drum circle was fun and full to the brim with drummers of all ages. Thank you to the group for helping me find my rhythm.

Labor Party members

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:23): I rise to pay tribute to the many local ALP members who over the weekend received their 40-year life membership medallions. These are true believers of the labour movement who have put in an immense amount of work over decades to improve the lives of Victorians. I would like to recognise in particular members of the Scullin federal electorate assembly: Steve Patullo, Jim Tilkeridis, Sofia Mastoris, Sam Alessi and Maria Merlino. Congratulations to these members of our party. I honour and thank them for their service to the movement.

Multicultural festivals and events program

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:24): I would also like to congratulate four community groups in my electorate who have successfully received an events grant under the Andrews Labor government's multicultural festivals and events program. A \$2000 grant has been awarded to the Palestinian Seniors Club of Victoria to hold an exhibition. The Butterflies Arts and Cultural

Association will run an Onam celebration event, a celebration of the Hindu harvest festival. The Hindu Youth group of Melbourne will hold a Diwali event celebrating the Indian Festival of Lights. We have also been fortunate to have the Nigerian Society of Victoria receive a \$15,000 grant to run a Nigerian Independence Day celebration event later this year acknowledging 63 years of independence. These grants will allow these cultural communities to share, preserve and celebrate their different cultures and traditions with the broader Victorian community.

Nicholas Building

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (10:25): The Nicholas Building is an iconic creative hub in the heart of Melbourne. It is a universe of the artistic community, with hundreds of small creative businesses and artists working there. As an artist myself, I remember late nights installing artworks in the Blindside gallery, peeping through the camera obscura on the sixth floor out to the Flinders Street station and the excitement of a fellow artist scoring a much-coveted studio space to work in a buzzing creative environment for cheap rent. Custom-made hats, suits and watches get made, fixed and altered by artisanal makers there.

The Nicholas Building has fostered artists to experiment, to collaborate and to create the substance that our collective culture relies on, but now it is under threat. This building is for sale, and it could be turned into a hotel, luxury apartments or a soulless commercial space. Tenants are already being pushed out with extraordinary rent rises, but they have banded together. They have formed the Nicholas Building foundation to try and save the community of artists and preserve the incredible 90-year creative heritage of this space. This kind of community just cannot be faked. It takes decades of organic growth and cheap rents, and this Nicholas Building foundation is calling on the state government to step in and save one of the last affordable artists spaces in Melbourne, this magical universe that is the Nicholas Building.

Wellsprings for Women

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (10:26): I rise today to celebrate the news that Wellsprings for Women, a support service for migrant women in my community, has received a funding boost of some \$780,000 to continue to provide its critical services. Wellsprings for Women has been providing essential support services for women for nearly 30 years right across Greater Dandenong and Casey predominantly. They offer a range of educational programs, including English literacy, computer literacy and vocational pathways of many different kinds, as well as things like homework clubs for the kids while their mums avail themselves of the many services at Wellsprings, which is a wonderful initiative. Wellsprings provides case management services as well for women experiencing family violence as well as co-occurring issues of poverty, homelessness and mental health concerns.

We know of course that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often face some additional challenges in accessing mainstream support services, and that is why this funding for Wellsprings is so vital. It will ensure that support remains accessible and available to some of our community's most vulnerable and isolated women at all stages of their lives. The funding is part of \$117 million to support victim-survivors of family violence announced in the last budget, and so far Victoria has invested more than \$3.7 billion to end family violence since the Royal Commission into Family Violence handed down its report, an achievement we are very proud of here.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Black Rock

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:28): Last week I had the privilege of meeting with a group of some 40 parents at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Black Rock, a much-loved and well-respected school within my constituency. Now, St Joseph's is currently subject to a school viability process instigated by the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, or MACS, and I am advised that the process will shortly conclude with an announcement about the school's future to be made in August

of this year. It is clear to me that the only acceptable outcome for this school and for this parent community is for St Joseph's Catholic Primary School to remain open, and later today I will convey that in letter form to MACS on behalf of parents.

St Agnes Primary School, Highett

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:28): Congratulations to St Agnes Catholic primary school on the official opening and blessing of their new learning spaces, an important occasion in the history of that school. This \$2 million refurbishment project of seven ground-level classrooms creates a modernised space with flexible teaching and learning facilities for that school. School principal Lachie Foott tells me that students, staff and parents are all very excited about being able to use these brand new facilities.

Laureen Walton

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (10:29): Finally, I note the member for Narre Warren North is in the chamber as well and pay tribute to the soon-to-be-retiring principal of Sandringham East Primary School Mrs Laureen Walton. Laureen is everything that is good about teaching. She is everything that is good about education. She has spent 55 years serving in educational roles, 22 years at Sandringham East Primary School. I say to Laureen on behalf of my community: thank you, Laureen, for your service. Enjoy your time with Geoff, enjoy your time with your family and thank you for your service.

St Sebastian Seniors Association

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (10:29): I rise today to acknowledge several exciting events and milestones in the electorate of St Albans. Over the weekend St Sebastian Seniors Association held their annual festa celebration. It was a fantastic event and is always an opportunity to host a dinner dance and Sunday mass. Celebrating the Maltese culture and traditions is really at the heart of our St Albans community. I would like to in particular thank St Sebastian Seniors committee, particularly Patrick and Monica, who really do work very hard each year to provide activities and opportunities for seniors in St Albans.

Autism spectrum disorder services

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (10:30): On another matter, I would like to recognise the work of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and Victoria University, which earlier this month opened Australia's first on-campus community centre for autistic adults at the VU St Albans campus. This will be a game changer for local students. Co-locating with Lifeline, it delivers a one-stop hub for services and programs that support and benefit not only the St Albans electorate but I believe the entire west. This is on top, of course, of our new jobs and skills innovation hub and the newly announced centre for paramedicine at Sunshine North campus, and as we can see the investment by the Andrews Labor government in the west and particularly in St Albans is much needed.

Eid al-Adha

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (10:31): I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all Muslims happy Eid al-Adha for next week.

Patch in the Park

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) (10:31): Over the weekend I met with Brooklyn residents Ruth, Brian and Kelly, who are some of the inspiration behind a new community group Patch in the Park. It was great to catch up with them to discuss how their plans for establishing a community garden in the heart of Brooklyn, thanks to

\$250,000 in this year's state budget, will really help to transform Brooklyn. It will contribute to a great community outcome, allowing people to have a plot and have their very own veggie garden. This land is adjacent to the newly developed Brooklyn hall that Hobsons Bay council is overseeing, and the community is excited by this too.

Patch in the Park sees an opportunity for the produce that the community grows and harvests to then be used in the community kitchen in the hall to bring people together, teach people new skills and really contribute to the wellbeing of the community. They are keen to get started with the design of the garden. They have already contacted the successful community garden in Altona to understand how they operate, what sort of governance is in place and how they have a peppercorn lease for the land with the Hobsons Bay City Council. They want an open and inclusive and accessible place that encourages people to gather in and around DN Duane Reserve and become a real hub for Brooklyn residents. There is nothing more satisfying than growing your own fruit and veggies, and I am really keen to see this project, with the significant funding, for the Brooklyn community get underway so that people can get out, start planning, harvesting and enjoying fabulous produce and leave a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Australian Chaldean Family Welfare

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (10:33): My community of Greenvale has a long and proud history of welcoming refugees escaping oppression and persecution in different parts of the world. From 2012 to 2021 the City of Hume, which encompasses Greenvale, had the largest refugee intake of any Victorian LGA, resettling some 12,000 humanitarian visa holders, which makes the values and messages of Refugee Week and this year's theme, 'Finding Freedom', particularly resonant locally. On Sunday night I was delighted to celebrate the beginning of Refugee Week with friends and neighbours and to reflect on the remarkable contribution of refugee communities to our local, state and national society, at a very special evening of cultural music and dance hosted by the incredible team at Australian Chaldean Family Welfare.

Australian Chaldean Family Welfare is an outstanding community organisation which supports the resettlement of and builds community capacity for Chaldean and Arabic-speaking migrants and refugees, many of whom bravely fled tyranny, oppression and persecution on account of their language, faith and culture in Iraq and Syria to be with us. I particularly acknowledge the important work of my constituent Ms Dalal Sleiman, president and founder of Australian Chaldean Family Welfare. Having arrived in Australia as a refugee herself, Ms Sleiman has generously dedicated her life in Australia to assisting new arrivals to gain confidence and skills to participate more easily in our broader community while also retaining and celebrating the cultural and faith traditions that have endured for millennia.

Container deposit scheme

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:34): Very soon you will be able to cash in your eligible cans, cartons and bottles for a 10-cent refund as part of the new and most accessible container deposit scheme anywhere in the country. It is coming this November, and it will cut litter by half, reduce waste and will have over 600 collection points across the state, and if you do not want the cash, you can donate it too. Community groups are able to take part in a few ways to help fundraise as well.

Boronia revitalisation

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:34): Boronia – it is the place to be, I love it. We have been building a better Boronia with the Boronia revitalisation work. We have now delivered or are in the middle of delivering over 20 localised projects across the CBD, and I want to give you a quick run down of what we have gotten on with: Lupton Way upgrade, better lighting; new murals and laneway arcade upgrade; Boronia breakfast program; wayfinding and branding strategy, which will now deliver works; design of the green spine corridor for Boronia; pop-up events and the Big Flix festival; community grants; youth mentoring; Erica Avenue upgrade, soon to begin; neurodiverse events for

young people; upgrading lighting in Chandler Park; the retail and placemaking project; and so much more. Of course do not forget, we are creating the heart of Boronia with a \$60 million upgrade at Boronia station, with works set to start next year.

Bayswater electorate sporting clubs

Jackson TAYLOR (Bayswater) (10:35): I wanted to give a shout-out to a few sporting clubs that have been backed in by the state government in some of their works or grants that have been delivered. Boronia Bowls Club just turned on their new lighting. The clubs at JW Manson Reserve – St Andrews Cricket Club, Ringwood City Football Club and Aquinas Old Collegians – are nearly set to move into their new digs. Bayswater Junior Football Club have moved into their new pavilion. Ferntree Gully junior football club were provided with a \$5000 grant to support their community day, and new nets and lighting are nearly finished at Guy Turner Reserve for the Bayswater Strikers and the Bayswater Park Cricket Club. The Andrews Labor government just gets on and gets things done and delivers for the Bayswater community.

Eltham Football Club

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:36): Events like these do not happen without the tireless work of volunteers behind the scenes. To Narelle, Karlie and Sharon, thank you for your tireless work that made the afternoon such a resounding success. The Eltham Football Club raised \$2500 that will go directly to Breast Cancer Network Australia – a wonderful achievement by our local football community.

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:36): As a past parent of Our Lady Help of Christians, I know firsthand the caring and kind nature of this school community. OLHC's recent Sea of Hearts project during reconciliation week was another example of this exceptional school. Students and the wider school community, including myself, were invited to decorate cardboard hearts to show what reconciliation week meant to us. The reflections from the school were beautiful to read and demonstrated such a strong understanding of the importance of reconciliation. Hearts were taken home for a family conversation and reflection on the meaning of Voice and reconciliation week. I loved seeing what the hearts represented to each student and reading the reflections showing the kindness and inclusion in the hearts of each student and community member. Congratulations, our ladies, on a beautiful exhibition of reconciliation and inclusion.

QWere St LGBTIQA+ winter street party

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:36): Congratulations to Were Street traders and Banyule council on the success of the restored QWere Street festival. Were Street in Montmorency was transformed into a queer street – a vibrant celebration of diversity, inclusion and pride. Montmorency was a beautiful sea of rainbows and smiles as we came together in celebration of our beautiful rainbow community. This lively event with so many activities, including live music, drag queens and face painting, brought my community and people from across Melbourne together in a beautiful, inclusive way. I was pleased to be a part of the day, standing in solidarity with our beautiful rainbow community celebrating the joy of pride in self in a safe, inclusive, welcoming space. Thank you to the Rainbow Community Angels for also attending.

Clarinda electorate multicultural events

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (10:37): Congratulations to the Zee Cheng Khor Moral Uplifting Society Incorporated on 21 years of service to our community. I was delighted to join president Stephen Chew, committee members and friends to celebrate. Clarinda is one of the most diverse electorates in Victoria, and we are so lucky to have so many amazing community groups and events taking place in our vibrant community.

A few months ago it was fantastic to celebrate Greek Independence Day with the Hellenic community of the city of Moorabbin. It was a proud day and a great opportunity to acknowledge Clarinda's and Victoria's strong Greek community and the rich festivity that accompanies this tradition.

It was also a pleasure to join the Vietnamese Community in Australia – Victoria Chapter at their annual flag-raising ceremony to commemorate and honour the rich Vietnamese heritage in Victoria in the south-east. I was honoured to join the Qing Ming Festival organised by the Bright Moon Buddhist Society, whose temple was devastated by fire in February this year. Again, I commend the community for finding unity and strength during this difficult time.

Lastly, it was a pleasure to join the Cambodian Association of Victoria, Cambodian temples and friends and families for Cambodian New Year celebrations. Happy belated Cambodian New Year. There were so many other wonderful celebrations, and I look forward to many more.

National Wattle Day

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:38): National Wattle Day is on 1 September. It is a day to celebrate Australia and what it means to be an Australian, and I cannot think of a better place to celebrate wattle day than the fabulous Wattle Park in the electorate of Box Hill. I would like to ask the Minister for Environment to join me at a community event on or around National Wattle Day to celebrate this important occasion on the calendar. Wattle Park in our electorate attracts walkers, joggers, cyclists and families from many parts of Melbourne, particularly to visit its iconic trams. The Andrews government understands the importance and the value of Wattle Park for local residents, and that is why we have invested \$4.3 million into Wattle Park to deliver the new nature-based playscape, along with a 3.25-kilometre running and walking track. I do thank the member for Ringwood for his efforts in helping get this project along.

Eastern Community Legal Centre

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:40): I was also delighted to join the Eastern Community Legal Centre staff members and volunteers and representatives of fellow community organisations at their volunteers and partnership dinner last month. It was an evening to honour those who have devoted their time to help our community access the legal services and support they need. Congratulations, Pamela McNulty, Mark Tomisch, Briana Jackman and Brendan McCarthy.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:40): I move:

That this house takes note of the 2023–24 budget papers.

There is no doubt that this was a challenging budget of course because our state, our nation and indeed the rest of the world continues to recover from the impacts of the global pandemic. We have made no excuses for the fact that we borrowed money as was required to meet the costs associated with keeping the people of Victoria safe, and now indeed is the time to begin to pay back those borrowings. But I would make this point: our government delivered on each and every one of its election commitments in full, and this is something that I think we should all be enormously proud of. I know that members certainly on this side of the house have wasted no time in getting out and talking to their communities about the many benefits flowing to their communities, not just local benefits but indeed some of the overarching initiatives that we have implemented in this budget – and I will talk a little bit more about those later in my speech.

I do want to, firstly, as the Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure and Minister for Medical Research, talk about some of the important initiatives that were funded in this year's budget. But in doing so I want to reflect briefly on last year's budget, which of course had our \$12 billion

pandemic repair plan, and that has seen some really significant improvements in our health system as we have worked, as the plan says, to repair the impacts of COVID.

What we have seen as a result of that investment includes 140,000 patients admitted from the waiting lists, including – and this is a number I am always extraordinarily proud of – 99.9 per cent of all category 1 patients being treated within the clinically recommended time of 30 days. We continue to recruit and train healthcare workers, and indeed that funding has gone towards 4500 healthcare workers. More than 100,000 patients have passed through Victoria's innovative virtual emergency department. This is a real game changer for the delivery of care, particularly for older Victorians, wherever they live. The opportunities to increase access to emergency care for people in rural and regional Victoria know no bounds, and indeed that will be a focus of my ongoing work as minister.

We stood up and delivered priority primary care centres. We are on track now to have 26. They are making a huge difference right across the state and providing care when people require urgent but not life-saving emergency care. I know that there are so many parents right around the state who have really welcomed the investment that we have made in primary care. Why did we do that – because we had almost a decade of neglect under the former Liberal–National coalition government in Canberra that effectively destroyed primary care in this nation. I am delighted to be working with the new health minister the very active Mark Butler as we work to repair the damage that has been done to primary care.

Let me talk a little bit more now about the workforce and the investments that our government has made. Since we were elected back in 2014 we have grown our public health workforce in Victoria by almost a third or over 26,000 full-time equivalent staff. Today there are almost 50 per cent more doctors, 26 per cent more nurses and midwives and 35 per cent more medical support and ancillary staff in our healthcare system. In this budget we are delivering more than \$338 million to ensure that Victorians continue to have a modern, sustainable and engaged healthcare workforce.

Of course it was our government that enshrined nurse-to-patient ratios. I have just been down at the Royal Melbourne Hospital this morning looking at their new MRI suite, and I got to meet – as I often do – with a nurse who has arrived here in Melbourne from Ireland. Let me tell you, our nurse-to-patient ratios mean that we are an incredibly attractive place for nurses from all around the world to come and work, here in Victoria. Indeed I might also say: why wouldn't they want to work in Melbourne when today it has just been declared the third most livable city in the world? We will continue to invest in nurse-to-patient ratios, including more staff in intensive care, high-dependency units and maternity services.

Of course our making it free to study nursing and midwifery – this is going to deliver 10,000 nurses and midwives with scholarships of up to \$16,500. We are very proud that we have got an incentive to come and work in our public health system, and I will make this point: if the private system wants to introduce incentives, good. They should do that. But we are very proudly recruiting for our free public healthcare system.

Let me talk a bit about infrastructure. We know that those on the other side of the house only know how to close hospitals. They are very limited in their skills when it comes to actually delivering and building hospitals of the future. We currently have \$15 billion of projects underway, and of course I look around and I see some of the great legacies of this Andrews Labor government: the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital in Sunshine; the Victorian Heart Hospital, the first of its kind in the nation, part of Monash Health; and the new Bendigo Hospital, the largest ever regional health infrastructure project delivered in this state and very important to my own community. But there is always more to do. This budget contains funding to commence the planning and early works for the seven projects that we committed to in the 2022 election. We have a range of projects underway, including expansions at some of Victoria's busiest emergency departments, including in the north of our great city at the Austin and the Northern Hospital, and I know there are many members on this side of the house who very much welcome that investment.

We have also committed to delivering eight more PET scanners and a new ambulance station down in the fast-growing community of Armstrong Creek, which I know is very warmly welcomed by members on this side of the house. I was, as I said, down at Royal Melbourne Hospital today looking at their new MRI suite, including a functional and research MRI, which is the best in its class here in Australia. So we continue to ensure that our public health system has access to the latest and best technology.

I have talked a little bit about primary care and the fact that it was completely broken by the former federal Liberal–National coalition government. It is actually a complete disgrace that under their watch it became virtually impossible to be able to access free primary care. All Victorians know this, and we have heard in this place many people talk about the waitlists and so on just to get in to see a GP. General practice is at the absolute heart of our healthcare system. We need our GPs to keep us well, to keep us out of hospital, but if you cannot get in to see one, you end up in the emergency department of one of our hospitals. And that is not where people need to be. That is why we established priority primary care; we are really proud of that. But I want to tell you that we are also leaning in again and we are working with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and others to ensure that we are encouraging more graduate and trainee doctors to take up the general practice pathway. I note the member for Brunswick is in the room, himself a general practitioner specialising in sexual health, and I am sure that he would endorse this policy. We are doing that by providing a supplementary wage for trainee general practitioners and by funding the exams for entry to the specialty.

Another part of the budget that I am exceedingly proud of is the money that we have committed to Aboriginal community controlled health organisations. Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands is a priority for me and a commitment that I have given to our Aboriginal community controlled health organisations. That is why we have invested \$35 million, which will deliver an additional 100,000 appointments in our ACCHO sector.

I do need to talk about – people in this house have heard me talk about it a lot, and I will talk about it some more – our government’s investments in women’s health. There are some parties in this house that understand the importance of listening to women, respecting women and electing women, and there are others that do none of that. Our government went to the election with a package of women’s health announcements that were well supported by women right across Victoria. I want to thank the member for Northcote, who is of course the Parliamentary Secretary for Women’s Health, for all the work that she has done to date and the work that she will continue to do to deliver on our election commitments to the people of Victoria. I will tell you this: we make a great team as a consequence of my representing a regional electorate and the member for Northcote obviously an inner city electorate. We bring a combined wealth of experience to this portfolio. We are going to have an excellent four years in this term of government delivering on each and every one of our 20 new women’s health clinics. These are real game changers.

Anyone that is a student of *Hansard* will look back and observe that it is only in recent years that words that were never, ever in the whole history of this state uttered in this place have become commonplace – endometriosis, uterus, pads, tampons, periods, menopause. All of these conditions are part of the lived experience of every woman in this state. We know that, as a consequence of both our sex and our gender, our outcomes have not always been as good as they should be.

Twenty women’s health clinics – but that is just the beginning. We are delivering another nine sexual and reproductive health hubs, and we will work to ensure, again in partnership with the federal government, that we increase the access to medical termination of pregnancy and that we increase access to surgical terminations where required, because our government believe that abortion care is health care.

We know that there are a range of common conditions that women experience very differently and present with different symptoms. That is why our women’s health care research institute is so important. There is a lot of catch-up work to be done to ensure that we understand and can apply the

most effective treatments to a range of conditions, including cardiac conditions. We know that more women are likely to present with multiple sclerosis, but we do not know why. So there is a lot of work to be done through our women's health research institute.

Of course we are going to double the number of laparoscopy surgeries that are available and have an inquiry into women's pain management. There is so much to be done in order to understand the way in which we have seen the growth in the number of women – well, we do not know actually whether it is a growth in the number of women presenting with endometriosis or whether for the first time ever women are able to get a diagnosis for the pain that they have continued to experience. So I am very proud to be delivering on each and every one of these commitments.

My first love will always remain the very good people of the Macedon electorate, and it is always obviously a great honour to be their representative in this place. We went to the election with some very targeted announcements for the people of Macedon – a new trades hub at Gisborne Secondary College, fully funded. We have got one in Kyneton; it is delivering for kids. The kids of my community really want to continue careers in trade and technology, and the trades hub at Gisborne Secondary College will deliver that.

There is an upgraded skate park in Romsey. Romsey has a very high proportion of teenagers, and it is really important that they have access to outdoor activities. The kids have told me that is what they want, and I am glad to be partnering with the Lions Club on the delivery of that. Kyneton footy netball club will have more netball courts for the young women of Kyneton – that will also be delivered. This is a great budget, and I commend it to the house.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (10:55): I rise to finally give the budget reply on behalf of the Victorian Greens. Obviously, this is the biggest Greens team ever to be elected to this place and this Parliament at a general election. This budget was handed down at an incredibly difficult time for so many Victorians struggling with the skyrocketing cost of living, struggling to pay the rent or afford their own home and struggling to access health care and find a bulk-billing GP. So many people are being pushed to the margins, into poverty and into homelessness, and this was a budget that desperately needed to go to the heart of these massive issues that are affecting so many Victorians, particularly young people – cost of living, poverty, homelessness and disadvantage.

The reality is that Victorians who are already struggling are going to be worse off over the next year. In the lead-up to this budget we were constantly told that the state would need to enter an austerity phase, with some belt-tightening to address debt and address the state's finances, but this ignored a really critical factor in that people cannot afford for things to get worse before they get better. Here in Victoria the cost-of-living crisis means that basically everyone is feeling the pinch but many are being pushed to the margins, and those who were already on the margins are off the cliff now.

More and more people are having to make the choice between putting food on the table, accessing health care or affording other essentials. Lifeline searches relating to financial issues and homelessness went up 50 per cent in the last year. Renters are facing yet another year of massive rent increases, putting so many people just one rent rise away from homelessness, which is on the rise. Thirty thousand people are experiencing homelessness every single night, sleeping rough, couch surfing or sleeping in overcrowded or unsafe accommodation. Thousands of people are being turned away from homelessness services every single year.

The public housing waiting list continues to grow, up to about 120,000 people, a quarter of them children. The wait time for priority housing applications is 15 months, and for those in public housing homes, many of them are facing crowded and substandard conditions that just are not fit for purpose. People are struggling to access bulk-billing GPs, mental health support and public dental care and are putting off treatment just to save money.

Workers who have already experienced low wage growth for years have received now an effective real wage cut – the biggest on record – and the Labor government has had a policy of deliberately

keeping wages low with a public sector wage cap. On top of that, in this budget, 3000 to 4000 public sector workers will be out of a job in the next 12 months. You know, we all said thanks for the incredible work so many in the public sector did during the pandemic. Well, what way of saying thanks is this – cutting their jobs? This is going to have a massive negative impact on service delivery, particularly services for vulnerable Victorians.

All this is on top of Victoria having the lowest national average funding for public education, for public health and for public hospitals, and all these things are just going to get worse under this budget. Without significant government intervention more Victorians are going to be pushed to the margins, pushed into poverty, suffering housing stress, experiencing homelessness and seeking food relief and help at already stretched community services and emergency wards.

In the lead-up to this budget the Greens highlighted the need to make the profiteering corporations like the big banks, like the property developers and like the gambling industry pay their fair share of tax to fund more public and affordable housing, to increase wages for workers and to make it easier for people to see a GP, a dentist or a psychologist. Whilst the government did raise revenue from big business and property investors, next to none of that money is actually going towards helping people in need. Quite frankly, it is staggering that this government is planning to raise over \$25 billion over the next 10 years with the debt levy and the future fund and at the end of that it is only going to have reduced debt by around 15 per cent and have nothing else to show for it.

That is why we have put forward an alternative proposal that the state government's COVID debt levy and the future fund should actually be used to tackle poverty and increase public housing. Under what we are putting forward the debt levy would be converted into an ending poverty levy so that some \$20 billion – or more than that – of revenue that is raised from taxes would be put towards genuine cost-of-living relief that matches the scale of the problem in programs such as for housing, health, education, justice and employment in Victoria's most disadvantaged areas. On the future fund, what we tried to do this week was amend that so the funds could only be used to build more public housing across the state and go towards building some 100,000 new public housing homes that Victoria needs over the next decade.

The state's debt should be better managed by using the economic benefits of reducing poverty and ending homelessness: increased economic growth, improved productivity, improved health, education and employment outcomes for people and lower costs for people in crisis presenting at emergency wards. Poverty is a handbrake to economic growth. Victoria would be much better off managing its finances by tackling entrenched inequality and disadvantage first. Just imagine the impact that over \$27 billion would have on people living in poverty, struggling to put food on the table or without a safe place to call home. The reality is with the revenue raised in this budget from the taxes on big business and property investors, the government can tackle poverty, can end homelessness and can create the fair society that we all want to live in.

On top of the cost-of-living crisis, the Victorian ecosystem is on the brink. The number of threatened species continues to rise, so we welcome the end of native forest logging, which we have pushed for for so long, in this budget. We are in awe of the activists, the local groups and the traditional owners who have fought so long, for decades, to protect our native forests. This logging has been devastating to ecosystems, putting native plants and animals under threat of extinction – and for what? Woodchips and paper. The state-sponsored logging operation did not stack up. It lost millions of dollars every year despite the government seemingly bending over backwards to prop it up – buying wood mills, making illegal logging legal, putting in anti-protest laws – and it was obvious to all that they had to bring forward the transition support to end native forest logging as soon as possible. But while our state continues to face the extinction crisis the government is cutting \$2 billion from the environment department, and they are still funding fossil fuel projects, actually looking to expand the use of coal in Victoria with the coal-to-hydrogen project using carbon capture and storage – absolutely appalling.

In my electorate of Prahran there is so much unmet need that has been neglected in this budget – more and better public housing, including social support for tenants. Residents are feeling ignored and neglected by the government. There needs to be funding to build a community hub at St Kilda Primary School. Stonnington Community Assist need to hire a much-needed paid staff member to help more people who are presenting in need in our community.

When it comes to climate-friendly transport, funding is needed for further upgrades to South Yarra station to meet the needs of the growing South Yarra community and finally to install that second entrance to Windsor station – we had planning money in one budget, but still we have not seen the results yet and it has not come to fruition; to install more EV chargers in Prahran – there is just one public EV charger; and to build separated bike lanes along Chapel Street north – the pop-up bike lanes which had identified Chapel Street north and other areas within Prahran, well, they have been cut. There is the community-developed Greenline project, a fantastic environmental initiative, a community-initiated initiative, that extends the length of the Sandringham line from the Yarra to Gardenvale. Now that the Prahran TAFE site has been acquired, a public, transparent master-planning process needs to take place, and the government will need to commit the funding and support required to realise that long-term vision of a Prahran arts and education precinct.

Victorians in need who are struggling to pay the rent, struggling to put food on the table and being pushed into poverty just cannot afford for things to get worse before they get better. Every dollar of revenue raised from taxes on big business and property investors should be going to ending poverty and building more public housing homes. The reality is we can have the sort of society we want to live in. We can afford to have the sort of society we want to live in, with an end to poverty and an end to homelessness, where we make sure people can access the health care that they need, make sure that people have well-paid, secure jobs and make sure we have got a planet for everyone to live on. That is why the Greens are here – the biggest Greens team ever elected at a state election.

That is what we are pushing for – pushing the government further and faster for renters, to help people in need and to get out of coal and gas – and certainly it is much better than the alternative approach that has been put forward by the Liberals, which is essentially supercharged austerity across our state. That is what all the Greens in this Parliament are fighting for.

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) (11:05): I rise today to put on the record the outstanding support that the Victorian state budget 2023–24 has delivered for my electorate, but also I would like to take the opportunity to outline, across my many ministerial portfolios, some of the things that we are delivering to do what matters for Victorians.

If I can focus on the wonderful electorate of Williamstown first up, there are a number of really key initiatives in this budget. Firstly, there is the Newport RSL sub-branch, and I need to give a real shout-out to the leadership there that delivers so many wonderful supports for the veterans community in and around Newport and Williamstown. In this year's budget – and this builds upon a couple of grants that they have received over the past few years – they were successful in obtaining \$200,000. This will be transformative for the RSL. They are in a pretty old building, and despite the best efforts of the veteran community to get in there, hold those working bees and do those refurbishments, there are structural things that need to be done to the RSL building, and this money will make it possible. So I congratulate Newport RSL on being successful in receiving that money.

On top of that, Altona Primary School, which is led by principal Sarah Afiouni, was successful in getting \$1.2 million to refurbish the school playgrounds and also the fencing. When I went down there in about October last year, I saw firsthand the state of those school playgrounds. Basically they were no longer fit for purpose. When I talked to the kids they said their number one wish was to have a new school playground. So it was great to be able to return there this year and say this is what we will be delivering for the school.

Earlier today in my members statement I mentioned a Brooklyn community garden group called Patch in the Park, and they were successful in receiving \$250,000 as a one-off grant for that community garden in Brooklyn. This will be absolutely transformative for Brooklyn. Patch in the Park is led by some really vociferous advocates for their local community, and I cannot wait to see the planning and the design. They really want to co-design the space at that community garden with the local community and also with the council to be able to provide a lasting legacy for the people of Brooklyn.

Another important part of the budget for my local community was for planning for a mental health and wellbeing local in Altona. This will provide support and treatment for adults aged 26 and older who experience mental illness or psychological distress, including those who have got co-occurring substance use or addiction. It will provide free, easy-to-access mental health care without the need to have a GP referral or meet eligibility criteria. This will be transformative, I think, for Altona. When you put that on top of our unprecedented investment in building the new Footscray Hospital, we will now have a network of wonderful healthcare services in the inner west.

I have also got two large and key mosques in my community. There is the Australian Islamic Centre, and there is also the Association of Islamic Da'wah in Australia, commonly known as AIDA, which will both be looking forward to the open community infrastructure grants with the Islamic community as part of the government's commitment in this year's budget to the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund. This will help these communities build on significant grants that they have received in the past. The Australian Islamic Centre received \$250,000 in the 2022 budget for facility upgrades. It is always great to go down there and see what the community is doing for others, because both of these communities are really invested in helping others. AIDA also received in the past \$150,000 to extend and upgrade that facility that they have got there, to extend and upgrade the mosque, and I cannot wait for works to start there. The other thing too – I need to pop down there very soon – is that they are passionate about table tennis, absolutely passionate about table tennis, and they received a grant through the West Gate Neighbourhood Fund to be able to put in some table tennis tables, so I think that will be good. I am not entirely sure my hand-eye coordination will be great, but I am happy to give it a go with some of the kids.

One of the biggest investments in the local community was of course \$6 million to refurbish Workshops Pier. Workshops Pier comes off Seaworks. It is one of the most important piers that we have got in the historic maritime precinct of Williamstown, so to be able to find the money to refurbish this important pier that can no longer have boats tied up to it will be fantastic. It will allow commercial fishermen to come back there and it will allow for the tall ships to be tied up there, which is something that has been much loved in Williamstown. This builds on the refurbishment of and repairs to the historic Point Gellibrand seawall, which I think will be completed in the coming weeks, and that is particularly exciting to the local community. It was built by convicts, because Point Gellibrand was actually the first point that white settlers came to, and it is a historic part of Williamstown.

On top of that there is Sutton Avenue Kindergarten, with works about to kick off there as well. There has been important investment in the kinders around the electorate, and I know that the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place is no stranger to Williamstown and the investment. Whether it is Robina Scott in Williamstown, The Range kindergarten down in Williamstown or indeed Emma McLean up in Spotswood, we have got kinders all over the place that have benefited from our historic investment in kinder.

I will turn to some of my portfolios as well. If I look at the initiatives that will contribute significantly to the safe and efficient way that Victorians will use and interact with the road network, we have got \$2.8 billion over 10 years to maintain and strengthen our road network, which includes flood recovery works. There is of course the \$10 million free rego for apprentices initiative, and that will provide that real cost-of-living relief for our hardworking tradies. \$31.7 million will protect and maintain our iconic West Gate Bridge, and again this is a bridge that really is very important to my electorate. There is \$15.7 million to continue our commitment to the school crossing supervisor program, and I would really like to give a shout-out to all those school crossing supervisors. There is \$61.6 million to

improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians, bike riders and drivers through a series of road and shared path upgrades.

In the time that I have got left, I would like to focus on a couple of things – firstly, road safety, because already this year 147 people have lost their lives on our roads. This leaves friends, families, workmates and communities forever changed. In 2021 we launched the state's new *Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030* and the first action plan, which sets really ambitious targets to halve road deaths and significantly reduce serious injuries. So it was really important that we announced the \$210 million safe local roads and streets program, which provides the development and delivery of road safety infrastructure projects on local roads. It will run over four years. We will work with councils to be able to plan and design and deliver those safety improvements, because everything that we can do we will do to get that road toll down.

Of course in this year's budget there is – and I see the member for Point Cook here in the chamber, who will be particularly excited about it – a program for clean air in Melbourne's west. This is a program that has never been done before. It is a \$20 million program to get some of our oldest, dirtiest trucks off the streets, because as you can appreciate, we live in such close proximity to the port, and the trucks that move in and out of the container parks, in and out of the port are some of the oldest and dirtiest ones on the streets. So to have a \$15 million package that will run over four years to be able to basically do cash for clunkers, in a way, is really important. And then \$5 million to seal unsealed roads in the cities of Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Brimbank is really important too. That is the first time that a project like this has actually been designed, so I think that will be incredibly important.

I also would like to say that there has been an historic investment in rebuilding and repairing a number of our much-loved jetties for communities to come. There was \$10 million to rebuild Dromana Pier and \$20.5 million to rebuild St Leonards Pier. Is the member for Bass here? No, she is not, but I know the member for Bass and I have had many, many conversations about the importance of the Warneet jetties. These jetties unfortunately have absolutely reached end of life, and I know how important that connectivity is for that town. The member for Bass has been an unbelievable advocate for her community. I have been down there a couple of times with her, met with the local community and seen the parlous state of those jetties, so to be able to secure \$9.5 million for those jetties is fantastic, and it is a real testament to the member for Bass's work in that area.

Finally, there are a couple of other things that I would not mind highlighting. Of course in casino, gaming and liquor regulation we have got an incredibly strong regulator, so to be able to have that funding that allows them to continue their important work is really important, because when we redid the legislation we put harm minimisation at the heart of their work. We know that they have leaned in very hard. Whether it is regulating the casino or other industries, they have certainly achieved so much.

In local government we have introduced initiatives that really achieve what matters for local government workers. There has been \$12.1 million to deliver a suite of programs that address skills shortages and make councils places where people want to work. There is \$5.3 million to develop a fair jobs code, which is tailored for councils. This will be designed to minimise insecure work, including outsourcing, labour hire and the casualisation of local government employment. We have got a \$6.3 million program to establish a pilot program that will create traineeships and apprenticeships in the local government sector. We will work with councils to be able to co-design this, because councils say to me all the time they are facing a number of skills shortages, but no council is quite the same. So to be able to work with councils to support them is a really important thing. In conclusion, in my remaining few seconds, I would like to congratulate the Victorian Treasurer on this budget. I think it will deliver positive change for our communities.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) (11:21): I rise to make a contribution on the budget for the coming financial year, the appropriations. It really has been a huge let-down, but what it does tell us is what we really knew: Victoria's finances are absolutely almost at rock bottom. We probably could still go lower, and if you look at the forecast, it will get worse. We are looking at the parliamentary

appropriations as well. The budget shows us where the spending is, where money is coming from and really how much taxpayers are being slugged – and we know taxpayers are being slugged more and more all the time. Really importantly, we want to know about the level of debt. What is for certain is that the state budget shows that under Labor life is getting harder for Victorians, with jobs being axed, taxes increasing and budget cuts to health, roads and major infrastructure. I would love to be spruiking all of the things that the government are going to be delivering into my electorate, but they are very few and far between. We did not even get a table tennis table, and I would be very keen to have something as low level as that in my electorate, because we have really missed out. We have got emergency services screaming for funding to upgrade or build new facilities, we have got schools and sporting clubs that need facility improvements – some of those are large, some of them are not so large – and we have roads crumbling before our eyes.

I am going to start with the state of the debt, projected to climb to \$171.4 billion by 2026–27. That is extraordinary. It is extraordinary to think about how you could put a plan in place to repay that level of debt. The debt that was incurred by the Cain–Kirner governments is paled into insignificance by this. The interest repayments are set to double to more than \$22 million a day, to pay our interest. At the minute it is \$10 million or \$11 million, and that is going to climb. It is really quite extraordinary the money that is being spent on just paying interest, which would pay for a whole lot of infrastructure in my electorate certainly.

Victorian families have got higher rents and increases in land tax. There are hikes in school fees, and that one is a little bit dodgy when you think that the Minister for Education and the Treasurer have got their whiteboard hit list of which schools are going to be on that and which schools are not going to be on that. It is an extraordinary way to do things. Certainly they are not for profit, and if you look at what a lot of those schools in that sector do in the community – the number of free positions that they provide – they are getting slugged. You have got to wonder, if they start to tax the not-for-profit sector, how much further is that going to go.

We see many, many major infrastructure projects that have been shelved. Businesses are going to pay for Labor's incompetence. There is a higher payroll tax and a 42 per cent increase in WorkCover premiums, and this means jobs are at risk and growth is at risk. If you are teetering around \$9.5 million in payroll and you are thinking of expanding, you are going to think twice if your payroll is going to hit \$10 million. You are going to have to work out whether it is worth it for you, because you are going to be slugged so much more in tax.

We have got 700,000 small businesses across the state, and these have been hit with increased premiums, taxes and costs as well – very little relief. A small chunk are getting a bit of relief but not very many. Business owners are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns, and a lot of damage was caused. A lot of them had to take out loans to make ends meet because they still had to pay for stuff. They would have had JobKeeper at some point, but there were still other costs that they needed to incur. They still had to pay to have the lights on. They still had to pay rent, because a lot of businesses do not own their own premises. The traders – a 42 per cent increase in WorkCover premiums, and that is fairly significant. Somebody told me the other day that already their WorkCover for a small supermarket had gone from \$70,000 to \$140,000 or \$160,000 – it was really quite extraordinary – before this happened. And if anyone has had a claim, especially one of the mental health claims that are causing a lot of grief for the government and for WorkSafe, that is going to impact further.

A 25 per cent increase in power bills – the government here did not match the federal government's small business energy relief program. It is virtually the only state in the country that chose not to do so, and they said that was because we have got a \$250 home power saving bonus. Well, people who run businesses have to keep their doors open and also have to run their home, so they have just been left behind. Other states have seen fit to match that, and so Victoria has been missing out again. We know that they are missing out, and we know that the government has no money. In fact we have got the Premier out and about saying, 'Look, I've got no money, but if you need planning reform, if you

need some changes, and it's not going to cost me money, I'm happy to facilitate that, but certainly we are not there to be handing out any grants.'

One billion dollars from the health budget – and at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, health department officials confirmed that a \$320 million health infrastructure fund will be added to the state's credit card. During the campaign, the government committed to fully funding seven healthcare facilities, in Gippsland, Monash, Dandenong, Wonthaggi and Melbourne's east and north, at a cost of more than \$4 billion. And, gosh, what a surprise it was to see in the budget that only 7.9 per cent of the projects were budgeted.

Locally for me, as I said earlier, I did not get much at all. We have emergency services that really need investment and have missed out again. Hoddles Creek CFA have been on the drawing board for ages, and everybody down there and at the other CFA stations and the districts all know that Hoddles Creek needs investment to upgrade their facility. Yarck seems to have dropped off. It was up in the top list of the infrastructure needs of the CFA. They want to move it from the tiny tin shed with ridiculous access at the back from the main street of Yarck around the corner to where the land is already purchased, so all they need to do is pop it up.

Mansfield – the SES station needs an upgrade. They know that. The council have sorted out where the emergency services precinct will be, and the SES station and the ambulance station in Mansfield have been in the top few, for the better part of a decade, of those needing investment. For a while it took the council having to sort out where they wanted that investment to go. They have done that, and I would have expected, and in fact I think everybody expected, that there would be investment made there.

Sporting clubs that have gone without need facility upgrades. The Yea Football Netball Club needs its ground resurfaced. They lost games last year, and they have been unable now to field sides. It also impacts cricket. Cricket is going along okay, but they need new nets at the cricket grounds, and the football ground needs a resurface. The Wesburn Junior Football Club is a great success story. They are doing so well, but their facilities are completely degraded. They have, like Warburton actually, a woodfired heater in their change rooms to do the heating – it is one of the quirks of country electorates. But the clubrooms certainly need to be developed, because we have males and females playing junior football and you cannot have them all getting changed in the one space.

The community leisure centre in Alexandra has a leaking roof. They need a new floor there. In Healesville the Queens Park sporting facility is really, really dodgy for away teams. I think the member for Evelyn's family actually went and played there and could attest to that. I have certainly been there a number of times. And the pavilion at Don Road – the sporting complex – needs doing.

Some simple schools infrastructure is needed. At Wesburn Primary School we have been screaming for years and years and years for 40-kilometre zone flashing lights out on the Warburton Highway. It is a big sweeping bend with a lot of traffic and foggy, very ordinary conditions a lot of times. Traffic does not slow down. The school and I have been calling for this for years and years and years. You see the former member for Monbulk just pull wish lists out of the air and manage to get some with less traffic and with less problems installed, and everyone sees that in my area as not being fair. Simple things like weather protection for primary schools so kids can in the summer have some shade while playing outside and if it is raining to be out of the wet – Yarra Glen Primary School and Panton Hill Primary School are very much looking for that.

The roads – Labor is punishing Victorians with a \$380 million reduction in annual spending on road maintenance since 2020. That is a 45 per cent cut. In this year's budget it is cut a further 25 per cent to just \$441 million, and this is less than in the last budget of the former coalition government in 2014. Roads are something I hear a lot about. Potholes are extraordinary. Melba Highway is a shambles yet again. The very recently resealed road – just around Christmas time – has also got potholes in it. The Goulburn Valley and Maroondah highways at Cathkin and at Killingworth near Bonnie Doon have dreadful conditions, and at Maindample. Roads leading to Mount Buller are causing great concern,

and snow season is just starting. Snow is popping down. Pedestrian safety in Hurstbridge needs to be addressed and improved. Heidelberg-Kinglake Road drastically needs safety improvements, and they are all missing out.

One of the things that I want to talk about is the shock shutdown of the timber industry, which was given six months and not six years under the guise that this will create certainty. Well, let me tell you, there is zero certainty at the minute. Everybody who works in that industry has no idea what is going on. They have been given zero information from the government, and so there is less certainty now than there ever was. There are some people that will be happy with this; I am certainly not happy with it. The 2500 workers in the native timber industry will not be. They were completely insulted by a press release spruiking the government's free TAFE program and how that is going to help them retrain. What an insult to them. Some of these people have only worked in the bush for 40 years or more and think they do not have the skills to undertake a course at TAFE, and nor do they have the desire or the interest. What is clear to me is these guys do not want to be on unemployment benefits, but they are terribly stressed about what is going to happen to them. The harvest and haulage workers are unsure whether they are going to be included in the compensation claims. A number of the people with businesses there have already laid staff off.

To get a contract with VicForests, part of the contract conditions was that you needed to invest in new gear, whether that was a skidder, a harvester or a processor, and to do so they had to take out loans. People have had to borrow against their houses to have that contract. Now those contracts are being pulled from them, and they are left with a loan. They are left with machinery that they are unlikely to be able to sell on the second-hand market because it is going to be flooded. So they are really, really feeling the pinch here and the stress. For communities the supply chain runs deep. They service the machinery, they service the tools and they provide the fuel.

The timber sector represents \$7.6 billion in economic activity per annum in Australia, and we have got in Victoria \$770 million in revenue. The demand for timber has never been higher. People want high-end timber in their homes for furniture, for windows, for fittings and for staircases. Where are they going to get this timber now? This is not about chips and paper like the Greens would have you believe.

Timber is a source that will absorb carbon. It is good for the environment. The government have virtually said there is going to be no transition to plantation, and let us face it, I think they finally worked out that plantations take some 40 to 50 years to grow. They are not going to be there by 2030, so the government have backpedalled from that fairly quickly. But where are we going to get our timber from – interstate, overseas? The United States provides a lot of timber here. Gee, let me just think about the emissions it is going to take to bring the quantities of timber that we need to Victoria from the United States. I constantly hear 'We are one planet'. Here we are, robbing Peter to pay Paul. It makes zero sense. If we get timber from Asia, what are their practices like? In Victoria we had very tough practices – some of the strictest practices in the world – for timber harvesting operations. That now has gone to the wayside, and we are going to have to rely on other areas. Particularly if we are relying on that from overseas, the forests will be decimated there. They do not have the timber practices like we do, the sustainable harvesting.

In forests the young trees absorb much more carbon than older trees, and the IPCC have said in their reports that removing trees as they mature and replanting them is better for the environment, as the wood continues to absorb carbon. So the arguments here that this is a good thing for the Victorian economy are absolutely from fairyland. Victoria has been screwed under this budget.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (11:36): I guarantee that my contribution will be a lot more eloquent and well mannered than that one. I rise to speak on the budget take-note motion this morning. We have heard from many people about the budget, but working in Treasury I would like to start by thanking the Treasurer's team and the department as well. The amount of work, the amount of late nights and the consultation that took place were remarkable. Obviously as the Parliamentary Secretary

to the Treasurer I get people thanking me, and I feel a little bit shy, because some of these people have really put the hard yards in for a budget that had to make some hard decisions.

There is no doubt that COVID put pressures on this state, and others across the globe, that nation-states had never seen before. That certainly happened in Victoria. The 10-year plan to repay that credit card debt, as it has been called, is one that I think we should be talking about more and talking about in a positive way, because it is responsible and makes sure that we are not handing the debt caused by a worldwide crisis on to the next generation. I think that is really, really responsible. I will not go on too much about the record employment and the bounce-back after COVID of the economy.

Instead I would like to focus more on some of the local things announced in the budget that have resonated with my community. I will start off with free kinder. Obviously the last couple of budgets have had free kinder in them. You hear families in my community of Frankston and across the peninsula talking about how they are going to be two and a half grand better off per child with the free kinder kits and with allowing mums and some dads to go back to work. It is quite something. It has definitely resonated across my community; as well as the power saving bonus, it is something we hear about daily in my electorate office.

On the power saving bonus, that has had an amazing uptake among, I think, every electorate in Victoria. Yes, we can talk about the cost of living, and it is brought up by those opposite quite often, but doing something about the cost of living is a lot more valuable. The PSB, the power saving bonus, certainly does that. As well as free glasses for kids, sports vouchers, free kinder, the priority care centres with bulk-billing and things like that, which have been mentioned a little bit earlier, certainly the support for TAFE in this budget was something that my community welcomed. The announcement of more free TAFE courses, with everything from becoming a beekeeper to some of the other offerings, has been of huge interest to my community.

We also heard just before the budget about the V/Line fare cap. That obviously means that the trip from Melbourne to Merimbula is capped at \$9.20 a day. It is great news for people in the regions. I know that it is shouted about across the chamber at times – I am sure in a very polite fashion – but there are many people on this side of the chamber that do actually represent regional communities. I have visited them in my capacity as the parliamentary secretary, and I know the feedback has been very good on that particular policy issue. That being said, if you calculate the savings on some of these – as I have said, free kinder, sports vouchers, free glasses, the early parenting centres, the power saving bonus and the priority care centres – you are looking at about \$3000 to \$4000 worth of savings per household, for households that might be entitled to each one of these savings measures.

In Frankston we were able to make some amazing announcements. I was so excited to be on the phone, as I am sure many of my colleagues were, to school principals, sporting clubs and local councils, and not the first time but the first time I think it really hit me right in the heart was when I had a particular school principal who answered the phone and was expecting bad news, because all they had heard about on the news was how this was going to be an incredibly bad budget and whatnot. It was not an incredibly large amount of money, but it was a huge issue for this particular school, and we are solving that issue. This principal was sobbing on the phone to the point where I said, 'Hang on, I'm going to come round.' I put the phone down, got the box of tissues, got a couple of coffees and went around and had a chat. Those are the things that I guess drive me as a local member, that we can make such a difference in our communities. This principal was crying not just because she had achieved a goal for her school but because she knew that this was a life-changing commitment from the Andrews Labor government. This will actually change lives, and we are not talking about just the educational merits of this announcement. It was actually more about some of the pastoral care and social issues in the area that that school is in and how this could actually change lives there as well.

The very first phone call I made was to the Frankston & District Basketball Association general manager Wayne. Wayne is a fantastic guy. He has got an amazing wit and is very, very smart, and we were able to back in our commitment of \$15 million and say it was listed in the budget and we were

good to go on this project. At the moment we are awaiting Frankston council to come up with some plans, but it is a tripartisan agreement with the federal government, Frankston council and the state government, and again, this is something that will change that community for the better. There are nearly 11,000 FDBA members in our community, and we are providing an extension for basketball so little kids do not have to be picked up by their parents at 11 o'clock at night after playing a game of basketball. I think it has come across, has resonated in the community and has been very much welcomed.

Frankston Brekky Club – I made another very emotional phone call to a bunch of people that off their own backs created what they call the Frankston Brekky Club. This is a facility that is co-partnered with Chisholm TAFE, where people who may not get breakfast in the morning in the Frankston community, people who maybe have been sleeping rough or who have not had social contact for some time and need to have access to services, can do that through the Frankston Brekky Club. They received \$200,000 in this budget, which means that they can go ahead and provide that material aid but also make sure that people are hooked in with the right services for that wraparound service that we know is the model that works in our community.

Aldercourt Primary School – it was a pleasure to ring up the principal and announce the \$3.8 million which will finish their master plan. That school is part of the Frankston North education precinct – may I say the award-winning Frankston North education precinct, with I think three awards now. I know that principals are too busy to be watching this and their cheeks would be red if they heard me say this, because they are quiet achievers, but to go from schools that a decade ago were in a community that was fourth in the dropping-off-the-edge list, so the fourth most disadvantaged community in Australia, to winning the Victorian education award, to a principal winning the Victorian principals award – and there is another award which I do not want to go on record because I am not quite sure about it, but there have been three awards – has been pretty amazing. It has been an amazing journey, and this school was part of that. Mahogany Rise Primary School was also part of that, and it was great to ring up their school principal and say they would have their netball and basketball facility upgrade.

Part of our job as MPs is of course visiting schools. As a former teacher it is kind of my natural place to be, and I love visiting our schools and hearing from teachers at the coalface what the challenges are, and in this area they have mostly been infrastructure challenges. To have been able to build these schools up and see that pride level go up in the families, in the school community and in the kids has just been an amazing journey for someone that was actually teaching in these schools not so long ago.

It was also great to ring the principal of Overport Primary School. Overport Primary School is a school where the Treasurer of Victoria came out and kicked the soccer ball with us and we had a look at the school oval – and it was pretty bad. The running track had holes in it that I think were more like mine shafts, a safety issue for the school community and the kids, and we said that we would do something about that. I know the Treasurer of Victoria was a bit taken aback when he saw the condition and straightaway said 'Yes, I think we should be able to do something about this,' and we are, because we are a government that does what we say we will do, and it is pretty simple. I mean, for most of us on this side of the house that is a life choice. Not just in your job but even in your personal life you say what you are going to do and you get it done.

We heard the announcement of a new tech school for Frankston. Of course this will be integrated into the greater conversation about the SEC, giving people the skills they need not just for the jobs they want but for future jobs. This will be around renewables, around med tech and around that sovereign manufacturing capability that we really need to be pushing more. The Frankston North re-engagement program, we are still funding that. That is part of that Frankston North education precinct. It is a model that is used in various electorates around the state now. It was introduced in Frankston, and the success story has come out of Frankston as well. Mount Erin Secondary College is another school where it was just a pleasure to ring their principal and say that help is on the way. They have had some issues with flooding and they have had some issues with the condition of their buildings. It was actually the

Premier of Victoria that came out and visited that school just to check out what was actually happening and what the ask was, and he made a commitment to that school, which was just fantastic.

There was a little bit of confusion on this next one, I think from members on the other side, and I would like to clarify that. There was another budget item that we committed to and fulfilled in the budget, which was the Frankston Hospital women's clinic. Now, this women's health clinic is actually additional to the \$1.5 billion Frankston Hospital redevelopment which is going on right now. We just had the second crane erected on that site, and it is a sight to see. You come down the Frankston Freeway, past say Kananook station, and you can see cranes on the horizon, and you know that during the day boots are on the ground doing work. Frankston of course, as I have said many times, has had more investment in the last nine years and more faith, more passion and more commitment by government in the last 10 years than in any other time in its history. It has had more investment in the last nine years than in the last 90, and it is starting to show. And you can see even in our community, as I have kind of said with the schools, that pride. When there is something new, people are aspirational and they are even inspired by the fact that their community is growing. We are seeing some commentary on some planning issues in Frankston at the moment, and it is very interesting to see the way that the community actually talk about those planning issues. I think it surprised some people about the direction they want Frankston to go in.

Of course I cannot forget about Peninsula Home Hospice. We have supported them and they do a great job. I meet with them at least every six months, and it is a great sign when a government can support such a service. These people do their job very quietly. They are not on social media and they do not put their hand up much, but they provide an integral service to our community. Frankston Hospital is part of the new PET scanner program, so we will be expecting to improve our clinical capacity to assess cancers, neurological diseases and cardiovascular diseases in the Frankston community, and the peninsula community I might I add, with a new PET scanner. The Frankston Zero program – which some people might have heard of; the Zero program operates in other municipalities too – essentially has an aim within a certain time period to bring functional homelessness in Frankston down to zero. I am very proud to note that the Andrews Labor government has been able to provide half a million dollars to that service, which involves Frankston City Council, the Peninsula Community Legal Centre and some other stakeholders to actually get this job done. It is a blight on us as MPs when you know that on the peninsula on any given night there are people who are sleeping rough or couch surfing, and we need to do as much as we can to deal with that, but we need to know how to do it, and this is part of that.

The 1st South Frankston Scout Group – I cannot forget these guys and girls. They do a great job. I love visiting the 1st South Frankston Scout Group. They are always entertaining. Their leaders are amazing. We are budgeting \$20,000 to make sure that they get the best facility to have the most fun.

I did mention it yesterday, but I will mention it again: Frankston is a finalist in the 2023 tourism awards along with Bendigo and – we do not worry about the other ones. Frankston is a finalist, and it was a finalist – I think we came third – last year.

Pauline Richards: Well deserved.

Paul EDBROOKE: It was very well deserved. I can see this year that we might actually take the gong. So much has been happening. So much has been progressing. The evolution of Frankston is not complete yet, but people certainly are appreciating that. We will wait for the judgement, but Frankston will be up there.

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (11:51): I rise to make a contribution on the budget take-note motion, although it is not a great budget – we know that. Certainly in regional Victoria it has been a disaster, but I think for all Victorians the financial millstone is going to be around our necks for many years to come. And just when you think it cannot get any worse, the Treasurer comes out and says, 'But wait, there's more.' There will be more debt. It will get worse before it gets better, and that is

quite frightening while Victorians are struggling with cost-of-living pressures. The Treasurer says there will be more pain. There are years of pain in the outer years.

As the Treasurer knows, Victoria is just about broke. It is really important for those on the other side to understand how we have got to this position, because I do not think many of them understand. They are in denial about how we have got in this debt. If I can take you back to 1970 – and I know it is going back a bit for some of you, and maybe you were not around back then – Victoria's debt was about \$6 billion. It was a long time ago, and the average home debt was about \$20,000. Then when the Liberal-Nationals left government in 2014 – so we are talking 44 years later – that debt went from \$6 billion to \$18 billion. So it took 44 years to get from \$6 billion to \$18 billion. Now we are going from \$18 billion to \$171 billion in just 11 years – it took 11 years to go from \$18 billion to \$171 billion. And we all know \$171 billion is not the figure; it will be closer to \$200 billion, because we know Labor's track record when it comes to managing debt and mismanaging money.

Life is getting harder for Victorians, and that is because Labor are punishing Victorians through their incompetence. To put this debt in perspective, in my electorate of Ovens Valley, if you went out and bought a home in Yarrawonga in 2015 and you had \$300,000 in debt – a reasonable figure to have in debt – if you put your debt level up at the same rate that the Victorian government has since they came to power, your debt, instead of being \$300,000 on a house in Yarrawonga, would now be \$2.8 million. That is a massive jump. If you went at the same rate at which the debt level has gone up in Victoria over that time, it would be a \$2.8 million debt load – and at 5 per cent interest, instead of paying \$15,000 a year, you would be paying \$140,000 a year. So how can you expect mums and dads to pay that sort of figure? They cannot, so they do not allow themselves to get into that level of debt – but Labor obviously does. They clearly do not care, because we now have a debt load that you just cannot jump over. We know that when Labor runs out of money, they start coming after yours. But as I said, mums and dads in regional Victoria or anywhere in Victoria do not have that luxury to go and find the money from somewhere else. They have to deal with it, and they are more responsible.

This disastrous budget Labor calls 'Doing what matters' – matters to who? Matters to what? A tax on jobs – that matters, particularly if you are going to lose your job because of the taxes. A tax on rent – well, that matters for 800,000 renters who are going to get a rise in their rent. We hear this time and time again from those on the other side, 'What matters', and I just think it is another slogan that Labor have come up with, but they really have not thought that through, because what matters is not all good news.

Again I hear from some of those on the other side – I heard this old chestnut from the members for Mordialloc and Eltham when they were talking about it in their contributions last sitting week – 'At least we do what we say we're going to do.' Well, tell that to the timber industry. Tell that to the families who were told they had seven years to wind down, they had seven years to get their business in order – seven years before their business was decimated, seven years to plan for the future or to reskill – and then they were told they have got seven months. So when they stand in this place and say, 'Oh, at least we do what we say we're going to do', that is a lie. I think you need to go to those timber towns and those communities and apologise and tell them that Labor and the Greens are going to shut their towns down. They have closed their communities, and they are going to turn their livelihoods into sawdust.

Labor stands up in this place and talks about saving jobs and all these wonderful things for jobs and that it is the party for jobs, and then it brings the guillotine down on thousands of working families. Even the Premier at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the other day said, 'It was our intention to keep it open until 2030.' That is a load of rubbish – more deception. I would love to see some of those on the other side go to visit Orbost, Maffra, Corryong and some of those timber towns and tell them that they are going to shut their industry down, that they told them it was going to be seven years but they have now changed their minds because they have teamed up with the Greens. If the Premier will not go, well maybe the Deputy Premier, the Premier-in-waiting, will go. Instead of standing in front of the mirror practising, maybe she could go to some of these timber towns and start to tell them the untruths they have been telling this place.

In this disastrous budget we see Labor is going to put off 4000 bureaucrats. They want to pump that up and say they are going to get rid of 4000 bureaucrats, but how is it that only Labor can put off 4000 bureaucrats but the bill – the costs for the bureaucrats that are staying there – goes up? It defies logic.

Labor is also cutting infrastructure projects – airport rail, Geelong fast rail and North East Link. It is interesting that everybody in Victoria knew at the last election that Victoria was running out of money but Labor did not. They did not know it at the election; they had to wait until a budget to tell them they were running out of money – and then all of a sudden it was like, ‘Oh, heavens above, I think we’re running out of money.’ They did not know that at the election but everybody else did. The reason why we know we are going to run out of money is because they started throwing money around like a drunken sailor and they started blowing it on cost overruns and things that were going to cost \$3 billion then cost \$6 billion or \$7 billion or more – and this is not one project, this is most projects. We know we are up to about \$34 billion now in overruns – and that is just overruns, that is not projects. We can think about what else we could do with that \$34 billion or the interest we are going to pay on that money from those overruns. Victoria now has more debt than Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania put together, and most Victorians are embarrassed about that – they really are – but I think those on the government benches wear that as a badge of honour. Everybody in Victoria will be paying that price for mismanagement.

Again, Labor has fixed hospitals in Labor seats. I hear them talk about it in this place and what they have done to different hospitals in metropolitan Melbourne – which is wonderful, fixing hospitals and fixing schools and fixing level crossings – but they are not doing the same in my electorate. I cannot stand here and say how much money we have been given in the budget for the Ovens Valley electorate, because it is simply just not there. It is like Victoria stops at Kalkallo, and this Victorian government will not look beyond the tram tracks to see the improvements that need to be done in Yarrawonga. The P-12 school has been waiting, waiting, waiting. The last upgrade they got was when we got it for them in 2010 to 2014. Bright aged care and hospital are going to be waiting years before they get that improvement they need, because again, the government has run out of money and so now everyone has to stop. Those that have already got their upgrades to schools and hospitals and roads in the last three or four years will say, ‘Oh, we can hang around a bit longer because we’ve already had our upgrade,’ but those of us who have not, all Victorians and all regions, are going to pay that price.

Then we get the SEC, an absolute stunt. They are talking about billion-dollar investment, bringing back the SEC. What a crock. There is about \$40 million in the budget, not \$1 billion. So this is a stunt; this is a slogan. It is \$40 million for a slogan; it is not even \$1 billion for a slogan.

Let us look at roads. They are the deadliest on record. They are the worst roads on record, and every day our road toll is 30 per cent up on last year’s – and growing. But it is like the government has thrown their hands in the air and said, ‘This is just too hard. We can’t fix all these roads. It was the weather last year. It was the wet roads,’ – and all these excuses. They have thrown their hands in the air and said, ‘This is too hard. Why bother?’ Yet this year’s disastrous budget slashed another 25 per cent out of the roads maintenance budget, another 25 per cent on top of last year’s 20 per cent. So we are 45 per cent down, heading towards 50 per cent of what the 2020 roads maintenance budget was. That is just disgraceful. We cannot expect to see our roads getting fixed any time soon when you cut that much money out of the roads maintenance budget.

Talking about debt – and we know how high the debt is, how disastrous it is – as I have explained we have gone from \$6 billion to \$18 billion in 44 years, and then in 11 years we are going to go up to \$200 billion, tenfold. We are currently paying \$10 million a day, which is around about \$3.6 billion a year in interest, but we will be heading to \$20 million a day, \$8 billion a year. If you think about what we could do with \$8 billion a year, \$20 million a day, in the Ovens Valley, that would be more money than we have received – just if we got a week of that money. If we got a week of that money we could fix the school in Yarrawonga, the hospital in Bright and the hospitals in Cobram and Yarrawonga. Just a week would be fine, but that is not going to happen, because we will be paying that in interest, and

that interest bill is going to go up. It is going up daily. Our credit rating is falling, and it will continue to fall. Our healthcare outcomes have got worse, and our communities are hurting. They are hurting everywhere. They are hurting through costs of living, through the extra taxes that have come through and a lack of services – less services in our community. There is nowhere for them to go, and people are really starting to feel that pinch. This is not just the fault of the Labor leadership. Do not get me wrong, I am not just apportioning this blame to those at the top. I am also saying that every backbencher who does not stand up to this leadership team and say ‘You’ve got it wrong, and enough is enough’, are just as guilty. They are just as guilty for the debt as those who are in leadership who have actually got us where we are – to this debt load.

When those on the other side talk about this COVID debt, it is like it is a mystery debt; it is somebody else’s debt. It is not ours; it is a COVID debt – somebody else’s. Well, they have got to realise that this debt has come from direct actions by this government: their mismanagement, their actions, their cost blowouts. So do not look around and say this COVID debt is somebody else’s debt. It is not about saying, surely, who can we blame, because we know they continuously want to blame somebody else. I have heard them blame Scott Morrison. I have heard them blame Jeff Kennett. I have heard them blame COVID, Tony Abbott, the opposition, everybody but themselves. That is just this morning in the chamber. I mean, you do not have to go for weeks and months to hear them blaming somebody else. Until they actually identify where that debt has come from and who caused that debt, we cannot set about trying to fix the debt that we have in Victoria, and it is going to take generations.

I do feel sorry for generations who are going to have to wear this pain for years and years, because we have got the highest debt in Victoria’s history. Many of our communities have been neglected and we have still ended up with that debt load. That is the frustrating part. If everything was shiny and new in every electorate, you would say, well, we’ll just ride this wave out, but that is not the case. In many of our regional seats we have not had the improvements that have been done for the Labor seats. So we have got a long time to wait. We have got a long, long time.

This government’s record is not getting any better. We saw the deaths of 800 people from the dodgy quarantine scam, and then the Premier and many of the ministers could not recall – in fact the Premier could not recall 27 times – who had done it. That is disgraceful. I think in opposition we need to keep raising these issues, we need to keep reminding those on the other side that this did not happen by accident. Somebody made decisions to end up with the debt we have got. So you have got to take responsibility for that debt and govern for all Victorians, not just for those where you hold the seats or where you intend to hold the seats, because really we have been neglected in many areas of Victoria, and not just in my electorate, and I do believe that Victorians should never, ever, ever forget this treason.

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (12:06): I rise today to speak to this motion that takes note of the 2023–24 budget and its significance for the people of Monbulk. A major school upgrade, a hospital rebuild and refurbishment, community care and energy resilience are the key headlines for the people living across the Dandenong Ranges and foothills. The Andrews government is getting on with delivering its election promises for our community and investing in what matters for the people of Monbulk. Every election commitment which I made during the campaign has been delivered in this budget. I know that each and every one of these will have a resoundingly positive impact across the hills, and the beneficiaries of these funded projects have received the news with joy, just like the member for Frankston experienced himself.

From my own experience, I know that students thrive when they have great teachers delivering their education in excellent facilities. As part of a more than \$2 billion investment in schools across Victoria, this year’s budget includes \$8.77 million for upgrades at Emerald Secondary College, completing the remaining stages of the school’s master plan. I had the pleasure last week of opening the recently completed upgrades for the first stage of the food tech classrooms and staffrooms, which was funded in the 2020–21 state budget. But there is more to do, and the old G block, which is notorious, is ready to be upgraded and dragged into the 21st century. The Premier came out to visit the college a couple

of months ago – it was a rockstar welcome, I can assure you – and he saw the recent works and what is to come. There are exciting times ahead for this great local secondary college in the eastern Dandenong Ranges. Education is the door through which all things can be achieved. It is the great leveller. Good governments who wish to see their people thrive and live decent lives believe in education. They invest in education, and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government has done. This announcement builds on the previous \$7.5 million we have already invested in Emerald Secondary College over the course of our past nine years. We have truly earned the moniker of being the Education State.

Labor is making sure local families in Emerald and surrounding towns, such as Cockatoo, Gembrook, Avonsleigh, Mount Burnett, Clematis and Nangana, have a great school with great facilities close to home. I could not be prouder. We are also supporting St John the Baptist primary school in Ferntree Gully with a \$3 million grant, which will allow this busy, vibrant school to expand its classrooms with a new building. Their waiting list is growing, and so too are their infrastructure needs, so we are meeting this need and investing in the education of our youth.

Along the lines of a school but slightly separate to it, the people of Gembrook have called for variable electronic speed signs outside Gembrook Primary School for many, many years. The school is sited on the main road into town, but on foggy mornings – and there are plenty of those, especially at this time of the year – you can hardly see the static signs. In fact if you are not a local, you would be hard-pressed to know that there is a school around and you should slow down. I heard the concerns of the school and the wider community through their strong advocacy – everyone wants to keep our children safe – and I managed to secure our commitment to install these upon re-election. I am delighted that these variable electronic speed signs, which light up, have been funded in this budget. They will light up the foggy mornings and make sure that people know that they need to slow down, and it will make the main road in Gembrook safer, not just for schoolchildren and their families but for the entire town. I am very proud that Labor will be getting this done.

Talking about sport, we all know it is a really significant part of our communities, and through this budget we will be helping the good folk of Ferntree Gully to stay active and get engaged for the first time, potentially, at their local footy, netball or cricket club. We are going to invest \$2 million towards pavilion upgrades at Wally Tew Reserve, giving locals more and better opportunities to come together while supporting the next generation of sporting stars. Local families and their little doggies will also have improved places to stretch their legs with our government delivering on its promise to upgrade the dog park at Alma Treloar Reserve in Cockatoo.

Community organisations which exist to support others truly are very, very close to my heart, and I am incredibly proud that this budget is backing the work of several organisations across the Dandenong Ranges which are making real change and having an incredibly positive impact on the lives of so many across the district of Monbulk. Treasuring Our Trees was established to collect fallen trees in communities affected by the June 2021 storms. Treasuring Our Trees has also partnered with the level crossing removal program to repurpose trees which have had to be cut down when removing level crossings. Funding from our Labor government will make sure they are well equipped to continue helping local families and communities with their projects. Basically, they grab these trees, they repurpose them and they turn them into something beautiful, not just woodchips or sawdust. They have turned red gum logs into incredible polished and beautifully oiled timber logs for yarnning circles in primary schools. With these yarnning circles, believe it or not, children are talking about the fact that they are discussing things they would never openly talk about with others in this quiet little safe space for reflection. We have really busy lives, and so do kids. Having a little quiet place might sound really little, but sometimes it is the small things that add up and create significant change for people. These beautiful projects that Treasuring Our Trees are undertaking will make quite a difference and have an impact across all these schools across the Dandenong Ranges. I am delighted that we are supporting them with a \$200,000 grant to continue their fine work.

I know the member for Bayswater is a firm supporter, a strong supporter of Knox Infolink. We are funding them with \$100,000 to continue their amazing work across the City of Knox. They have supported the people of Knox with their free breakfast program and food parcels and help with essentials like toiletries, pet food and so much more in between for those who are really doing it tough. They have been working for over 30 years, tirelessly volunteering and supporting the community, so we are supporting them. I think that is one of the key roles for us here – how to help those who help others. That \$100,000 grant we know will make a significant impact across the communities of Bayswater and Monbulk.

Another wonderful community organisation I am really proud we are putting money behind is the Philanthropic Collective. We are providing a \$60,000 grant. They are a wholly volunteer-driven charitable organisation, and they are generating so much help and assistance across the ridge top of the Dandenong Ranges. They have served over 240,000 meals and reinvested over \$3 million into our community. Every Monday a small army of volunteers gathers up donated food and creates boxes of fresh produce and meat for people really doing it tough. Those people can also come in and shop for their dry goods. I actually had the pleasure of going and setting it up. It was like my old greengrocer days. I got to do retail and face up all the food, and people came in and shopped with dignity at no cost to themselves. They were able to choose luxuries. They were able to choose things that they knew would make everyone at home feel valued and worthy. They are a fantastic organisation.

Further to that, they also run a fabulous annual event called Halloween on the Green at the Ferny Creek reserve. Every year you can buy a ticket and go in and enjoy the rides, which are all free. There are food trucks and there is live music. Last year it was Dave Graney and Clare Moore, two Aussie music legends, performing on stage, along with many others. But what they do that many do not realise is they provide free tickets to families who cannot afford to buy them, so those children who probably will not see Luna Park or be able to afford a ticket for entry to these other big places can go there, jump on a free ride, have a great day and feel part of something without needing to have a bank balance that supports it. This program is fabulous, and I am delighted that we are supporting and continuing to support the wonderful work that they are doing.

Another community organisation we are backing is Foothills Community Care. Every Monday night in Upwey and every Wednesday night in Ferntree Gully, Foothills Community Care open their doors to anyone who needs a helping hand. They provide some of the most delicious free hot meals. I tell you what: you walk in there and you smell it, and if you were not hungry when you walked in, you are certainly hungry when you are there. It is amazing food. Again, the food is free. It is there for people who otherwise cannot afford it. It is somewhere where they can sit. For some people it is the only time they will sit down with others and have a conversation and feel a connection. This organisation is run by truly dedicated and wonderful human beings. They first opened their doors in 2002, and the respect that they have garnered all across the area is admirable, to say the least. I am delighted we are supporting them.

We are also supporting Connecting Cockatoo Communities with a \$50,000 grant to enable them to support their community of Cockatoo. On the weekend, I tell you, that town is bustling with energy. Once a month there is a fabulous market. There are sports matches and community events. They even run a community Easter egg hunt. Organisations like Connecting Cockatoo Communities work tirelessly to support their town and the people within it, and again, I am delighted that we are supporting them through this state budget.

Another fabulous organisation that we are supporting through the state budget is 3MDR 97.1 FM community radio. They will receive \$50,000 to continue their fine work. They are a fantastic non-profit community radio. They started test transmissions in 1985 and have been going strong for coming up to 40 years. They provide a program for all tastes and interests. They broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The turntables just keep spinning – they do still have turntables, I have seen them. Their programming includes music, live performances, news and lifestyle, talkback and local community arts and culture. They have specialist music programs that run, catering to everyone's

tastes no matter how varied, from the blues to country, folk to indie and classical. They pride themselves on playing a whole stack of Australian music content and local artists as well, and there are quite a few of them. We even had a finalist in the latest, I think it was, *Australian Idol*. It was Anya Hynninen from Selby, and she made it into the top six. We have a thriving, thriving culture of arts across the hills. 3MDR is another way that these artists are supported. They also proudly host a wide variety of community language programs, including Greek, Romanian, Sri Lankan, Tamil, Hindi, Croatian and Samoan. I am delighted we are supporting this wonderful local radio station, which in turn supports our community.

Another wonderful grant we are providing is \$50,000 to the Dandenong Ranges Community Cultural Centre, which is better known as Burrinja. This place is an art gallery. It provides an artists residence for several local artists, and it is also a performing arts centre. People should be able to access art and culture without schlepping into the city. Your postcode should not dictate your ability to appreciate the arts. So this \$50,000 grant I know will go far to supporting this fabulous cultural centre.

There are a few other things I need to speak about, and I am noting the time. I will talk about neighbourhood batteries, because energy resilience – and I have spoken about it before in this place – is one of the most pressing issues across the Dandenong Ranges. We promised that we would put power back into the hands of Victorians, and through our investment in 100 neighbourhood batteries, including across the Dandenong Ranges, we will be doing just that. They are an excellent initiative which enables the network to support more rooftop solar by storing solar-generated electricity during the day and discharging it during the evenings when demand is highest. It enables consumers to generate and consume more renewable energy locally, and it supports our excellent, world-leading greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy targets. I am thrilled.

To kinder, in coming back to education – we know that, with 90 per cent of a child's brain developing before the age of five, early education has the most profound impact on how our children develop. That is why we are delivering free kinder for three- and four-year-olds and establishing pre-prep of 30 hours per week –

A member: Hear, hear!

Daniela DE MARTINO: 'Hear, hear' indeed – and upgrading or providing new equipment to kinders across the state to make sure our Victorian children get the best start to their lives. Our landmark free kinder program, which has been incredibly well received, will continue to save Victorian families up to \$2500 in fees per child per year and give more Victorian parents, especially women, greater flexibility to return to work if they so choose.

Now, when it comes to health every Victorian should be able to get the health care they need when they need it and close to home. That is why we are starting work on redeveloping and expanding Maroondah Hospital at Ringwood. We also ensuring women and their health are given the focus, funding and respect they deserve. Yesterday in my constituency question I spoke about the women's health clinics. Of the 20 that we are implementing across Victoria at a cost of almost \$58 million, two will be located in my electorate of Monbulk and will service the women of the hills. Casey Hospital and Maroondah Hospital will both receive a one-stop shop for women needing treatment or advice on issues from menarche to menopause and from pelvic pain, contraception and the scourge of endometriosis to polycystic ovary syndrome.

Sadly, the number of women who have had to put up with terrible pain and debilitating symptoms is far too great, and it has gone on for far too long, so we are doing something about this and investing in women's health and not a moment too soon, because women deserve better. The women of Monbulk will be able to access these clinics just outside of our boundaries, and I know this will make a significant and positive impact on their lives.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the SEC and our desire to bring it back. We all remember the good old State Electricity Commission. It meant a fair deal on your power prices, and it meant good,

stable, decent jobs for workers. So we are going to drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs in renewable, government-owned energy. When the announcement was made about us bringing back the SEC during the campaign, I was on the doors that day and I was high-fived by the first person I told. He was not a Labor voter, but he became a Labor voter, and I have seen him on several occasions since. I am delighted.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:21): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

This is so that the house can consider notice of motion 17 in my name on the notice paper – that this house:

- (1) acknowledges the serious impact of the 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 the Legislative Assembly to consult with the Mitchell Shire Council, the Greater Shepparton City Council, the Campaspe Shire Council, 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 sitting 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.

This is the last sitting day for the autumn session of Parliament, and I think it is appropriate that we debate this particular motion and that the house actually agree to have a sitting of the Assembly in northern or central Victoria.

This is the people's house. The upper house has agreed to have a regional sitting, and they are going to hold a regional sitting in central or northern Victoria by April next year, and they have authorised their clerks and their President to organise that particular sitting. For us in this chamber, us being the people's house, I think it would be very, very appropriate that the Legislative Assembly also sits in regional Victoria in the not-too-distant future so that the house can go out and can see firsthand the damage that was caused by the floods of last October but more importantly now see how slow the flood recovery is going.

There were hundreds of houses that were flooded during the floods. There are still hundreds of homes that are uninhabitable at this stage. If you go to Rochester, you will find there are probably more people living in caravans in the driveway of their house, which has been stripped out by the floods, than there are actually living in houses that have been repaired. I think this house – both sides of the chamber – should respect those communities by going out there and inspecting this firsthand, and by going out and inspecting the damage to the roads firsthand that have not been repaired at this stage.

The flood recovery funding has been far too slow, and as I talk to local government areas, they are extremely frustrated that they have not been able to get on with the job of repairing the roads and repairing their infrastructure, as was the case after the 2011 floods. To show respect to those communities, I would urge those on the other side of the chamber to support this motion and agree to this motion so that we can go out and have a regional sitting.

I know and accept it is a challenge for the parliamentary staff to find a location that is suitable, but there are locations, particularly in Shepparton or Seymour or Echuca, where you could hold those sittings. I am sure those local government areas would be very happy to work closely with the Parliament to make sure that can be facilitated, because I know those communities. The smaller communities around that would come in to be part of that sitting and watch us debate the issues of the day, and they would feel that they have finally had their city cousins take note of what is happening out there, what has happened out there and what is still happening out there as far as the flood recovery into the future goes. It would be about making sure that the 88 members of this chamber are very well informed about the issues which those of us that live in those areas and represent them already know

and making sure that the rest of the 88, those that do not have a direct connection to those communities that were flooded, can see firsthand and, more importantly, meet with the people that live in those communities to hear firsthand from them.

If I go to Rochester, particularly every time it rains, the people of Rochester get very, very concerned that this may happen again. They would, I think, find their mental health improved by people coming out and actually talking to them and listening to them and showing them the respect of listening to their stories. I know some ministers have been out, but there are a lot of other members of this chamber who have not had the opportunity to go out in a structured way so they are actually shown the things that have happened, the things that are not happening and, more importantly, the things that need to happen to make sure that people get back into their homes and to make sure that the community infrastructure that needs to be repaired is repaired. Every time I drive through Rochester I look to the left as I come down and I see the swimming pool that has been totally destroyed. That community no longer has a swimming pool. We are coming into summer; they do not have it. So I urge those on the other side to support this motion.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:26): I rise to speak on this motion. I do not want to argue with the substance of the motion. I respect the member and those communities very, very much, having had some experience in the emergency services myself and having seen how these incidents evolve from an incident reported to an incident control centre to having municipal stakeholders involved and the state government and the federal government as well. I know that at times those waits can be extremely frustrating and it is hard on those townships, as most crises will be. But at the moment, the first point I would make is that this government has an extremely full government business program. I certainly am not saying I would not like to visit those regions myself, but we have at the moment members talking about what is happening in their communities and how the budget has affected their communities across the board. I know there are still many members who want to make contributions as well, and they should be able to, so I will not be able to support this motion.

I think the motion that has been put up is making the assumption that there are not a lot of regional members on this side of the house. There are more regional members on this side of the house than on that side of the house. It is also making the assumption that ministers do not regularly visit these regions, are not aware of the issues and have not spoken to those communities. It is making the assumption that work is not actually happening behind the scenes to resolve some of these issues as well. When a fire or flood goes through, from personal experience, often the largest part of that crisis is in the immediate crisis, that acute stage, the chronic stage, where so many things, so much infrastructure and so many community-supporting agencies need to be built up to ensure that we can operate those communities in a safe manner and those communities can, I guess, rise once again. So there is no argument with, I guess, the substance of the motion for me; it is more about the fact that we are in the middle of a debate on the budget take-note motion and there are plenty of people that would like to contribute. It is a very full government business program, and those people should be able to contribute. This has been on the notice paper, and we will continue to do that.

I am sure it is not something the member means, but for me there is an implied assumption that people on this side of the house do not know regions. I think there is an assumption that maybe ministers are not doing their jobs, and I would like to just put on the record that, having worked in some of those areas as Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, I know that nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that work continues in these areas and work will continue in these areas. But right now, today, as the notice paper suggests, we should be speaking and we should let all members of the chamber – independents, Greens, Liberal, Labor and otherwise – have their say on the budget take-note motion, as was predictably put in the notice paper. So I cannot support the motion.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (12:30): Thank you to Leader of the Nationals for putting forward this motion, a motion that is deeply important to me and that I am proud to support and speak on. There is one question that disappointingly is regularly on my mind: how can this government truly

represent Victorians if they never leave the city? We know that Victoria extends beyond Melbourne. The most recent numbers from the ABS say that nearly 1.6 million are now calling regional Victoria home. A major reason why I became a member of the Nationals was to ensure these people –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member for Euroa has just made a statement that is completely untrue. It is a narrow procedural debate. On this side of the house we have 18 members representing rural and regional Victoria.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It is a procedural debate on the question of adjournment. I have been listening to the Leader of the Nationals and the member for Frankston, and I ask the member for Euroa to continue. There is some context that I have allowed and I will continue to, but please stay on the urgency of the motion.

Annabelle CLEELAND: This is why I would like to adjourn to debate this and not be silenced and have my time, when I get to speak about my community, chewed up by someone – who has left, I think. Getting back to what I was saying, a major reason why I became a member of the Nationals was to ensure our regional people are listened to and fairly represented in this place. Regional Victorians are feeling ignored by this government, and I agree with them. The response to the October 2022 floods demonstrated the government's apathy to regional Victorians, and it is high time that the serious impact of these floods is recognised. It is imperative that all members of Parliament get out to the people impacted by this crisis and that we hold a sitting in a flood-affected community. We must understand firsthand the impact for residents in the Euroa, Shepparton, Eildon, Murray Plains and Ovens Valley electorates and many, many parts of our state. The upper house has already agreed to sit in central or northern Victoria by April next year, and yet we are still sitting here with no plans to proceed. This is supposed to be the house of the people. Our communities and our people deserve to be heard by a government who is in touch with their needs.

In my electorate of Euroa the impact of the floods is still ever-present and will be for years to come, both physically and emotionally. Hundreds of people remain displaced. Houses were destroyed, caravan parks are still closed or operating at limited capacity and farmers are recovering from decimated crops and lost livestock. Our unsafe and rapidly deteriorating roads remain a primary concern of our residents. While the government feel comfortable cutting the road budget based on their knowledge of well-paved city streets, regional residents pay the price. Repairs to our roads and our infrastructure have been inadequate and slow, with no room for the betterment of an already struggling network. The mental health of people in these communities continues to suffer. Unfortunately those suffering are in areas with insufficient support services, medical professionals and health infrastructure. Our local economies too are suffering. Agricultural industries have struggled to bounce back from destroyed crops. All these issues remain while these people are still waiting for funding support from this government. Every day my constituents inform me that they are yet to receive their support funding from this government. Many are yet to even receive an email or call back. These people deserve to be heard.

The Nagambie Caravan Park, which is located in my electorate, has 3000 sites that remain closed despite this park being integral to our local tourism economy. I truly believe this government does not fully comprehend the impact this will have on the town's economy and the livelihood of so many hardworking and honest people. Nagambie, a town ultimately reliant on its traditionally booming tourism industry, needs these facilities to be reopened. This is just one town; there are many, many more that are still feeling the impact of the floods and the lack of this government's support. Hundreds of people remain displaced, with people living in caravans or on friends' land because their homes remain uninhabitable. In Seymour about 50 flood-affected homes remain unlivable as tenants and owners navigate insurance challenges. We are experiencing a housing crisis that is amplified throughout our flood-affected communities, with so many people and families couch surfing, living in cars and caravans and in the front yards of friends. It is time that we showed them the support and respect that they deserve. We must sit with these flood-affected communities, if only for a day, because we must show we care.

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (12:34): It is with pleasure that I rise to make a very quick contribution to this debate. And what I would say is that the Andrews Labor government has a significant number of MPs who are from our beautiful regions. I am one of four MPs from the Geelong region. There are two Labor colleagues who represent the Ballarat community. There are two colleagues who represent the Bendigo community. We have the fantastic state seat of Ripon that has been added.

A member: Bass.

Darren CHEESEMAN: We have got Bass. We have got Macedon. We have got a huge number of members of the Andrews Labor government who have been working tirelessly day in and day out making a strong case for our regions, and we will continue to do that day in and day out, fighting for our fair share. And I think if you look at the track record of those fantastic Labor representatives from the regions you will see firsthand the hard work of Labor working for Victorians and particularly for regional Victorians. We have got a huge number of challenges, and of course those strong, committed regional Labor MPs every single day are out there making the case. When I look at the track record indeed of the National Party, I must say the experience –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a procedural debate, and the government has not yet explained why after nine years this house has never gone to the regions. I know that they are embarrassed about doing that and are refusing to debate that matter, and I would ask that the Deputy Speaker return to the tight procedural debate.

Mary-Anne Thomas interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the House! The member for South Barwon needs to relate his debate to the urgency of adjourning the current motion, and I have been listening carefully to see how he will do that.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Thank you. What I would say is that this chamber has some very, very important work as a part of the business program. We indeed had a vote on the business program at the start of the week. The government have full intention of working our way through that business program through the course of this week. I find it remarkable that the National Party have chosen to bring this motion to this chamber on the last sitting day of the week. They had the opportunity to make a contribution perhaps on this at the start of the week, and they chose not to. The reality is that when the National Party have that opportunity of being in a coalition government, we see cuts and closures to this state. We see rail lines closed, we see –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member is now defying your ruling. His contribution is equivalent to his contributions normally, and I would ask you to bring him back to the tight debate as to why the government is refusing to bring the Assembly to the regions and has not for the entire life of their government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The debate is actually on why the motion should be adjourned, not other things, and the member will continue on that.

Darren CHEESEMAN: Indeed we set out the government business program at the start of the week. We will stick to the government business program. It is important that we set out the agenda; we do that as a government every single sitting week. The National Party are all about cuts and closures. Every single opportunity –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is now the third time you have needed to rein in the member, and I would ask you to bring him back to the question as to why the government refuses to take the Parliament, the lower house, to the regions and has not for nine years. I know they are ashamed. I understand why.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (12:40): I rise to support the motion put to the house by the member for Murray Plains. This Parliament has obligations to the people. That is why this is the lower house. It is the people's house. We need to be aware of what is happening right across the state of Victoria from border to border, and we are not if we are sitting in this place. When I heard in the last Parliament the member for Eltham saying that her mother had told her that the roads in regional Victoria were fantastic, that just showed how out of touch this government really is.

Ros Spence: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, as you have ruled previously, this is a narrow procedural debate. We are not debating the motion on the paper by the member for Murray Plains. We are debating the narrow procedural motion as to whether we adjourn debate. The member has not mentioned the motion about adjourning debate.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member has – relatively – just started and will continue on the procedural motion ahead of us, on the adjournment.

Roma BRITNELL: I do support the adjournment of the debate so that we can debate this motion. That is why I do support the motion, because the regions have copped a flogging. They really have done it hard – the floods, the fires – and that is why the upper house went to the regions. They understood that, and we should be doing exactly the same thing. I visited northern Victoria recently, and I saw the Rochester decimation. I was in the member for Euroa's electorate last week and saw the effects of the caravan park that cannot open and took no income for the whole of the summer – and in the member for Eildon's, what damage has been done from the floods around her electorate. So I urge this Parliament to take all the members from this Parliament, particularly the Labor members who do not get out into the regions. Ask the people of South-West Coast what the roads are like –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I can hear the Leader of the Opposition saying this is getting silly. It certainly is. It is a silly motion for an adjournment. Once again, the member is not speaking on the narrow procedural motion. She is using it as an opportunity to say things that are simply untrue about members on this side of the house who are regularly –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for –

Mary-Anne Thomas: Not only do we live in regional Victoria, we are in regional Victoria.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member to continue, please, on the debate at hand.

Roma BRITNELL: As I have already said but will quite clearly repeat, we need to adjourn the debate so we can debate this motion, because the people of particularly south-western Victoria, northern Victoria, the regions from over the West Gate and further than this government knows how to go, want this government to know what it is like to drive on our roads, our dilapidated, disgraceful roads that are causing such heartache and such pain and fear in the community that I live in and the communities of northern Victoria. They need that funding for the roads recovery that they are just not getting and that they have explained to me in my capacity as the shadow freight and ports minister. So I think they should be coming out. They should be hearing about these terrible roads, they should be hearing about the pain the cost of living is causing them and the cobweb of transmission lines that this government has left all across western Victoria. Talk to the teachers and talk to the students who are having such a difficult time. The regions are important, and this government does not know how to acknowledge the importance of the regions because they are so –

Michaela Settle: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this is a narrow procedural debate, and certainly the member has strayed.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the adjournment matter.

Roma BRITNELL: I suggest we adjourn the debate so we can talk to the motion that the member for Murray Plains has so articulately put forward, that there is trouble in the regions, there are flood-affected communities who are struggling and who have been waiting.

Members interjecting.

Roma BRITNELL: You can all laugh, but if you are one of these people that for eight months –

Members interjecting.

Roma BRITNELL: You can all laugh, but people are out of their homes.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is entitled to be heard, and I need to hear the member. If members on this side would like to have an early lunch, I can assist.

Roma BRITNELL: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Through you, I do think that we should be respectful of the fact that we are here today talking about a motion that will take the members of Parliament out into the real world where people are suffering, where our roads are appalling. This would give them an opportunity to drive on those roads or, even if they have a driver, to try and look at their phone while they are on the road, because it is just impossible to do anything in the car because it is so, so bad to drive on our potholed roads that are so dangerous. So if it gets these members of Parliament, particularly on the other side out, I am for it. *(Time expired)*

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (12:45): I am very happy to speak on this procedural motion. I think we should remind those opposite that we actually have 18 government members who are representing regional Victoria very well. Not only do they live there, but they also drive extensively around those regions, so they are definitely circulating in those regions. The suggestion that somehow members of the government have never been to regional Victoria I just find a furphy. I just think it is very narrow tightrope and a very weak argument at that. Having said that, we are absolutely sensitive and acutely aware of the incredible challenges faced by regional Victoria, no less than our regional members themselves. Of course collectively we have deep compassion for the circumstances of Victorians in regional Victoria, absolutely, and across the entire state. We just do not represent one area or another; we govern for the whole of Victoria.

The take-note motion is a fantastic opportunity for those who want to speak to it to be able to transact debate on any elements of the budget that they feel deeply concerned about or otherwise. Why not use that opportunity here and now? We are not here to debate the merits of having a regional sitting or otherwise; that is not what this debate is about. I will put it to you that one or three days in a regional sitting does not replace the day-in, day-out management of a seat. I am just saying that it does not mean you should not go, and I am not suggesting there is not merit in that – certainly I am sure everyone here would be happy to do so – but it does not replace actually being a member who is working in those areas. I know all our ministers govern for the entire state, not just for one seat or another, and it is an absolute furphy to suggest otherwise. I have had the pleasure, even as a parliamentary secretary, to go to places like Mildura, Geelong, Wonthaggi and Buchan and to drive and to talk to people at the Learn Locals and find out about the incredible work they do – the networking –

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, unbelievable. It is actually really inspiring. Yes, I have been out of the city – who knew? But in my parliamentary –

Annabelle Cleeland: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is a very narrow procedural motion, and I would just like to highlight that the member has not mentioned one flood-affected community, which is the point of this motion. You do not know where it is.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard your point of order. I have been listening closely to this procedural debate, and there have been many members who have gone far astray from the procedural motion. Member for Albert Park, I remind you that this is a narrow debate, as I would remind other members when we have procedural debates in this house.

Nina TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Speaker, for your learned guidance there. I completely respect that, but I also think it is fair to say that there has been quite a far-reaching debate where people

have spoken to their areas, specifically regional areas, and made some fairly pointed remarks that were rather unfair against the government, particularly suggesting that government members were not getting out of the city, which is absolutely a furphy. It is actually offensive to those members who work extremely hard in their regions day in, day out, driving kilometres and kilometres, as they love to do. It is their passion and it is why they have been elected, so to suggest otherwise is deeply unfair and actually offensive.

Having said that, coming back to the procedural motion, the purpose here today of the take-note motion is to give all members in the chamber ample opportunity to debate all aspects of the budget. If you have got particular concerns, go for it; use the opportunity rather than taking up government time and parliamentary time on a matter which arguably is actually interfering with the ability of those members opposite to be able to transact debate on the budget. I should say that prior to this sitting week, when we were initially debating the budget, they were lamenting the fact that they could not talk about the budget. Now we give members opposite the opportunity to talk about it, suddenly – ‘Oh, we don’t want to. We need to filibuster and do other funny things. We can’t actually get to the budget itself.’ We are giving those opposite the opportunity. Those opposite are welcome to take it or otherwise. I mean, it is here. I am a little bit confused because they say one thing one week and one thing another week.

The other thing is we did have a sitting when I was in the upper house in Bright, and I do remember a member for Southern Metropolitan Region, a Mr Davis, who may have behaved in a certain way on that particular – I am just putting it out there. *(Time expired.)*

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Eureka.

Colin Brooks: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Brighton just made a remark towards the honourable member who was most recently on her feet, the member for Albert Park, referring to her as a grub, and I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

The SPEAKER: As you know, Minister for Housing, it is up for the member for Albert Park to request that withdrawal.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, I withdraw and apologise.

Assembly divided on Peter Walsh’s motion:

Ayes (24): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

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

Motion defeated.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (12:56): It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the take-note motion on the 2023–24 budget papers. I am very proud to be a regional MP in this place representing the Bellarine. That role does come with great privilege and great responsibility, and it is

a role that I take very seriously. We do not want to waste a moment in government. I as a member do not want to waste a moment in delivering for our community, because I am someone who likes to get on with things. I do like to consult with our community but then also to deliver for our community.

It is a great pleasure that the Treasurer this year was able to send a really important message to the Bellarine and to Victorians that we are being responsible, we are planning for our future and we are doing what matters, but more importantly, we are going to do what we said we were going to do and deliver on the things that we said we would do. Last year we took a really positive plan to the Victorian people, and I was very proud to let the community and voters of the Bellarine know what was on offer at that election in terms of not just the local commitments that we were making but statewide initiatives that are going to transform this state – bringing back the SEC; the Best Start, Best Life reform for our littlest Victorians across the state; free TAFE; cost-of-living measures, including making V/Line fares fairer for regional Victorians; apprenticeship support; free nursing degrees; and so much more. The list is long. I thank the Treasurer for his hard work. Budgets are not easy. This was the first budget for me as the member for Bellarine in this place, but it was the ninth budget for this Treasurer. I thank him for his commitment and the work that he has done. It is not easy, but he has managed to deliver a budget that is committing to the things that we said we would do at the last election.

I would like to speak a little bit about the Bellarine commitments that we made and about how important they are for the Bellarine community. I have been really pleased to be able to go out into the community since the budget and celebrate those commitments with our community, and I am really looking forward to seeing these projects develop and continue.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Can I acknowledge in the gallery today the High Commissioner for Pakistan His Excellency Mr Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri and Consul General Syed Moazzam Hussain Shah.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Parole eligibility

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:02): My question is to the Premier. Is it government policy that Paul Denyer should never be released?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:02): These are not issues that are quite so simplistically summed up, I would have thought. In terms of the government's policy, it is to make changes to the adult parole system so as to ensure that, rather than having High Court challenges that might well be successful, we have an enduring set of arrangements that have victims and families at the centre of those arrangements both in terms of the way they are supported, the information they are provided and the care that is extended to them, as well as, wherever possible, certainty as to the status of inmates, those who have caused such pain and grief and tragedy to so many.

I will take this as a third opportunity to extend to the member for Berwick, on behalf of the opposition, an invitation to again be involved in the drafting and the work to deliver a minimum period between an initial application and any subsequent parole board application and, what is more, the inability of any offender who has simply refused to be involved in rehabilitation programs to apply for parole a subsequent time. We think those two reforms are both sensible. They are legally safe; they are not a make-work scheme for the High Court of Australia. They are instead a way forward, one that I hope can be a bipartisan way forward. It is a genuine invitation. If the member for Berwick wants to sit with the Attorney-General, then that is absolutely on offer. We will work with all parties, but of course the opposition, to make these changes, and we will waste no time doing it.

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (14:04): First, in relation to the offer, thank you, Premier; I have responded to your office today to take up that invitation. I think it is too important to not do that, so

thank you for that. Can the Premier provide the families, friends and victims peace of mind by telling them when this legislation to keep Paul Denyer behind bars will be introduced and debated in this Parliament?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:04): First of all, I am pleased that the opposition wants to be involved in that process. It was a genuine offer, it is accepted in genuine terms and that I think is a good thing. That is always when the Parliament is working at its best. Can I just, however, make the point to the honourable member for Berwick that I do not think it is useful to describe these changes in the way that he just has. That runs the exact risk that we are trying to avoid. Yes, there have been other inmates that have had specific legislation drafted. The issue is this: the more of these that we do, the more likely a High Court challenge is. That will take months, maybe years. That will be distressing and painful all on its own, on top of the burden that these families carry every single day. We will get this work done as fast as possible, but it has to be done properly and done in a legally safe way. A High Court challenge that runs for years is in no-one's interest, least of all families who already live every moment of every day with the inconsolable grief of the loss of their loved ones.

Ministers statements: level crossing removals

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery) (14:05): I am very pleased to update the house on the removal of 110 dangerous and congested level crossings across Melbourne. Of course 70 have already been removed and work is underway across another 40, which, can I say, we could not have done without the great workforce working on our projects – and there are some representatives of that workforce in the gallery today. Recently we announced that we are fast-tracking the removal of more level crossings in the areas of the Sunbury, Melton, Werribee and Frankston lines, and as the member for Melton knows, we are making Melton level crossing free by 2026.

Now, a bit of history here: back in 2014 there were 71 level crossings held by representatives of the Liberal Party sitting opposite here today. After the 2022 election there were only 26 level crossings left in those Liberal Party seats. How low can you go? How did that happen? It is a double strategy: you get rid of level crossings and you get rid of Liberals at the same time, so it appears. Is it possible to go lower than 26? We think it is. When it comes to level crossings, it is absolutely possible to go below 26. The member for Caulfield knows this, because we are getting rid of those two dangerous and congested level crossings in Glen Huntly, and as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we also got rid of that dangerous crossing in Surrey Hills, a site where two women lost their lives. We are going to keep on going. We are going to drive down those numbers of level crossings in Liberal seats well below 26.

Schools payroll tax

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:08): My question is to the Minister for Education. In a statement the principal of Whitefriars College, located in the electorate of Warrandyte, said this morning:

As a not-for-profit entity, all income is invested towards the education of our students ...

The government's new schools tax:

... will cost the College community over \$1 million per annum which will need to be found either through cutting programs, cutting refurbishment plans or increasing school fees.

Can the minister explain to families in Warrandyte why, during a cost-of-living crisis, this government is increasing school fees or cutting education programs?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:08): I thank the member for the question, but I do not agree with the premise of the question. This government is not cutting education programs. In fact this government is investing \$3.1 billion of additional funding into schools across the network, and \$450 million worth of that investment goes directly to non-

government schools capital investment. There is also a \$36 million investment in the tutor learning initiative that goes across into non-government schools.

The member opposite can continue to make up hypotheticals about legislation that we are going to continue to consult the sector on. I am really pleased to say that we will continue to work with the non-government school sector to implement all of our budget commitments and make sure that they flow across the entire sector and that they see the benefits of programs such as the tutor learning initiative.

The SPEAKER: Order! When the member for Kew asks her supplementary question I would like the house to come to order so we can hear the answer.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:10): In the electorate of Warrandyte, around half of the enrolled secondary students go to a Catholic or an independent school. Why is the government punishing families in Warrandyte who send their children to Catholic and independent schools to fix their budget black hole?

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (14:10): I thank the member for Kew – or Warrandyte, I am not sure – for the supplementary question. But certainly our investments in the non-government school sector are quite significant. They are reboosted out of this most recent budget, and of course when it comes to implementing the taxes that have been passed through the upper house, and in particular in regard to an exemption to the payroll tax for the non-government sector, we will continue to work with this sector and the peak bodies. Make no mistake about it, 85 per cent of schools in the non-government sector will not be affected by this. There are a lot of schools out there that will continue to benefit from the investments, those low-fee paying schools. If those opposite want to continue to advocate for the elite, highest, wealthiest schools in this state – they are the only questions they ever ask us about. *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: budget 2023–24

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:11): I am excited about the news that 26,000 small businesses will benefit from payroll tax changes that were announced in last month's budget. That is around 60 per cent of all current payroll taxpayers benefiting by up to \$14,550 a year. From 1 July 2024 the government will lift the payroll tax threshold from \$700,000 to \$900,000, and then 12 months later on 1 July 2025 we will lift that payroll-tax-free threshold to \$1 million. About 6000 businesses or about 15 per cent of current payroll taxpayers will stop paying altogether. Any business on a payroll of less than \$3.6 million will either pay no tax or will pay less tax as a result of these changes.

We are progressing these important reforms despite the fact that we are not getting our fair share in terms of GST distribution. Now, Victoria makes up 26 per cent of the national population. That is the good 26 per cent, not the 26 per cent the Leader of the Opposition is familiar with. Yet with 26 per cent of the nation's population we only get 22 per cent of GST distribution. This year Victorians will send \$2.8 billion of their taxes to other states to prop up their ailing economies – \$670 million to South Australia and \$620 million to Tasmania – so we are fighting for a fair deal from the GST. We need to because the former Liberal–National government in Canberra was doing dirty deals to buy – *(Time expired)*

The SPEAKER: I ask members, if they are interjecting and across the chamber, to refer to members by their correct titles.

Office of the Special Investigator

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (14:14): My question is to the Premier. Premier, the Court of Appeal has said that the Lawyer X saga:

... might prove to be one of the greatest scandals of our time in relation to the workings of the criminal justice system.

Why has the government refused to give the Office of the Special Investigator the power to lay charges against those responsible for this scandal?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:14): Because that is not what former judge McMurdo handed down in the royal commission recommendations. We have been completely faithful and delivered against the recommendations made in the royal commission that sadly needed to be run into what is a very serious matter. There is no debate between the member for Malvern and myself or perhaps anyone really, on that front. It is a very serious matter.

In terms of the expansion of powers, we have given to the special investigator exactly what the royal commission told us to give to them: no more, no less. On the broader issue at play here, if I might, it is not in my judgement good policy for us to be questioning the independence – in broad terms, not personalities but broad terms. We have independence of the prosecutorial function where the only thing that matters is the brief of evidence when it comes to making a judgement about whether someone should be charged or not and what they should be charged with or not. The independence of the DPP, the Director of Public Prosecutions, is critically important, as is funding, as is the full delivery of the recommendations that the royal commission provided to us, and that is what we have done. Many of those passed the Parliament very, very recently. There were some who were not supportive of elements of that particular work, but that work has been done. That is now the law of our state, and that is all about making sure that we do everything possible to make sure that what occurred cannot and does not occur again.

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (14:16): A special investigator, eminent former High Court judge Geoffrey Nettle, has raised significant concerns about the DPP's refusal to lay charges, as was reported to Parliament yesterday. Premier, having praised Mr Nettle on appointing him for his extensive and wideranging experience at the highest levels of the legal system, why is the government now refusing to allow him to hold accountable those who sought to pervert the course of justice in this state?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:17): Well, we know why he is here and not at the bar. Seriously, with a question like that – did you not listen to the answer that was just provided? Is there actually a debate between the government and those who would want to be the government on the independence of prosecutorial functions?

Michael O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, it is not for the Premier to debate the question. He has made a choice to not give Geoffrey Nettle the powers he needs to bring charges, and he needs to answer questions as to why.

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition! The member for Malvern knows how to call a point of order. That is not a point of order.

Daniel ANDREWS: The member for Malvern and the Leader of the Opposition by their incessant interjections can try and put it out there that somehow the government has not done as it should have done. Well, the government has established a special investigator in the precise terms –

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: They always interject when they are not interested in the answer. We have delivered this in the precise terms that the royal commissioner outlined. I think it is a sad day when the member for Malvern – well, I have quite a bit of time for the member for Malvern, but if he is seriously putting it to me that we ought to not have independent prosecutorial functions in this state, well, on that we will never agree because that fundamentally is wrong.

Ministers statements: major events

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:18): According to the global livability index, Melbourne is again the most livable city in Australia and in the top three in the world. According to the *Age* this morning, Melbourne's culture and environment set it apart from Sydney in the five categories assessed.

There is a lot going on here in Melbourne all year round, but off the top of my head I can think of at least 26 annual events that have contributed to the city's world-famous cultural life. I have not got time for all 26. Let us kick off with Australia's premier arts and cultural festival, Rising, which just wound up on the weekend with some tremendous numbers indeed: 630,000 people attended across 12 nights that had the city jumping in the middle of winter. Restaurants were booked out. Bars were packed, from very small bars with a capacity of 26 right up to our biggest nightclubs and venues.

Melbourne is roaring. Forty thousand Melburnians and counting have visited the ice rink down by the Yarra, which is still open actually and drawing crowds after 11,000 folks descended on what was the biggest public participation orchestra on record, 10,000 kazoos. Right next door to St Paul's Cathedral we had Night Trade pulling in 80,000 people across the festival. Across our major events calendar this year we have broken records at the Australian Grand Prix, the comedy festival, the Avalon air show and the Australian Open. It is heartening to see our sport and culture economy recovering better than ever, but it is actually no surprise, because this success, these global leading numbers, come off the back of almost a decade of investment and planning by this government.

The recognition and crowds are great, but it is the hundreds of thousands of jobs that this industry underpins, the creativity it stages and the lives that it enhances that make Melbourne the best city in Australia and one of the best in the world. You would not want to be anywhere else, and that is endorsed by Taylor Swift, who is coming here. Now, there is no bad blood with the good people of South Australia. Taylor Swift is not going to Adelaide, but she must be enchanted with our city – she is coming here, to Melbourne.

Sydney Road tram stops

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:20): My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. On the weekend nearly 200 people walked and rolled up Sydney Road to protest the lack of accessible tram stops on a 5-kilometre strip up Sydney Road.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order. The member for Brunswick to continue, in silence.

Tim READ: It is hard enough for them now, but it will get more difficult when the nearby Upfield line is closed for level crossing removal works, leaving wheelchair-using people severely limited in their mobility. Now, about three-quarters of Melbourne's tram stops are not accessible and there is no money in the budget to replace accessible tram stops, so my question to the minister is: when will my constituents with a disability be able to catch a tram on Sydney Road?

Vicki Ward interjected.

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

Member for Eltham withdrew from chamber.

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:22): I thank the member for Brunswick for his question, which is an important question on making sure people of all abilities have access to a world-class public transport system. The member would appreciate that Melbourne, Victoria, has the largest tram network in the world. There are always two parts to the equation when

it comes to accessibility. There is a rolling stock component, which we are getting on with the job – a \$1.85 billion investment to get rid of 100 high-floor trams to make them 100 low-floor trams. That is one part of it. But then you have to also work with local government, and sometimes Greens councils too, to remove dangerous and non-compliant tram stops at the local level. But guess how many this government has done?

Jacinta Allan: How many?

Ben CARROLL: 48. We are heading towards 50. That is a major legacy for this government when it comes to supporting people, ensuring that we have more accessible trams and more accessible tram stops. I meet with the sector regularly, and it is a key component to making sure – and I said this on the weekend – that we give every person with mobility issues, whether it be hearing or whether it be disability, access. We have a great track record of working with this community when it comes to rolling stock. We also have a very important track record when it comes to working with this community in making sure, whether it is a bus, a tram or a train, that they have every opportunity to be like every other member of this community: independent, mobile and having access to get to school, jobs and TAFE.

I will continue to work with Sydney Road and continue to work with the local member. As I said, only today I met with a member of the disability sector, and he came in with his guide dog. I will continue to meet with the sector. I know how important it is. As the public transport minister I have said this on many occasions and publicly: I do not want people with disabilities just to have access to multipurpose taxis, I want them to have the freedom and the mobility and the equity that comes from being a full member of our society and having every opportunity to be on the public transport network.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (14:24): I thank the minister for his work on rolling stock. Nevertheless, with the low-floor trams you still cannot get on them with a wheelchair unless the tram stop is elevated, and so that work needs to be done. So my supplementary question is: with the gradually diminishing funding in the budget for tram stop replacements and now none in this budget, does that mean that the tram stop replacement has come to an end?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:25): We are continuing to invest in our public transport network. In fact one of the important parts of our next-generation tram project – and I happened to be out recently with the member for Footscray looking at the Maidstone facility – is it is very cutting-edge technology we are looking at where when the tram comes to its stop, the floor will actually come out and meet the stop. That will be a major improvement and a new technology that we are going to trial. We are talking to the disability sector on this. As I said, when it does come to accessibility – and you can read the Auditor-General's report on this – there are two parts to the equation. There is the at-surface, hard-surface component and then there is the rolling stock component. It has been this government, the Andrews Labor government, that has put record funding into doing everything across removing dangerous congested level crossings, making sure our tram stops are as accessible as they need to be and in combination with that putting low-floor trams on the network and retiring high-floor trams – *(Time expired)*

Ministers statements: digital services

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (14:26): I rise today to speak about the digital revolution and how the Andrews Labor government is delivering digital services for all Victorians. I know the flogs opposite are entirely stuck in an analog world, but I thought it would be worth pointing out that it was 26 years ago when two Australian pioneers took out a non-exclusive patent on a wireless computer network, blazing the trail for what later became known as wi-fi. Fast-forward, guess what, 26 years, and we are providing free wi-fi in the CBD and rolling out the \$550 million Connecting Victoria program.

Now, a lot has changed, and the Andrews Labor government has not wasted a day in pushing forward the digital agenda. I was thrilled to be joined by my colleague the Minister for Roads and Road Safety recently to announce that the digital drivers licence is coming to Victoria. This is cutting-edge technology, and Victorians will have the option to download their licence in the Service Victoria app or alternatively the soon-to-be-launched VicRoads app. And guess where we are trialling it? The fantastic – one of the best cities in the world – Ballarat, the mighty Ballarat, supported by the equally mighty members for Wendouree, Eureka and Ripon.

But we are not just doing a digital drivers licence. We are rolling out a number of digital cards, and this means that Victorians are one step closer to leaving their wallet at home. My colleague the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers has been working hard to make sure older Victorians get their seniors card in their Service Victoria wallet, because we know it is not just young Victorians who want access to digital services. Earlier this year Service Victoria rolled out a digital version of the working with children check card, and what a success it has been.

Do you know what the satisfaction rating is for Service Victoria – 25 per cent or 26 per cent? No. On this side of the house we will not settle for that. Service Victoria boasts a 96 per cent satisfaction rating, and we could not be prouder. While the filth opposite are cherishing their Kodak moments of Bob Menzies, we are getting on and delivering cutting-edge 21st-century technology for all Victorians.

Public transport ticketing system

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:28): My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. In October 2020 the Department of Transport and Planning contracted Corneum Consulting to provide technical advisory services for the next-generation ticketing strategy. What services were provided under this contract?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:29): Welcome back to the dispatch box, member for Polwarth. I wondered where you had been yesterday. Let us be very clear: in that time line the member for Polwarth gave, we were also going through COVID and we were also responding and making sure we could use digital applications to get more and more people back onto public transport to support frontline workers. I know firsthand the Department of Transport and Planning were doing due diligence to make sure we could do everything we could to support our nurses and our doctors and our frontline workers get to where they needed to get to and also to help everyday Victorians get the jab and get vaccinated and use public transport. We draw on a lot of expertise and a lot of experience and will continue to get on and do the job to make sure we have a world-class public transport system, including a world-class public transport ticketing system.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:30): The principal –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Polwarth will be heard without assistance.

Richard RIORDAN: Thank you, Speaker. The principal consultant of Corneum Consulting is Mr Russell Goslin, formerly the vice-president, public sector, Australia and New Zealand, for Conduent. Can the minister outline if the probity auditor was aware that the former Conduent vice-president was advising the government on a \$1.7 billion contract that it awarded to Conduent?

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (14:31): What I can outline for the member for Polwarth is that the independent probity auditor has signed off on the contract process. He has signed off right from the very beginning – the expression-of-interest process to the request-for-proposal process.

Richard Riordan: On a point of order on relevance, Speaker, the question was: did the probity auditor sign off that the former vice-president of Conduent was in fact advising your government on the contract it awarded to Conduent?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Polwarth knows that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The Minister for Public Transport was being relevant to the question that was asked.

A member interjected.

Ben CARROLL: I would not be talking about tap on and tap off if I was you. Everyone is waiting for you to get a tap on the shoulder and go.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, through the Chair. It is very disrespectful to the Chair if you direct your questions across the table and not through the Chair.

Ben CARROLL: Thank you, Speaker. The independent probity adviser has signed off on the full process, and can I please outline for the member for Polwarth that when it comes to making an assessment of contracts there is the mandatory criteria, which obviously takes in financial capability, but more than that – and we have just had the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Queen’s Hall – there is the social procurement side of it, and – oh, here he is.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Polwarth! Members will be removed from the chamber without warning. I get it that this is the last question, but I ask you to come to order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order. The Leader of the Nationals can leave the chamber for half an hour. When I am on my feet, the house will be silent.

Member for Murray Plains withdrew from chamber.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very direct: was the probity auditor aware that the person who was managing the contract worked for the eventual winner?

The SPEAKER: Order! Relevance was your point of order. It is not an opportunity to repeat the question. The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Ben CARROLL: Thank you, Speaker. I was asked a very clear question about the probity auditor, and as I said at the outset, the independent probity auditor signed off on the whole process.

Ministers statements: priority primary care centres

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:34): I am very pleased to rise to talk to the house about a number of investments the government is making.

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Oh, last one. Well, it is the winter solstice today, and isn’t it going to be a long cold winter for some. It is the shortest day today. The sun will be coming out, but it is going to be a very long cold winter for some. Now, he is not altogether upset about Warrandyte, because it means they cannot neck him until afterwards, so there is another couple of months secured in his own little political solstice he is running over there out of Hawthorn. Aren’t you happy to be back?

The SPEAKER: Premier, through the Chair!

Daniel ANDREWS: We are happy you are back. Speaker, we hope he is there for a long time, a very long time – winter, spring, next winter, the longest winter. We hope he is there for a long, long

time. But the reason I wanted to get up today is I want to talk about a very – oh, the member for Brighton is not taking any points of order today. I wonder why.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I know this might be the Premier's last farewell speech, but I ask you to bring him back to the question.

The SPEAKER: I am not sure how the member for Caulfield knows what the Premier's ministers statement is about, therefore I am not sure how you can call relevance.

Daniel ANDREWS: Speaker, I do feel obliged to point out to my honourable friend there, the member for Caulfield, that the last person who did one of those 'I'll see you off's was the member for Warrandyte. I am still here, and he is at home or wherever he might be. So good luck to him, and thank you for your predictions – they are not worth much.

What I want to do is update the house on the fact that we have opened not one, not 12, not 20 but 26 priority primary care clinics. Now, there is a big difference, you see, between primary votes and primary care. They are two different things. Not so much 26 primary votes but –

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: I know where you are, mate. You are precisely nowhere.

The SPEAKER: Order! Premier, through the Chair!

Daniel ANDREWS: And I love it. I love it, and I will miss you through the winter. I will miss you like you don't know.

The SPEAKER: Through the Chair, Premier!

Daniel ANDREWS: I will pine and ache for you all winter.

The SPEAKER: The time for questions has ended.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (14:37): Yesterday there were a number of constituency questions which I undertook to review. The member for South-West Coast asked a question and an action of the Minister for Environment. I therefore rule that question out of order. The member for Hastings asked multiple questions of the Minister for Housing. I therefore rule that question out of order. The member for Rowville asked multiple questions of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I therefore rule that question out of order. The member for Ripon asked the Minister for Multicultural Affairs to provide an update, which is an action. However, in keeping with previous rulings, I will allow questions which seek updates only on constituency matters. If members have any questions about these rulings, you are welcome to come and speak with me. I again remind members that if you are in any doubt before asking a constituency question, please come and speak with either me or the clerks.

Jess Wilson: On a point of order, Speaker, I have eight overdue questions: 286–290, 292, 293 and 447. They are for the ministers for health, public transport, local government, energy and resources, environment, transport and infrastructure, the Attorney-General and the Assistant Treasurer. I also have an overdue adjournment matter, 185, for the Treasurer on the issue of land tax. I ask if you could follow up these for my constituents.

The SPEAKER: The matters will be followed up.

Jade Benham: On a point of order, Speaker, I also require follow-up on constituency question 152 and adjournment matters 147 and 23, for the ministers for youth justice, health, and treaty and First Peoples.

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Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Speaker, I too have some follow-up questions. I have questions 411 for the Minister for Public Transport and 282 to the Minister for Housing, and questions 166 and 145 to the Minister for Environment. I have question 110 for roads and road safety and question 42 for the environment minister.

Annabelle Cleeland: I also have to raise a point of order, Speaker, about response times to overdue questions on notice. I actually have 27 questions that are overdue for a response – bear with me: 177, 183, 184, 185, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 407, 408, 409, 410, also 448 all the way up to 460, but I will respect your time and not read them all out. These questions are to the ministers for health, education, emergency services, housing, public transport, agriculture, victim support, water and early childhood and pre-prep. One of my questions is to the Minister for Health, which is now 77 days overdue.

The SPEAKER: I ask the member for Euroa to hand her list to the clerks, please.

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Speaker, I have some outstanding items: question 117 for the Minister for Environment, questions 149 and 169 for the Minister for Health.

Constituency questions

Croydon electorate

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:41): (220) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will the minister look at and provide an update on modifying the Maroondah Highway service lane exit point for residents exiting Aveo Cherry Tree Grove retirement village and entering Maroondah Highway in Croydon? Cherry Tree Grove retirement village is a large and vibrant village with over 350 residents. The entry and exit points for the village are through the service lane at 67–81 Maroondah Highway, Croydon. The exit point to leave Cherry Tree Grove and enter moving traffic on Maroondah Highway poses some difficulty for a couple of reasons: the angle of the exit point and the fact that elderly residents enter a three-lane highway with traffic travelling up to 80 kilometres per hour. These residents must also give way to traffic doing a U-turn at a pedestrian crossing approximately 20 metres from the egress point, which increases the level of complexity. Minister, my office is being contacted by concerned family members worried about the safety of this exit point, and again I ask: when will the minister look at and provide an update on modifying this egress to increase the safety of road users?

Narre Warren North electorate

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (14:42): (221) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Education. My electorate of Narre Warren North is home to some incredible local primary schools with amazing educators. That is why I am so glad this year's state budget reflected real investment in our local primary schools. We have committed \$310,000 to Fleetwood Primary School in Narre Warren for key upgrades to benefit the school community. We have also committed \$9.1 million to James Cook Primary School in Endeavour Hills, with the budget kicking off the planning works. Will the minister update me on the progress of these incredible investments?

Euroa electorate

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:43): (222) My question is for the Minister for Planning, and I ask: how will the government help councils that are struggling to provide effective housing options for current and prospective residents? Within some LGAs in the Euroa electorate we are seeing developers leave in droves due to several concerns with the planning capacity of local councils. Developers are concerned with the significant delays, issues with receiving permits, zoning changes and a lack of transparency. These towns cannot afford to have prospective developers take their business elsewhere, particularly when they are providing housing options at a time when they are so desperately needed. Over the last year the Strathbogie shire saw the largest rise in median rental prices across the entire state, up 19.1 per cent to \$420 a week. In addition to the rising rental costs,

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homelessness is already a concern in my electorate: from 2012 to 2019, 1183 people in the Mitchell, Strathbogie and Benalla LGAs required support from specialised homeless services, with that number rising. I ask that we look for a planning flying squad and find ways to intervene and offer expertise to avert some of these issues.

Eltham electorate

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (14:44): (223) My question is for the Minister for Health. Minister, what is the Andrews government doing to help those in my community who have been diagnosed with motor neurone disease? MND is a shocking terminal illness devastating both local people as well as people across our state and nation. We are seeing a statewide conversation on the importance of research into this horrible disease, enabled by important and generous fundraising to support this research. Locally in my electorate the Diamond Creek Junior Football Club committee came together to raise over \$7000 for FightMND. FightMND is an important charity supporting research for effective treatments and a cure for MND. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Shaun Fitzpatrick, Karli Owen, Rachael O'Connor-Horan, Bronwyn Duggan, Dale Versteegen and Kerrie Flinn for all of their hard work in organising this event. I particularly thank those who braved the icy cold water of the Big Freeze dunking machine, auctioning themselves off to help raise money for FightMND. It was a bit of fun to be the winning bidder to dunk club president Dale Versteegen, and I thank him for his leadership regarding this terrific club and this great event. It was also wonderful to have Bomber legend Terry Daniher attend this great night, talking about his brother Neale's battle with MND. I have witnessed this disease firsthand – *(Time expired)*

Mornington electorate

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (14:45): (224) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Will the minister urgently approach the federal Labor government to ensure the upgrades of the Forest Drive and Uralla Road intersections with the Nepean Highway are not at risk of further delay because of the federal government's 90-day review? These dangerous intersections in Mount Martha are notorious in my electorate, and accidents frequently occur on them that have resulted in death and serious injury.

The previous Liberal federal government provided the funds for these intersections to be upgraded soon after 2016. Politics were played by the state Labor government over many years. Then the works were meant to start before 2023, then early 2023, then mid-2023 and now will start late 2023. But it has been revealed in the *Mornington News* that contracts now cannot be signed because of the Labor government's 90-day review even though money has already been spent on planning and the project is ready to go. This continual delay is unacceptable.

Pakenham electorate

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (14:46): (225) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety too. Minister, what is the latest information on the road maintenance that has been carried out in the Pakenham area? As the winter weather sets in, road conditions can change. With heavy rain downpours, road surfaces can degrade in a short space of time, creating new potholes. As the school holidays commence at the end of the week, many families will be travelling through my electorate to go on holiday. It is important that the state roads in my electorate are maintained to a high standard.

Richmond electorate

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:46): (226) My question is for the Attorney-General. Colin and his friends, who were renters in Abbotsford in a share house, have been waiting for two years now for their VCAT hearing so their bond can be returned. After vacating their share house in 2021 the landlord made a claim for their bond, arguing that they owed outstanding rent. Colin disputed the claim and their bond is now frozen. The last time they checked in with VCAT they were told there was no hearing date in sight. Landlords may have the resources to wait; renters do not. Too many renters that

I hear from are choosing to give in to their landlords rather than face a costly, long and uncertain VCAT battle. Attorney, when will your government help renters like Colin and his friends by clearing the backlog at VCAT by ensuring that it is adequately resourced and preventing more cases from joining the VCAT queue by strengthening renters rights and giving landlords and renters certainty?

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (14:47): (227) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. How is the Andrews Labor government supporting students in my electorate to attend school camps? My electorate of Glen Waverley is home to some of the best schools in the state. A good quality public education system gives every child a fair opportunity to succeed in life. I am so proud that the Andrews Labor government is investing in local school upgrades across my electorate. Upgrades for Burwood East Primary School, Glen Waverley South Primary School, Glenallen School, Parkmore Primary School, Vermont Secondary College, Vermont South Special School, Weeden Heights Primary School and Wheelers Hill Primary School are progressing. In addition, the recent budget secured \$10.9 million to upgrade the learning spaces at Forest Hill College.

Not only are we investing in our local schools, but we are also expanding opportunities for Victorian students in government and low-fee non-government schools to attend camps. School camps are a great opportunity to connect with new friends, strengthen relationships and encourage physical and mental wellbeing. I believe that this is a great investment for my community, and I will say it, I look forward to the minister's response.

Narracan electorate

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:48): (228) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, and the information my community is seeking is how much funding is allocated to the West Gippsland Hospital. The state budget allocated \$320 million towards planning and works for six or seven new hospitals, including West Gippsland. My community wants to know how much of the \$320 million has been allocated to the new West Gippsland Hospital from that amount. Confusion has come about because the Minister for Regional Development in the other place has said on Facebook:

we're investing \$320 million

To get the new West Gippsland Hospital underway

So can the minister end the confusion caused by the Minister for Regional Development and please provide the accurate information about how much funding of this \$320 million is allocated to the new West Gippsland Hospital.

Yan Yean electorate

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (14:49): (229) My question is for the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers. How will the new Changing Places facility in Yan Yean benefit my constituents with a disability? We heard last week that we will be receiving one of 13 new Changing Places facilities at the Donnybrook community centre. The Donnybrook community centre is being delivered as part of the Growing Suburbs Fund. The community centre will have a new kinder, child and maternal health services, a community hall and kitchen and much more. We welcome the addition of the Changing Places facility and ask about the additional benefits that will bring for that centre.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Debate resumed.

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (14:50): It is great to rise again. Just before the break I was speaking about how proud I am to be the member for Bellarine and what a privilege it is to represent that community but indicating that we want to get on with delivering. The last member was a wonderful member for that community and delivered so much for the Bellarine, and we want to

continue to build on that legacy – and this budget certainly does that. I was going to talk about some of those commitments that we made and that were fully delivered in this last budget, and I would like to talk a little bit about what they will mean for the Bellarine community and what difference that will make for our communities.

Sport and wellbeing and keeping our families and kids active is really important across the Bellarine. It is a wonderful place to raise a family, and we are really fortunate to have wonderful facilities. But there was always more to do, and I am really pleased to be able to commit some funding to provide some further investments and upgrades.

The Barwon Heads Football and Netball Club will receive an upgrade of \$2.4 million to help redevelop their clubrooms. This will be a new facility that the community will really be proud of, but I remember being at the announcement during the campaign, when female players were saying that these would make a huge difference to their ability to play at that club when changing for feeling safe at that club. It will make a huge difference when they have seen a really considerable amount of growth in women playing sport and in their junior sides as well.

The Collendina Reserve will also receive an investment of \$1 million. At the moment their club is just booming. It is actually the biggest sporting club, or biggest footy club, on the Bellarine, and they do an incredible job. They have got so many volunteers, and they are really community driven. But their ground is quite unsafe in terms of how the traffic flows around the ground and where their clubrooms are, so I am really pleased that we will be able to make an investment on that ground and at that reserve to improve the safety. I will just say: go Cobras.

One of the big commitments too that we made in this election was to make sure that the north Bellarine have the aquatics facility that they need and rightly deserve, particularly for some of the more senior people or people that were doing rehabilitation, who were having to travel quite a bit to go to other facilities. This was a \$20 million commitment that we said we would put into the northern Bellarine to build a facility that would cater for those people and for children to be able to learn to swim as well. There is an outdoor pool being built there now. It is outdoors; the community did not want an outdoor pool. I will not go into the politics of that commitment – it was at a federal level. But the community have said to me that they will not use that facility. They need an indoor pool that caters for their growing communities. I said at the time it should have been built once and built properly. We have had to now step in as a state. I am really proud that we have been able to do that, and stage 2 will now be delivered and an indoor facility will be there for the community. I am really proud of that.

The Portarlington Recreation Reserve will also have an upgrade to make sure that they have got some safe accessibility and an upgrade of their change rooms as well. It is a wonderful reserve that is used by quite a number of users – the agricultural society is there as well – and so this will be a wonderful upgrade to start with. Unfortunately, we have come to a situation where the Geelong city council have frozen their support for this project and frozen the part of the funding they had committed. They have come to the state to say, ‘Oh, do you think you could keep going with the project?’ It is unbelievably disappointing, but we do want to get on with it. I want to make sure that that community get the commitment that we promised and the upgrades that they deserve, so I am working really hard with that community to make sure that that progresses and does not stall.

In my inaugural speech I said – and I have said this consistently in the electorate and here in this place – that community would be at the heart of any decision-making that we make, and I am really proud to support some of the smaller communities that are on the Bellarine. The SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre are going to receive a \$50,000 grant just to help them with their continued service to their community, such as with technology; they help the seniors with public transport information, training sessions, cooking and that general social connectedness that they offer. Anne Brackley and the team there do an absolutely amazing job, and I am really pleased to support the neighbourhood house. They have also been wonderful in supporting the power saving bonus – residents can go there to have help with accessing that bonus.

The St Leonards Progress Association also will receive some upgrades to their hall, enabling them to deliver services and programs to the community. It is one of those beautiful old country town halls. This upgrade will make sure that their flooring is improved, and it is a wonderful community hub there for the St Leonards community.

St Leonards also is going to receive some money for some boat ramp upgrades and the St Leonards Pier – \$2.8 million for the St Leonards boat ramp, including wave protection to make sure we are reducing the impact of waves during the boat launching and retrieval process. Safety is a big issue at that ramp, so I am really pleased that we are able to make that commitment for upgrades for the boaters there. Boating is absolutely huge on the Bellarine. On the weekends or even during the week when I am driving around the Bellarine, the car parks will be full of trailers and boats. They really love their fishing, and it is good fishing off our coastline. They are spoilt for choice though, our boaters. We have the Clifton Springs boat ramp, Point Richards, Indented Head, St Leonards, Swan Bay, Queenscliff, Ocean Grove and Barwon Heads. As you go around the whole coast, we are very spoilt for choice, and many of these have seen upgrades, with the previous member advocating for investment in those.

I just want to point out that I have been really pleased to engage with the St Leonards boaters. They have been really terrific advocates for the upgrades and have been involved in consultation, and I thank them very much for doing that consultation with me and Better Boating Victoria. The St Leonards Pier also will have a major upgrade and some rebuilding work, making sure that it continues to be an iconic pier. As you drive down the main street, Murradoc Road, into St Leonards, you then drive basically to the pier. It is very much loved. Lots of fishermen, fisherwomen and children fish off there, which is just wonderful. It is much loved, and a rebuild will be incredible.

I have spoken about this in this place before, but the Queenscliff neighbourhood battery will be an absolutely wonderful addition in the Queenscliff area. We have committed to 100 of these across Victoria, and I am really pleased that one will be in my electorate.

The Wallington Primary School will see an upgrade to their main school buildings. Having visited there, they have a wonderful country-school feel about them. They will have some upgrades to some of their classrooms and the main building, which will be much loved. The staff and the principal there just have a wonderful commitment to their children, but now they will also receive some funding to make sure they have got world-class facilities as well.

The Queenscliff marine search and rescue vessel investment means that the Queenscliff coastguard will be able to have a new boat to make sure that they can continue the work that they do to keep our community safe. Just as we may call the SES, the CFA or the police, boaters who find themselves in trouble, either in the bay or in very dangerous waters out near the rip out of Port Phillip Bay, will be able to call on the coastguard if they need it. The coastguard's new boat will ensure that they will be able to endure the treacherous waters off Queenscliff. So I am really pleased to be able to commit to a new vessel for the Queenscliff coastguard. It will give boaters that peace of mind.

In addition, the Portarlington region – the statistical area of Portarlington, which does include the St Leonards area as well – will receive one of the 50 government owned and run childcare centres, which is really important for families in the Bellarine. We have seen a real growth in that region. The St Leonards community does not have a childcare facility at the moment. We are looking at where this may be located, but I am really pleased that one will be located in that statistical Portarlington level 2 region. Having affordable child care for families in the Bellarine is so important, giving parents, and particularly mothers, that option of returning to work and giving their children that best possible start in life in a childcare centre.

Regional Victoria has seen a lot of investment. I am really proud to be a regional MP, and I absolutely love living on the Bellarine. So many who have come from Melbourne particularly to live in our region have come for that quieter lifestyle, but it is still easily accessible to Melbourne and Geelong. I am proud that we have invested in the regions, such as with fairer V/Line fares, free kinder and upgrades

to the Geelong hospital – there will be a new children’s emergency ward at the Geelong hospital. One of the women’s health clinics will be in Geelong, in our region. We have a new mental health hub being built. Youth mental health services and beds are coming to Geelong as well. In the construction phase right now is a new early parenting centre to support new families. We are supporting thousands of jobs by bringing back the SEC. There is a duplication of the Barwon Heads Road, free TAFE and free rego for apprentices, which will benefit our region. The list is actually quite long, and I have not got time to list them all. I cannot wait to see all of these projects get underway and to deliver on those commitments that we promised.

I am so proud of the Bellarine communities. They look after each other, they support one another and they get involved in their communities. We have so many who volunteer and give back to our communities, and I know that these investments that we have made are there to support their efforts. That is what we do: we support our communities, and this investment will continue to build on that community wellbeing and continue to improve the area in which we live.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:02): I rise to speak on the take-note motion on the 2023–24 budget papers. It is an opportunity for members to speak to the government’s financial management of the state and the allocation of funding. This most recent budget was tagged by the government as ‘Doing what matters’. What struck me when I first received a copy of the budget and opened the budget papers was how much the government has chosen to ignore parts of the community. I will speak about financial management later, but I do want to raise the point that the government has chosen to ignore so many important community issues. As the member for Brighton I represent Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood, Hampton and Hampton East, and there are so many issues in our community that are being ignored.

Before the budget I wrote to the Premier personally, and the first issue that I spoke to was the issue of community safety. It is an issue that has been raised over the last year. The Brighton community has spoken out about safety issues in our community – aggravated burglaries, home invasions in our community. When those issues were first raised the government and the Premier himself victim-blamed one of the women in my community who raised them. He effectively said that she did not understand data on crime and that she should understand data better. Well, what we have seen proven by Victorian police, in terms of both the data and also the words from the most senior of Victorian police, is that there is a problem with community safety in Victoria and particularly Brighton.

There has been a 30 per cent increase in aggravated burglaries. Over the last 10 years in my community aggravated burglaries have increased by almost 600 per cent. We have the highest level of aggravated burglaries in this state that we have ever seen. Unfortunately – though in my view and so many in my community’s view, our community is the number one place in Melbourne – we are in the top five locations in Melbourne now for aggravated burglaries, and that is a terrible position to be in.

One of the main concerns of my community, a concern that we raised throughout the last year, is the need for increased police resources in our community, including a police station. Unfortunately the last Labor government shut the police station in Brighton, and we do not have a local police station. So our community is short on resources, and we have seen that both in terms of responses and visual presence of police. It is concerning, and it is even more concerning to see that, as a result of the concerns being raised, that is being reflected in the data. So over the last year we have seen a dramatic increase in crime in my community specifically.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is a bit rich to have to sit in this place and listen to the member for Brighton talk about crime in his community. This is a man –

James NEWBURY: Acting Speaker, what is the point of order?

Mary-Anne Thomas: who routinely demonstrates bullying behaviour in this place –

Members interjecting.

Mary-Anne Thomas: and I ask you to bring him back –

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): Order! There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: There is no point of order, Acting Speaker. How appalling, Acting Speaker.

The Brighton community over the last year has seen an increase in crime, and the budget was an opportunity for the Premier and this government to invest in fixing –

Members interjecting.

James NEWBURY: It was absolutely the opportunity for the government to fix the problems in my community, to increase the resources of police in my community, and they did not do that.

I will also speak to the local schools in my community, because what we have seen reported is a 93 per cent allocation of school funding into Labor seats and a 6 per cent allocation of funding into Liberal seats. In my electorate there are a number of schools that have been well deserving of funds – schools that have not seen funding for decades. I will talk specifically first about Brighton Primary. Brighton Primary houses one of four of Melbourne's hearing-impaired units for the deaf. It is a wonderful school that does wonderful work for children, and that school has, as I said, one of the four specialist units for the deaf. That unit at Brighton Primary is in a demountable, a 50-year-old demountable, next to a train line.

I mean, when we stand in this place, all of us as members of this place, we often stand and talk about the needs of our community and the needs of the children in our community. One of the things I think we can all agree on is the need for our children to have the best resources available and resources they deserve. I do not think anybody in here would think that the four schools that house hearing units for the deaf should not have the resources that are commensurate to the needs that they have. Unfortunately the particular site at Brighton Primary, though the school is wonderful, with wonderful staff and well-meaning staff, who try so hard and work so hard – I am sure we can all agree on how difficult it would be for staff to try to assist children with hearing difficulties as trains regularly roll past on the Sandringham line. The unit is literally metres away from the Sandringham line. It would be only fair and reasonable for that school community to have an allocation of resources. The coalition are represented by 36 per cent of the seats in this chamber and received 6 per cent of the funding.

There are a number of other schools with similar needs, and I refer to Gardenvale Primary and Hampton Primary, two schools who were promised money in the election, and not a single dollar was committed to those schools in the state budget – not one single dollar. The government went to the election committing to funding, and the budget does not include a single dollar for those schools in terms of capital works – not one dollar. Hampton Primary is a wonderful school in our community, a wonderful school, and to think the whole school community has opened the budget and has seen the forward years – the four forward years are there in the budget for the whole school community to see. And I know how many in the school community, separate to any politics, have contacted the minister saying, 'Will we ever get any money? Will you put it in writing? You said before the election we would receive money, and then post the election we have received nothing.' It is so terribly sad to know that these schools have not received funding that they deserve – like Brighton Beach Primary School. A recent audit found 1236 items that deserve attention, and the school has not received a dollar. None of these schools are listed in the budget for capital works.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am not persuaded that the member for Brighton is actually telling the truth, and I want to make this point while I am on my feet: this man today has demonstrated that he is a bully in this house.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): Order! One at a time, please.

James NEWBURY: There was no point of order.

Mary-Anne Thomas: My point of order was on relevance and the importance of telling the truth in this place in relation to funding to schools.

Members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Meng Heang Tak): I need to listen to the minister at the table's point of order. If you would give me one moment, I think I would much appreciate that. There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: Thank you. I note that now there have been two points of order raised when I am talking about the needs of children in my community. I am talking about the needs of hearing-impaired children in my community and then have spoken about little children in Hampton and little children at Brighton Beach Primary, little children that deserve funding. Their schools deserve funding, and the government is taking spurious points of order when a member is standing in this place representing their community, calling for school funding.

I would like the record to show, and I hope the families of my school community see, what has occurred, because the facts are there to see in this place – that I am raising the genuine needs of my community, the genuine needs of my schools, schools like Brighton Primary, Brighton Beach Primary, Hampton Primary, Elwood Primary, Brighton Secondary and Elwood College. Elwood College unfortunately has significant issues with their basketball court and with their theatre – significant issues. You are talking about decades-old infrastructure that frankly is concerning. In the gym, pieces of the roof are hanging down. In the Phoenix Theatre at Elwood College, there are structural concerns with the building that require investment, and that investment has not been forthcoming. Why? It is because 93 per cent of school funding is directed to Labor electorates and 6 per cent is directed to Liberal-held seats.

These are genuine issues. There are many infrastructure needs in my community, including sporting facilities for our children. There are a number of terrific sporting clubs. In fact we have the best sporting clubs in Melbourne in my community, and those children deserve funding for their infrastructure as well. Brighton Beach Oval has a very old pavilion that deserves an upgrade. There are a number of pavilions. The Wattie Watson Oval pavilion in Elwood is in real need of funding. These are important infrastructure projects in my community that deserve investment, and that investment has not been forthcoming. The Jack Levy Pavilion at Moorabbin West reserve is a particular example. That pavilion has been promised funds for 10 years. Three times it has been listed in a council budget. It has seen no funding. Three times it has been listed to be funded and that funding has been withdrawn. It is another example of the young children in the community deserving funding and that funding not being received.

When it comes to local police resources, we have seen a significant increase in aggravated burglaries. Aggravated burglary concerns were first raised by the community before the stats had picked them up, and that makes perfect sense. If you were listening to the community, you would know the concerns that they have raised. The community raised concerns about crime which were dismissed but have proven to be true. Despite those crimes having been proved to be true, no action has actually been taken. No resources have been invested. The government members are laughing about aggravated burglaries increasing by 30 per cent – the government members are laughing about the aggravated burglary increases in the community.

It is deeply disappointing to know that there has been a spike in crime and an issue with schools not receiving the funding they deserve, and that is the truth of this budget. The truth of this budget is the government is not doing what matters, and it certainly has forgotten Brighton, Brighton East, Elwood, Hampton and Hampton East.

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (15:18): I am very pleased to rise and speak on the budget for 2023–24 and what it actually translates to for the seat of Albert Park and beyond, because there are many benefits that transcend to the whole state and indeed to all Victorians. One thing in particular I do want to raise to start with is that we are bringing back the SEC –

Members interjecting.

Nina TAYLOR: yes, fantastic for Victoria – to drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs in renewable government-owned energy. I note that there were some comments made yesterday by members of the Greens. They were trying to suggest that social media posts are what actually effect change in terms of moving away from fossil fuels to clean energy. In fact I can enlighten them that actually social media posts are not the trick. That is not what makes real change when it comes to cleaning our environment. It is real investment. An initial \$1 billion investment in the SEC will help to deliver 4.5 gigawatts of power – get this, the equivalent replacement capacity of Loy Yang A – through renewable energy projects. How about that? That is real investment driving real change for this state, not just fancy little social media posts.

This is on the back of extraordinary investment from our state and sophisticated market mechanisms to drive investment in renewables. We had the Victorian renewable energy target 1. That was so successful, that market sounding, we now have the Victorian renewable energy target 2, and the benefit of that is that is helping to move us along to 100 per cent renewable energy, which helps to clean up, so to speak, our public transport system and government buildings. I am really excited about these changes, and I know that the people of Albert Park will be as well, because they are very passionate about making sure we are doing all we can to transition to a clean energy future, and that is exactly what we are doing.

A member interjected.

Nina TAYLOR: Yes, the member for Polwarth may not be so excited about that, but on this side of the house we certainly are.

At the same time, it will help to support 59,000 jobs for the people of Victoria. Drilling back down to the seat of Albert Park specifically, we should say there is also going to be a community battery for the local LGA of Port Phillip. We know that with the seat of Albert Park we have the City of Port Phillip and the City of Melbourne that intersect. I am really excited about that, because there again we can see that we are finding modern mechanisms to be able to store energy, and this is also helping with our clean energy revolution in Victoria.

For the seat of Albert Park, we have some wonderful investment in local schools, and I should point out that we have a more than \$2 billion investment in schools across Victoria. We will also, for the seat of Albert Park, begin planning to upgrade Middle Park Primary School. That is a very fine school in my local electorate, but it is an older school. It is pretty old. I think it was back in the 1800s that it was built. So it is time for it to get some real investment. This is really exciting, and I am glad to see that those planning processes can get underway for those upgrades. We are also investing to make sure students have the classrooms they need, and in particular Fishermen's Bend is going to get a primary school as well. This is really exciting. Not too far away –

Darren Cheeseman: What were they doing in Fishermen's Bend when they were in government?

Nina TAYLOR: Well, I do not know. I think there was a lot of development, but it did not include schools and amenity. They forgot about amenity when they were investing in planning. Who knew that amenity had to accompany planning when you are looking at planning in your local area? Never mind. Well, at least the Labor government has helped to catch up in that space, so to speak, and has put record investment into local schools, and I also pay homage to my predecessor as well in that regard, out of respect.

I should say, with the nearby Port Melbourne Secondary College already built, and this is a Labor government investment – absolutely fantastic – is that of course around schools you also need to make sure that roads are nice and safe and accommodate and support children coming to and from school, so the good news is that we are fixing the local roads around that school with our \$1.5 million investment towards safety upgrades. I am really looking forward to working that through with the local

community. This includes a traffic action plan and works towards improved traffic safety. It will deliver infrastructure signage and pedestrian access to get local drivers out of the traffic and home to their schools sooner and safer. This is a real positive. I know that locals definitely have wanted this, and I am pleased that we are going to be able to deliver as well.

Moving along to health and in particular women's health, because we know that Labor are literally moving this matter from what has unfortunately been traditionally seen more as a niche issue to something getting the focus it needs and deserves, there is going to be a new, comprehensive women's health clinic at the Alfred hospital, and this will change the way women's health issues are treated, providing care and support for conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, perimenopause and menopause. I am really excited about that, because that is sort of the closest major hospital for the seat of Albert Park. It is very meaningful for women in our local area, and I am pleased that it is our government that is backing it in.

What about mental health? We know that our government has been including an extraordinary investment, a historic investment, in reforms in that space, and I am pleased that we will begin planning for a new mental health and wellbeing centre in St Kilda to ensure more locals can get the help they need and that it is truly accessible at a community level. I think this is going to be really, really important, and I am pleased that there has been funding committed to planning for that very important local community facility.

What about our surf lifesaving clubs? Well, I am also excited because the Port Melbourne Life Saving Club is going to get an upgrade to the toilet block and lift to support accessibility, which is really important. I actually know a lot of people in the club very well, and I know how hard they work. The volunteers there – oh, my goodness! – they put in hours and hours and hours incredibly selflessly. It makes good sense, however, to make sure that they have a truly accessible facility, so this is going to bring about some fantastic change for that local building.

I will talk about the Port Melbourne Bowling Club – fantastic club, all heart; the members there are absolutely fantastic. But the facility is arguably quite tired, so I am really pleased that they are getting a \$1 million investment. This is going to be truly transformational for that wonderful club – people who contribute so much to the local community, spend a lot of time really bringing people together – and it really makes good sense that we are bringing about effective change there as well as helping them with their upgrades.

Talking about green space, I live in Southbank and I am particularly aware of it. But across the state arguably everyone wants green space. Open space is really, really important, and I am really pleased that we are going to be investing \$1.5 million to support the creation of the Dodds Street Linear Park. This is going to be really quality open and green space and somewhere for the Southbank community to meet with friends and family and relax, because we know that there are a lot of very tall buildings there and it is really good to be able to provide a really nice open green space where people can connect in a relaxed and enjoyable way.

I should also say that the budget is providing more support for our proud, diverse multicultural communities who contribute so much to our state. We have got a \$77 million investment, and it is really about supporting things like vibrant festivals that truly bring people together, events and new and improved community spaces. These indeed are spreading right across the state. I am not talking only about the seat of Albert Park, but I am really pleased to see this kind of investment, because we want to make sure Victorians practise their faith and embrace their culture free from racism and hatred, and this is certainly part of our government backing in these kinds of very meaningful support mechanisms to enable people to connect in a safe way and to honour what is truly meaningful to them.

I also want to mention community support. We have got many wonderful community organisations that do a power of work locally, and it would be remiss of me not to mention the Sacred Heart Mission. I am really pleased that they are getting a \$100,000 grant, and we know that the wonderful Sacred

Heart Mission provide clothing, meals and support services to people experiencing homelessness across the St Kilda and Southbank areas. It only makes sense that we back those in who are truly doing amazing work for people who are struggling in our local community.

We also have \$100,000 for the Nappy Collective. This enables them to keep supporting families across the state. It is a really truly wonderful organisation, and I know that it is essentially volunteer-run. It is just lovely. It actually warms your heart to know that there are people who are giving so much time and energy to others, so it is a great pleasure that we can help to back them in, and I know that this is going to make some meaningful change for that organisation as well.

There is \$100,000 for Ready Set. I visited Ready Set, and the incredible work that they do is truly transformational. We might think of clothing as a superficial element beyond that which provides warmth or keeps you cool in summer, but actually when you are wanting to apply for a job, you need to have reasonable presentation generally speaking, and this enables people to get clothing they might not otherwise be able to afford. At the same time they also help them with their confidence generally, so it is so much more. It is a great service. It is so much more than just the clothing itself. Granted, that is essential and certainly necessary when you are wanting to get back into the workforce or maybe to get a job for the first time, but also they do incredible work in building people's self-esteem and helping them and supporting them in those necessary steps when they are actually at an interview point. So it is really inspiring to see these changes coming through as well, and this is a real positive coming out of the budget.

The budget will also make sure residents in high-rise public housing towers are comfortable all year round, with a \$141 million investment to begin delivering air conditioning to their buildings. I know that there are a number of high-rise public housing towers in the seat of Albert Park, and so these changes will certainly be most gratefully received. Further, I just want to speak to some of the continuing mechanisms to help with the cost of living, because I know there have been a lot of comments about cost of living in the chamber and I think it is important to not lose sight of these, because they do benefit people not only in the seat of Albert Park but actually across the state.

Some of the measures that we have to help support household budgets include a new round of the \$250 per saving bonus for all Victorians. I believe that the seat of Albert Park has one of the highest uptakes of this mechanism. I am really pleased about that because it suggests that on the one hand there is a need for it, for sure, and we know that goes without saying, but also that people recognise the benefit of it and that it can actually help them get through winter in particular, when heating costs et cetera can go up. We know that there are worldwide pressures that are driving in this space.

We also have the Victorian default offer, which in 2023–24 will still be cheaper than the price of standing offers prior to the Victorian default offer's introduction in 2019. We are extending the solar homes and batteries program into 2022–23, with 64,000 solar rebates and 1700 battery rebates available. I am only just getting warmed up here. There is so much more.

We have capped V/Line fares, and I know even for people in the seat of Albert Park this is an incentive to go and visit regional areas as well. It is a quid pro quo. It benefits both people in the city areas and people in regional areas, and it is really exciting and means that people who might not otherwise necessarily be able to afford to do that can do that now. I think it is really driving equity in our state but is also a good incentive for those who might want to travel to regional Victoria and help boost their local economies as well.

We have free L-plate and P-plate licences and online testing. Again, this is a really good cost-of-living measure helping those who want to, obviously, get qualified so they can drive safely, so this is a really good thing. We have discounted driver licence renewals for safe drivers. That is another cost benefit. We have short-term vehicle registration and car registration discounts for eligible concession card holders. So there are all these mechanisms. When you are looking at cost-of-living measures it is never just one thing or another; it is a whole range of mechanisms throughout the budget – and ongoing, I

should say, not exclusively with the budget – that enable Victorians, just helping them to get ahead in times that are really, really challenging.

I just did want to mention also the \$1 billion annually in stamp duty exemptions and concessions and first home owner grants and the Victorian Homebuyer Fund, a shared equity scheme contributing 25 per cent of the purchase price. So you can see various mechanisms which are helping those who are trying to get into the market as well.

We have free TAFE to give Victorians more training and new careers. This is certainly a plus when you are looking at the benefit of education. There is a cap of one residential rent rise per 12 months – there is a power of work going on in that space overall, but just to say these are some of the measures that are in place to help support Victorians.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:33): I rise this afternoon to take note of this year's budget. This 2023–24 state budget is the one that is really making country and regional Victorians pay a heavy price for the wanton waste of taxpayers money, the mismanagement of the state as a whole, and unfortunately I fear greatly, particularly for the people of Polwarth, that we will be a long time coming back from the bills, the burdens, the debt and the consequences of this investment.

We will go through this afternoon some of those issues that are really making it very hard for the people of Polwarth and regional Victorians generally. A few of the government members have talked about an opportunity for city people to get out to regional Victoria and help support our economies. Well, we always like that. I mean, that is great for regional Victoria and particularly Polwarth, with the Great Ocean Road, our beautiful coastline, the Otway state forest and so on – and national parks. However, this budget has delivered, between this year and last year, a 45 per cent cut to regional road funding. What that means for country Victorians is it is no longer safe on our roads. The cost of getting our wonderful clean, green produce to market, whether it is to the ports of Portland or Geelong or into Melbourne – transport operators from one end of the state to the other are reporting the massive increase in maintenance and costs and time delays brought about by the roads.

The roads of course are what keep country communities together, and to have such a massive cut to the funding, essentially now the whole of regional Victoria is expected to look after this vital road infrastructure on less money than what this government is prepared to spend on just one level crossing. This government trumpets the fact that it has done I think 80-odd level crossing removals. When you think about that, they have been prepared to spend 80 years worth of country road funding in just eight years, and that has come at the expense of regional Victorians. What that means for Princes Highway west, for example, is the duplication that was started back in 2007 has still not actually been officially finished or officially opened, and yet the left-hand lanes are almost undriveable. In fact local police reported that they were happy to not insist that drivers stick to the left, because it was no longer safe to do so. I experienced a drive back from Ballarat only two weeks ago when there were four cars in a row pulled over with punctured and ruined tyres because of a clearly massive pothole that had formed and was unable to be maintained. This is an unsafe and dangerous position, but of course what we have to keep in context is that money delayed last year, money delayed this year and money delayed for the foreseeable future will just mean the cost of getting our roads back to spec again will be almost beyond the state's capacity. What worries me more than anything is that places like the Surf Coast shire and other municipalities are actually lowering their speed limits from 100 to 80 because they can no longer guarantee the safety of drivers on the road. So this government are actively encouraging an even less productive use of our roads and our road networks because they are not prepared to fund roads where they need to.

Why do regional Victorians feel so aggrieved about this? Quite frankly, they are aggrieved because we also learned in this budget that there is some \$30.7 billion worth of blowouts in the major projects here in Melbourne. What country Victorians see is this endless pot of money being unleashed, a debt that when the Labor government came to power in 2014 was about \$22 billion. By the time we go to the polls again it will be \$170 billion-plus based on today's estimates. That is a massive amount of

money. That makes the debt and deficits and disasters of the early 1990s, when Labor was last left to recklessly take hold of the budget and we thought it was going to be a long time coming back from that – this completely obliterates what the Cain and Kirner years did to Victoria. This government has now completely broken all those records and set a whole new trajectory, which will see Victorians pay around \$22 million a day in interest repayments. You know, the average punter – those out suffering cost-of-living pressures and people struggling with rising interest rates and increased taxes and costs – understands that \$22 million a day is a lot less money the state has to provide essential services in health and education.

In regional Victoria of course it is the roads – we have talked about the roads – but it is also other real attacks on the way we do business and the way we operate. For example, agriculture funding has been cut by 34 per cent, and that comes on top of Regional Development Victoria's slashing. One of the things that was particularly egregious along the Great Ocean Road and for regional tourism was Daniel Andrews's great claim to be saving Netball Australia –

Paul Edbrooke: The Premier.

Richard RIORDAN: The Premier. The Premier's claim to be saving Netball Australia – the funds that he used to bail out Netball Australia actually came from regional tourism funds. That is a real slap in the face to regional Victorians, who are flat out trying to get people back into their area.

Nick Staikos interjected.

Richard RIORDAN: By all means fund women's sport – it is an important role of government to do that – but not at the expense of regional Victoria, and it certainly should not be at the cost of regional tourism businesses who have struggled and struggled for the last three years with the COVID claim. And now this government is seeking to once again penalise regional Victorian businesses so that they can send even more money back to Melbourne. At a local level –

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

Richard RIORDAN: It is good to hear the member for South Barwon chiming in there. Of course he went to the electorate way back in 2018 promising a community hospital for Torquay, which is still a thistle-laden paddock in Torquay. We have gone now through multiple, multiple budgets, and they have not been able to move the dial on that. The sign is so old and tattered and faded and broken down I am sure the good people of Torquay have possibly forgotten where their community hospital was going to go.

That is actually a marvellous symbol of this government's commitments and promises to regional Victoria. We heard of the city deal – it was back in 2018 too – when the federal government generously gave \$150 million to the Victorian state government, and since 2018 they have not been able to spend a cent of it, not a cent. Some five years after being gifted free money from the federal government they have not been able to get a cafe and a restaurant done at Lorne, they have not been able to secure the upgrade and redevelopment of toilets at Port Campbell, they have not been able to organise the payment for and building of a tourist walk between Skenes Creek and Apollo Bay. In fact their management of this money has been so bad that they have had to cancel that project this year. They have cancelled that project because they can no longer afford it. With inflation running at 7 per cent per annum they can no longer build it, and they are going to cut it. It is a bit like the poor fishermen who have been operating for 70 years in Apollo Bay: they have been desperately waiting for the upgrade of their fishermen's co-op and the fixing up of the Apollo Bay harbour, which was funded some five years ago, and not a blow has been struck.

As we speak at the moment, some iconic visitor spaces along the Great Ocean Road are sitting closed and abandoned because this government simply does not have the resources to adequately manage the state's estate. We have got Glenample Homestead – closed. We have got the Arch, which is one of those iconic spots at Port Campbell – closed. We have the steps down to Loch Ard Gorge – closed.

We have the caravan park at Skenes Creek – still closed. They opened it briefly over summer but then quickly closed it again, despite the fact they were still advertising to the community that it was open. This government has been single-handedly negligent, absolutely negligent, in looking after and supporting things that are important in regional Victoria.

There is another big issue for regional Victoria. My electorate is affected as well. Even though we do not have commercial hardwood logging in my region, we have still managed to get some value out of our state forests in our region. One of the most important ones of course is firewood. Right throughout the Otways region, whether you are in the small townships of Apollo Bay, Forrest, Colac, out at Pirron Yallock, Irrewillipe or Birregurra, wherever you may be, all these communities rely heavily for heating on firewood. This government have made a grand announcement, in order to win over some votes in the city, that they are going to stop that availability of firewood to these communities. They have called the wood merchants in and told them that as of Christmas or the end of the year, 31 December, their multigenerational businesses will be no more. That might affect those individuals, who will have lost their income – and in many cases they are incredibly proud of the great work that they have been doing in managing state forests – but this is another consequence of that: there are now going to be thousands of families who have wood heaters, who have wood stoves, who still even keep hot water in their homes through wood. These people have not been given any opportunity to transition. They are not being looked after. They have been abandoned in fact. And these are costly things to replace. They are not like the Premier and others, who have had massive pay increases this past week, who could probably easily afford a new hot water system – many people in my community cannot.

When we look at that, this government single-handedly just continues to forget about country Victorians. They have forgotten about people who do artisan work, who actually create high-value items. In the case of the Otways we have got fantastic boutique, bespoke guitars being made; we have got other people that, using simple techniques, provide artefacts and items of beauty for tourists and visitors. This can no longer be done in our region, and that is in fact a great shame and just shows how out of touch with country Victorians this government has become.

I mentioned earlier the great promises of the Torquay hospital and of road upgrades that have not happened. But there are a couple of others that have long been on the Polwarth community's list of upgrades and forgotten and broken promises. We have got two major roundabouts – one at Tomahawk Creek Road, or the Timboon-Colac Road, and the Princes Highway; and of course the Winchelsea-Deans Marsh Road, otherwise known as Marjorie Lawrence way. These projects have been funded now for quite some time – many years in fact – and this government has just been incapable of putting rubber on the road and getting these projects done. The community is tiring of it.

We read that the road toll this year, for example, is up some 30 per cent – and that comes on a steady increase that has been going on now since 2018 – while this government has raided the TAC in order to help prop up its budget bottom line, and it certainly spent an awful lot of money in the mid teens of this century putting in wire rope barriers. It has all amounted to an increasing road toll. Victorians, and country Victorians, look at that and say, 'Well, here are two projects – the Winchelsea roundabout and the Tomahawk Creek Road roundabout – that have been funded and could have been built and that could have helped make lives safer and driving safer in country Victoria,' yet we are still no closer to seeing those projects realised.

In the time I have left I want to touch on the cost of housing. This budget has been brutal to housing affordability, housing availability and housing supply. When I talk around the community, both home owners and renters understand that the only way you are going to help solve the housing crisis is to have more homes, and you have more homes by incentivising the private sector to work alongside government and provide more homes. This government just cannot do the simple maths. The government has about 87,000 homes in the public estate, but there are about 888,000 rental properties in the state. The state only caters for about 10 per cent, and yet it has decided to tax and punish and make renting less possible for the private sector. All the government is doing with its new land taxes and other charges on landlords is forcing people to sell property and exit the rental market. This

government does not understand that landlords need to be worked with, supported and helped, because it is only them that will truly help reduce the massive housing crisis that we have here in the state of Victoria at the moment, where we have seen just in the last 12 months an extra 4000 families added to the housing waiting list here in our state.

This budget is a disappointment. It is a let-down for country Victorians. The government has much more work to do in this space.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (15:48): It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the budget, a budget full of tough decisions – full of sound decisions but nonetheless tough decisions – and a budget that is full of a lot of positivity for Victoria. It is a budget that forecasts a growing economy and low unemployment; it is a budget that forecasts an operating surplus at the end of the forward estimates; it is a budget that manages the repayment of Victoria's COVID-related debt; and it is a budget that funds all of the commitments that this side of the house made to the people of Victoria at the last election.

I will start with commitments made to the people of Bentleigh at the last election, and there were a number of them. For example, we have continued the massive school building program in the Bentleigh electorate with funding to plan the \$12.6 million upgrade of McKinnon Primary School, new synthetic turf at Ormond Primary School and also with \$7.3 million to upgrade Cheltenham Secondary College – which was previously in your electorate, Acting Speaker Tak, but following the last redistribution Cheltenham Secondary and three other schools have come into the Bentleigh electorate. I am really enjoying working with those schools to ensure that they have what they need to lay the foundations for a quality education for their students. We have started with Cheltenham Secondary College, which already is an outstanding school. We are going to support them to do even more, and I am really proud of that.

Locally, we have also funded \$3 million for Glen Eira City Council to rebuild the Mackie reserve pavilion. The Mackie reserve pavilion is home to Mackie Cricket Club. It is a big cricket club. Their facilities are substandard, and they are going to have a state-of-the-art pavilion for their club, which we are also very proud of.

There are a number of other improvements to the electorate that we have funded in the budget as well, and that includes a pedestrian crossing on Centre Road near Balmoral Avenue. Often we get criticised for putting up too many traffic lights, but the reality is our local roads especially are not just about getting from A to B, they are also for pedestrians. We have also got to make sure that our roads are safe, and we make no apologies for that.

But looking at a more macro level for our state, I think the centrepiece of our series of election commitments last year but also of this budget is the revival of the State Electricity Commission, something that everyone on this side of the house is very proud of. I know it is something that the people of Victoria have welcomed, which is why we returned after the election in such great numbers in this house. It is an initial investment of \$1 billion to revive the SEC, but it is not only an investment that delivers on an election commitment; it will also deliver 4.5 gigawatts of power to the grid, it will ensure that Victoria reaches our nation-leading renewable energy target of 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035 and it will also create 59,000 new jobs. It is something that I know the other side of politics has opposed, and I certainly know that my local opponent in Bentleigh opposed it. But they are on a hiding to nothing in opposing something that is so visionary for Victoria and something that has been backed and endorsed by the people of Victoria, because at the end of the day, when those opposite privatised the system in the 1990s, multinationals made billions upon billions of dollars, but what did the people of Victoria have to show for it? Ageing infrastructure and higher prices. We are going to reverse that.

I also want to highlight in the budget our commitment on level crossing removals. Seventy level crossings are already gone under the government's existing commitments, but the election

commitment last year added another 25 to the 85 already committed in 2018. The current number is 110 to be removed by 2030, and that includes making the Frankston line level crossing free.

Paul Edbrooke: There we go!

Nick STAIKOS: The member for Frankston is very excited about that, and he should be, because being at the end of the line, his constituents are going to be the chief beneficiaries of the removal of all of these level crossings – level crossings in Highett, in Mordialloc, in Aspendale, in Seaford and in Mentone. The removal of those dangerous and congested level crossings will happen by 2030, and we are excited about that as well.

Those opposite lately have been talking about non-government schools a fair bit. But that brings me to the non-government schools capital funding program, which our government has had in place for the last eight or nine years. In our first term we committed to that fund \$120 million to upgrade and to build non-government schools. In our second term we contributed \$402 million to that fund, and in this third term we are contributing \$450 million – that is nearly \$1 billion over the three terms of this government in capital works to non-government schools. Now, between 2010 and 2014 another political party was in power in this state. How much did they contribute to capital works at non-government schools? It is a very round figure: zero. Doughnuts. Zero to non-government schools. They claim to be the party of non-government schools, but when they had the chance, they contributed nothing to non-government schools. This side of the house has contributed nearly \$1 billion in capital works to non-government schools, a number of them in my electorate, and I am really, really proud of that.

I said at the outset that this is a budget which features a number of difficult but sound decisions. During the pandemic our government borrowed to support the Victorian community – to resource our public hospitals but also to support business and to support jobs. That is COVID debt that amounts to around \$31.5 billion, and around \$21.2 billion of that was on business, economic and worker support alone. It is important that we now pay off that debt, and this budget includes a plan to pay off the COVID debt.

It is important to note the context of course in which state budgets are framed, and that is that the state government collects payroll tax and property taxes, and a lot of our GST money is allocated to other states. In fact in question time today the Treasurer highlighted that just this year \$2.8 billion of Victorian GST money is going to other states. All the while within these constraints our government is funding our hospitals, schools, TAFEs, emergency services, roads and public transport and building the infrastructure of the future for a growing capital city – one of the great cities of the world. And on top of that we do have to pay off the COVID debt, and we have got to do it in the fairest way possible within these constraints.

I do want to focus on our changes to payroll tax – firstly to say that for those smaller businesses this government is lifting the payroll tax free threshold to \$1 million. What that means is that 6000 businesses in our state which currently pay payroll tax will not be paying payroll tax. But we are also restructuring payroll taxes to share the burden of the COVID-19 debt by calling on those who did the best during the pandemic to support those who were not quite as fortunate. Despite the impacts and economic slowdown, throughout the pandemic we know that there were some large businesses that did well, with profit margins that were higher than usual across this period. Total business profits in Victoria over 2020 and 2022 were \$996 billion. That is 24 per cent higher than in the preceding three years. Big business can and should make a modest additional contribution over the next 10 years to repay a debt that was needed to protect lives and livelihoods, and that is why the first component of the COVID debt levy is on large businesses with payrolls above \$10 million. It is important to note that only the largest 5 per cent of Victorian employers will be affected. It will raise \$3.9 billion over four years, and it will be a temporary measure ending in 2033.

It is important to also remember, given that this is a budget that funds election commitments, that at the last election the opposition's election commitments on their own costings – and it was not easy to get their costings out of the mouth of the then Shadow Treasurer; he turned up to the press conference

without having tallied up their costings – were \$19 billion more than Labor's. So they were going to spend more than this government in this term. The member for Sandringham in his budget reply – and remember I was here for his budget reply; I think I was one of few people on this side of the house who actually listened to his budget reply – said that they would also cap debt. So they would spend more and cap debt. He came out with this:

We say to millions of Victorian families: under the Liberal–Nationals you will be literally thousands of dollars better off every single year.

With all we know, that is spoken like a man who knows he has got Buckley's of ever being in government. Do not look at what they say, look at what they did in government. When those opposite were in government for four years, this state had the highest unemployment rate on the mainland. Only Tasmania had a higher unemployment rate at that time than Victoria. So do not talk about being literally thousands of dollars better off. There were so many families in this state at the time who were out of work.

They were not thousands of dollars better off. They were out of work. They were not experiencing the dignity of work because those opposite, when they were in government, mismanaged the economy. There were no cranes in the sky. Nothing was happening in Victoria over those four years. I am really proud that under our government we have a historically low unemployment rate, around 3.9 per cent at the moment. It has been below 4 per cent for the past year, something that has not happened in nearly 50 years. In September 2020 – we remember in 2020 we delayed our budget, and it was very much a stimulus budget which included a jobs plan – we promised to create 400,000 more jobs. Not only are we ahead of schedule, but this government since September 2020 has created 460,000 jobs. We smashed our target by two years, Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer. Well done.

I might mention it is worlds above the meagre 39,000 jobs created while the opposition was in power for four years. We have been hard at work every day since we came to government to reduce the unemployment rate. That was at a record high of 6.7 per cent when those opposite were in government. This does not happen by accident. It is the result of a government that gets on with doing the things that matter, gets on with making the right investments.

It is all about, at the end of the day, jobs and opportunity for Victorians. That has been the government's central mission over the nearly nine years that we have been in government so far. It is because Labor governments genuinely care about people. Labor governments genuinely care about people having jobs and opportunities in an economy that is changing. That is why it is this government that has embarked on free TAFE. I think we have got 70 or 80 free TAFE courses on the list at the moment. That is people getting the skills they need for free to ensure that they can get the secure, high-paying jobs of tomorrow. These are things that matter. These are things that those opposite will never understand, because those opposite do not believe in society. They do not believe in community. They do not believe in the government. They do not believe in the collective coming together and helping each other out and making the right investments to ensure that we lift each other up. This is the difference between Labor governments and conservative governments, and thankfully the people of Victoria have seen right through that and re-elected at the last election a government that has made the right investments to ensure that our state progresses in the way it needs to to support the people of Victoria.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (16:03): I rise to give a bit of a talk about how the budget has affected or been taken by the people in the seat of Morwell, the people of the Latrobe Valley. It appears that the Andrews Labor government has demonstrated its utter contempt for the Latrobe Valley and regional Victoria with a rather brutal budget that has slashed millions in funding from key areas including health, roads, emergency services, agriculture and community infrastructure, all of which affect us down in the valley. The regional development budget has again been cut, halved from \$211.5 million to \$106.6 million in this year's budget. Since 2020 it has been slashed by over 80 per cent. Victoria's debt is projected to climb to \$171.4 billion by 2026–27 and interest repayments will more than double to \$22 million a day. Life is getting harder under Labor. In my electorate of Morwell the fallout from this budget is already starting to be felt on the ground.

A touch before I said that the state of the roads right across regional Victoria is abysmal, and the Andrews government is set to repeat history by repeatedly underspending on our regional roads to the detriment of our local communities. This catastrophic budget has cut more than \$260 million in maintenance funding from an already crumbling network of roads, including in the valley, where notoriously unsafe roads have cost lives. As of today, 22 June, there have been 134 deaths on Victorian roads this year, up a staggering 30 per cent on this time last year, yet billions of dollars continue to be splashed on inner-city-centric projects like the Suburban Rail Loop and level crossing removals for road users in metropolitan Melbourne while regional Victorians are left with shoddy roads that are not even fit for use.

As the member for Gippsland South often says, we need to have our cars roadworthy so we can drive them, but our roads are not car worthy. The roads, as I said, are crumbling, and it is a blight on the government that they do not do more for our country roads. At a time when our roads are falling apart and in need of major investment, we instead have road maintenance allocations that are at a lower level than they were in 2014–15 and down a whopping 45 per cent on what they were in 2020.

My electorate does make a lot of the steelwork for the Big Build in Melbourne, so we have massive trucks that are driving along our roadways and causing more and more grief to the substructure of the roads. We get to see this on a daily basis. There are potholes that are causing maintenance costs for cars when cars hit the potholes. Under the guise of repairs the Andrews government is sending out repair crews to temporarily patch the roads. We need the base of the roads to be changed. The whole lot needs to be looked at so that we have a safer structure for our country and regional families to drive up and down on those roads. This flagrant disregard for the safety of road users is shameful, and the chronic underspending on regional roads because of expensive billion-dollar-blowout projects must stop and must stop now. We need our roads fixed.

I will move on to the timber industry, which is at the heart of the Latrobe Valley and further into East Gippsland. Without warning and without reason, Labor pulled the rug out from under a sustainable industry that contributes millions of dollars to the local economy – some seven years ahead of its own schedule – and thousands of workers and their families are reeling. They have all of a sudden said, ‘We’re shutting the timber industry.’ It is almost unfathomable that a decision of this magnitude with such far-reaching and dire consequences for these families was dropped like a bomb on the timber workers and their families in the form of a media release. Their jobs, their lifestyles and their families’ lifestyles are going to finish at the end of this year. The suggestion that a single \$200 million support package that will be dripped out over four years is enough to compensate these workers, their families and their communities is ludicrous, and the funding is woefully inadequate.

As part of the VicForests contracts, these people that work in the forestry industry were told that to be able to get another contract they had to go out and buy new equipment – equipment that is used in the actual forest for the cutting down of the trees and new logging trucks to cart the logs around. They have gone and done that in good faith, and they are now left with no timber industry going forward and all this new infrastructure, which they needed to be able to continue on with these contracts. They have mortgaged their houses. These are young people from generational families in the logging industry that have mortgaged their houses to access this multimillion-dollar machinery that they needed, and \$200 million just does not cut the mustard. I spoke with one particular logger who has 50 trucks. You can add up the cost of each truck, and he has got 50 of these trucks which look like they are going to become redundant. We are hoping that he can diversify a little bit and get into some other areas, but at this stage, with the pressures of actually moving on into other work opportunities, he does not want to do that. All they want is their jobs. They do not want support packages; they just want their jobs.

Whichever way you spin it, this is a catastrophic outcome for the workers, their families and our timber towns – timber towns that have been built by the timber workers and sustained by the logging industry. Recently I stood with timber workers outside the Hazelwood power station when the Minister for Environment visited to commission one of the new batteries which are being put around the place.

Workers respectfully asked for a conversation with the minister, but instead she snubbed them and drove out the back door. They were at the front gate, just wanting to have a talk to say, ‘Why are you trying to do this to our families and to the timber industry?’ They got no acknowledgement there. It is one of those new batteries which, with all the figures that have come in, is going to service 75,000 houses when the battery is fully charged but only lasts for 1 hour – 1 hour of power – so we can see how big this issue is.

Victoria’s mental health crisis now means more than half of the people that come into hospitals with acute mental crises are languishing in an emergency department for more than 8 hours while waiting for a bed. Is this going to continue on now we are adding the timber industry workers into this category? Because, yes, they are going to need some mental health support, so we must make sure we can do that. Labor claims it wants to treat people with mental health issues before they reach a level of acute crisis, yet it appears pleas to increase funding to Lifeline Gippsland, which I have been asking for since I have become a member, have fallen on deaf ears. Calls to Lifeline’s 24-hour crisis line have skyrocketed by 45 per cent, yet demand has increased and the funding is not adequate. Lifeline Gippsland triages 11,000 calls per year at an estimated cost of \$430,000. Their yearly funding from the government at the moment is \$150,000, so it does not even touch the sides and they are forced to recruit funds through fundraising. Crisis phone lines like Lifeline Gippsland help provide critical support for the mental health of Victorians and keep them well enough to stay out of hospital, yet Labor has shamefully turned its back on Lifeline Gippsland and ignored their urgent need for an injection of funding under this budget, and it is everyday Victorians who will wear the cost of this.

Latrobe Youth Space, also down in the seat of Morwell in the Latrobe Valley, have 500 members – and when we say 500 members, it is 500 youths from the ages of 12 to 25. The funding has been pulled from underneath them out of the budget. It had been ongoing money that was coming in. They have been up and going for two years, but the budget funding is no longer going to be there for them at the end of Christmas, when this finishes. Youth Space has only been open for two years but has made huge strides in our community and established itself as a really safe place for young people aged 12 to 25. Many of these young people are transient and rely on Youth Space for a hot shower and food as they couch surf around at friends’ houses or are without a house and on the streets. The fact of the matter is that by shutting down Youth Space the Labor government is sending at-risk kids back out onto the streets, and we need to do more for them.

Our local CFA is another one. The Tyers CFA, which I have asked for funding for many a time in my short stint here inside Parliament, is no longer fit for purpose. Volunteers are forced to house their rapid-response four-wheel-drive vehicles off site some 20 kilometres away, so if there is an incident out around Tyers or up into the hills around Walhalla, they are forced to drive to the local airport in Traralgon, to the SES building where the response vehicle is housed, get into that and then go and respond. They are the first responders out around that area now, as the Tyers bridge is still shut and a new bridge is in the process of being put in. They are our first responders, and our first responders now have to go and travel 20 minutes into Traralgon and then 20 minutes back out again. They have a new fire truck – they do have one – but unfortunately that fire truck does not fit in their shed, so we wanted more funding for that.

We have talked with interest about the SEC. Labor has touted its plan for the reinstatement of the State Electricity Commission as a miraculous cure for all skyrocketing power prices and the environment. By giving power back to the SEC, this is going to fix it – by bringing back the SEC. But in the Latrobe Valley, where we have powered the state for more than a century, the people did not vote for this. They see it for what it is. We are the original home of the SEC. The people down there in the Latrobe Valley know that this version of the SEC is nothing like what the government tried to sell it as. Before Labor handed down its budget, the pie-in-the-sky idea to revive the SEC was bereft of detail. Now the budget has been released and we are still none the wiser. The budget contains no independent costings, and a vague mention of an initial investment of \$1 billion does nothing to allay the concerns that it will be another massive cost blowout plunging the state even further into the red. Under questioning

by my colleague the member for Gippsland South in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing, it was revealed that the SEC office and its 29 staff were actually going to be located in Melbourne, when it had been said it was going to be located in Morwell. The Minister for the State Electricity Commission refused to answer questions about whether the SEC would be based in Morwell or not.

On community infrastructure, I will just touch on a couple of our community clubs. One close to my heart, the Traralgon Football Netball Club, was devastated by floods two years ago. They are still out of their change rooms because no work has happened. We have asked for money in the budget for that. It did not appear. They support young men and women playing football. Same with the Churchill Football Netball Club – their rooms do not comply now, and they too have both male and female footballers and netballers that use these rooms.

The budget down there has been brutal. Latrobe Valley residents have had an absolute gutful of the lip-service and empty promises dished out by the Andrews government, and this budget does nothing for them except confirm what they already knew: Labor does not care about regional Victoria and the people of the Latrobe Valley.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (16:18): I am delighted to rise and speak on the take-note motion for the Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023. I am particularly proud to stand up as a regional member. I have got some fantastic colleagues in the region – my good friend and colleague from Wendouree – and what I would really like to make a point of at the moment is that this government has more regional MPs than any other party on this floor, in this chamber – twice as many as the Libs. This confected idea that this budget in some way ignores our regional cousins – all I can say to you, Deputy Speaker, is, would you say no to the member for Wendouree? I would not, and certainly they do not when they are doing the budget. We have strong, proud members who have fought at every point to make sure that this budget looks after regional Victorians. Do you know what, that is why we have got twice as many regional members, because people in the region know that this government, the Labor government, stands and defends regional people. This is just a line that is delivered by those on the other side of the house to give themselves some sense of relevance, because basically in regional Victoria they are irrelevant.

But let us then have a look at this wonderful budget and what it has done for my community of Eureka – a really gorgeous regional seat that picks up some of Ballarat, all of Golden Plains shire and all of the Moorabool shire pretty much. It is a gorgeous and diverse community. What I am most proud about in this budget is that it understands where we are and has made some really strong and concerted efforts to work on the budget towards budget repair but all the while maintaining what are our very basic and strong principles on this side of the house.

I think all of my colleagues believe very strongly that education is the great leveller. We know that, and that is why this government has always invested in education. This is how we make it a level playing field for all Victorians, and of course this budget goes a long way to continuing that support. Our Best Start, Best Life program, which is going to deliver free kinder and pre-prep, is just an extraordinary piece of policy and funded in this budget.

I was really delighted a couple of weeks ago to visit the West Maddingley early years centre that is being built in Bacchus Marsh in West Maddingley. I went with the Premier, and it was just lovely to see all of the people who work in the early years centres for the local council really engage with the Premier. They were delighted to speak to him, because they know that he respects their work and supports their work. We do it through things like the Best Start program, but also we see it in the education programs that we roll out. So it was really, really lovely to be there with him.

It was last year that I visited Woodmans Hill college, a fantastic school in Ballarat, a really wonderful school, and we committed before the election that we would invest \$8.59 million. What I love about this is the most wonderful principal there, Stephan Fields – and I give a nod to him – wanted to prepare

a space for that really difficult transition period for kids from primary school into senior school, so his vision was to create a year 7 centre. The idea is it is not just a hard transition for the kids, it is also a bit rough on us parents. You know, you are used to walking your kid into class and having that really direct connection. Suddenly they are at high school and it is this great big centre, and they jump out of a car and that is that. What is nice about this vision is to have a year 7 centre where parents can still engage that bit more. It was fantastic to see that it was fully funded in the budget.

There was this wonderful young man. The Premier was going to come up and visit a while ago but could not come – because of the death of the monarch, in fact – and there was this young student who it had been arranged would meet with the Premier. He was absolutely heartbroken that the Premier did not come, so I was really delighted that months later, when he did visit, the Premier took that extra minute to go and chat to him and do a photo with him. That is something that that young man will remember for many, many years, and I hope one day to see him in here as well.

But of course it is not just government schools – though this government invests very heavily in government schools – the budget also provided money for independent schools. There is a school in Bacchus Marsh, St Bernard's primary school, and in the budget we committed \$3 million for a very big expansion. I went to visit last week, and I am sure my colleagues will agree with me that one of the nicest things you can do is go and visit a local school. We were there to get excited about this \$3 million but also to promote the Premier's reading challenge. I had a really lovely day being shown around by Sister Mary and also being able to read to all of the kids. It was really special.

But in this budget as well we live our values through our really deep, deep commitment to equality and giving voice to women. This government has been extraordinary in both the promotion and support of women amongst our own ranks, but of course what that more importantly leads to is the differences in policy that that can create. For example, in this budget the free tampons campaign has been funded. That is an incredibly important program. I think every woman in this place would know a time when they have been caught short, and it is really pretty distressing. Someone else was doing a contribution this morning, and I was delighted that we even talk about periods, we talk about endometriosis and we talk about women's issues on this floor. That is a consequence of having such strong women in cabinet to develop those policies. Locally what has come out of that are the extraordinary women's health hubs that were committed to. We are going to be having a women's health clinic at the Ballarat Base Hospital, and I know the member for Wendouree and I were very proud to stand with the minister to talk about that and how important it is going to be for women in our electorate. Womanhood is a lifelong thing, and there are many different experiences that we go through.

A member interjected.

Michaela SETTLE: Absolutely, but for someone who is of a certain age there are issues – at the other end – that need to be addressed in different ways. Just to have a clinic that is dedicated to those issues for women is an extraordinary win not just for Ballarat but absolutely for the wider region.

I talked earlier about how important it is to have regional representation. What we know from the voices of so many regional MPs is the importance of local communities and local clubs, so one of the things that I was delighted to see was that investment in those clubs. Often the sporting club is the absolute heart of a community; certainly it is that in my neck of the woods. I know you are not allowed to have favourite things in the budget, but there is \$1.5 million for the Teesdale recreation reserve change rooms. Teesdale is a smaller community in my electorate. They do not have a seniors team, but they have a corking juniors team. What this means is that we are going to be able to provide facilities that are going to attract more people, and I look forward to being there when their seniors team is launched. This is not a word of a lie: I got the loveliest email this morning from someone saying, 'What you've done here is generational change,' and I was really, really warmed. \$1.5 million to a small sports club means the world, so I am very, very glad. I will be going there on 28 June. I am putting on a sausage sizzle for the whole town, so if anyone is around, come and celebrate with us. You are all invited.

Of course in Bacchus Marsh there is the bowling facility. This is an interesting one. There is \$2.9 million for a new bowling centre, but when you live in the community what you understand is there have been two groups that have been in the middle of town, and this is about bringing those two groups together and giving them a spanking new facility. It also means that the land that the council has in the middle of town that has previously been their bowls club can also be a much more activated space for the centre of Bacchus Marsh. It is a really, really fantastic project. Then there are the little ones that matter so much – \$250,000 for netball upgrades across the Moorabool shire. That is a great investment in women's sport, and I am delighted.

There are the bigger issues as well that I think we really need to look at. Of course climate change is real, and we can only address that through renewable energy to get to net zero. Bringing back the SEC is an enormous commitment – many people have spoken about that – but for me locally there is also the commitment to the Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre. My electorate is home to many wind farms – soon we will have one of the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere – and what I want to see is that those jobs remain in the region and that locals get to benefit from this. The investment in Federation Uni's Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre of \$6 million is really going to mean that local people can get in there and learn about and have specialised training in turbine maintenance and blade repair. It is really going to make a difference to local people if they can harness that.

We have got the lowest unemployment figures virtually on record. There was just something put out today; we are down to 3 per cent in regional Victoria. Those on the other side like to say that we do not care. We have driven down unemployment in regional Victoria. We are at an absolutely historic low, and that is because this government has continued to invest in regional Victoria. It is things like making sure that the money goes locally. We have the wind farms, we support those, but we also support local people to be able to work for them, and that is why we have got this extraordinarily low unemployment rate in regional Victoria.

I think one of the things that is why probably all of us joined the Labor Party is looking after working people and working people's rights, and this government just continues to do that on so many levels. I look at the work that is in this budget around apprentices, which is extraordinary. There is the support around the discount on their motor vehicle registration. That might not mean as much to the city folk on the other side, but those of us on this side from the regions know that their cars are their jobs; they need that rego to get to work. So it is those really practical things. And then of course we are making sure that we are supporting mental health for apprentices. There is a big, big investment in this budget in supporting the mental health of apprentices. We really need to look at the whole lifetime of working people and how we can support them.

I am running out of time. There are so many wonderful things that have happened in my electorate, but I really do just want to go back to this idea of regional Victoria. This government stands by regional Victoria in an extraordinary way. They like to say occasionally that we only represent the bigger areas, but when you look in the budget there are programs like Tiny Towns. Now, hold on to your hats, that is going to be one fantastic program when it rolls out. It is really about making sure that we invest in all of regional Victoria, and we will continue to do that.

I do just want it acknowledged that in this budget there is \$45 million worth of dedicated investment into regional development programs. I am really, really proud to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development and Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture. I have had the absolute honour of being able to travel across Victoria doing an agricultural review for the Minister for Agriculture in the other place. The difference that this government has made to those regional communities I think is absolutely exemplified in the regional rail cap. What a cracker of a policy for all of our communities, because on this side of the house everybody in Victoria is equal. We do not promise one fee for the city folk and another for people in the country. We have made it equal, comparable. We will pay no more to get around this wonderful, wonderful state.

This budget is full of so many good things for my community and so many good things for regional Victoria, but at the same time it is a sensible and guiding hand into the future and really stands by our Labor values.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:33): I rise to speak on the motion to take note of the 2023–24 Victorian budget. This is a budget that sees our net debt rise by 47 per cent to record highs. This is a budget that sees the deficit deepen. It is a budget that results in taxes rising, with tax revenue rising by 28 per cent. It is a budget that results in the public sector wage bill rising by \$3 billion, despite the fact that there are going to be 3000 or more jobs cut from the public service. Only under a Labor government can you see the public wage bill rise while you are cutting jobs. This is a budget that sees unemployment in fact rise over the forward estimates. It is a budget that sees economic growth in Victoria fall to 1.5 per cent next year, and it is a budget that no doubt in any form punishes Victorians across the state for what has been economic incompetence and financial mismanagement by the Andrews government.

Victoria is broke, and for all the talk about the debt repayment plan by this government, it is very, very clear from the numbers in the budget that the deficits are getting deeper and the debt is getting higher. The new taxes from this government, the \$8.9 billion worth of new taxes in this budget – a jobs tax, a schools tax and a land tax increase that is essentially a rent tax – do not actually come close to even covering the new spending in this budget.

So the spending is growing and the taxes are growing, but the taxes are not growing faster than the spending. That is why we are seeing Victoria's net debt projected to climb to over \$171 billion by 2026–27. That represents, by the time we get to \$171 billion, a whopping 25 per cent of the economy. That is compared to a much, much lower figure when the Andrews government took government earlier in the decade, and now we are seeing, as a ratio, 25 per cent of net debt to the size of the Victorian economy. As we know, repaying the interest alone to service that debt is going to rise to \$22 million a day by 2026–27. On this side of the house, many of us look at what \$22 million each and every day could fund in our own electorates. We have heard the gloating from those opposite about how easy it is to get spending commitments in their electorates – new spending commitments for schools, for local sporting clubs and for community organisations. Yet when you look on this side of the house, whether it is the Liberals or the Nationals or the Greens, that funding is not flowing into the seats. So for a government that claims to govern for all Victorians, it seems to only govern for the seats that it holds.

Victorians are being slugged with three new taxes that they are saying are necessary for the COVID pandemic: a jobs tax, a rent tax and a school tax – a tax on enterprise, a tax on aspiration and a tax on chalkies. It is very clear that this is a budget that is aimed at actually dividing Victorians: pitting property owners against renters; small businesses against medium and big businesses; and very sadly, government schools against non-government schools. These taxes are just a blatant attempt at covering up their own waste and mismanagement. COVID-related expenditure, as the Shadow Treasurer repeatedly has pointed out, only makes up a quarter of the debt that Labor has racked up over the past eight years. Yet all the focus is on paying down the COVID-related debt. Unfortunately, the rest of the debt, three-quarters of the debt, is actually the result of infrastructure blowouts – over \$30 billion worth of infrastructure blowouts – and the government's financial mismanagement over the course of the past two terms. As a result, Victorians are paying the price.

Those opposite like to cast back in time. If we cast back to the post Cain–Kirner recession, net debt as a percentage of gross state product peaked at only 16 per cent in 1993. Victoria's current level of net debt compares to the post Cain–Kirner recession peak of \$18.8 billion in 1995. That is only equivalent to around \$35 billion in today's currency, so today we are a further \$100 billion in debt than at the worst time in our state's history. In order to tackle that debt and really for those opposite to only focus on the COVID-related debt, as they say, we have seen three particular new taxes – a jobs tax, a rent tax and a schools tax – and the Parliamentary Budget Office has confirmed just in the past couple of weeks that Victoria is the highest taxed state in the country. The report by the PBO, the state's

independent budget watchdog, found that Victorians are paying over \$5000 per person in taxes. That is considerably higher than all the other states, and that is going to rise by at least another \$400 per person in the next couple of years.

I will turn to each of these new taxes briefly. The rent tax: ABS figures show that Victoria has the highest reliance on property-related taxes compared to all other jurisdictions. It is equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the total tax revenue, and Labor is hiking land tax up again in this budget, just months after property owners have felt the shock of Labor's previous land tax increases. I know that many on this side – I know the member for Sandringham and the member for Nepean in particular – speak to constituents regularly about the fact that their investment properties that they put on the rental market, which they have saved for and which they might only own one of in order to save for their retirement, have been hit over the last couple of years. They can no longer take the hit and they are looking to put those properties on the market. That is only going to have the consequence of taking rental stock out of an already undersupplied rental market. There is no mistaking that a hike in land tax will be felt first and foremost by renters, by tenants already doing it tough in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. Looking at how we have got a housing affordability crisis in the state, which has been fuelled by a lack of housing supply, we are looking at a situation where the government is changing the land tax requirements so that 860,000 investment property owners in Victoria will pay an additional \$4.7 billion in extra taxes over the next four years through cutting the tax-free threshold from \$300,000 to only \$50,000 for low-value properties and mid-value properties. These are the properties that actually are critical to our rental market, critical to providing lower rents in the rental market, and they are being hit with a new tax that will see that flow through directly to renters.

Those opposite like to say that this is a tax that only hits those rich property owners, those people that deserve to pay more tax. It is a blatant attempt at class warfare, as we have seen from this, the schools tax, the jobs tax. According to ATO data, 72 per cent of people who invest in real estate own only one investment property, and a majority of these investors, over 50 per cent, have an income of less than \$100,000 a year. So these are hardworking nurses, firies and tradies. They work hard and have been pursuing what has always been the Australian dream: to own property, to buy property and then to put that on the rental market, to serve the rental market – for tenants to take. Then they will be hit with a new tax which will flow through, in a cost-of-living crisis, to renters and to tenants.

Victoria's residential vacancy rates currently sit at a very, very low 1.2 per cent. We have a real supply problem in the market, and that in turn is causing an affordability crisis. This is a simple demand-and-supply equation. If you continue putting pressure on property owners at a time when mortgage rates are increasing, when everything is just getting a little bit more expensive – whether at the supermarket, petrol prices or school fees – then the only option will be to turn to putting those properties on the market and taking them out of the rental market. On this side of the house we want to see lower rents. We stand for lower rents, but that will only result if we see more supply coming into the rental market. Looking at some of the representatives in this area, Keith Ryan from the Housing Industry Association has said:

We need to keep in mind that a lot of the providers of rental stock for housing are mums and dads, people who might own a house or two who are doing it hard with interest rate increases, further regulation, extra costs, and for them a rental freeze would be disastrous ... I appreciate the superficial attraction, but ultimately it would lead to a lack of supply of homes for rental, and that cannot be great for tenants.

This is the track we are now heading down. As a result of hiking land tax and putting a tax on renters, the government is now looking at doing a deal with the Greens to put rental caps in place, which will further fuel our housing supply shortage.

Turning to the school tax, this is one of the most blatant attempts in recent memory of targeting hardworking parents to shoulder the burden of budget repair. This is an attack on school choice. It is an attack on the right of parents to choose where they send their kids to school, a school that reflects their faith and their values. This government has arbitrarily put in place a fee threshold, a fee threshold that none of us are actually any clearer on and none of the schools are any clearer on. The Minister for

Education does not seem to be any clearer on it either. This could cost families around \$1000 more per child to send their kids to a school of their choice, schools that take an enormous burden off the state system. We have heard how this government are putting funding into state government schools only in electorates that they represent and that suit them.

Sam Groth: Ninety-three per cent.

Jess WILSON: Ninety-three per cent of funding –

Juliana Addison interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wendouree, you are not in your seat.

Jess WILSON: is flowing into Labor electorates. And if I can –

Juliana Addison interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wendouree is warned.

Jess WILSON: The school tax will have a disproportionate impact on my electorate of Kew, and I can speak to one of the schools that wrote to parents recently and said:

The ... preliminary position is that we will be forced to pass through the majority, if not all, of these levies and taxes to ... parents and families.

Genazzano is a terrific Catholic girls school in the electorate of Kew –

A member: Isn't it in Warrandyte?

Jess WILSON: No, it is very clearly in the electorate of Kew, and it is a wonderful Catholic school. It is going to cost them, this new schools tax, in excess of \$1.3 million in additional cost to the college. Genazzano has pointed to the pressure of trying to absorb that additional cost, a cost that will be put in place without any warning next year. They said:

The ... cost ... would require a reduction in our educational programs and subject offerings ... and it will

hinder our ability to offer future scholarships and bursaries.

We have heard from those opposite today around the funding that is flowing to non-government schools – well, for Genazzano:

It appears that our annual payroll taxes and levies will exceed the annual funding support we receive from the State Government.

So the funding that they receive from the state government, the payroll tax they have to pay back, will have to be paid.

With my final time remaining I will just turn to the jobs tax in this budget. I received an email from a local constituent that runs a business that employs more than 400 young people, mostly from my electorate and those surrounding, and they talked to the fact that they just cannot take any more price increases or insurance premium rises, particularly highlighting the WorkCover premiums. How are they going to survive in this environment? She points to the fact that she and her husband have worked very, very hard for a long time and saved money, and unlike the Premier and the Labor government they have always tightened their belts when required. That has not occurred, and in this budget we are seeing the consequences of not managing the budget, of net debt rapidly increasing and of new taxes being put in place – a tax on jobs, a tax on rents and a tax on schools that will not serve the people of Victoria.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (16:48): I am so glad that the member for Kew has raised the topic of schools. Just yesterday the principal of Doreen Primary School Glenn Simondson was here to meet with the minister and share some of the knowledge he has gained in his decades as a principal and teacher in our local state schools. While he was here, he shared with us the story of Doreen Primary

School and how he as principal fought to keep the school open during the era of the Kennett cuts. I am so glad that that school managed to stay open during that era.

Other schools in my electorate were not so lucky. I think of Kalkallo Primary School, which was cut by Kennett. But never fear, because the member for Kalkallo is gladly welcoming and pushing along all of our brilliant new schools in that area. We are looking forward to the high school, which is on track. We have got a specialist school coming. We have had Gilgai Plains Primary School, and other primary schools are coming, so we are more than making up for the cuts of the Kennett era. When the member for Kew says that Labor spend too much money on schools, that we show too much support for the schools in our area, I say long may it continue.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think the member for Yan Yean is misquoting the member for Kew.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. It is a matter of debate. The member for Yan Yean to continue unimpeded, please.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. The principal of Doreen Primary School was here to talk about the upgrade happening at the school which was funded in last year's budget, and that was advocated for by the former member for Yan Yean, who was a great advocate for our area. I recall after that funding was received she was fond of saying, truthfully, that in Mernda and Doreen every school was either built or upgraded by a Labor government – every school in Mernda and Doreen. I am so pleased to be able to say that this budget continues that history.

In this budget we have funding in Doreen for Hazel Glen College, for an upgrade of their sports facilities. What is great about state schools is that in many cases their facilities are available for community use as well. So when we invest in our local state schools, we are also investing for our community, and that is the case with this \$800,000 sports upgrade at Hazel Glen College. This will provide new sports courts not just for the students but for the community, and we know that the City of Whittlesea has a deficit of netball courts, which our government is working hard to address.

Another way that we are addressing that deficit of courts in the Mernda–Doreen area is through funding the next stage of the Mernda regional aquatic and sports centre. For those in the room, that might sound like just another project, but I can tell you that this project has been on the front page of our local paper for years and years as the council worked through their issues to get this project off the ground. We were so pleased when they finished their business case last July, and Labor was quick to commit funding of \$20 million in the campaign to get that project moving. When complete, this project will include six indoor courts, including competition-level courts, eight outdoor courts and a full aquatic centre. I checked with council last week to make sure of something that is important to a lot of families – that there is a play or splash area included inside, as they have in Craigieburn – and I was so pleased that we will have that fabulous facility for our families.

Continuing then on the theme of schools, my first election commitment, which I am so pleased to see delivered in this budget, was for an upgrade for Whittlesea Secondary College. We saw a few weeks ago the woodwork, or the manual arts – I am not sure of the correct term these days – teacher receiving an award for 40 years service. This college has been part of the community for such a long time, and the history of the college is part of the history of many of the families in that community. In fact I believe I met the mother of that teacher when I was out and about during the campaign.

The upgrade of Whittlesea Secondary College will see their facilities improved, and let me tell you, they deserve it. They are a fantastic group of teachers, students and staff. The principal Kathy Mourkakos speaks passionately and advocates strongly for her school, and so she should. Referring to what I was saying earlier about Mernda and Doreen, something she said to me was, 'I see the schools in Mernda and Doreen, and I'd like our college to be at that same level of world-class facilities.' I am really proud that with this budget we are making that possible. I pay tribute to the wonderful student leadership team there,

who I have had the privilege of meeting on a few occasions, particularly a young student, Sophie, who has a keen interest in politics – and perhaps one day we will see her in this chamber.

Another school which is being supported through this budget is Wandong Primary School, and this school is a cracker. It definitely performs well above its weight in terms of the focus on literacy for its students, the fantastic teachers and the principal Kelly Morrow. This upgrade will see improved facilities for not just the students but the teachers as well, with new administrative and meeting rooms for the teachers, because we know that teachers do a fabulous job, and teachers deserve to have the best facilities. I am really glad that we will be able to provide additional and better facilities for the teachers at that wonderful school.

But when you are not at school you need to have some fun. There needs to be not just the three Rs – reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic – but opportunities for families and children to enjoy some recreation. So I am really pleased that this budget is delivering on our commitment of \$500,000 towards a regional play space in Doreen. I think we have seen that the member for Mill Park has delivered a similar facility for her community. For us a little bit further north this was something that we needed. Families have been travelling to Mill Park or across to Wallan, which was another project which was supported under the Growing Suburbs Fund by this government, so I am so pleased that by working together with the federal government, a very cooperative federal government, and the local council we are going to be able to deliver a play space for the community which will include a splash park and which will be for all abilities. Every child deserves the opportunity to play, and in this budget we are making sure that children in Doreen have that opportunity. I recall on the hustings meeting a mother who had told me about the Mill Park all-abilities playground and how she travelled with her young son, who was the same age as my daughter, down to use that playground regularly. I am so pleased to know that for her and her son there will be a local option for recreation in the near future.

A problem that families have faced repeatedly in our area – it might seem like a wee problem – is that we do not have a toilet at the Laurimar shops.

Members interjecting.

Lauren KATHAGE: Thank you. I am here all night. I would meet many families or people who were visiting the area when I was on mobile stalls at the shops. They would ask me where the toilet was, and I would have to tell them that unfortunately the shops had not provided a toilet that was open for families to use. Little kids were doing bush wees down at the park because there were no other options. It may seem like a small thing, but it is actually going to make a huge difference to people. I did speak to a father, who has been speaking with me about this, about his child who has bladder issues and who he has not felt confident and comfortable to take to the shops, because there was nowhere to go to the toilet. I am so glad that we are delivering what matters. We are delivering things that others may not deign to think about or think are important, but we know what is important for people in our electorates, and so I am so glad to deliver funding for a bathroom in Laurimar.

From the very small to the very big: I would like to speak about the delivery of the ramps onto the Hume from our community in Wallan. This project is absolutely huge for our community. I drive on Watson Street every day, and every day families on the way to school and people on the way to work are lining up to get onto the Hume. They have to drive right through the centre of Wallan to do that, so the delivery of these ramps means that the traffic will be taken straight out of Wallan and families will not have to queue up to get to where they need to be. It has always been dispiriting driving past the line of traffic waiting to get to where it needs to be. This project is already under the community engagement process, and community members are giving their input into how they want the ramps and associated amenities to be. This is going to change things completely for our community. I think if you did a tally of all of the front pages of the –

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

Bills

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Authorising Pharmacists) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

That this bill be now read second time.

And Emma Kealy's amendment:

That all the words after 'that' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to take into account feedback on the value of a two-year trial period'.

The SPEAKER: The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Lowan has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. She has proposed to omit all of the words after 'That' with the view of inserting in their place the words which appear on the notice paper. The question is:

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

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

Assembly divided on question:

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

Noes (27): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

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.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Amendment Bill 2023*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

And Emma Kealy's amendment:

That all the words after 'that' be omitted and replaced with the words 'this bill be withdrawn and redrafted to enable the delivery of a health-led response to mental health related emergencies'.

The SPEAKER (17:07): The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Lowan has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. She has proposed to omit all the words after 'That' with the view of inserting in their place the words which appear on the notice paper. The question is:

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

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

Assembly divided on question:

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

Noes (24): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

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.

Emma Kealy: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Broadmeadows, at the conclusion of that vote, made a remark to me that 'That was a waste of our time, member for Lowan; you shouldn't be raising those matters in this place.'

Members interjecting.

Emma Kealy: I have got every right to raise a point of order. You cannot raise a point of order on a point of order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Emma Kealy: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, the member for Broadmeadows made a remark –

Mary-Anne Thomas: What is your point of order?

Emma Kealy: Speaker, could you please direct the member for Macedon to allow me to make my point –

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lowan, do you wish to raise a point of order?

Emma Kealy: Yes, I do.

The SPEAKER: Please raise the point of order. Leader of the House – enough.

Emma Kealy: At the conclusion of the vote on my reasoned amendment that I put before the house today, I was told by the member for Broadmeadows that that was a waste of her time and that I should not have wasted her time by bringing that reasoned amendment to the house. This is a breach of the Members of Parliament (Standards) Act 1978 which was attempting to influence my vote and impacting on my ability to undertake my duties as a member of Parliament by infringing on my right to be able to raise a reasoned amendment. I ask you to review this matter and provide counsel to the member for Broadmeadows in regard to the members of Parliament act and the right of every single person within this chamber to raise a reasoned amendment or other process that they may wish to – including the member for Broadmeadows, if she should wish to do so in the future.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but if the member for Lowan wishes to discuss that matter, she is welcome to talk to me in private.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Harkaway Primary School pedestrian crossing

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:13): (241) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. I ask the Minister for Education to come out to Harkaway Primary School to visit the students and parents in relation to the student crossing that was out the front of that school, which has been removed by the government and council. I have a letter that I want to read in from the students at the school, and it states:

Dear Brad Battin –

Members interjecting.

Brad BATTIN: Sorry, to have people just continuously yelling across when I am talking about some of the kids from the school I think is actually appalling from the government.

The SPEAKER: Member for Berwick, continue with your point of order. Do you have a point of order?

Brad BATTIN: No, I am still in my adjournment. If the government do not want to listen to what the issues are out in my electorate, from the kids in my electorate, then I suggest maybe that they do not sit in here and move outside. This is a letter from the children in my electorate, which says:

Us kids and staff at H.P.S. find it really disturbing and unsafe that our school crossing is gone. We are a school aren't we? So why don't we deserve a crossing just because we're a smaller school? One life is just as important as 100 lives. As you once said "If you see a house with everything stolen and you see an elderly ladies house with one of her gnomes smashed. Treat it the same." But instead of that it's like "If you see a school with lots of kids but no crossing and you see a smaller school with no crossing. Treat it the same." ALL schools deserve a crossing to make sure ALL lives are protected.

If you're going to care about children and install school crossings, you might as well give EVERY school a crossing, because what's the point of saving only a handful of children when you can save even more. And every year more than 9,000 kids are driven to the emergency room for injuries that occur when they aren't supervised near motor vehicles. Just imagine going to school knowing that there's no one there to make sure you're safe.

You have the opportunity to save thousands of children's lives right in front of you, so why not choose to? It shouldn't matter if we're a smaller school we NEED a crossing because our lives matter ...

Just like that girl who changed the way they take care of the big cats in the zoo with a letter and actual passion, and just like Malala fought for women's rights I'm fighting for our school crossing, I'm writing a letter hoping to change how people treat smaller schools. And now that I've done my part it is time for you to do your part.

Kind regards,

Natasha

That is a letter from the Harkaway Primary School, where a young girl understands that the removal of the crossing, which happened just last month, has now put these students at risk trying to cross a reasonably busy road. Yes, they are small school, but they deserve to be respected and to be safe going to and from school when people are dropping them off, whether it is down at the milk bar in Harkaway, across the road at the tennis court or at Harkaway Hall, from where they have to walk to go to their local school.

Northcote early parenting centre

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:16): (242) My adjournment is to the Minister for Health, and the action that I seek is that the minister work with me to deliver Northcote's early parenting centre as soon as possible. Ever since I was first elected to represent Northcote I have pushed for more services for infants, parents and families in the inner north because, as we know, parenting is tough. Through all the joy and new beginnings that newborns bring, this period for parents can also be isolating and overwhelming. As a mother to two little ones myself, one in kinder and one in prep, I have had countless conversations with parents in my community.

Parents of young children have a sort of unspoken solidarity about the fact that we are all in this sleepless trench navigating the needs and whims of our unpredictable little humans, but in amongst that sometimes comedic chaos there are moments in which we show our vulnerability, and I think it is so important that we do. I have heard stories of birth trauma, of postnatal depression, of relationship breakdown, of isolation and of family violence. I have spoken with mothers struggling with breastfeeding who cannot escape the feeling of guilt, unwarranted as that is, or others who day after day will pump milk for their babies who will not latch, and the physical and emotional exhaustion of that. There are mums struggling with postpartum recovery, perineal tears, episiotomies and C-section scars, not to mention incontinence, mastitis and the enduring crushing fatigue.

It is no wonder that women are at greater risk of developing a mental illness during the perinatal period than at any other time or that one in 10 new fathers will experience depression and anxiety. We also know that the wellbeing of parents is inextricable from the wellbeing of infants and children. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System recognised this and the importance of integrated family care in a baby's mental and physical development.

Parents should not have to go it alone, yet sometimes the first help-seeking behaviour that they have is when they seek help for their baby rather than themselves. This is where our early parenting centres come in. These are free primary health facilities where families can come and stay in their own private rooms and be cared for by highly skilled practitioners. Whether it is sleep and settling, feeding,

bonding, peer support or mental health, the multidisciplinary team is there to support each family to build up their skills and their confidence.

Recently I visited both Tweddle, with the member for Footscray, and the O'Connell Family Centre in Canterbury, with member for Southern Metro John Berger, to see these services in action. The parents I met there could not speak more highly about the care they and their babies were receiving at these centres. I am excited to bring this critical service home to Northcote with our election commitment that was funded in the last budget, and I look forward to working with the Minister for Health to make it happen.

Myrtleford-Yackandandah Road, Barwidgee

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:19): (243) My adjournment is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that I seek is that Regional Roads Victoria make the Myrtleford-Yackandandah Road a priority and get on and fix the drainage culvert at Barwidgee. There is a set of temporary traffic lights there, as the road is down to one lane and needs to be fixed immediately. These traffic signals have been in place for over six months – I think it might be closer to nine months, but I definitely know it is over six months now – and locals and regular users of the Yack–Myrtleford road are absolutely frustrated. Many drivers are now beginning to ignore the lights and play Russian roulette with other motorists, so it really is important to get on. If we are not careful, there will be an accident there very shortly. I just think the government needs to hurry up and fix this culvert and get the road open on both lanes again. I urge the minister to put a rocket under Regional Roads Victoria and get this road fixed so these traffic signals can be removed.

Barwon Therapeutic Community

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (17:19): (244) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action that I seek is that the minister visits Windana's Barwon Therapeutic Community in Corio, which is a residential rehabilitation facility. Residential rehabilitation is a treatment option for people who have already started their journey to recover from alcohol and drug issues. The site in Corio, opened in early 2022, is a 30-bed adult live-in facility providing 24-hour care and support for people who have been through withdrawal or stabilisation and need to continue their treatment. It provides a structured therapeutic and homelike environment where people experiencing addiction can develop coping skills and address underlying issues to overcome their alcohol and other drug use. The facility also includes administration and consulting facilities and lounge and dining areas along with indoor and outdoor activity areas. It has a mix of single and double bedrooms with shared bathrooms.

I recently visited Windana's Corio facility for a tour and to meet with some of the staff there. I heard some incredible stories about all the work the staff are doing to support people on their journeys towards recovery. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Windana for their important work. In particular I would like to thank their chair Jenny Gillam, CEO Andrea McLeod and communications manager Adam Miller for all of their support and facilitating my visit. We know that alcohol and other drug problems are complex, affecting not just individuals but their entire families, their friends and their communities. Each year Victoria's alcohol and drug treatment and support system helps around 40,000 Victorians who are struggling with dependence on alcohol or other drugs. Windana are delivering a great service to those in need in my electorate and across the Geelong community. That is why I look forward to hosting the minister for a visit to Windana.

Restricted breed dogs

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (17:21): (245) I tonight raise an issue for the Minister for Agriculture concerning the issue of dangerous dogs. Recently a woman in her 60s was attacked in daytime in Bulleen. She was dragged 15 metres along the road by a bull Arab cross that weighed more than 50 kilograms. The dog had escaped from its home. Her ear was ripped off and she sustained other quite serious injuries. While the owner in this instance was exceptionally remorseful and understood the dog was going to be put down, as a dog owner myself I have some questions to raise.

What necessity is there for people to own a breed that when escaping from its yard has one inclination – that is, to attack, to hurt or to kill? What reason can a person give to own a breed of animal that has no other redeeming feature but to intimidate other people, to maul smaller dog breeds or cats and when faced with being set free has but one instinct, and that is to cause physical harm? I for the life of me cannot fathom why anyone thinks owning a breed of animal that is larger than a human – or more dangerous, certainly – with crocodile-like jaws is somehow acceptable and is not going to possibly injure or frighten and maybe one day injure or kill someone. There are breeds of dogs that in my opinion should frankly not be owned or be allowed to be owned, and there are some breeds that should be bred out. This is not an issue of politics. It is an issue of survival and of personal injury, both for humans and for other animals. Sadly, though, some people will never learn. They will claim it is the owner, it is not the breed, that causes dogs to behave like that, which is complete rubbish. If my 15-kilogram cavoodle went nuts, he would be a lot easier to move on or to control than a 60-kilogram mastiff whose jaws are four times the size of most dogs and whose jaws are as large as most dogs' heads and who has an inbuilt desire to kill.

So tonight I ask the minister to act to vastly increase penalties for people whose dogs get out and cause physical injury, whether it is to double or triple them. While the minister is at it, can the minister please set a task of breeding out the biggest and most dangerous dogs in our society and criminalising their ownership. I ask the minister to act on this, please. It is not about politics. It is the right thing to do for the sake of all sensible Victorians, and it might just save someone's life.

Mount Waverley Secondary College

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (17:23): (246) My adjournment item this evening is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me at Mount Waverley Secondary College to have a look at the fantastic new STEAM centre that will be completed in the next couple of months. Karen Wade, the wonderful principal of Mount Waverley Secondary College, and Ian MacLeod, the principal of the middle school, lead an outstanding group of teachers, support staff, student leaders and of course students and are a credit to their school and our community. The school's \$7.9 million STEAM centre is well underway and soon to be completed and the amazing building will provide lots of opportunities for their students to participate in hands-on and creative learning.

On Monday I paid the centre a visit with my work experience student from the school, Zinia Rohila. We had the very great opportunity to take a tour through the building and have a look at its construction and the exciting development. The new building will include laboratories, technology workshops, multipurpose classrooms, art rooms and has a drainage system around it that is effectively a moat. So we now have a moat in Mount Waverley. Although it will be covered up, I know it is there. The new facility will be a place that fosters culture and innovation and leadership through the creation and sharing of ideas. This STEAM building demonstrates the college's dedication to enhancing current infrastructure to develop a crucial technological environment that will provide students with an advanced educational approach and will be a centrepiece for Mount Waverley – as you come down Stephenson's Road it is there for all to see. I would also like to especially thank Zinia for writing this adjournment item that I have just read out. She has been a fantastic asset for the team this week, and I hope to see many more students from Mount Waverley in the office locally.

Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:25): (247) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Water, and the action I seek is for the minister to outline how and when decisions will be made about the reallocation of water in the Latrobe River system. The minister will be aware that the government last year released the *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy*, which includes in its recommendations or its plans a decision to reallocate 25 gigalitres of water in the Latrobe that was set aside many years ago for a prospective future power station. It is known as the Loy Yang 3/4 bench bulk entitlement. The government has made the decision to retain 9 gigalitres of that for potential future energy use, and I do not disagree with that decision, but the remaining

16 gegalitres is to be divided between environmental flows, traditional owners and irrigated agriculture.

The minister will be aware that I have been campaigning for some time for the expansion of irrigation along the Latrobe system and in Central Gippsland broadly. In a drying climate this is an excellent area for future development. We have this water available, and we already have great opportunities and great irrigation districts in the Central Gippsland area, particularly the Macalister irrigation district, and the Latrobe could add significantly to the jobs and the economic value added in that region. Of course I would like to see much of the 16 gegalitres allocated to irrigated agriculture, and there are a number of local landholders who are keen to develop further and value-add on their properties. The *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy* says that this decision will be made by 2024. It actually says:

By 2024 ... this bulk entitlement will be permanently reallocated ...

What my constituents are wanting to know is how that will be done and when it will be done. There is nothing currently on the Engage Victoria website and there is currently nothing in the sustainable water strategy itself as to what is happening and how that will happen, so it is important that the minister actually provides an outline as to how this will be done so that all stakeholders can engage to make sure that we get the best allocation of that water.

Wallington Primary School

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (17:28): (248) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to join me and meet with the Wallington Primary School to discuss the upgrades to the main school building announced in the recent 2023–24 state budget. Wallington Primary School is a great local school led by an incredible and dedicated staff. Wallington Primary School has served the Wallington community since 1868 and has a really small, country feel about it, and it is a much-loved part of the Bellarine community. In recognising this and supporting the local school and community the recent state budget is investing \$2.1 million to upgrade the main building and the classrooms, adding to the \$580,000 we have already invested in Wallington Primary School – an excellent school for local families. The community are all very excited to see this project get underway to improve the school's facilities and longevity. I know the school would welcome the minister visiting to discuss the upcoming upgrades.

Schools funding

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:29): (249) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Education, and the action I am seeking is that this government deliver fair funding for school capital works for all students across Victoria, including those in my seat of Kew. This government claims to govern for all Victorians, but nothing could be further from the truth. Labor's true colours are on full display when it comes to school funding in their budget. Labor has short-changed students in Liberal, Nationals and Greens electorates, and one can only imagine it is because their parents had the temerity to vote against Labor. Labor allocated \$241 million for new capital works and schools in their own seats, but in Liberal and National seats schools only received a paltry \$14 million. Labor holds 63 per cent of the seats in this chamber, but it allocated 93 per cent of new school capital funds to schools in those seats. The Liberal–National coalition hold 32 per cent of seats and have received a measly 6 per cent in funding for our schools.

This is deeply unfair and deeply divisive, just like their school tax on parents who choose to send their children to independent schools. In particular I draw the minister's attention to the five schools I have previously mentioned in my adjournment matter for her. Unfortunately the minister's previous response was not satisfactory for these schools – schools that desperately need capital works in my electorate. Ad hoc maintenance funding to ensure school facilities are simply workable and safe for students and staff is not sufficient. That is the basic responsibility of government. Minimal

maintenance funding does not meet the needs of these schools nor deliver what students and families expect for their local state schools.

Once again I call on the minister to fund capital works at Kew East Primary School with \$6.5 million to replace the outdated buildings and build eight new permanent classrooms, a staff room and an office area; \$12.2 million for Canterbury Girls Secondary College to deliver a new master plan and build fit-for-purpose science and art facilities; and \$6.1 million for Balwyn Primary School for an upgrade to reflect the increasingly significant numbers at that school and deliver new classrooms and much-needed toilet facilities, staff facilities and sick bay facilities. And once again I call on the government to ensure that surplus funds from the building of the recent STEM centre at Kew High School are reinvested in upgrading the teaching and learning spaces and not repurposed for maintenance works. And finally, I call on the government to commit to funding phase 2 and phase 3 works at Chatham Primary School.

It should not matter which postcode you live in or what school you go to, the government should make sure that irrespective of what electorate you live in your school has access to fair capital funding to make sure your school's teaching and learning facilities are up to scratch. It is a deeply saddening indictment of this government that it continues to punish parents simply for living in a postcode that does not suit their electoral fortunes – for voting the wrong way according to Labor. I call on the government to immediately review the capital funding provided to schools in the budget and reallocate it fairly across all schools in all seats, including in the electorate of Kew.

Linda Dessau

Nina TAYLOR (Albert Park) (17:32): (250) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I seek is for the Premier to formally congratulate the Honourable Linda Dessau AC and to offer our thanks to Her Excellency for her work and contribution, given that today is the last parliamentary sitting day of her term. Governor Dessau was sworn in as Victoria's 29th Governor on 1 July 2015, the first woman and the first Jewish Governor in our state's history. Her Excellency has worked tirelessly in the community serving the people of Victoria and certainly deserves our deep gratitude.

Responses

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (17:32): I am indebted to the member for Albert Park for raising this very important matter. It does give us an opportunity at the end of this sitting week, the last one before the winter break and the last sitting day before Her Excellency the Governor the Honourable Linda Dessau finishes her quite outstanding eight-year term as the 29th Governor of our state. There was a function held last Friday night, and we had an opportunity to thank Her Excellency and acknowledge her service at that point, but I thought it was appropriate, as did the member for Albert Park it seems, to use this opportunity just to put a few things on the record.

It is not easy to be the first. It is very, very challenging often. There is a burden of expectation, an expectation that you will continue to open doors for others, but there is always that sense of doubt perhaps that the door will close. Her Excellency the Governor over her eight years has opened up Government House and made it a more inviting place, has engaged with the community in good times and bad, and has worked incredibly hard to make sure that she was accessible and fundamentally accountable to the people of our great state.

Coming to the governorship of course she had an esteemed career, firstly as a magistrate for 10 years and then as a Federal Court judge and a Family Court judge for a further 18 years. We all know how harrowing that legal jurisdiction can be – very, very challenging work – but she distinguished herself there. She served as an AFL commissioner and served as a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria.

The process to select a Governor is not done often and it is not done lightly, but it was incredibly important that we made the right choice. It is a great gift of being in government that you have an opportunity to nominate to the palace someone to serve in that most unique role. Looking back on that

letter that I signed to Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in early 2015, it is very clear to me, and I think to all Victorians, that on behalf of the government I could not have proposed anyone better to serve as the 29th Governor of our state.

The ease with which she engages with people right across our state, the sheer workload – she is a very, very hardworking Victorian – the amount of different events and the amount of firsts that she has been associated with do her great credit, whether it be hosting the first ever youth iftar dinner during Ramadan at Government House; overnight school camp-outs to mark VicHealth's 30th anniversary; organising Government House's first ever reception in acknowledgement of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia; or the Peace and Prosperity Kitchen Garden. Many honourable members will have had an opportunity to see that – a very considerable, generous donation by the Governor and former Judge Howard to establish that quite magnificent space and to run programs for refugee and migrant women to grow, to tend, to cook and to share experiences – and I do not think any of us can overstate just how important it is. To be invited as a relatively new member of the state of Victoria to the head of state's house to spend time with her is an incredibly powerful thing. Many, many hundreds of women have benefited from that and so too have all of us.

It was noted on Friday evening that Her Excellency the Governor finished secondary school at age 16, having skipped ahead, such were her abilities. She then graduated law with honours at the University of Melbourne at 20, and it remains to this day – not reflecting on Her Excellency's age – quite a significant achievement, as the youngest ever graduate of the law school at the University of Melbourne. She has been associated with firsts throughout her life, and as the first woman to occupy the office of Governor in this state she has done every Victorian credit. We owe her a great debt of gratitude, and it is appropriate that we acknowledge it today.

However, you get two for the price of one when it comes to Her Excellency Linda Dessau, because in former Judge Tony Howard we had another first: the first man to fulfil that role of a Governor's spouse. Tony's personal touch, Tony's ability to engage with ease with everyone that he deals with and his passion for the history of Government House and for the history of our state – and on a very personal note, the many kindnesses that he extended to my family; my kids know him well – will never be forgotten by us.

To both Linda Dessau and Tony Howard, you have our thanks and praise for the work that you have done. If I can simply say this to Her Excellency the Governor of Victoria, Linda Dessau, the 29th Governor of Victoria, thank you. Thank you so much for the person you are and the Governor that you have been.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Health to respond to the member for Northcote and to refer matters raised by other members.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:38): The member for Berwick raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action he seeks is that the minister consider the situation of Harkaway Primary School, who want a school crossing, and in particular I will acknowledge Natasha's letter to that effect.

The member for Northcote has asked me to do something I very much look forward to, and that is to work with her on the delivery of an early parenting centre in Northcote. That is something that will give me great pleasure, and I want to thank the member for Northcote for her advocacy on behalf of her community and the way in which tonight she so beautifully outlined all that an early parenting centre can do and the many ways it will support families – mothers, fathers and babies – at what is always a very joyful time but one that can be exceedingly challenging. I think, reflecting on the member's contribution, that some of the challenges that she raised are some that she perhaps experienced herself. Many of us, those of us who have had children, can reflect on how challenging sometimes those early days can be.

The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action that he seeks is that the Yackandandah–Myrtleford road be given priority for an upgrade.

The member for Lara raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, and the action that she seeks is that the Minister for Mental Health join her on a visit to Windana, which provides very important alcohol and drug services for those who have dependency on alcohol and drugs.

The member for Bullen, who I note is no longer in the chamber, raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, and the matter that he seeks to raise with the minister is that she act to increase the penalties for dangerous dogs.

The member for Ashwood raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and the matter that the member raised is that the minister join him to inspect the magnificent \$7.9 million upgrade that is underway at Mount Waverley Secondary College and the delivery of a STEAM centre. Can I say, as a member of this house who has had the good fortune of having a STEAM centre built at Romsey Primary School, they are absolutely life changing for the kids that get to access the learning that those environments provide.

The member for Gippsland South raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Water. The action that he seeks is that the minister outline how and when reallocation of water in the Latrobe River system will take place, and he particularly has expressed his wish that some of that water go to irrigation for agricultural purposes.

The member for Bellarine raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action that she seeks is that the minister join her at Wallington Primary School on another trip to visit yet another school upgrade delivered by the Andrews Labor government – \$2.1 million, and indeed there have already been works taking place at that primary school. It would be a great opportunity for the minister to visit and inspect the upgrades there.

The member for Kew also – the Minister for Education is very popular tonight – raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and she is seeking fair funding for all schools. I am sure that the Minister for Education will have quite a bit to say on that.

The member for Albert Park raised a matter which the Premier has already answered.

Speaker, can I wish you a wonderful winter break, and we will see you on the other side.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Premier. Thank you, members. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:42 pm.