



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 17 August 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren	South Barwon	ALP	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
Cleeland, Annabelle	Euroa	Nat	Pearson, Danny	Essendon	ALP
Connolly, Sarah	Laverton	ALP	Pesutto, John	Hawthorn	Lib
Couzens, Christine	Geelong	ALP	Read, Tim	Brunswick	Greens
Crewther, Chris	Mornington	Lib	Richards, Pauline	Cranbourne	ALP
Crugnale, Jordan	Bass	ALP	Richardson, Tim	Mordialloc	ALP
D'Ambrosio, Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Riordan, Richard	Polwarth	Lib
De Martino, Daniela	Monbulk	ALP	Rowswell, Brad	Sandringham	Lib
de Vietri, Gabrielle	Richmond	Greens	Sandell, Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Dimopoulos, Steve	Oakleigh	ALP	Settle, Michaela	Eureka	ALP
Edbrooke, Paul	Frankston	ALP	Smith, Ryan	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will 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 17 August 2023

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

Business of the house

Notices of motion

The SPEAKER (09:33): General business, notices of motion 1 and 2, will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their matter to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2 pm today.

Documents

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Government Response: Legislative Review of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (09:33): I table, by leave, the government response to the legislative review of parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008.

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor – Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 – SR 82

Electricity Industry Act 2000 – SR 83

Gas Industry Act 2001 – SR 84

Health Records Act 2001 – SR 85

Water Act 1989 – SR 86.

Bills

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Amendment (Ending Political Corruption) Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

The SPEAKER (09:34): I have received a message from the Council:

The Legislative Council transmit to the Legislative Assembly “A Bill for an Act to amend the **Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011** in relation to the meaning of corrupt conduct and for other purposes” with which they request the agreement of the Legislative Assembly.

I understand the member for Brunswick will take charge of the bill.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (09:34): I move:

That this bill be now read a first time.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (29): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Gabrielle de Vietri, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, Sam Hibbins,

COMMITTEES

3014

Legislative Assembly

Thursday 17 August 2023

David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Tim Read, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, Ellen Sandell, David Southwick, Bridget Vallence, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Noes (49): Juliana Addison, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Vicki Ward, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Motion defeated.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Membership

The SPEAKER (09:40): I advise members I have received the resignation of David Limbrick from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee effective from 16 August.

Business of the house

Adjournment

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:40): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday 29 August 2023 at 12 pm.

Motion agreed to.

Members statements

Canterbury Primary School

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (09:41): I wish to inform honourable members that I have received advice from the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Canterbury Primary School in my electorate of the passage of the Outdoor Resources Improvement Bill (No.2) 2023. It was moved on behalf of that house by the member for Peck on behalf of all house captains and wellbeing ministers. It is a bill for an act to improve outdoor activities at Canterbury Primary School. It was passed after extensive debate in the House of the Representatives of CPS, the resulting vote of which was 64 ayes and 9 noes.

The bill satisfies me that it acquits all necessary form and manner requirements of a bill for passage through the CPS House of Representatives. It contains a short title: the Outdoor Resources Improvement Bill. It is to commence in week 8 of term 3 of the school year, and its purpose is to increase the number of outdoor activities available for students to use during recess and lunchtime. It contains a sunset clause, as you would expect in a bill of this type. The main substantive clause of the bill – or act, as it has now passed – is the responsibility, implementation and administration clause, clause 5 of the bill, which provides for consultation with students and teachers and for a mode of collaboration. I commend the school on its act.

Wyndham Youth Civic Participation Project

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:43): I rise to update the house on my recent involvement with the Wyndham Youth

Civic Participation Project this week at Parliament. I was joined by my colleagues the members for Tarnait, Point Cook and Laverton on Tuesday when we met with 12 of our constituents aged from 18 to 25 who have an interest in becoming lawyers, policymakers and community leaders. The project is run annually by Wyndham City Council to connect Wyndham's youth and local, state and federal governments and help them to better understand how governments operate. We had the chance to discuss our different stories and experiences and how we think government can improve the lives of Victorians. It is inspiring to see that there are so many young people in Wyndham who want to do the same and start with an enthusiastic approach towards public service and civic life. One of the participants of this year's program is Nordin Hammouche, who completed his work experience in my electorate office two years ago. While his year 12 studies took precedence over a visit to Parliament this week, it was great to see that his interest in how governments can make the lives of people better has been well and truly sparked. I thank all participants for visiting us at Parliament. It was an honour to meet you, and I wish you all the best for the remainder of the program.

Cost of living

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:44): The Victorian Labor government is making life harder for Victorian families. Policy decisions of the Andrews government are fuelling the cost-of-living crisis that all Victorian families are facing. Labor government decisions have forced up the cost of electricity and gas by over 35 per cent. This is impacting both households in Victoria and particularly businesses and our food manufacturing sector, and this is one of the reasons that grocery bills for the average family have now risen by nearly \$1700 per year. Increases in WorkCover and payroll tax are going to add to these price increases further when it comes to going to the supermarket shelves, as businesses have to pass through the costs that they are going to receive and the increased WorkCover premiums and the increased payroll tax for a lot of businesses. It is not just a tax on jobs, it is a tax on all Victorians as these costs are passed through the supply chain. The cost of owning and driving a car in regional Victoria is getting higher because of the damage caused by the treacherous country roads that we have to drive on, and that is going to get even worse into the future as the cuts to road maintenance funding are going to mean that the roads are going to get even worse. Everywhere Victorians turn, the insidious hand of the Labor government is in people's pockets taking more of Victorians' hard-earned money to pay for the incompetence and mismanagement of this government and particularly to pay for the cost overruns on major projects. Thirty billion dollars in overruns is just an absolute disgrace.

South Morang Football Netball Club

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:46): I am pleased to speak about the South Morang Football Netball Club, a fantastic local community sports club. The South Morang footy and netball club represents 628 members and players, 128 of whom are women. The club has most recently run a ladies day event celebrating women in their club and community. I was fortunate to be invited to join them and more than 120 attendees in celebrating the important role that girls and women play in sporting and community organisations. There was fantastic entertainment and a presentation by local club legend and AFLW premiership player for Melbourne Football Club Alyssa Bannan. The day of celebration also involved a fundraiser for Breast Cancer Network Australia and successfully raised \$2000 for vital medical research. I want to thank the club chair Gary Kallinikos, senior vice-president Grant Pell, junior vice-president Lynda Luke, club secretary Mark Stefanile and other terrific volunteers for the wonderful event and for the work that they do each and every day to create an inclusive sporting environment. This is a wonderful club that have built up a strong tradition for themselves and an appreciation of diversity, which is the lifeblood of that club. They are going from strength to strength. I was absolutely delighted to also have a great conversation with Alyssa Bannan, who is truly an inspiration.

Hampton Bowls Club

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): Help save the bowlo. The much-loved Hampton Bowls Club has gone into voluntary administration. A new not-for-profit bowls and community club without pokies is being established. To support this the club needs to raise \$150,000 by next Wednesday 23 August. The community has dug deep, and club volunteers have already raised over \$95,000. Thank you to club volunteers for the work in saving our bowlo.

Aged Care Employee Day

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:47): The Star of the Sea aged care residence, based next to Star of the Sea College, is home to sisters who have retired. The sisters were kind enough to host a morning tea to celebrate Aged Care Employee Day. The sisters have a rich history hearkening back to their forebears, who in 1883 opened the college and took up residence in the house next door, Turret Lodge.

St Columba's Primary School

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:48): St Columba's Primary School are a little school with a big heart on Glen Huntly Road in Elwood. They are in the process of developing a plan for refurbishing their sports courts. The school are interested in making these courts available for the community but need support for the refurbishment. Thank you to the school community and to principal Daniella Maddalena for your wonderful leadership.

Model United Nations Assembly

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (09:48): A huge congratulations to Brighton Grammar students Jenson Galvin and Erik Kyparisis on winning the 2023 Model United Nations Assembly national championship. The championship is an international youth program that simulates the workings of the United Nations assembly by having two senior students from schools, representing a particular country, debate international issues. The Brighton community is incredibly proud of you both.

Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:49): Yesterday Victoria Police paid its respects and reflected upon the lives and service of Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller. Sergeant Silk and Senior Constable Miller paid the ultimate sacrifice after being murdered in the line of duty 25 years ago yesterday in Cochranes Road, Moorabbin. Their loss continues to have a profound impact on Victoria Police, their families and friends to this day. Our thoughts are with them all, and this house's ongoing thanks and support go to all Victoria Police members, who go to work every day to keep Victorians safe.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:49): Further can I just say that tomorrow marks Vietnam Veterans Day, the 50th anniversary. There will be national commemoratives services that will recognise the service of all Australians in the Vietnam War and honour the sacrifice that they and their families have made to this country. The Diamond Valley Vietnam Veterans, well known to many in this place, have done amazing work not only for our community and for our country but also with their ongoing support for the welfare of fellow veterans. To Jeff Freeman and the veterans liaison support team up at the Heidelberg repat, led ably by Rob Winther OAM – my thanks go to all of them for the work that they do.

Viewbank College

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:50): Lastly, to Viewbank College, my old school, thanks very much for *Legally Blonde* – another fantastic performance in the Viewbank College performing arts theatre, built by the Andrews Labor government.

Bruce Turner

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:50): I want to congratulate Bruce Turner, who was awarded the RSL's Life Membership with Gold Badge. Bruce has been a member of the Rosebud RSL for 36 years, has devoted the last decade to serving as its president and has become one of the most experienced compensation advocates in the RSL. Bruce was also recently named the Club Person of the Year in the Community Clubs Victoria awards, and Rosebud RSL won the mental and social wellbeing program award for 2023 and was named best metro community club bistro/restaurant for 2023. On behalf of all of our community I want to express our gratitude to the whole Rosebud RSL team for the tireless work they do for local veterans and for the wider community.

Country Fire Authority Boneo brigade

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:51): I recently had the pleasure of attending CFA training exercises hosted by Boneo CFA. These training exercises included participants from Rye and Sorrento as well as Boneo. I just want to say that every day these men and women pull on a CFA uniform they are taking an enormous risk as volunteers to protect our community members, and I want to thank them for that.

FIFA Women's World Cup

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (09:51): Finally, I want to congratulate the Matildas on their performance throughout this World Cup. With what they have done over the last few weeks they have inspired the next generation of Australians both male and female. But what they have really done is they have shown a whole generation of girls that they can compete on an equal or even bigger stage than they ever have before. I want to say a big thankyou to the Matildas and congratulate them on that, and I look forward to seeing the next generation of Tillies come through.

Sydenham electorate transport infrastructure

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:52): I rise to provide an update on Sydenham's Big Build. Last week I visited the Calder Park Drive level crossing removal site along with the Parliamentary Secretary for Level Crossing Removals the member for Sunbury. Works are powering ahead 24/7 to build the temporary road which will divert traffic around the construction site, and the team have also started the piling works to build the foundations for the new rail bridge. The dangerous boom gates will be gone for good by 2025, which will make traffic flow better in the area, a major relief in easing congestion for the 10,000 drivers that use this road daily.

The Metro Tunnel has also marked the biggest milestone to date, with the first trains entering the testing phase. Once completed, the tunnel will be an absolute game changer for Sydenham residents travelling to the city and across our state. We are delivering more trains more often for our growing community.

Construction teams are out at Melton Highway right now working on vital safety upgrades at high-risk locations, making sure that safety barriers are installed to fill the gaps from The Regency in Hillside all the way to the Calder Freeway in Keilor. The Andrews Labor government's investment in roads and transport connections in the west is absolutely vital to our locals being able to live, work and travel safely and to spend more time at home, not on the roads.

Gippstar Awards

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:53): I was very fortunate to attend and present at the 63rd annual Gippstar Awards last week, which were held by the Gippsland Sports Academy and superbly supported by the six councils across the region. The night rewards elite achievement from individual as well as team sports that have happened in Australia as well as on the world stage. With athletes as young as 11 through to athletes of a mature age, we truly are blessed with elite sporting programs for our athletes to excel. Chairman Darrell White and MC Judi Buhagiar took control of the night, which was held in the superb brand new function room at the Morwell Bowling Club. Judi had

the tough gig of interviewing our winners; some were definitely more forthcoming than others with answers to some great questions. As with all young athletes, their parents were also front and centre, with the amount of hours and finances spent transporting them to and from training and sporting events. Congratulations to all junior and open award winners from across the year. I wish you all the best in your sporting goals moving forward.

Luca Edward French

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (09:54): Also, a big welcome into the world for Luca Edward French, who arrived safe and sound on 12 August 2023. Congratulations to mums Kate and Beth and big brother Noah French.

Vietnam Veterans Day

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (09:54): I rise today to pay my respects for Vietnam Veterans Day on Friday 18 August. This day marks the Battle of Long Tan in 1966. The battle was fiercely fought, and the Australian 6th Battalion held on for hours until reinforcements arrived. Over time the bravery and courage of the battle has become closely associated with the Vietnam War. I am proud today to be wearing a commemorative badge, with many members of the house, of the Long Tan cross to mark Vietnam Veterans Day. Thank you to Bob Elworthy AM of the Vietnam Veterans Association for providing us the badges. It was great to have met Bob, General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove and Kingsley Munday AM, together with my colleague the member for Bass to discuss the important work that they do for veterans. I look forward to taking part in the Vietnam Veterans Day service at the Shrine of Remembrance tomorrow. I want to take this opportunity to thank all our Vietnam veterans and their families and acknowledge their service and sacrifice for our nation and our state. This day honours their memories, and we will never forget their sacrifice. Our government is committed to supporting our Vietnam veterans, including by recently launching the Veterans Card Victoria. It is a small way of us saying thank you, and I encourage all veterans to sign up to the card. Lest we forget.

Country Fire Authority Warragul brigade

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (09:56): I had the great pleasure last Saturday night of attending the Warragul fire brigade or Warragul CFA's 140-year anniversary. Thank you very much to Tyler Hogan the Warragul captain for inviting me along. Today I would like to acknowledge some of their certificate holders who were there on the night. I would like to acknowledge those who received a five-year certificate, being Quentin Christensen, Fraser Drummond, Michael Leyte, Tyler Parsons, Nicholas Pendlebury and Philip Steer; also a 10-year medal to Lauren Brewer; 15-year medals went to Melissa Adams, Amie De Battista and Tyla Murray; 20-year medals to Christopher Bradshaw and Peter Fitzpatrick; a 25-year medal to Joanne Brewer; to Graeme Minns, a 30-year medal and CFA life membership; to Brian Brewer, a 45-year medal, a Volunteer Fire Brigade Victoria Gold Star and CFA life membership; to Timothy Pritchard, a National Emergency Medal; and to Bradley Hogan, another National Emergency Medal. I really, really congratulate the Warragul CFA on 140 years – such a fantastic history. The CFA go out there and protect their communities with no recognition and no honour, and they do it because they love their communities.

National Tree Day

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (09:57): On Sunday 30 July I had the pleasure of joining the mayor Cr Pierce Tyson, Moonee Valley City Council, as well as Friends of Steele Creek and Lincolnville community kindergarten as it was National Tree Day celebrations at Rosehill Park, East Keilor. The day began with a moving ceremony to country led by Uncle Dave Wandin, and then over 300 community members began planting manna gums, eucalyptus trees native to our area, which are culturally significant the Wurundjeri people but also very significant to the people of Melbourne's north-west.

Why is National Tree Day so important? Well, particularly for Melbourne's western suburbs, we have around 20 per cent less tree canopy than the eastern suburbs, and as a result the western suburbs experience far higher temperatures that cause greater instances of heat-related illness for humans and deterioration of the rich biodiversity of our environment. That is why in 2018, under the leadership of the minister next to me, Minister D'Ambrosio, then environment minister, the Andrews Labor government introduced the More Trees for a Cooler Greener West program, which has now planted half of its targeted 500,000 trees in Melbourne's west. This is making a real difference to the lives of our local community and the amenity. Since 1996, National Tree Day has become Australia's largest community tree-planting and nature care event with some 300,000 people taking part. Fifteen thousand trees were planted across Melbourne's western suburbs for National Tree Day as part of the More Trees for a Cooler Greener West initiative. To be part of that with our local community was very significant.

Climate change

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:59): We have just experienced the hottest month ever recorded on our planet – ever. As of today, over 100 people are confirmed dead from the wildfires that ripped through Lahaina in Hawaii. Greece is on fire. Oceans in Florida this week reached 38 degrees – that is oceans hotter than body temperature, as hot as a hot tub – and to be honest, I feel really scared. I feel scared because scientists did not think we would be seeing these terrifying impacts so quickly. But mostly I feel scared because even as the world literally burns, politicians in this place and other parliaments on both sides are still supporting new coal and gas projects that make the problem worse.

I have been a climate activist for nearly 20 years now, and nine in this place. When I was younger politicians dismissed us, laughed at us and told us not to be so dramatic. Now they tell us they are doing the best they can, but it is tricky and complex and we cannot expect everything to change all at once. But they tell us this while here in Victoria Labor support a new coal project and are actively opening up our land and sea for more gas drilling. I do not understand. Do they not lie awake at night like I do, looking at my kids' faces, wondering what is going to happen? Not approving new coal and gas should be the absolute bare minimum. Young people are angry but they will not give up. They will keep fighting, as will I.

Williamstown Primary School

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) (10:00): 150 years ago Williamstown Primary School first opened its doors and James Russell, the school's first headmaster, welcomed 310 children, who were reported to be 'clean, decently clad and of respectable appearance'. It was the first state school in Williamstown, and it was so successful that within weeks of opening it was overflowing with students. Just a year later there were more than 1000 kids enrolled. In fact it was so popular that Williamstown North Primary School had to be opened just down the road. This of course was all due to the introduction of the Education Act 1872, which declared that schooling for all children would be free, secular and compulsory.

Since its first day, Willy Primary has been an integral part of my community, from being converted to a makeshift hospital during the Spanish flu to the annual visit of the Easter bunny at the Easter hat parade. Last year, in the lead-up to this year's celebrations, the Department of Education began organising a digital time capsule full of photos, reports and other trivia, and surely there will be many more historical milestones to come. The community will come together on Friday for the 150th celebration gala at the Williamstown town hall and at the school open day on Saturday to enjoy historic tours. No matter if a kid attended one year ago or 150 years ago, the school's unofficial motto, 'Once a Willy kid, always a Willy kid' remains.

Kalkallo Teeyan Mela

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:02): I rise to recall in fondness and thank the organisers, Austar events, of the Teeyan Mela, which was held recently in my community. I thank the organisers Rajinder Joshan and Richa Sharma for creating such a fabulous event. This women's event featured gidha, the traditional Punjabi dancing and singing, and the intricate rhythms and melodies that were created absolutely transfixed all who were present. The entire gymnasium was full. Everybody was having a fantastic time, and I was so glad to be there with all of the women gathered together sharing their experiences and sharing their joys in our new community forming in the north. I have to tell you that when I drove home, my hands were sore from all the clapping which features in the music, my feet were sore from dancing and my heart ached from bursting with joy. So I want to thank again the organisers and all the women for spending that fabulous afternoon with me.

Kororoit electorate schools

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (10:03): As we know, Melton LGA is growing and it is growing rapidly. The member for Melton and I say this time and time again. I am very pleased to say that Aintree, a suburb very close to Melton and within the Melton municipality, has two new schools that will be opening soon. Last month I was joined by the Minister for Education in my electorate of Kororoit to tour the site of these two new schools that are currently being built in Aintree. I joined the minister announcing the names of 14 new schools that this Andrews Labor government has delivered across Victoria. I am very proud to be part of a government which actively promotes Aboriginal language names in our community. The secondary school in Aintree will be known as Yarrabing Secondary College, which means white gum, and the specialist school will be known as Dharra School, which means white hawk. These new schools will ensure our growing communities have a great local education for our kids and a unique connection to the land and their Indigenous names. I also want to thank representatives of the Wurundjeri, Bunurong and Wadawurrung traditional owner groups, who were consulted to support this great milestone. During the tour we were joined by the secondary school principal John Mitsinikos and specialist school principal Lizzie Tout. When Yarrabing Secondary College opens on day one of term 1 next year it will include a design, arts, technology and science building, a learning neighbourhood and hardcourts, and it will also have a community hub. I look forward to being there on their opening.

Cockatoo Tennis Club

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:05): It has been a busy and celebratory time across Monbulk of late. Last week I had the pleasure of opening Cockatoo Tennis Club's new southern courts, with fantastic lighting, alongside Cardinia Shire Council mayor Tammy Radford. These courts were made possible through both council and state government funding, and our contribution to this project was \$250,000 through the Local Sports Infrastructure Fund. I am pleased to hear that membership of the tennis club has already started to grow as people notice these wonderful facilities and are drawn to them.

Belgrave Lake Park Cottage playgroup

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:05): I also had the great pleasure of launching a boat, with the most fabulous milk champagne pinata you could ever imagine, at Belgrave Lake Park Cottage playgroup's new playground. With a landlocked electorate, I never thought I would ever launch a boat. Suffice to say, it is part of new wonderful play equipment that is fit for all pirate girls and boys. This was also part funded by the Andrews Labor government through a \$22,000 Living Local Fund grant.

Monbulk electorate schools

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (10:06): I had the pleasure of presenting the Aboriginal flag to Mater Christi College, and I had my first question time with the grade 5/6 students at Belgrave South Primary School. They ask very insightful questions, I have to say. I have visited several other schools across the district over the past couple of months, including Olinda Primary, Cockatoo

Primary, Kallista Primary, Mount Dandenong Primary, The Basin Primary and Emerald Secondary College on several occasions. It has been fantastic to get out and see the wonderful work which our teachers do day in and day out, because state schools are great schools.

Greenhills Neighbourhood House

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:06): At Greenhills Neighbourhood House art will be used to learn, to be active and to create connections with other young people of all experiences and backgrounds. Greenhills Neighbourhood House has also received \$15,000 under the Living Local Grants program, supporting an outdoor kitchen space and transforming their outdoor area into a year-round space. Greenhills is an amazing neighbourhood house, and I thank them for all that they do.

Nillumbik Reconciliation Group

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:07): I want to celebrate the wonderful Nillumbik Reconciliation Group and all of their efforts during National Reconciliation Week. NRG celebrated 25 years of reconciliation in Nillumbik, which I loved attending alongside the federal member for Jagajaga Kate Thwaites, mayor of Nillumbik council Ben Ramcharan, Cr Natalie Duffy, deputy mayor Geoff Paine and Cr Frances Eyre. This was an important celebration of their hard work over the last 25 years as well as a look to the future and the positive ongoing work that NRG and our community can do together. The theme for reconciliation week this year was 'Be a voice for generations', and I thank Ian Hunter, Wurundjeri elder, in particular for his welcome to country as well as Auntie Gail, Auntie Julieanne and Charley from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation for their cultural consultation. I also want to give a shout-out to the Djirri Djirri dancers for their performance, which was wonderful. I also thank the president of the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group Jan Mackenzie, past president Jan Aitken, the committee and all involved in the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group for the organisation of this important event. I also thank the Chocolate Lilies community choir, Scott Darlow and the Eltham High School symphonic band.

Kurmile Primary School

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:08): I went to visit Officer Brunt Road Primary School, where I met with our Parliamentary Secretary for Education the member for Eltham along with Mr Galea from the other place to announce the new name, Kurmile, meaning 'white cockatoo' in Bunurong language. It is fantastic to see the progress being made on this wonderful new school, and the community are very happy that Kurmile will be open day one of term 1 next year.

Voice to Parliament

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:08): I have also had a few events in the last fortnight where Indigenous leaders were able to explain what voting yes in the upcoming referendum means to Australians. It is simply about recognising our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our federal constitution and recognising that we have the oldest living culture on this planet, which has been here for over 60,000 years. The second part is simply giving our First People the opportunity to be heard and to have a Voice to Parliament and government to give advice about matters that affect them. This is not too much to ask for. It is a once-in-a-generation chance for us to do the right thing.

NextGen Unite

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:09): I was also pleased that NextGen Unite in Pakenham were the successful recipients of \$50,000 from the Andrews Labor government to help fund their project, Music and Justice to Inspiration. The weekly music program will provide a safe and supportive environment for South Sudanese–Australians and other African–Australian youth to develop their skills in producing and mastering music whilst connecting with mentors.

Officer Secondary College

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (10:09): I had the pleasure of watching Officer Secondary College students do a role-play right here in this chamber. They did brilliantly, and I look forward to visiting them soon.

Bass electorate constituent milestones

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (10:09): Celebrating all things 100! Inverloch's Trevor Scott, two years shy of 100, was recently awarded the RSL meritorious service medal. A member for 67 years, he served in World War II, highly regarded and respected, with a very long list of community achievements. For the record, he committed to handing out for Labor at the next election.

Magnificence aplenty – Bonnie Castle turned 104. To fulfil her lifelong dream to go to Paris, the lifestyle team at Griffiths Point Lodge in San Remo threw a Parisian-themed party and her friend Betty Pescud made an incredible papier-mâché Eiffel Tower. Pauline Priestly from the Inverloch Legacy Widows Club reached the same milestone, another remarkable woman who served in the Australian Women's Army Service during World War II, enlisting at the age of 18. Cherished by many, the ever-so-sprightly Joan Conroy of Cardinia also celebrated the big 100.

Inverloch Kongwak netball player Lanni Pryor celebrated her 100th game against Tooradin Dalmore with a convincing win, cementing their place at the top of the ladder. Pearcedale Panther Tahlia Coates celebrated her 100th. Accurate under the post, she started her journey as an under-17 player and has risen steadily to become a big part of the senior side. Miah Roberts won the 100-metre backstroke at the Victorian Country Short Course Swimming Championships in Wangaratta as part of the South Gippsland Bass Swimming Club. The club finished third overall. All embrace life, are spirited and energising, with remarkable milestones and community contributions. Happy 100th!

Business of the house**Notices of motion**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (10:11): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notices of motion 1 and 2 today and ask that they remain on the notice paper.

Bills**Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*****Second reading*****Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (10:11): As I was saying yesterday, this bill also aims to improve the functioning of Victoria's wholesale gas market by enabling regulations to be made to increase the maximum civil penalties payable for parties that breach the rules. The change will provide additional flexibility to the Australian Energy Regulator and the courts in determining appropriate responses to instances of non-compliance and help ensure any civil penalties issued reflect the severity of the conduct and act as a deterrent. This will ensure the compliance and enforcement regime is fit for purpose so that the Victorian gas market delivers better outcomes for consumers and align the level of civil penalties with those in place in other east coast wholesale gas markets. Finally, the bill updates several outdated references to the Essential Services Commission gas distribution system code in the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008. This will help improve the accurate interpretation of the act.

While there is a lot of technical jargon throughout this bill, there is a tangible benefit that can be transferred to our communities. The bill is about ensuring the reliable supply of energy to Victorian consumers, and that is what is important. Within the Euroa electorate the reliability of energy supply,

particularly electricity, has been questionable at best. In times of emergency and crisis members of the community have been unable to rely on electricity. When residents in Pyalong faced severe storms in 2021, locals expressed concerns about how they would be able to access electricity, communicate with emergency services and get in touch with loved ones. These sentiments were shared following the October 2022 floods, which greatly impacted much of the Euroa electorate. It is not just times of emergency when the reliability of our energy is compromised – regular blackouts occur over much of the region. The rolling hills of the Strathbogie region regularly face dropouts, inability to access mobile coverage and unreliable connections. In towns like Benalla we see power seemingly turn off at random, with my electorate office and surrounding businesses being on the receiving end of this multiple times in recent months. Community groups in the town of Euroa have built their own microgrid after being faced with unreliable and unstable electricity. Another local business in Euroa, Kinross Farms, has taken matters into its own hands too. They have built a generator, a much-needed solution to the unreliable and unstable power sources that plague our region.

Much like the energy legislation amendment bill previously debated in this house – the one that referred to energy safety – this bill is part of modernising our energy system and ensuring the transition to renewables is done properly. So far not everything in this transition has been smooth sailing. Our regional areas, including the Euroa electorate and the wider north-east of Victoria, are set to be a hub for many renewable energy projects. Regional communities have had every right to be concerned about some of the projects. Constituents in my electorate are worried about the impact these projects might have on them. This includes an impact on their agricultural land, the increased risk of fires, the biosecurity of our farms and primary producers and ensuring coherent emergency management strategies, and I have heard them worry about increases in landholder insurance premiums.

We know what can be achieved when we get the transition to renewables right, when communities are involved and benefit from the change, but too often we see secrecy and poor planning divide our communities. It is crucial we prioritise listening to the impacted communities and ensure a careful approach. Failing to do this will jeopardise our ability to achieve both emissions reduction and renewable energy targets. From listening and meeting with concerned members of our community, such as the Strathbogie renewable energy group, I believe that wanting something in return for compromising their land is not unreasonable. This is a group of people who are concerned about what this will mean for their community. Our community is simply asking who benefits from energy infrastructure and are our host communities being brought along in this process. We cannot allow large corporations to sweep into our communities, dismiss the concerns of the people and then take all the benefits offshore, leaving locals with nothing. With renewable energy planning approvals falling solely on the desk of the minister, we need to ensure there is also a robust appeals process so our communities are heard as loudly as these big companies. Making this transition to renewables in the right way can and must bring prosperity to our communities. By sharing the benefits, be that through employment, economic profits or development, we can make sure this switch is not at the expense of the people who call these places home.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (10:16): I rise to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is another bill that is taking us a step closer to the transformation of our energy generation and transmission in Victoria. This fundamental technological transformation is making us less reliant on coal-fired generators, and we know that they are exiting the market, we know that they are not as reliable.

Now, what would my pop say about this? My pop was a member of what they call the greatest generation. He was born in 1915. These were the people who saw what happened in World War I and signed up for World War II. This was a very pragmatic generation of people. My pop – do you know what he did? He was a coal miner. He was a coal miner from Germany. He was a very pragmatic person, and he worked his way up to making his own holes in the ground and digging out the coal and selling it, following in the footsteps of his father. Then his son, who was a part of the building generation in Australia, was in the coal business as well. But you know what, my family learned

lessons, because before we were in coal we were in scythe making. Right back to the 1600s we made scythes over open fires, but then that technology was no longer required for harvesting the field, so my family moved on to coal. As a pragmatic, straightforward person, I am sure that if my pop were alive today he would be buying solar panels. He would be putting them wherever he could. He did not have an ideological or a sentimental attachment to how power is generated, he was just busy getting on and doing it. If he heard some of the quite frankly romantic notions that have come from those opposite about coal, he would not know what they were talking about. That is for sure.

We want to be attached to something not because it is historically what our industries were built on but because it works. I have spent a lot of time in countries where the power is not reliable. I think of my time in Papua New Guinea with whole weekends with no power and the difficulties that caused for families – for mothers in particular – and for businesses. The times that the power does go out in Yan Yean, I know the difficulties that that causes for businesses and for people who want hot showers and the like.

This is about making our energy generation more reliable with new renewable technology. We want to make sure in this transition that as well as the main thrust being the move towards renewable energies, with that being the main measure of how we are creating reliable energy, we are also making sure that we are providing assurance to energy users about the reliability of the existing power sources. That is what a lot of this bill is about. It is about making sure that the retailer reliability obligation is working for the people of Victoria. Built into this updated approach we have got thorough consultation with the Australian Energy Market Operator, the Australian Energy Regulator, the Premier and the Treasurer et cetera, as well as making sure that there is transparency, with a statement of reasons being published when the retailer reliability obligation is triggered. We are building up sensible solutions to take us forward to what the future will look like for Victoria.

As they say, past performance is the best predictor of future performance, I believe. What is our past performance here in Victoria? Well, we know that we have set targets for renewable energy and then we have smashed them. That is our past performance. For example, we had the first Victorian renewable energy target auction, the largest of its type in Australia, supporting 800 megawatts of new capacity, and our second one is going to have 623 megawatts. That is the past – 800 – and we have got 623, which is the future, coming up.

On a smaller scale, at the household level, which is how most people experience the energy market, we have got the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program. That has already helped 200,000 households with access to rooftop solar. And we have got \$540 million for the Renewable Energy Zone Fund. Through measures like this, sensible measures, we have tripled renewable energy generation since 2014 – tripled it. People did not believe we could do it, yet here we are.

As well as the generation, the storage is also receiving plenty of attention. I know that besides the utility-scale batteries we also have the neighbourhood-scale batteries. The people of the City of Whittlesea are looking forward to our neighbourhood battery. That is going to be one of the 100 neighbourhood batteries that this government was talking about at the end of last year. Through that investment in neighbourhood batteries, over 25,000 homes will be able to access local renewable energy in Victoria, having access to a neighbourhood battery. That is another example of how we are moving towards the future based on our past performance. At the household level you can also benefit from batteries with reduced up-front costs over a four-year period if you install a home battery. There are about 4000 left of these home batteries in the 2023–24 financial year, so I would encourage all people to investigate the appropriateness of a home battery for them. The future also involves bringing back the SEC.

As my pop, I am sure, would have recognised, the future is in renewables, and that is the way we going. That is why we are putting in sensible measures to get us there. But we also need to make sure that where there is pain in the existing system we are working for the benefit of Victorians – the benefit of Victorians and not the power companies, tipping the scales in favour of Victorians. If we look at

power prices, we know that there is a correlation between more renewable energy and lower power prices. When we are using fossil fuels and the like, the costs are higher, which is why it is hard to understand why in the cost-of-living context that we are in there would not be full-throated support from everybody in this chamber for our latest announcement regarding gas in new homes. This is something that will make bills cheaper for every household in Victoria and deserves the full support of every member of this chamber.

In making sure that we are supporting and tipping the scales in favour of Victorian households rather than companies, we heard from the member for Euroa. She is loath to see profits go overseas, she explained to us, and she wants to see jobs and income distributed amongst the community from energy projects. I will have to tell her about the SEC, because that is going to do exactly that for our community.

Another way that we are supporting households is to make sure that everybody possible claims the power saving bonus. We know that there are cheaper power bills to be had. We know that power companies do not always make it easy to get onto the cheapest deal – that is why we have introduced the power saving bonus. Every household can log on, make sure they are on the cheapest deal – they can change, they can not change; it is entirely up to them – and we will provide \$250 to each household who goes through that process. This is about a government that understands we are in a cost-of-living crisis and that also understands that this state, this community, needs to continue the transition to renewable energy sensibly, one step at a time. This bill is one more step in that direction, and that is why I stand today to support this bill and the work of our Minister for Energy and Resources and energy-related topics. I commend the bill to the house.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (10:26): I rise today to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Of course it is quite relevant timing for this bill because earlier this week we saw perhaps one of the most significant protests from country people that we have seen for a very long time, which was all related to energy infrastructure. I have noted from previous speakers there are a lot of things that we are hearing about this warm, fuzzy feeling about how we are moving to renewables: ‘Won’t it be wonderful?’ and ‘We’ve got the SEC – well, at least we’ve done a lot of media releases about it’. What we find with this Andrews Labor government is we hear a lot in the media, but all of their strategy goes into their comms team, into their media team. But when it comes to delivering the goods, we do not see it, at the end of the day. And that is exactly what we are seeing in Victoria: what Labor say is completely different to what they do and what they deliver for everyday Victorians.

In Victoria today we are going through a cost-of-living crisis. So many individuals, families and businesses are coming to my office every single day saying they simply cannot afford to live under the Andrews Labor government anymore. The one thing that is consistent, whether it is individuals in their homes or whether it is businesses, is the amazing increase in energy bills. It is the power bills that are going up. And while we might hear from some of the previous members of government about all that you are doing to build renewables, what you are doing is actually shutting off reliable supply and we are leaping far too quickly into renewables. The supply is not there. You are pushing up prices, and you are crippling household budgets and making it so they cannot afford to live.

You are getting businesses in a position where they cannot afford to keep every job that they used to. This is in Victoria today, and I know of many, many businesses who are now moving interstate. I know of at least five businesses personally who I have spoken to who are moving to South Australia simply because they cannot afford to do business in Victoria. We can have plans and we can have strategies, and by no means am I against renewable energy at all. What I do support, though, is a sensible transition, because we have to be able to keep the lights on in Victoria. We have to make sure that the businesses have the baseload power to continue to operate, to keep those jobs locally in Victoria and to make sure that Victoria is again seen as a place to do business and we do not have people trickling out to either New South Wales or South Australia in my neighbouring area.

As I opened with, on Tuesday we saw an amazing turnout of farmers who are deeply concerned about the extended VNI West project. They are not just saying, 'Not in my backyard', they are being very, very sensible in their position in that they have put forward an option. They are supporting an option which was developed by esteemed professors in this area. They are highly respected in the industry. They have been in the industry for decades designing electrical systems and transmission systems. They have put together a fantastic proposal which actually makes an enormous amount of sense. It is to upgrade the existing electrical infrastructure, and the outcome of upgrading this existing electrical infrastructure would be phenomenal for the people of Victoria. Most importantly, it would unlock more renewables. It unlocks more renewables to upgrade the existing transmission lines that go through to Horsham and then up through the Ouyen area right up to the border of New South Wales. It is a shorter route. It is a route that costs half as much money – you would save \$5 billion if you went down this route – but most importantly it would take electricity bill pressure off. It would save \$1.1 billion in Victorian power bills each and every year. If we are talking about infrastructure and making sure we do have the infrastructure for the future, we do need to ensure that that includes a renewables future. Why wouldn't the Labor government come out in support of those farmers who made all the effort to bring their tractors to town? They left their farms. Some of them left their potato harvest. Some of them left whatever their local activities were on their local farms right across western Victoria and they came to the steps of Parliament to make sure that they had their voice heard. But not one member of the Labor government could be bothered to go out on the steps and listen to them.

Peter Walsh: Not even the local members.

Emma KEALY: The member for Ripon, who says a lot privately one on one, did not have the courage to stand with her constituents about what they are desperately concerned about for their local area. They are so concerned, and it is not just about their own business; they are worried about the future of agriculture in that western part of Victoria. It is prime farmland. It is perhaps some of the most productive farmland that we have in the state, and rather than putting a bulldozer through it, ripping it up, putting biosecurity risk there – and we know that farm biosecurity is so important now it is legislated; there are so many additional pressures and requirements put on farmers in terms of controlling who comes in and out of their farming property. Yet we have got a proposal which is basically just 'Go ahead, build a brand new transmission line 70 or 80 metres up in the sky', infrastructure that is far in excess of what we need in Victoria, when we can actually do something much, much simpler and much, much shorter that will help to achieve the state's renewable target in a much shorter time frame and will take pressure off Victorians' power bills. Why wouldn't the government go out and support it? Why wouldn't the member for Ripon go out and support people and actually take it to Parliament House? We have never heard that from her. She is not standing up for her constituents, and we can do a far, far better job –

Members interjecting.

Emma KEALY: No, the member for Ripon was invited and she refused to turn up. She could have met with any of the farmers there beforehand or after, and she refused to meet with them.

Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, respectfully I ask you to bring the member back to the bill and to be relevant to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: This has been a very wideranging debate. There is no point of order.

Emma KEALY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It is so important in this place that we do have a strong voice for country Victorians and make sure their voice is heard. I urge the minister to look at this proposal, because I do not believe she has looked at it. She cannot possibly have looked at it if she understood it would unlock more renewables, because that was the excuse we heard yesterday – it will not reach the renewables target. Well, it actually will reach it more quickly. It will deliver much, much lower power bills. How can you say no to that? How can we have a minister that will not even consider a report? In fact one of the recommendations of this report is that VicGrid should be asked to publicly

advise using its Victorian transmission investment framework on the relative merits of plan B, which is the upgrade of the existing infrastructure, compared to Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) VNI West in meeting the Victorian government's target that 95 per cent of Victoria's electricity is sourced from renewable energy generated in Victoria by 2035. They are just asking, basically, to compare it. Include this as part of your consideration. It is not too late. You do not have to bulldoze prime farmland and create new easements when existing easements are already there. You do not have to spend \$5 billion – \$5000 million – of additional taxpayer money for something that will not achieve the same outcomes as plan B, this plan.

You have got an option that really ticks all of the boxes. It wins at every single level when comparing the two projects. The farmers of western Victoria are impacted by the two lines. There is the proposal of the VNI West project but also there are people – farmers – who have got property along the existing powerlines, the ones who are generating an enormous amount of wind energy through Murra Warra. There is not enough capacity in the lines to take on all of the energy that that massive wind farm is generating today. If you want to get a quick outcome, if you want to get more renewables online now and if you want to start to replace the shut-down coal-fired power stations, and now there is ban on gas – and here is news to Labor: if you ban gas and get rid of gas bills, it will not keep prices down. You might not get a big gas bill anymore, but you are going to get a much bigger bill from other energy sources because there is simply not enough supply.

I urge the government, when they are considering the future of energy supply in Victoria and how we move energy around the state, to look at all of the options available. AEMO has a vested interest in keeping VNI West in there because they are managing the project. They are no longer independent of it, and they have simply not delivered when it comes to consultation and giving information to landholders through the VNI West project. I urge the minister to please look at plan B, consider it and make sure it is the government's plan A for upgrading energy infrastructure in the state of Victoria going forward.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (10:36): I am very pleased to rise and speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. We have heard a lot from those opposite, but I am really happy today because we have gone from a place where we were talking about whether the energy systems of Victoria, the nation or the world should proceed and move to renewable sources from hydrocarbon sources. That question seems no longer there. We have got a bunch of converts over there who do believe in renewable energy now, but it is just about the timing and some of the details of it. That is a big place to come to. That is a big step for some people I think, so congratulations to them. You are now part of a global community that is actually moving to renewables from coal. I do like the anecdote from the member for Yan Yean. If I can be so bold as to put it in another sense: every generation is going to have its challenges. Every generation will have things that they have to adapt to and overcome. This is our generation's challenge, and we cannot leave it to other generations – our children and their children.

The bill has three components. The first adds decision-making criteria to the Victorian legislation in the event that the Minister for Energy and Resources triggers the retailer reliability obligation. The second enables alignment of penalties applied to Victorian gas market participants with those in other jurisdictions. The third changes outdated references to the gas distribution system code, which is now known as the Gas Distribution System Code of Practice. These amendments are technical in nature but provide confidence to Victorians that energy markets are working in their favour.

We have dragged the opposition kicking and screaming to a place where they now know that they do not have a choice in this. They would like us to think, through their dialogue, that power stations such as Hazelwood were closed down by the Victorian government. In reality those were global decisions from global companies, made by the CEOs of Engie and the boards of such companies. They are divesting out of coal, oil and anything hydrocarbon because their investors will not let them invest in that, and that is the truth. We can look overseas. In fact I will bring up some case studies a bit later about countries that have similar renewable targets to us and are on the same journey. We are doing

very well in Victoria. We are leading the nation; we are not leading the globe, though. This is not a wheel we need to reinvent. But to do that we need to make sure that our electricity system undergoes a fundamental change – the biggest evolution we have ever had. It is a transformation as the increasingly unreliable coal-fired power stations exit the market.

We have heard positive stories from this side of the house – from MPs – of constituents who have had a really good experience, and we have seen huge take-up of government offers. The power saving bonus is one, where we are providing \$250 for anyone that provides an electricity bill to actually compare their bill and save money from unscrupulous electricity providers. The uptake has been huge in my electorate, and I know it has been huge everywhere else. But we have got other offers that have been out for a long time now. One of those would be the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program, but there is also the \$540 million Renewable Energy Zone Fund. We have got more solar on roofs in Victoria than we have ever had before.

I guess with what we are seeing now, what the opposition will have to do – it may take some time and it may take some study – is get on board with or consider how changing our energy system is as much about replacing fossil fuels with renewables as it is changing the economic model. We have seen that in other countries. One hundred per cent renewable energy can lead us to a different economic model that is more equitable as well.

Most of our energy in Australia has been transported to power plants after it has been dug up as coal, and that energy production and distribution is controlled by very few entities. They are private companies usually, and it is a vertical supply chain. What we have got now is the opportunity to make that supply chain more horizontal by offering opportunities such as microgrids and the decentralisation of our power grid, which in turn will make for more reliable power sources. We have been embracing that innovation and that infrastructure for the last eight years. We have seen quite a few very, very good examples of where this has worked very well already. The opposition are now talking about time frames rather than the acceptance of renewables, which is a step, but we know that we have had some very great stats – absolutely fantastic stats – when it comes to renewables in our community.

We have heard other people in the house talk about the targets we have set. We set the target of having 65 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2030 and 95 per cent by 2035, and when we set a target, we hit it. We have got the runs on the board there. We smashed our 2020 renewable energy target of 25 per cent, and we have increased our 2030 target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. We have supported the targets with the policies and the promotions that I have spoken about before.

The Victorian renewable energy target auction was the largest of its type and the first of its type in Australia. It launched and supported five projects that are providing up to 800 megawatts of new capacity in the system. As I said before, on the actual figure for rooftop solar in Victoria, more than 200,000 households have been able to be helped to get solar on their roofs through the actions of this government. As a result, this government has been able to provide Victoria with more than triple the amount of renewable energy generation since we were elected in 2014. We have tripled renewable energy into the system since 2014. As the share of renewables increases – as it will, and we know this from the story globally – there are new opportunities for energy storage solutions. That is why our renewable energy targets are supported by Australia's biggest energy storage targets: at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity in Victoria by 2030 and 6.3 gigawatts by 2035.

Now, we know from other speakers that there are plenty of good examples overseas of how the renewable transition can take place. I think we are on a good pathway. One writer Anna Leidreiter, who is the senior program manager for climate and energy at the World Future Council and a member of the Global 100% Renewable Energy Platform, brings to bear a few case studies that are really interesting. One of them is Frankfurt in Germany. Her case studies talk as much about renewable generation of electricity as they do about changing economies and economic models. By 2050 Frankfurt will produce 100 per cent of its local energy from local and regional renewable sources, bringing down its current energy import costs of €2 billion a year to zero. According to Leidreiter:

Thanks to its public local utility which drives this transition, the city ... not only benefits from these savings but ... generates additional income in the form of revenues and tax incomes. By prioritizing energy production from within the city and ... the surrounding region – while still being connected to the larger national grid – the money will stay in the region. Energy efficiency measures have saved Frankfurt €100 million in energy costs, a number that is projected to rise ... the city has reduced emissions by 15% since 1990, while its economy grew by 50% for its ... 715,000 inhabitants.

Vancouver, Canada, also gets a shout-out. One city leading the movement in North America is Vancouver. Widely recognised as the most livable city in the world, its environmental footprint is currently three times larger than it can sustain. Former Mayor Robertson and his team were committed to changing this by putting the city back on track to become the greenest in the world by 2050. Vancouver will obtain 100 per cent of the energy it uses from renewable resources and emit 80 per cent fewer greenhouse gases than in 2007.

I bring these case studies up because sometimes I feel like there are some of us that are not actually seeing the global trend to maintain energy production. If we keep on going down a coal path – we basically cannot; there is just no choice. As far as members from the opposition today also talking about businesses moving out of Victoria, I would ask them to have a look at some of the economic data coming out of Victoria – the actual data. Have a look at consumer sentiment. Have a look at the NAB business survey, where Victoria is actually climbing more than the nation as a percentage. In that, the bill is very commonsense. It really has three components, and I commend it to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Laverton.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition did not stand.

John Pesutto: I move that debate be adjourned, Deputy Speaker, and we proceed to debate notice of motion –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition did not stand. The call does go from side to side, and I did wait a little bit before. The member for Laverton has the call.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I was walking into the chamber. I saw the Leader of the Opposition speak.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Manager of Opposition –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was going to stand. It is a convention of this place that the speaking opportunity moves from side to side, and I would say to ensure that the house remains in order that convention be upheld.

Paul Edbrooke: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, the member well knows that in the standing orders there is no presumption for someone that might stand up. The member had the call quite clearly. No-one on the opposition side was standing up, and we should not presume that they were going to stand up.

Emma Kealy: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I clearly saw –

A member interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Without assistance.

Emma Kealy: You should read up the books and then you might know a little bit better, and the people behind you might not think –

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that referring to ‘you’ is referring to the Chair. I understand the Leader of the Opposition’s and the Manager of Opposition Business’s point of order. If the member does not stand to make the call, is given time and another member seeks the call, no-one else stands and I make the call for that member, it is done. I have ruled on the point of order. I appreciate the position you make, and I presume that you will stand when the member’s time is completed. The member for Laverton has the call.

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (10:49): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I will start by being quite humble and putting forward –

Members interjecting.

Sarah CONNOLLY: The toys are really out of the sandpit there, aren’t they?

I will start my contribution by saying that I am all too excited to stand up time and time again in this place to talk about energy legislation coming before this house, which at the moment feels like every single sitting week. Sitting here, I did look to the other side – who were busy walking in and talking to each other – and felt like I was doing a little bit of a favour by standing and taking the call for those on the other side, who often do not make any contribution to this house on what can only be described as important, essential bills of legislative reform that come before us time and time again.

It is also quite amusing that only last sitting week I was again standing here and reflecting on the amount of energy legislation that has been pumped through this Parliament time and time again in the five years that I have been here. No sooner had I spoken than yet another energy bill like this one was introduced into this Parliament. Indeed I do think someone, probably me, should keep count of them so that when I stand up here again to talk about them I can reflect on how many bills just in the last measly old five years that I have been here have come before us that I have chosen to speak on.

What is entirely clear to me and my community is that Victorians know that when our government, the Andrews Labor government, talks about energy it has a strong track record. We have a strong energy policy that has grown and evolved naturally upon each reform and each success. In fact it is in quite stark contrast to the previous Commonwealth government. Only now that there is a Labor government sitting up in Canberra is the Commonwealth government developing a strong, coherent energy policy. It is something that the energy industry has been crying out for for a very, very long time.

It might also be a surprise to some of us that we have not been sitting around here since our government was elected in 2014, but we have had one minister for energy and climate change. I have said time and time again to colleagues on this side of the chamber, and indeed to my circle of friends, that the true change in this state around climate change and around energy policy, which was crying out to be reformed when we came to government in 2014, has been done incredibly well by having a minister who has been dedicated to that portfolio during four years in opposition and in the almost nine years that we have been in government. What is incredible about the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action is her record and her projected record in this place.

Emma Kealy interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Member for Lowan, I love the fact that you are at least sitting there listening to my speech when so many of your colleagues again appear not to be here in this chamber. They were certainly not present for you when you stood up and spoke.

Jess Wilson: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I feel the member was using reflections on the Chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would encourage members not to use the word ‘you’ unless they are referring to the Chair, and I call the member back to the bill.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It is so lovely to be interrupted by the member for Kew – thank you for that – because in the next part of this contribution I did want to point out that in the time shared between our government and your friends in the previous federal government in Canberra they had three energy ministers, not one – and one of them was not actually an energy minister – and 20 different energy policies.

Peter Walsh interjected.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Oh, dear. Some might call that trying pretty hard in my patch.

Of course we saw similar paralysis under the previous state government, which let energy companies run rampant in this state and allowed prices – member for Lowan – to increase by 35 per cent and doubled the amount of disconnections. The difference between us in this space cannot be starker. As someone who worked in this industry for many, many, many years, let me tell you that the change of government has made a world of difference for Victorians. Victorian consumers – Victorian mums and dads, folks – whether you are in the western suburbs, the south-east or the north, wherever you are here in Victoria, we have been busy getting on and making a world of difference for Victorians. They were doing it tough; some of them still are. In extreme cases they were freezing in their homes. They had no gas, they had no electricity because, member for Lowan, the power companies were disconnecting them. That is what was going on –

Members interjecting.

Sarah CONNOLLY: Not as easily as when you were previously here.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair, member for Laverton.

Sarah CONNOLLY: The purpose of this particular piece of legislation today relates to the retailer reliability obligation, the RRO. The RRO ensures that electricity retailers and large energy users have the capacity needed to meet demand forecasts. This is based on the Australian Energy Market Operator long-term reliability outlook, made available through the electricity statement of opportunities. What this does is let us know when new capacity is needed on the network to meet potential gaps in the network, most importantly, ahead of time. Where there is a projected gap at least three years and three months away, there is an option to trigger the RRO. Until recently this trigger was only available to AEMO. Last year these trigger powers extended to state and territory ministers under the National Electricity Law.

What this bill does, in particular with the RRO, is provide additional criteria and, importantly, safeguards for when these decisions are made. It clarifies that the minister must consult with AEMO, the Australian Energy Regulator, the Premier and the Treasurer before triggering the RRO. In addition to this, the bill provides that a statement of reasons must be published outlining why the trigger was used. But let us be clear: the event of capacity storage is something that we should all try to avoid. The RRO provides long-term planning supports, which are more important with the shift to renewable energy. It is a just-in-case measure that is only to be used as a last resort when the market is not able to respond to a projected gap.

We hear all the time from – I will call them naysayers about how this transition is going to lead to mass blackouts and that we will not be able to keep the lights on. That really is fearmongering in our community, because, let us face it, the energy sector is a really, really complex sector and complex industry. What we have been able to do in Victoria is increase the capacity of our electricity network. In fact since 2014 we have tripled it. We added approximately 800 megawatts of energy through the first Victorian renewable energy target auction, and our second auction will bring forward an extra 623 megawatts of new renewable energy generation capacity and an additional 365 megawatts of new battery storage. Thanks to our government's flagship Solar Homes program, which is something that folks in my electorate and particularly in Truganina in my previous electorate in Tarneit in the outer

west have taken to with open arms, rooftop solar has been able to generate nearly five times the power generated by gas, and I expect the gap will continue to widen.

In the 60 seconds I have left to make a contribution – and I can see the house quickly filling up; the person going right after me must be incredibly important in this place – I will say that this bill may be small in scope and deliver a few small changes, but it continues to build on our government's record on creating a fairer electricity network. This is another really important legislative reform: a bill that has come before this house that is all about improving electricity, electricity supply and capacity for Victorians here in this state. The minister has done an incredible job, including in her four years in opposition before coming to government in 2014, in specialising in this area of energy industry and climate change that she wanted to make reform in. Each and every time we are here in this place there are incredible bills before this place that come out of her portfolio. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the house.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (10:59): I move:

That debate be adjourned.

And that we move to notice of motion 40 on the notice paper, being:

That this house:

- (a) notes the worrying, but deeply important, findings of the *Australian Jewish University Experience Survey*;
- (b) affirms our bipartisan commitment to fighting antisemitism; and
- (c) calls on the Minister for Education to bring university vice-chancellors, Jewish students and leaders together to work towards a solution.

This is a really important motion that we strongly believe should be debated in this house immediately. We all stand, I would hope I can say without any hesitation or doubt – all of us in this house stand – against any form of racism. Certainly antisemitism remains a challenge in our community, despite all that we are committed collectively to doing to make sure that all peoples, no matter what their backgrounds, have opportunities in this great state and this great country. But this report raises very serious issues, and just in general terms it is very troubling that the findings show that 64 per cent of students have experienced antisemitism in our universities. That is a finding which ought to be of concern to all members of this house. Of these students 88 per cent have experienced antisemitism in the last 12 months, 57 per cent of students have hidden their Jewish identity to avoid antisemitism and one in five have avoided campus altogether. Now, I think we would all stand in unison in expressing our concern about that, and if that is happening in our universities – as it clearly is – then we need to take very urgent action to address that.

The types of antisemitic behaviour that we are seeing vary but can involve such scenarios as students seeing comparisons of Israel to Nazi Germany or someone denying or minimising the Holocaust, which is deeply offensive and deeply hurtful. There is also a concern that I want to express that so many students have a lack of faith in the complaints process itself at many universities, and the report reveals findings that 81 per cent of students who have experienced antisemitism in the last 12 months did not make a complaint. Some of the reasons for not making a complaint include these: they did not believe it would make a difference; they thought the university would not take it seriously; they did not even know where to complain to; and they thought the process was too complex. Sixty-one per cent of students who complained at universities were dissatisfied with the outcome, and only 37 per cent of students have faith in the complaints process. That reveals an extent of dissatisfaction with processes in our universities which should be first class – world class – and achieve benchmarks. All students should feel safe. When we look at some of the lived experience of these students it is deeply troubling. According to one student, as part of the report's findings:

Almost every day I attend University, I see/hear/witness one or more antisemitic groups or antisemitic incidents ... These range from comments like 'Nazis were good people', which was made by an Arts faculty

chief examiner ... to being doing that I would not be welcome in a mainstream progressive club because I am a Zionist.

Another said:

A person in my class heiled Hitler to me and not a single professor, tutor or student did anything. The uni needs to step up.

Another:

The anti-Israel narrative is so overwhelmingly strong on my university campus that I always hide this part of my Jewish identity ... I would be nervous about being present at a Jewish society event if an Israeli flag was displayed.

A final example:

It is very difficult to be a Jewish student at university, especially with regard to non-Jewish people minimising or gaslighting you when you call something antisemitic ... [Staff and other students] feel that they have the right to define antisemitism and fail to listen to Jewish students. Universities need to be held accountable ... [Universities] must listen to Jewish voices, as they do any other minority group.

What I would say is that you can see from what I have highlighted in my comments this morning that there is a concern amongst students that they do not have the supports in our universities that they need. Antisemitism is a most insidious form of racism. It is not the only kind, but it calls on us as a Parliament to take prompt action. We cannot have students in this situation feeling like they cannot even attend classes and having doubts, feeling that when they are faced with antisemitic experiences they have got no-one to turn to. People of all races, all backgrounds, all religions and all ethnicities in our great state must feel supported, and we have a group here expressed in the findings of the *Australian Jewish University Experience Survey* that are calling on us to take prompt action. That is why debate needs to be adjourned.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (11:04): I rise to oppose the motion, not because of the content of the motion – I want to be extremely clear about that, and indeed it is why I am determined to provide the Leader of the Opposition with some largesse to talk about these very serious issues, understanding of course that this is indeed a narrow procedural debate. But it is important that I put on the record that leave was sought for this motion yesterday. It was not given at that time.

Last night I received a letter, as Leader of the House, from the member for Caulfield, and he and I corresponded. I indicated to the member for Caulfield that we had a full agenda and that it was not possible to include this motion at this time. But I did note – and I want to also make sure that this goes on the record – in my response to the member for Caulfield that I was pleased to see his affirmation of our absolute bipartisan commitment to fighting antisemitism. We know that antisemitic behaviour is always harmful. We have zero tolerance for it as a government, and we as a government work very closely with representatives of Victoria's Jewish community to do all we can to stamp out antisemitism, to stamp out racism, to stamp out this terrible discrimination and these hateful and very frightening and disturbing behaviours. I think we have demonstrated our commitment through a number of legislative reforms that we are bringing to this house.

However, I want to make the point that there is a place and a time and a way to do these things. Our government will always stand ready to work with the member for Caulfield and with the member for Box Hill, both of whom are strong members of Victoria's proud Jewish community, both of whom advocate strongly on behalf of those communities and both of whom we all stand in solidarity with in our commitment to defeat antisemitism here. There is a way, a time and a place to progress policy reform and to respond to reports, and it is not by theatrics like we just saw from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the way he behaved earlier when he was not given the call. So I just –

James Newbury interjected.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: No, I am making the point that there is a time and a place and a way. If you are serious, that is how you do it. Now, the member for Caulfield was clear, because I wrote to him and told him that we would not be able to do that today. But we stand ready, as always, to do all we can as a government to support Victoria's proud Jewish community. To suggest otherwise is incorrect, it is distasteful and it is simply untrue. It is disingenuous and it is untrue.

We will be opposing this motion on the basis that I have already communicated and made the government's position clear to the opposition – now on two occasions – that we would not within this parliamentary sitting have the space to be able to debate this important motion. But I extend on behalf of the government the opportunity for the member for Caulfield, in particular, who would be welcome. I know the Minister for Multicultural Affairs is sitting here at the table. But our government stands ready to take action in response to antisemitic behaviour wherever it happens in our state, including on our university campuses. And I make the point that it is actually the Minister for Training and Skills in the other place who is the minister who is most appropriate perhaps to have this conversation. But I also recognise that we have had challenges in our schools and we need to – (*Time expired*)

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:10): I rise to speak in support of notice of motion 40:

That this house:

- (a) notes the worrying, but deeply important, findings of the Australian *Jewish University Experience Survey*;
- (b) affirms our bipartisan commitment to fighting antisemitism; and
- (c) calls on the Minister for Education to bring university vice-chancellors, Jewish students and leaders together to work towards a solution.

I acknowledge the Leader of the House's comments today. I know the Manager of Opposition Business will be speaking shortly and also will talk very supportively about this and, most importantly, about their steadfast support for the Jewish community in combating antisemitism. Combating antisemitism has always been an issue in this Parliament that has been supported in a bipartisan way. I acknowledge, I respect and I support that. I want to put on record the work that the member for Box Hill has done in this area with me as Parliamentary Friends of Israel co-chair. There are a number, including the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the member for Bentleigh and the member for Albert Park, on the other side of the house that have spoken solidly in support of the community. I respect that, and I want to put that on the record.

I want to make the point that when I wrote to the Leader the House last night calling for this to be urgently put on the notice paper today I did it because there is nothing more urgent than talking about antisemitism on campus. We have spent time in this chamber on notices of motion congratulating the government on level crossing removals. It is not that they are not important, but when something like this comes to the Parliament as a report or comes to the state – in this case it was actually to the whole of Australia. When a Jewish university experience survey that ultimately says that Jewish students do not feel safe on campus – when a report like that comes to light – the Parliament need to respond, and we need to come together to debate it. We have adjourned off business on many occasions before to debate things that are important. I would put to the house that there is nothing more important than to talk about this today, and that is why, even though the Leader of the House did not grant me leave to do it in an orderly manner yesterday, I have sought as my only option to raise it today.

I do take up the offer, and I will certainly be working with the government in any way that we can to look at the intention of this motion, because the intention of the motion is to put a taskforce together in a bipartisan way to tackle the problem at hand. We have an International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition that has been accepted by Melbourne and Monash universities, and we are working with other universities to get that accepted. More importantly, it is an IHRA definition that has been accepted in a bipartisan way in the federal Parliament and here in a bipartisan manner in state Parliament. This is an IHRA definition that actually explains how we define antisemitism. We need to ensure the university campuses uphold that. At the moment students do not feel safe. It is appalling

to know that 64 per cent of students have experienced antisemitism. Of these, 88 per cent have experienced antisemitism in the last 12 months, 57 per cent have hidden their Jewish identity to avoid antisemitism and – this is disgraceful – one in five students have avoided campus altogether. This must stop. We must work in solidarity to ensure this is stamped out, and we must bring together the university heads to work towards combating this.

Eleven years ago in this Parliament, under the former minister Martin Dixon, we brought nine universities together to discuss this very matter. There were a number of important issues that started it. I am very sorry to say that we are back where we were 11 years ago. This problem has not gone away. This problem, unfortunately, is continuing to get worse, and that is why this Parliament must work together. I look forward to working with the Premier, who I have also written to, along with the Minister for Higher Education and the Minister for Education, because there are a lot of issues in the primary and secondary schools as well, as we absolutely know.

Finally, I want to thank the Zionist Federation of Australia and the Australasian Union of Jewish Students for the work that they have done, and Paris Enten, Noah Loven, Bren Carlill, Jeremy Leibler and Zeddy Lawrence, who are all with us today and who have all done an amazing job. I know Alissa Foster from AUJS as well has done an amazing job bringing this issue to light. We will not stop until we stand up for students that are experiencing these issues.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (11:15): I stand to speak on the procedural motion. I would just like to point out the respectful way that this notice of motion has been spoken about by all members of the chamber so far. I do not think there is anyone in this house that believes we should have anything other than zero tolerance for antisemitism or racism; I think we can all agree on that. This procedural motion is not about that, though. This procedural motion is really asking the question: in a full government business program planned for the week, should we interrupt business? Last night the decision was made not to do that, and we are here again today to debate what has already been answered.

As far as our solidarity on this issue goes, again, I do not think anyone would question that. It was only in the previous budget that \$3 million was funded towards an antisemitism campaign, which was an election commitment of the Andrews Labor government. Also, this is the government that banned Nazi symbols. We know there is more work to do. No-one is saying there is not more work to do in this area – whether it be education, whether it be awareness, whether it be action – but the decision was made last night that we would continue with the government business program. This government does stand ready to work unwaveringly with the Monash University and other vice-chancellors to make sure that everyone in this community feels welcome and that we can fight this scourge, but at the moment we should be sticking to the government business program as planned.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (11:16): Today is an important, necessary, timely and urgent opportunity to debate an issue that needs to be debated today. The house does need to adjourn debate on the bill that it has been debating yesterday afternoon and this morning – we have had two separate days of debate on this bill – to debate this absolutely urgent issue. It is an urgent issue because antisemitism is not only a scourge in our community but it is a rising scourge in our community. It is not just a rising scourge in our community, it is now a daily event in Victoria – and it is just not okay.

In the last week we have seen, both in terms of objective reporting and incidents occurring, some of the most hurtful, upsetting, distressing things happening in our state, things that I would hope and feel sure none of us in this place would ever want to have happen or would ever tolerate. But it is not okay to just see those things happen – we need to stand up when they happen, especially like they have over the last week, and speak strongly about it.

We have seen an incident on a bus in the bayside region where schoolchildren were involved – a scary, violent incident. As a parent it just breaks my heart to think what those children went through. We have seen a bayside non-government school deal with an issue with one of their students' behaviour on a Zoom call. We know there are issues in schools. We know that from not just this incident but

numerous incidents over time. It is not just an issue for government schools; this is an issue for schools – we know that – but we know that we have seen a horrific incident in the last week.

My colleague recently spoke on the results of the Australian Jewish university survey. Those findings, frankly, should not only concern every member of this place but make them recognise the need to deal with these matters, speak to these matters, call out these matters and make sure something is done about them. They are findings that we cannot accept as Victorians – we just cannot accept them as Victorians. It is so upsetting to know that two-thirds of Jewish students have experienced antisemitism at university, but that reflects what is happening more broadly. I have spoken previously about the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's antisemitism reports each year, and its most recent report shows a 7 per cent increase overall in reports just in this most recent reporting period, but we see it each and every year. Each and every year we see an increase, a significant increase, and it is not okay. But neither is not doing enough about it.

I say to the government that I recognise the financial commitment made in the most recent budget, the \$3 million. I recognise that commitment, and that is an important commitment, but no money as I understand it has been spent yet. So I would say to the government: I look forward to seeing announcements in relation to committing that money to important projects that actually take action. It is not good enough to just allocate money, we also need to spend it, targeted to where it is needed. So I would say to the house that this is an important motion, a motion that we gave notice of, that we spoke about, that we sought an opportunity to move, and today should be an opportunity for all of us to not only stand up against antisemitism but also stand up against the hurtful, upsetting incidents of the last week and call them out as a Parliament in a bipartisan way.

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (11:21): I will note at the start of this contribution that the usual narrowness of a procedural debate on the adjournment of an item has been somewhat relaxed in this particular procedural debate, and that is probably a fair thing. I think both sides of the house would agree that the sensitivity and the importance of this issue probably warrant us being a little bit more relaxed in terms of how we apply the standing orders of this place to this particular discussion, and I commend members on both sides of the house for the way in which the conversation on this issue has been conducted. As has been mentioned, the scourge of antisemitism needs to be approached in a bipartisan way, and I am sure that every member who is in this house at this point in time is a strong advocate for us to take every step we can to fight that scourge of antisemitism.

It is important, in terms of some of the issues that have been raised by members, to think of the banning of the Nazi Hakenkreuz, which is a significant step forward – one step forward – in trying to stop that hateful symbol being used in a way that has such a negative impact on so many people, particularly of course those people from the Jewish community. When we think about the rollout of the banning of that symbol, there was a very strong consultation process and engagement with a number of communities – not only the Jewish community but also the Hindu, the Buddhist and the Jain communities, who were so supportive of the Jewish community and the objective of that ban. It was a difficult process also because that symbol has long had a religious meaning for those communities. So there is a consultation process and a funded education campaign within communities and within Victoria Police about the appropriate way to ensure that the hateful use of the symbol by Nazis is targeted so that people who are legitimately concerned about its use in peaceful ways in terms of their religion are not in an unintended way restricted from observing that symbol. I just want to make the point that it is important to step through these things carefully and make sure that we have broad support for these sorts of changes, and we have announced further the banning of the Nazi salute. That will be another careful piece of work that we work through with the community.

Members have mentioned the \$3 million commitment to the campaign against antisemitism, which was an election commitment and has been funded in the recent budget. I want to thank the peak Jewish community organisations, who have been so constructive in working with government to put forward a very pragmatic and powerful approach to the application of those funds. I am looking forward to

having more to say about that very soon. I want to thank the team at the Holocaust museum, who do an amazing job educating our schoolchildren, and anything we can do to support the way they educate children about the Holocaust and the way in which hateful ideologies can impact societies will be something we would be very keen to support.

Further to that, it is also important to recognise the work that is being undertaken in terms of the strengthening and the broadening of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, a piece of work that is being led by the Attorney-General but my department is engaged in the early consultation work with the justice department to ensure that again the changes that we make in terms of the progress of that particular piece of really important reform – we know that we need to strengthen and broaden that piece of legislation – are done in a way that takes community with us and does not have unintended consequences.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition, I think it was, that moved the adjournment motion today for the way in which he has raised this matter. As the Leader of the House has indicated, the house has an agenda set forward, but I am certainly happy to engage with members on either side of the house around our pathway forward on some of the issues that have been raised. I would be very happy to discuss with the relevant minister that is mentioned in the motion, the Minister for Education – I think it is the Minister for Training and Skills that is probably the relevant minister – about the subject matter in the motion that is preferred to be debated by those opposite.

Assembly divided on John Pesutto's motion:

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

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

Motion defeated.

Steve McGHIE (Melton) (11:32): I rise to contribute to the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Firstly, I just want to thank the minister –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Could members please leave the chamber quickly and quietly. I also ask members not to have conversations in front of the mace.

Steve McGHIE: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to extend my thanks to Minister D'Ambrosio for her work in this space. We know of the work that she has done over many years and what she has delivered to this house. It feels like every fortnight we are here talking about updating and modifying the legislation around energy and safety regulation, and that is a testament to the sheer volume of the work that not only the minister does but her office and her staff do. Of course we are coordinating the fastest transition from old technology to new and trying to make it as smooth as possible.

But before I talk further about the bill, I just want to make an acknowledgement of National Science Week. I do not want it to go unmentioned, and I think this is an opportunity. From our agritech farmers across the country to the sports scientists who help our athletes – we saw that in action last night with the Matildas, and what a fantastic effort it was, even though unfortunately they did not win – and the people that generate our electricity and the science behind that, and to those that are working in all the new technological evolution areas, including the mechanics that build our planes and cars and vehicles, and on all the innovative ways of protecting and prolonging our lives, we cannot thank our scientists enough in this country. We are very fortunate to have them and of course the next generation that is coming through in our science fields. So, thank you, in National Science Week.

I will go on to the legislation. This Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 is a comprehensive piece of legislation, and it is aimed at bolstering the regulatory framework for electricity and gas in Victoria. Through amendments to the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 and the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008 and its proposed modifications, it will provide increased safeguards for energy consumers and offer greater predictability for those participating in the energy market.

This bill will modify the National Electricity (Victoria) Act to establish specific controls for the retailer reliability obligation – the RRO. The RRO is activated when a projected electricity supply shortage of three or more years is identified, compelling retailers to secure sufficient electricity to fulfil consumer demand and encourage increased supply. The phrase ‘More renewables and more storage means more reliability’ – or MRAMSMR, as it is known in my office – is an important touchstone for our vision for a sustainable, dependable and resilient energy future. The RRO is the key component to ensuring the safety net for energy supply, and the RRO comes into play only when the market does not naturally respond to projected reliability gaps. As I say, it is a just-in-case mechanism in regard to the commitment to energy security. The RRO is a pivotal component of our national energy landscape and, again, in 2019 it emerged on the national stage. The power to trigger it was initially vested with the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), and if we move forward from 2019 to 2022 – which no doubt few people would like to remember – the trigger mechanism was extended to encompass state and territory energy ministers, marking a notable expansion in its scope. Of course the authority for the Victorian energy minister to initiate the RRO has already been incorporated into our national legislative framework.

The bill amends the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008, and it empowers the Australian Energy Regulator with higher penalties for non-compliance by participants in Victoria’s wholesale gas market. This aligns Victoria’s penalties with those in other east coast gas markets, and it deters non-compliance with regulations, safeguarding local energy consumers. It also includes minor revisions of the national gas act 2008 by updating references to the Essential Services Commission’s Gas Distribution System Code of Practice. That refinement ensures accurate interpretation of the code as stated in the national gas act 2008, enhancing clarity in the process.

Our commitment to ensuring transparency, accountability and fairness in energy decisions has led us to this point, the introduction of this Energy Legislation Amendment Bill. This proposed legislation is designed to infuse additional layers of decision-making criteria and consultation safeguards into Victorian law. It underscores our dedication to both energy consumers and market participants, and it gives us some confidence to have bills such as this and the extra layers of protection. The aim clearly is to instil confidence that any decision to activate the RRO is founded on justifiable grounds.

A key facet of this amendment involves meticulous consultation and extensive consultation before triggering any RRO. Of course the minister will engage in meaningful discussions with pivotal stakeholders. They can include representatives from AEMO, the Australian Energy Regulator, the Premier, the Treasurer and so on. By seeking input from these key stakeholders, we will ensure that the decision to activate the RRO is firmly rooted in the most current and relevant data available. Once it has been set in motion, we will go further than previous governments in ensuring transparency in all of our actions. A statement of reasons, obviously, will be made public. It will be publicly available. It

will be offering a comprehensive explanation for any decision taken, and the commitment to openness underscores our dedication to upholding accountability and fostering trust among all Victorians.

Our strides towards reliability are rooted in our government's robust energy agenda, one that has been born out of remarkable success. Our ambitious renewable energy targets have paved the way for transformative change and are setting the stage for investors. Our aim is to achieve 65 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2030 and a remarkable 95 per cent by 2035. That will be some achievement.

I just want to come back a bit and reflect on our track record. We have exceeded our 2020 renewable energy target of 25 per cent. Of course we have had to go back and increase our 2030 target from 50 per cent to an even more ambitious 65 per cent, and we have championed these targets with policies – good policies – that have actively encouraged the deployment of new renewable energy capacity. It is an amazing effort already achieved in this state. We have seen terrific results and very tangible results. The Victorian renewable energy target auctions have catalysed the creation of 800 megawatts of new capacity, and the second auction, VRET 2, will bring forth 623 megawatts of renewable generation and up to 365 megawatts of battery energy storage.

At the grassroots level – we should say at the rooftops level, not the grassroots level – the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program has empowered over 200,000 households to embrace rooftop solar, and we see, even driving around the different electorates and suburbs, how many houses are now fitting rooftop solar. It is amazing to see. I know, driving around my electorate, more and more households are installing that rooftop solar. Of course we have invested \$540 million for a Renewable Energy Zone Fund, and that is a fantastic effort in upgrading our grid to unlock further capacity.

This is a really important bill. It just adds to previous energy bills that the minister has introduced and implemented. Again, we are leading the way in this country in regard to energy and renewable energy, and I commend another great bill to the house.

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (11:42): I rise to make a contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. As has already been talked about, this puts in place a number of market mechanisms to help guarantee the supply of electricity into the future for Victorian consumers. Those on the other side of the house have been quite vocal in their self-praise about how they have managed the energy supply here in Victoria, in both electricity and gas, and been, I think, almost misleading about particularly the impact it has had on Victorian consumers. The policy decisions of the Andrews government are what have driven up the price of electricity and driven up the price of gas in Victoria to the point where –

Members interjecting.

Peter WALSH: No, the cost-of-living crisis is real. Those on the other side can laugh about families that are having to make decisions between paying their power bill, paying for their kids at school –

Belinda Wilson interjected.

Peter WALSH: No, some are laughing, and I think that is despicable. For a party that purports to represent working families to actually be laughing about the fact that people in Victoria are facing a cost-of-living crisis is wrong. The cost of energy has gone up. The cost of groceries has gone up. The cost of lots of things have gone up, and a lot of that comes back to policy decisions of the Andrews government and particularly the policy decisions around energy here in Victoria.

If you go back to when coal royalties tripled overnight, which is what led to the closure of Hazelwood, that was the start of some of these issues. It was a policy decision at that time by the Treasurer to triple coal royalties. That led Engie to make a decision to close Hazelwood, which took that supply out, and that has progressed on. There have been policy decisions that have meant that the production of coal-powered electricity is not as competitive at certain times in the market, so coal power generators are

making economic decisions to exit the industry sooner than they would have. That has put the pressure on to have more renewable energy. That has put the pressure on to build huge transmission lines across part of Victoria, and I will come back to that. So it is policy decisions of the government that drive these cost pressures that are going back onto Victorian families and onto Victorian businesses, because ultimately every decision that the government is making in this area goes into the bills that a household pays or into the bills that a business pays for delivery of the services for Victoria.

We talk about the increase in grocery costs for the average household. Food manufacturers and food producers here in Victoria are having a huge increase to the cost of their gas. A lot of food manufacturers use large quantities of gas. As their contracts run out – the protection they had under a contracted price for gas – you find their gas prices are doubling and tripling. That is flowing through to the price of groceries, as is the cost of electricity for those manufacturers as well, particularly when it comes to refrigeration and freezers. It is government policy decisions that are having a major impact on the cost of living for Victorians. There is a role for government in ensuring the provision of the basic needs to sustain a family, be it food, be it housing, be it health services, be it education or be it community safety, and one of those needs is to have the heating and cooling that people need to maintain their lives, and that is why it is so important to have guarantee of supply into the future.

My observation on this piece of legislation would be that it shifts responsibility from government to the generators – the suppliers – and the large users of power to make sure there is power into the future, whereas at one time that was an issue for government. No doubt at some stage there will be stress on the system given the way the system is evolving, and if there is not enough power under this, the government will point to the energy producers or will point to the large consumers and say, ‘This is your fault. It’s not our fault’. For the government to trigger the retailer reliability obligation, they will blame someone else. As we know, with the Andrews government it is always someone else’s fault why something goes wrong, and that is one of the concerns that I would raise with this legislation, although we are supporting the legislation because it is needed. It transfers some of the responsibility to ensure there is sufficient power supply here in Victoria from government to the energy producers and to the large consumers so that they have to have a plan in place to make sure there is enough power.

I come back to the issue with the increase in renewable energy production in Victoria and the east coast of Australia. There is this issue of needing new transmission lines or upgraded transmission lines to transmit that power to where it is needed to be consumed here in Victoria in our case, and that comes back to the VNI West proposal, which a number of my communities have grave concerns about. They do not believe that the government has gone through sufficient consultation with that community. They do not believe they have done the analytical work to justify the decision to build that particular project, which is going to cost something like \$5 billion. As I said before, that cost will go back to household power bills, and that is where I have a concern. Every decision that is made sounds great – a great engineering project that supposedly is going to generate all these jobs in the building of it – but it is ultimately the power consumers of Victoria that are going to pay for that particular project.

The concerns that have been raised with me from those in my electorate that are affected by this project are that they do not believe the minister has done enough analytical work to justify that project over some of the alternatives that are on the table, and that was the question that I asked the minister in this place on Tuesday following the demonstration out the front. One of the things that I noted with that demonstration is that there is now a new generation of younger farmers who are becoming very politically active because they see their livelihoods and their quality of life being threatened by policy decisions of the Andrews government and a lack of true analysis as to whether that is the best project to build or whether the proposal put forward by the Victorian Energy Policy Centre – the upgrade of the existing major transmission lines across north-west Victoria – would be far more economical and deliver a better outcome for power consumers in Victoria because there would be not the increase in the price of power due to the VNI West project. And it would have a more positive impact on the quality of life for people that live in regional Victoria because the powerlines would be where there are existing powerlines at the moment.

Emma Kealy: And more renewables.

Peter WALSH: And opening up for more renewables. I know in my community, particularly in Gannawarra shire, there are groups of farmers that are coming together and talking to the renewable energy companies and offering up their land to be part of this, and they need access to the transmission lines to be able to build those projects and feed it in. There is a strong view from regional Victorians that they want to be part of the future and part of the transition, but they want to be shown the respect and be talked to in a meaningful way about what this means, what is going to be in it for their community and what is going to be in it for them as businesspeople if these projects go through, and that is not happening.

I attended a forum at Wedderburn, where the Australian Energy Market Operator was a number of months ago. We raised some very pertinent questions about the technology and how this project was going to unfold, and the constant answer from the ‘gurus’ was, ‘This is too technical to explain to your farmers’. I explained to them that farmers are actually very practical, sensible people; if you show them the respect of talking to them in a sensible way, they will show you the respect of listening and making some value judgements. But when you are told it is too technical and you are not smart enough to understand it, that is the best way to get a farmer’s back up. When you want to access their land, you want to put a big powerline across their land and you want to drive across it every day for months and months or even years in building that particular project, I think they deserve the respect of proper consultation and they deserve the respect of being treated as intelligent people rather than just dumb farmers whose land you are going to put a powerline across.

This particular piece of legislation puts the onus back on the energy producers and the large energy consumers to make sure Victorians have power into the future. That is not a bad thing. But I think we have come to this situation because of previous policy decisions by the Andrews government that have led to the closure of power generation and have meant that we have not had the renewables and particularly have not had the transmission system in place in time to make sure we have enough power into the future. I dread the day we will have to close down industry to make sure we have enough power to keep the air conditioners and the refrigerators going here in Victoria. I dread the day when the bills are going to continue to rise and families in Victoria will be under more cost-of-living pressure than they ever have been.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (11:51): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. This is yet another important bill that we have had come out from the energy portfolio this week, one that will strengthen the electricity and gas regulation frameworks that apply in Victoria by amending the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 and the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008.

I would like to start by commending the Minister for Energy and Resources. As is obvious, energy reform has been a major priority for this government, and we all know how important clean, affordable and reliable energy for all Victorians is. I commend the minister again for bringing this bill forward today, and for the many initiatives that are being delivered for Victorians across the energy portfolio. Last sitting week there was the energy safety legislation, which I had the pleasure of contributing on, and it really seems that there is a steady flow of legislation coming through on energy reform, which is a testament to the hard work of the minister and her team and evidence that there are some really exciting announcements and developments taking place. We have seen some exciting and progressive announcements over the recent days and weeks. Certainly that includes the change to the residential gas connections and the interest-free loans for solar batteries, which I will touch on in just a moment.

I would like to first make the point again here that in Clarinda energy affordability is a major priority for so many families. It is something that is raised with me on a really consistent basis. The power saving bonus take-up data is evidence of that. Just sitting here in this chamber I have had a message from a missed call asking where is the website. I politely said that the fourth round is due on 31 August, so there will be a hurry getting there now. The current round is 31 August, and of course I was

delighted to see another round announced in the budget. The uptake has been amazing. The most recent data from 4 August shows more than 19,800 households in Clarinda alone have accessed the bonus, and we estimate there have been another 260 applications in just this week, pushing that up to 20,000, which is tremendous –

A member: Wow!

Meng Heang TAK: Yes, wow. That is over \$5 million to support families with the cost of living. So I am really proud of the work the Labor government is doing to help with the cost of living and to make energy more affordable for my constituents and for all Victorians, getting them the best deal on their home energy bills.

As I mentioned, there are also the changes to residential gas connections. We know across the world the cost of gas continues to increase, and in addition there is a great deal of uncertainty around supply. As we have heard, that combination of factors sees Victorians at the mercy of private companies exporting gas overseas, which has a real impact on the cost to Victorians at home. As such, in 2024 planning permits for new homes and residential subdivisions will only connect to all-electric networks, with houses taking advantage of more efficient, cheaper and cleaner electric appliances. This is a fantastic initiative that can be delivered at no extra cost to buyers and will slash around \$1000 per year off household energy bills or up to \$2200 for households that also have solar installed – such a saving for families with financial, cost-of-living challenges.

In other recent announcements we have made it easier for Victorians to maximise their solar panel generation with the new \$8800 interest-free loan for household batteries. Households with both solar and a battery could save up to \$1500 on their energy bills each year. A battery will more than double the amount of solar-generated energy consumed in the home, saving money on energy bills and helping Victoria reach net zero emissions by 2045. I have mentioned before that I have had a lot of interest in these announcements through my electorate office already, which is a positive step. It makes sense because it is a really exciting announcement. Loans are repayable over four years and in some cases will reduce up-front installation costs to zero. Loans will be available in addition to the \$1400 rebate and \$1400 interest-free loan for solar PV if a solar and battery system are installed at the same time, saving eligible households \$11,600 on up-front installation costs. That is a huge saving, and one that I am very proud that we are delivering, helping to make this program as accessible as we can. There are often out-of-pocket installation costs, but this is a really significant saving.

We will continue to stand by and deliver for all Victorians on energy reform, and the bill here today is just another example of that. The bill is an omnibus bill. The bill makes three major amendments, which the previous speaker on this side already alluded to, the first being an amendment to the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 to incorporate requirements, procedures and methodologies the responsible minister must comply with when making a T-3 reliability instrument under section 14JA of the National Electricity Law to trigger a retailer reliability obligation – the RRO ministerial trigger. Secondly, there are amendments to the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008 to improve the civil penalty arrangements for a breach of a declared system provision prescribed to be a civil penalty provision under the act. Finally, the bill changes outdated references to the gas distribution system code, which is now known as the Gas Distribution System Code of Practice.

These changes here before us today are mostly technical changes, but they are also welcome changes and ones that have had broad support across the many departments that have been engaged in the consultation process. I support these changes here today, once again. As mentioned, these amendments are mostly technical in nature, but they provide confidence to Victorians that the energy markets are working in their favour.

I would like to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward today and for the many initiatives that are being delivered for Victorians across the energy portfolio, particularly those around the cost of living. I am very proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government, which continues to support

families and individuals that need it in the current economic climate. We know the cost of living continues to be tough on families, and the budget builds on existing support to help with everyday bills. As mentioned, we have funded our fourth round of the power saving bonus, which is due to finish on the 31st of this month, with \$250 to help households pay their bills. The electricity discount and winter gas discount for eligible concession card holders are to be continued, as are the Victorian default offer and many others.

More broadly, there is free kinder for three-year-olds and four-years-olds, which will save families up to \$2500 per child each year. I know this has been a very welcome initiative. I have a young family, with my Sofia turning three in November this year, and it has come at a very good time. We are expanding free TAFE so that people with higher education qualifications will be able to train for free in skills shortage areas. These continue to be very important initiatives that provide relief where it is needed most, supporting individuals and families with the cost of living. I commend these initiatives, and I commend the bill to the house.

Darren CHEESEMAM (South Barwon) (12:01): It is with some pleasure that I rise this morning to make my contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I reflect on the elements of this bill but also the profound work that the Andrews Labor government has been putting into the great and significant challenge of decarbonising our economy. In reflecting on what we need to do to decarbonise our economy, we have to reflect on the historic realities in the Victorian economy, particularly in terms of the way that we have historically generated energy in this state. For a significant part of Victoria's history over the last 100-odd years the reality is that our competitive advantage came from having an abundance of relatively cheap energy. In fact it was a global strength of the Victorian economy. In the 1990s the Kennett government sought to exploit that advantage that the Victorian economy had by taking the opportunity to privatise the energy generation assets of this state, because they were on a course of wanting to privatise and sell off effectively everything that the Victorian government owned and operated to see profits go to shareholders of multinational companies.

Through that period of time, really back to the 1980s, the scientific community were equally starting to realise the challenges that the planet was facing from greenhouse emissions and what that would mean for the future. Now, under Labor governments – and I wish to acknowledge the Bracks government which in so many ways started this journey – there was great recognition that we needed to start partnering with global renewable energy companies to start the journey of generating electricity in this state, generating energy in this state in a way that would offset over time the energy that is produced by coal-fired power stations.

We have seen legislation brought to this place, to this Parliament and indeed to this chamber, over that period of time to put in place the legislative building blocks needed to generate certainty for the private sector to make that massive investment that needs to be made to generate renewable energy in this state. There is a whole lot of reform that we need to put in place to make sure that we have got literally the building blocks to help in that journey to get energy from windy parts of Victoria to consumers. With this Parliament, this government, and right back to the Bracks government, the necessary building blocks, the necessary investment and the necessary public policy have been put in place to enable us to take advantage of the opportunities to pivot to renewable energy and to offset the energy that has been generated historically by principally coal-fired power on the eastern side of the state, in Gippsland and places like that, and over time to pivot away equally from gas.

When you look at energy generation in this state and you compare the carbon emissions per energy unit generated in this state, the highest carbon footprint comes from brown coal. It is important that we in the very first instance pivot away from that, and we are on that journey. Once we have effectively offset that energy generated from brown coal, we need to then take up the next great challenge, which is gas. That is an important journey, but it is a secondary journey. The primary thing that we need to do is coal. But we are also recognising the opportunities to have energy generated in this state in the hands of individuals through having solar and batteries and other energy technologies at a household level, again recognising the opportunities to be investors and help drive down energy costs at the

household level. Our minister has done an enormous amount of work, as has the cabinet, as has the Parliament, through the leadership of the Premier, to make sure that we are putting in place those requirements, those opportunities, at a local level.

Globally right now, and it does not matter which country you go to – it does not matter whether it is Europe or North America or the Asia-Pacific region where we exist – there are huge inflationary pressures in the global economy. There are huge inflationary pressures particularly in the basket of inflationary measures that go to effectively energy. In part those inflationary pressures can be seen playing out as a consequence of the challenges that the Ukrainian people are facing in that conflict, and indeed that is fuelling inflationary issues right across the global economy that are playing out here in Victoria and playing out here in Australia.

Pleasingly enough, I think that whilst we have those pressures and those challenges we also as a government have a basket of government-led initiatives that are in place to help households, particularly given those inflationary contexts. Here in Victoria of course we have the power saving bonus, and that is something that has been taken up, I know, very strongly in my electorate. It has been taken up very strongly in the electorates of all of my colleagues, who have been out there promoting the opportunity to go online and to look for cheaper energy and to take advantage of the Andrews Labor government's \$250 power saving bonus. That power saving bonus is helping households right now whilst we have got these huge inflationary pressures in the Victorian economy. I certainly am very, very grateful for that work, and I encourage people to take it up. There are two weeks remaining in which people can go and take advantage of the current instalment of the power saving bonus. This is a long journey, but we are up for that challenge.

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (12:11): I rise, along with my colleagues, to support this and to also talk about our ongoing energy transformation. Like the member for Frankston, I am very glad to see that we are seeing that transition happen with those opposite, where we have got people starting to get on board and recognise the transition that we need to make. It is one thing to be conservative, but you do have to sometimes recognise that change has to happen, because if it does not, you will shrivel up. We have got to transform, we have got to change, which is exactly what we are doing. We need it for our energy reliability and we need it to keep down costs. This is incredibly important. Like the member for Frankston, I am happy to see that we are actually getting on with it and that those opposite are starting to get on board.

What we do not want to do is waste time talking about things like nuclear energy, which is what we have seen from the federal Liberal Party opposition. We have got Peter Dutton out there pushing for nuclear energy and gas to be central to any future government's energy strategy, and they expect to finalise this before the next federal election. I would caution the federal Leader of the Opposition against this. I think it is one of the many ways that they will see electoral ruination. I do not think there are many people in this country at all that want to see a transition to nuclear energy. We have even had those opposite talk about supporting nuclear energy recently in this place, with the exception of the member for Bulleen, who gave a very passionate speech opposing it. Nuclear energy is not quick to build. There are challenges with nuclear energy, such as waste removal and storage. Nuclear reactors just cannot be built in time for the transition that we need.

Rather than waste time with a nuclear pipedream, we have been investing in a clean energy transition, and this is happening right now. We have got our skates on. We are giving certainty for our economy and industry: 65 per cent of our electricity by 2030 will be renewable and 95 per cent will be renewable by 2035. We have been ambitious with our targets, and we absolutely need to be. If we are going to be a responsible government and if we are going to look after the economy of this state, this is something that we absolutely have to do.

One of the really important areas in which we are investing is batteries. We have got the 30-megawatt Victorian Big Battery, the largest lithium ion battery in the Southern Hemisphere, which took less than a year to build. This is in stark contrast with trying to build a nuclear reactor, which takes more than a

decade – and that is assuming you can even get the planning permits to do it. We are also building a 125-megawatt big battery with grid-forming inverters, which will be funded by \$119 million from our Renewable Energy Zone Fund; another 100-megawatt battery with grid-forming inverters in Terang, supported through our Energy Innovation Fund; and four batteries totalling 365 megawatts as part of the projects that were successful in the Victorian renewable energy target auction.

As I said earlier, the work we are doing in government is giving certainty to industry. That means that industry also wants to invest, and it is investing in our big batteries. They are developing and operating the 150 megawatt Hazelwood battery energy storage system, which opened in June, and the 350 megawatt Big Battery being developed by EnergyAustralia to support an orderly transition for the closure of the Yallourn coal-fired power station. Industry is getting on board because they know that not only is it the right thing to do, it is where the money is. It is where they are going to have economic certainty.

We are also going gangbusters when it comes to neighbourhood batteries. Victoria is also a leader in neighbourhood-scale batteries, providing nearly \$11 million via the neighbourhood battery initiative to explore the potential of technology and to implement projects that benefit Victorian energy users. We are also investing \$42 million to install 100 neighbourhood batteries across Victoria, improving energy reliability and providing vital storage capacity for local communities. Our first Victorian renewable energy target auction was the largest of its type in Australia when it launched and supported five projects, totalling 800 megawatts of new capacity. Our second auction will bring forward 623 megawatts of new renewable generation capacity and deliver up to 365 megawatts of new battery energy storage.

This is just what is happening with the big batteries. We have also got our Solar Homes program, which is a \$1.3 billion investment, delivering renewables at the household level, and we have already helped over 200 households access rooftop solar. This year rooftop solar has generated nearly five times the power generated by gas in Victoria, and it will keep growing as our 10-year Solar Homes Victoria program continues to roll out.

We have invested \$540 million from the Renewable Energy Zone Fund to upgrade our grid and unlock new capacity. These are all things that we have to do to ensure continuity of our energy supply but also support our economy. It is such an important investment, and it is astonishing that conservatives, who see fiscal responsibility as such an important part of who they see themselves to be, struggle to understand the full potential and capacity that is available through the renewable energy sector. As a result of these policies Victoria has more than tripled renewable energy generation since 2014, and it is something that we as a government should be incredibly proud of.

I do want to talk about what is happening around the rest of the world, which the member for South Barwon alluded to just before. Poland is the second-largest consumer of coal in Europe and the second-largest producer of coal, and it is phasing out coal – so too is Germany, which is the highest producer of coal. It has sped up phasing out coal. Brazil is the highest producer of coal in South America, and it is phasing out coal by 2040.

I just want to talk about Colombia, which is the second-highest producer of coal in South America. I will give an example. In February 2020 a small town called La Jagua de Ibirico in northern Colombia experienced dramatic economic and environmental change because their coal mine closed. As the pandemic sunk coal prices internationally, the international giant Glencore closed two coalmines in the area. Since the closure, the environment has improved. There is not coal dust. There is cleaner air. Birds have come back. But jobs have plummeted. Seven thousand workers from a workforce of 7300 lost their jobs, and contractors left town. Nearly 100 restaurants, cafes, hotels and other businesses have closed, the local branch of the country's biggest coal working union says. As a result, according to the town's mayor, the municipality has lost 85 per cent of its income. And why? Because they did not have a transition plan. Paola Yanguas Parra, policy and energy transition economist at the Technical University of Berlin's FossilExit Group, has said about Colombia:

What we've seen historically is that when transitions are not planned, the social, economic and cultural repercussions remain for years, and even decades ... It's extremely traumatic.

This is something that this government understood early on. That is why since 2014 we have been investing so heavily in renewables. We have been investing so heavily to ensure that we have a transition plan that will economically and environmentally support this state, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:19): I just want to say a few things on this Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023, not because I am particularly passionate about this piece of legislation but because I have been listening to parts of the contributions from the government members and I just want to place on record a couple of things when it comes to the energy transition. Many of those opposite are talking about it and wanting to highlight the wonderful things that apparently this government is doing. I have heard a number of them talk particularly about 'We're building' – 'we' as in the government – 'We're building this particular project' and 'We're building this particular battery'. I remind members opposite that most in cases it is not 'we'. It is not the government and it is not taxpayers that are building this stuff; it is in fact the private sector. They are doing it, yes, in the context of government policy, both state and federal, but they are doing it because they see the opportunities from the commercial sphere.

The second thing that annoys me, and I know it annoys my constituents, is there is so much talk, particularly from the government and from their friends the Greens up the back, about this transition.

A member interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: Yes, I thought that might get a mention. But everything that happens with this transition happens out there. It happens out there somewhere else, not in the electorates of Mordialloc, South Barwon, Eltham or any of those. It happens to people in my electorate in the Gippsland South area, in the area of Narracan or in the area of Polwarth. To take it to the nth degree and the actual specifics, when it comes to renewable energy, most particularly wind farms, this government has specifically precluded wind farms from being established in all the areas that the government represents – the Bass Coast, the metropolitan area, the Yarra Valley, the Mornington Peninsula, the Bellarine Peninsula.

Members interjecting.

Danny O'BRIEN: Along the coast there are one or two exceptions. I can see the member for Ripon and the member for Wendouree, but I have not heard those members speak on this issue today. Maybe they have. Constantly we are told that all of these wonderful things are happening, but no-one ever mentions the locals involved in those areas. They do not mention the people in the coal-fired power stations who are going to lose their jobs or who have lost their jobs. They do not mention the people that are having to deal with wind farms. Whether you like them or not, the fact is they divide rural communities because you end up with haves and the have-nots and people that have to put up with the visual intrusion and the noise and the like. They do not talk about the transmission lines. I do not think I have heard anyone mention the transmission lines, despite the fact that we literally had tractors on the front steps of Parliament this week.

Now, these are all things that happen. Whether you have got renewable energy, whether you have got nuclear energy or whether you have got coal, you need transmission lines, and it is not easy. But I would like the government to just sometimes acknowledge that there are people out there, and they are predominantly in the rural and regional areas of the state, that actually host this infrastructure, that actually run these power stations, that actually put up with the wind turbines and that actually have to deal with all these transitions and changes that the government likes to talk about but does not take any responsibility for.

I was at a meeting last Wednesday night at the Giffard West hall with VicGrid. To their credit VicGrid were there talking to the locals about their plans. There are a lot of people who are very stressed there.

They have already got dry conditions coming on them. They had Basslink come through 20 years ago, and there was a campaign that they ultimately lost when trying to stop the pylons there. Now they have got another one. They have got uncertainty about what is happening with the offshore wind industry and where the transmission lines might go to connect that up. It would just be nice if the government members acknowledged that all of this wonderful renewable energy and this transition that is all so great – ‘We’re great. We’re doing this, and we’re doing that’ – have an impact on people. Not everyone gets caught up in the emotion and the joy of what is coming.

I missed the opportunity last sitting week, but, member for South Barwon, it is Star of the South, not star of the sea, and it is off Gippsland, not off the Bass Coast. It is off the Gippsland South coast. This is exactly the sort of thing I am talking about. We hear government members talking about all these wonderful things that their policies are driving, but they do not understand the locations, for a start, and they certainly do not understand the impacts on people.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (12:24): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Our electricity system is undergoing a fundamental technological transformation as ageing and increasingly unreliable coal-fired generators exit the market. As those dated fossil fuel dependent generators are increasingly being replaced by cheaper renewable energy, we must ensure that as a state government we enable a smooth transition from the old technology to the new. We must also support the introduction of measures as part of this transition that ensure that the lights stay on through this whole process, and these are measures that support new renewable capacity to come online in time for the closure of those coal-fired power generators.

In Victoria these measures include strong renewable energy targets and programs such as the Victorian renewable energy target auctions, our \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program and the \$540 million Renewable Energy Zone Fund. These, along with other landmark renewable energy investments across wind and solar generation, will play leading roles in helping us as a state to combat climate change and decarbonise our economy as we strive to reach net zero emissions, including a 45 per cent to 50 per cent carbon reduction target on 2005 levels by 2030 and a 75 per cent to 80 per cent carbon reduction target by 2035. These ambitious targets build on the Andrews Labor government’s record to date, having already cut the state’s carbon emissions by 32.3 per cent below 2005 levels, with Victoria decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country, cutting its emissions by more than any other state since 2014.

This is in very stark contrast to what the member for Gippsland South mentioned earlier, and it is in very stark contrast indeed to the former federal Liberal government, who had a Prime Minister bring a lump of coal into federal Parliament, and to a state Liberal Party who took to the last election an energy policy built on expanding the role of fossil fuel – coal and gas-fired power generation – a policy that was overwhelmingly rejected by the Victorian people.

A member interjected.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Done. They rejected it. Irrelevant.

However, building on Labor’s record, this government continues to take real action that people voted for to deliver new renewable energy and zero emissions technology across the state, including by bringing back the State Electricity Commission, the SEC – the member for Narracan, there he is – which will be the key driver in reducing emissions and bringing down power bills through a \$1 billion initial investment into renewable and government-owned energy.

The Victorian Labor government has committed to ensuring that all Victorian government operations will be powered with 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2025, and we are also working towards reaching Victoria’s new renewable energy targets, which include powering the state’s energy grid with 65 per cent renewables by 2030 and 95 per cent renewable energy by 2035. These are ambitious yet realistic targets that are built on this government’s real and credible record when it comes to delivering clean energy across this state – you will never hear this from those opposite – because our 25 per cent renewable energy target by 2020 has now well and truly been achieved. We are on track to achieving

it. We are on track – 25 per cent renewables already. This again is in very stark contrast to the federal Liberal opposition, who under Peter Dutton now have committed to going down the path of nuclear power, and to a state Liberal opposition who at the last election also committed to expanding onshore gas exploration and development – fracking. Unbelievable! However, along with Labor’s landmark policy measures that are moving us towards this renewable energy and sustainable future, it is also the smaller policy measures that play just as important a role and ensure that the right rules are in place to improve our energy reliability as we strive to decarbonise our economy and our energy sector. In this context, that is why this bill, which has three components, is so important.

Firstly, this bill adds decision-making criteria to the Victorian legislation in the event that the minister for energy triggers the retailer reliability obligation. Secondly, the bill enables alignment of penalties applied to Victorian gas market participants with those in other jurisdictions. And thirdly, the bill changes outdated references to the gas distribution system code, which is now known as the Gas Distribution System Code of Practice. These amendments are largely technical in nature but provide confidence to Victorians that energy markets are working in their favour, particularly as the energy market continues to transition towards 95 per cent renewables by 2035.

There is so much more I can say on this bill. One last thing I just want to wrap on, actually, is around the fact that all of our investments are playing a leading role in encouraging more young people and students to want to take up studies in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Fifty-nine thousand jobs are going to be created through the SEC, and I was so proud that earlier this week, on Monday, I was here to welcome girls from Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College as part of Science Week celebrations in state Parliament. These are young women and girls studying the STEM subjects who came here in the context of Science Week being about space exploration, of all things, and their project was on exploring Mars and debating a bill in this house which was about the industries the government should take to Mars should we establish a colony there.

But my message to them was that the more we explore space, the more we understand the nature of our solar system, the reality is the more we realise how precious life on Earth is. We are the only intelligent life form in the universe, as far as we know, and that is why combating climate change is so important. That is why delivering clean and renewable energy is so important, because we have got to protect our environment, we have got to protect our planet and we have got to create the jobs of the future for the students coming through in STEM subjects. In that regard, I commend the bill and I look forward to further debate.

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:30): I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned until later this day.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

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

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (12:31): From colonising Mars to improving Wallan, I am so happy to speak about the 2023–24 budget and the improvements and industry that we are bringing there. I am inspired to do so by the presence of the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Suburban Development, the member for Kalkallo, who I am so pleased to work with to deliver a major feature of the 2023–24 budget: the delivery of the Watson Street interchange and road improvements for the communities of Wallan East and Wallan proper, which we share. This project is going to be a game changer. What I want to stress today is that

this was included in the 2023–24 budget, and you know what – works are underway. The planning is underway. We have engineers onsite making technical assessments. We have traffic modelling underway, and the project manager herself, Suki, has been in the community engaging with the community to understand what is important to them in the development of these ramps. Now, how great is it that our community can speak directly to the project manager and have their views taken into account in the finalised designs of this project? When I asked the project manager what the common themes were of the feedback she was receiving, the main theme was please do it quickly. There is nothing the member for Kalkallo and I would agree with more, and that is why we are working so hard to make sure this feature of the 2023–24 budget is turned into a reality as soon as possible. There had been an earlier hiccup as we waited for the former federal government to release funding – when they had not committed enough for the project – but now that we have our good partners in Canberra and now that the state government has been able to commit funding to the project, it is getting there, so I would like to reassure the people of Wallan that this project is a big priority for me and the member for Kalkallo, and we will see that one through.

The reason people want the road is because they have got places to go, and some of the places people are going to is schools. I was also very pleased that we were able to announce that Wandong Primary School and Whittlesea Secondary College will also be upgraded as part of the 2023–24 budget. We have got smart students in our area, and we want them to be supported with great facilities. We have got dedicated teachers in our area, and we want them to have the ease and comfort of the facilities they need to deliver the best quality education for the children of the north.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (12:34): I take this opportunity to rise on the take-note motion for the 2023–24 budget papers. Three months ago the budget was delivered. A lot has changed, actually, since the budget, and I will get to that in a minute. First, I will start with just a few little bits and pieces from Nepean. In earlier debate, another piece that was mentioned – he is not here anymore, but the member for Pascoe Vale said the budget was endorsed right across the state. Well, it certainly was not in Nepean, otherwise the previous member would still be sitting on the other side of the chamber. For Nepean, in the budget there are a few bits and pieces for some school funding. I note that there is some planning funding for Eastbourne Primary –

Darren Cheeseman interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for South Barwon is not in his seat.

Sam GROTH: Thank you, Deputy Speaker – which is fantastic. Eastbourne Primary is definitely in need of an upgrade. What I will say, though, is that planning funding is not going to assist students. The school needs the funding to be delivered ASAP. You cannot store your PE equipment in a plan or play at recess in a plan. You cannot write or draw with a plan. While I do welcome the investment in funding, I want to see some action. Also when you talk about schools, Rye Primary need a couple of hundred thousand, and there was \$42,000 in this budget. You know, if a playground costs \$200,000 to build and there is only \$42,000 in the first year, I am not sure when the other \$160,000-odd is coming and how it is going to be used.

I also note that there was \$6.9 million across four projects in Victoria for piers. Dromana Pier was promised \$10 million at the last election. \$6.9 million for four projects is a long way short of the \$10 million this government promised for Dromana Pier, so I am hoping that in future budgets the rest of that funding will come through for the community in Dromana. I will also note that the major projects that we advocated for during the election campaign down there – some of the major projects that are desperately needed, such as Rosebud Hospital, which I have mentioned numerous times in this chamber – did not receive any funding in the budget. So health care is once again neglected on the southern peninsula.

As well there is no funding for the Jetty Road overpass, which has had \$75 million of federal funding sitting on the table for going on five years now. There is still no funding to commit to that project for

those constituents in the Rosebud and the further southern peninsula area. I mean, it is a debacle of an intersection at the end of the freeway. I am sure many members in the chamber from both sides have travelled that road at some stage and know that, especially during the busy parts of the year, that intersection is in much need of an upgrade and the extension. There is also no money for sound barriers down the Mornington Peninsula Freeway. It is one of the only metro freeways – incredibly it is metro – left in Melbourne that does not have any noise abatement or anything to stop the sound. Those residents have been, since 2018, when studies were done by VicRoads, living with noise that is well over the decibel threshold for something to be done, and it actually is detrimental. Noise at that level has been shown to actually cause things like early dementia and Alzheimer's and such, so I encourage the government to keep looking at doing something about those sound issues along the freeway.

More broadly, we have seen in this budget an increase in taxes – when you think about the rental tax, the payroll tax, the schools tax. And this government has set a fairly ambitious housing agenda that they keep talking about, but when you start to look at sending houses or trying to help those people who need houses, either affordable places to buy or to rent, increasing land tax on those properties – I have got 5500-odd properties on the long-term rental market, and I will say that on the southern peninsula the Airbnb versus long-term rental situation is a delicate one. I have a huge number of Airbnb properties that do drive a lot of that tourism industry that my community so much relies on. When you have 5500 rentals at the moment and you talk about the Airbnbs, driving land taxes up, which those landlords are just going to pass on to their renters, is not going to drive more houses to the long-term market. It is actually going to turn people away from putting their houses on the long-term market as they try to recover some of the losses that they have made. And when you talk about interest rate rises and those sorts of things, an extra tax, for most people, is not going to send any more properties back to the long-term rental market.

Since the budget we have already seen other states poaching and pitching for business to take their interests interstate. We have seen South Australia and Tasmania both pitching, because of the extra tax on payroll, saying, 'Come and do business in our state. Send business over here. We'll look after you. It's going to cost you less'. We do not want to see that. We do not want to see business leaving this state. We want to make this state the best place to do business, not by increasing their taxes but by encouraging people. We should not be taxing payroll. We should not be putting an extra tax on jobs. We should be doing everything we can to make it an attractive place to grow your business to employ more people, not the other way around.

The big one, though, that we have seen over the last few weeks – it was mentioned in the budget papers, only to be cancelled eight weeks later – is the Commonwealth Games. How can you have a budget that budgets \$2.6 billion for the Commonwealth Games and eight weeks later see an increase of up to \$5 billion and then all of a sudden the price tag is \$7 billion for something that was going to be a 12-day event? Having had lots of conversations with ministers and the department and briefings over the last few weeks since that cancellation, I am not sure the government has a plan on how they are going to get out of this in any way that is going to deliver for regional Victoria. We hear about a billion dollars for housing. The department is not taking any responsibility. It is handing that off to somebody else and saying, 'Well, we're still working through those'.

I am not sure how they are going to deliver what is supposed to be 14 sporting legacy projects across those regional hubs. We have in the last few days been told it will have a price tag of around \$500 million but as long as those projects meet the budget they will be delivered. There is no guarantee on those projects or what level they are going to be delivered to. Are they going to be delivered to an international standard like they were going to be for the games, or are they going to be wound back now to fit within what the government calls an 'infrastructure legacy spend'? There are a lot of questions around that. For these communities we have to be listening. I understand there were certain projects that would have had to be delivered for the Commonwealth Games and that would have made sense because we were delivering a games, but now we need to go back to those communities and make sure that they are being given pieces of legacy infrastructure that they need.

Michaela Settle: And we are. We have got consultation booked across all of the regions.

Sam GROTH: I glad we have an expert on the other side on this. It is incredible that the member knows when yesterday the department themselves did not know what they are doing. If the member has information that the department does not, I would be incredibly keen to hear what that information is, because the department says they do not have that information yet.

Members interjecting.

Sam GROTH: Can I continue? Are you excited? Sounds it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair. Without assistance.

Sam GROTH: Overall this is an awful budget for Victoria. If this government had not blown the budget and got our debt out to \$170 odd billion – we are paying \$15 million a day in debt, and it is going to rise to \$22 million a day. I would love all the members on the other side just to acknowledge what their communities could do with \$15 million a day. \$15 million a day in one month in my community would build the hospital, would build the intersection, would build the pier, would fix Flinders Pier, would fix the roads with the potholes and would build every school that we need to have fixed. If they cannot acknowledge that their financial mismanagement has driven this state to a place where we cannot afford to build things, we cannot afford to deliver events that we have committed to – if those on the other side think that we are doing things well in this state with the current level of debt, then I think they need to go and take a good hard look in the mirror. This is one of the worst budgets this state has ever seen. While there are little bits for my community in there, there is a lot missing, and there is a lot more to be done.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (12:43): It is a delight to be able to take note of this great Labor budget. If you go back in time to the depths of the pandemic, the government set itself four key targets. The first was to stabilise the economy and to grow the economy, and since that time we have created in the order of 450,000 jobs. The second focus was to look at having a cash surplus in the general government sector, and we are on track. I think we have secured that in the recent financial year. The third phase was about having an operating surplus in the general government sector, and that is projected at the end of the forward estimates. Then beyond that it was about stabilising debt. If you look at the budget papers, you see that debt as a proportion of gross state product is getting close to stabilising. It is not quite there yet, but it is pretty close. The metrics that we are on are really strong and solid. The Victorian economy is incredibly strong and robust, as we saw.

I note the member for Nepean's contribution. I appreciate the fact that he was not here in the last term, but when you are confronted with the greatest economic crisis the state or the nation has seen since the Great Depression, you can turn around and say we will adopt the Sir Otto Niemeyer plan which was imposed on governments during the Great Depression, which is that governments need to act like a household budget – when you do not have any money coming in, you cut all expenditure and you try and basically pull everything back. All that did, in terms of the Great Depression –

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, you cannot use the word 'you'. That is a reflection on the Chair.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is correct. I appreciate there is some context, but yes, 'you' is reflecting on the Chair.

Danny PEARSON: Well, it is always a delight when new members start reading up on the standing orders. I will give credit there, through the Chair. So in that particular case, what you had happen was that public sectors and governments around the world started to withdraw and not invest in communities. As we saw, that resulted in the rise of fascism and led to what was a minor economic contraction in 1927 becoming a full-blown depression.

At the time – and the member for Gippsland East was certainly here; he predates me – as a government we were faced with that situation. Well, we could either recreate the mistakes which were made in the 1930s, or we could recognise the fact that we were in this situation where we could use our state budget to support household budgets. That is a strategy that we used, that is a strategy which the Morrison government used and it is a strategy that the Biden government used. It is a case where you turn around and say we can gaze out over years and decades, long beyond the forward estimates, to think about how we can try and use our budget as a shock absorber for the economy. How can we try and make sure that the economy is well supported to be able to get through difficult times? We know that times will turn and that times will improve, and at that point on we can start to repay that debt. That is why the Treasurer has established the Victorian Future Fund, a future fund that is holding the receipts of various long leases and co-investments which will allow the opportunity to try and service that debt and pay it down. We made those necessary investments; we provided \$11 billion worth of support for Victorian businesses at a time when they needed it.

I think in terms of this budget, it reflects the fact that we are in a really strong position, but equally we do have to recognise the fact that we took on all this extra debt at a time when we needed to and we need to try and pay it back. Now, we do not have the benefit that the Commonwealth government has in terms of getting corporate tax returns through company tax rates. We do not have the benefit of the Western Australian government in terms of mining royalties, nor of the fact that they have got what can only be described as a very unfair GST allocation that is in their favour. But nonetheless we are in this position where we have got a really strong, robust economy. If you look at the unemployment rate, I think –

Darren Cheeseman: Record lows.

Danny PEARSON: Well, my good friend the member for South Barwon would know the regional unemployment rate – 2.8 per cent, 2.9 per cent. I mean, you almost have to go back to the gold rush to see an unemployment rate that low. So the economy is really humming along beautifully, and the budget really ensures that we are in a very strong position to build on those strengths.

Certainly from my perspective as the Minister for Government Services, I am really excited about the money that we are investing in terms of Service Victoria. We have provided tens of millions of dollars – I think if you look at it overall, it is around about \$120 million – to digitise and improve services. Not all of that is going to government services or to Service Victoria, but we are starting to onboard more and more transactions onto that platform and into the Service Victoria wallet. We have got the working with children check card and the Ambulance Victoria card. We have got the seniors card coming on board, as well as the veterans card that has recently been launched. I am really excited that, in terms of Ballarat, we have got the launch of the digital drivers licence, which I know the member for Eureka is very excited about –

Michaela Settle: I've got one.

Danny PEARSON: You have already got one. It is a great user experience. So this is all about trying to find ways in which we can more efficiently deliver services to the community. I think that when we start to onboard more and more of these transactions – Service Victoria has now got well over 100 transactions you can perform on that application – we will improve the quality of service and we will ensure that there is a consistent level of service provided to the citizens.

The Service Victoria app has been downloaded about 1.4 million times. It has got a really high satisfaction rating; it is like 95 to 97 per cent. We can start to onboard more and more of these transactions because we want to ultimately be in a position where we can improve the user experience and we can improve the citizen experience. That means that as a government we can reallocate resources where they are needed most. If you think about that for a moment, what does it mean? Well, it means that we can start to put money towards people who may be digitally illiterate or who may not feel comfortable using the internet or a digital app for their health and solutions.

An example of that is we are putting \$51.4 million into public libraries. Our public libraries – and I appreciate that that is a portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Local Government – do a fantastic job. They really are incredibly important in terms of presenting an opportunity to deal with people who do not have the opportunity to use the internet or use a digital solution effectively. I think these sorts of investments really help to improve that experience. It is about sort of segmenting the community so that people who are digital natives and people who are early adopters – people who are fluent and conversant in digital technology – can have a consistent level of service through the app, but we can then reallocate resources to people who do not have that. The public libraries present a really great opportunity for trying to do that and doing that well.

I am really pleased that we are allocating \$30 million to the Business Acceleration Fund. Again, this is about making sure that we can do process redesign to make sure that regulation can be appropriate and rolled out and administered in the most efficient and effective way possible. These investments are important. Usually in the past when we did this the return on investment was in the order of, I think, about 10 or 12 to 1. Where you can try and make it easier for business to be able to comply with the laws of the state and do so in an efficient and an effective way, that is a really good thing.

If you go back historically and you go back to the 1990s, it was all about deregulation. There were ministers for deregulation. Maybe if you had come out of the 1970s and 1980s, when there was a pretty tightly prescriptive regulatory regime in place across the country, that might have been appropriate. But it is more about better regulation now. It is more about understanding that we need to have regulation in place. We have seen what happens when you have regulatory failure. We have seen examples like Porter Davis, where we have just basically had shonk operators, rogue operators, behaving in the most egregious of ways. So we need to make sure that there is regulation in place, but how can we structure it to be better? How can we make sure that it is more efficient and more effective and services the needs of the community? These things are incredibly important, and I think that with the \$30 million that we are allocating, we will ensure that we are in a really strong position there.

I also note the fact that we have looked at providing \$1.2 million to specialist financial counselling services. I will be careful in what I say now because I do not want to identify an individual, but I was at a sporting event recently. A woman came up to me and she said, 'I'm sorry to disturb you on a Saturday. I need to talk to you.' I said, 'That's fine. I'm working.' She talked to me in a very graphic way about the way in which she had been treated by her estranged, abusive partner. He had conducted himself in such a way that, despite the fact that it would appear that they were from means and had a comfortable life and a comfortable existence – she was wearing really nice clothes, she spoke very well and she was very articulate – she was facing homelessness because of the abuse. She said it was not physical. She said, 'He never touched me. There were no bruises.' But it was the controlling nature of the abuse and the fact that she was facing the prospect of being homeless. She did not know where to turn. She said, 'Can you help me?' I think that putting in this money for specialist financial counselling services is incredibly important, because we know that in many cases with family violence it is about control and it is about power, and we know that perpetrators of family violence often use financial abuse as a form of abuse. It is one of the tools that they use to abuse their spouses. That is why having an investment like this is so incredibly important, because the state does need to intervene. The state does need to be active in this space. The state does have a role to play. We can try and provide those levels of support that victims of family violence need.

In terms of Essendon, this budget acquitted many of the commitments we took to the election. I am super excited about the fact that we will be having a community battery in the City of Moonee Valley. That is going to present a really great opportunity to be able to take off some of that excess power and store it to be used later by the community. I know certainly parts of my community are incredibly excited about what this could do in terms of reducing their carbon footprint and what it will do in terms of tackling climate change. Essendon Primary School is one of the oldest primary schools in the state. I think it was founded in around about 1860, right next door to Windy Hill. The community there have been advocating very firmly for a new playground, and we have provided \$2.6 million in funding for

that. That is something I am really looking forward to working with the community on as we start to co-design, build and develop this fantastic piece of infrastructure.

I think we have gotten much better as a community and as a society. Deputy Speaker, you and I are of a similar age – it did not matter which school you went to, they were all the same. They were all procured in the same way, with the same architectural fit, the same look and the same feel, always with the zigzag structure that was holding up the ceiling. We have gotten better as a society and community. We co-design and work with our communities better. We understand the fact that if you look at Cranbourne, if you look at Essendon or if you look at Ashwood, they are all very different communities, and the infrastructure that we deploy and develop in those communities needs to reflect the aspirations of those communities. So in my case I am really looking forward to working with the community.

A big shout-out to Peter Moore. He is the principal of St Monica's Primary School. We will be providing \$2 million in funding for the new foundation classrooms at that school. Those classrooms were built in 1917. They are not fit for purpose. There are foundation students at that school who have got issues in relation to access and egress at that building, and so this investment I think is going to be really important. Peter has done a fantastic job as the principal at that school in really supporting, nurturing and encouraging that community. From my perspective, being able to provide that funding will be incredibly important.

I am pleased that we will be providing \$100,000 in funding to the Moonee Valley Legal Service. I want to give a shout-out to Helene McNamara, who recently lost her husband Jim Cusack, who had been on the board at the Moonee Valley Legal Service for many years. The legal service provides a really important role in supporting people down at Ascot Vale, particularly those who live on the Wingate Avenue public housing estate. They deal with many issues, and they do really important work providing essential legal services to people who need them the most, when they need them. In addition to this, I am pleased that we will be providing \$300,000 to the Fanny Street Reserve bike track and \$400,000 to a bike park in Flemington. This budget is a Labor budget, and this budget reflects the values –

Sam Groth interjected.

Danny PEARSON: Yes, you are right. It is. That is why we won, and that is why this is the first time a government in this state's history has increased its margin at three successive elections. That is what happened, and that is why we have got the strong support of the community.

Members interjecting.

Danny PEARSON: No. I was making a point, member for Nepean, that the election occurred before the budget. What I am saying is that this budget reflects the community's aspirations and hopes. It is instructive of the fact that we have increased our majority every time we have gone to the people, because this reflects the hopes and the aspirations of the people of Victoria. It is why we command a two-thirds majority in this place. It is something I am incredibly proud of. It reflects the times which we are in, it ensures that we are on a really strong, stable footing to chart the waters that lay before us and it is something I am incredibly proud of. I know the people of Essendon are going to love to see the rollout of this budget and the delivery of these projects across the forward estimates. It is a great time to be alive. It is a joy.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (12:58): Acknowledging that we will be going to lunch in a fairly short time –

A member: You do your best work in 2 minutes.

Tim BULL: Yes, I do, but I will take a little bit longer on this occasion, honourable member. I was one of the few members on this side who had the opportunity to speak on the original budget reply, so I will use this take-note motion on the 2023–24 budget to provide, I guess, a little bit more of a timely update, with a few months having transpired since that time. The first issue that I want to touch on, which I will go into in more depth after the break, is the abhorrent decision to end our native timber

industry. What has transpired since then, with the lack of information that has gone to impacted families, workers and communities in relation to what is going to be going on in the next few months before they lose their employment, and the lack of access to information that they have had? As I said, I will go into more detail on that after the break, but it is a very, very worrying issue for a lot of people within my community of East Gippsland and the other Gippsland electorates that are impacted.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Members

Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Absence

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:01): I rise to inform the house that for question time today the Minister for Industry and Innovation will answer questions for the portfolios of transport and infrastructure and the Suburban Rail Loop.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Commonwealth Games

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Health. Last month, in relation to the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, the minister said:

Tough decisions have to be made when you're in government ... this was a tough decision, but it was the right decision ...

The Premier stated in relation to the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games:

I've made a lot of difficult calls, a lot of very difficult decisions in this job. This is not one of them.

Why was it a tough decision for the minister?

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Speaker, I am not quite sure how the question from the member for Nepean relates to my portfolios as health minister, health infrastructure minister or medical research minister, and I ask that you ask him to rephrase his question so that it relates to one of my portfolios.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, I understand why the minister would take a point of order to avoid answering a question in relation to her own quote. The question related to a statement the minister has publicly made. I am not sure how the minister is not responsible for her own words as minister.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question does not relate to the minister's portfolio responsibilities. However, the minister can choose or choose not to answer the question. Alternatively, the member for Nepean may rephrase his question to make it relevant to the minister's portfolios.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer! Does the member for Nepean wish to rephrase his question?

John Pesutto: On the point of order, Speaker, the question relates to comments the minister herself made as a member of the cabinet. She is a member of the cabinet. She was a decision-maker in the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games. She has, as a minister, made comments on the public record. Are we to understand – with respect, Speaker – that we cannot ask a minister in this government about the basis of comments they make on the public record?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Tarneit, you can leave the chamber for 90 minutes.

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: Under *Rulings from the Chair*, Leader of the Opposition, a member may only ask a question relating to a minister's current responsibility. However, if the member for Nepean would like to redirect his question to the Premier in relation to it being a cabinet decision, I am happy for that.

Sam GROTH: Thank you, Speaker, for that direction. My question is to the Premier. Last month in relation to the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, the Minister for Health, as part of your cabinet, stated:

Tough decisions have to be made when you're in government ... this was a tough decision, but it was the right decision ...

The Premier stated in relation to the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games:

I've made a lot of difficult calls, a lot of very difficult decisions in this job. This is not one of them.

Do you agree that this was a tough decision for the Minister for Health?

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Daniel Andrews: On a point of order, Speaker – he was famous for his first serve, but his second serve is nowhere near as good – the question directly asked for an opinion, and that is against the standing orders.

James Newbury: On the point of order, Speaker, the rephrased question clearly asked the Premier, who is responsible for his administration, about a comment made by a minister under his responsibility.

The SPEAKER: Order! I rule the question out of order. It was asking for an opinion, therefore I will rule it out of order. There is no opportunity for a supplementary question.

Ministers statements: Vietnam Veterans Day

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:08): Tomorrow Victorians and indeed Australians will commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day. It is an opportunity for us to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of 60,000 Australians and of course their partners, their families, their kids and grandkids for their dedicated service in the defence of freedom in what was, until Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, our longest overseas deployment – our longest war. 521 Australians made the ultimate sacrifice and more than 3000 were injured. It is a matter of record that this was a controversial deployment, a controversial conflict and war, and those veterans, those brave men and women, were not treated well upon their return. In fact shamefully they were treated very, very badly.

Tomorrow presents us with another solemn opportunity, an important obligation, to attend functions down at the Shrine and in the centre of our city and state but also at many local functions. It is significant because of those who died, and it is significant because of those who were wounded and because of the toll that their families carry and the burden that the broader veteran community carry each and every day because of this war. It is made acutely more difficult by the way in which they were treated upon their return. We have all, I think, tried to make amends for that through various commemorations and formal apologies delivered by our government. Tomorrow will be another solemn occasion for all of those reasons, and of course it marks the 50th anniversary of the end of that war. To every Vietnam veteran, to their partners, to their families and to them as a community, I say thank you. We honour your service and sacrifice, and tomorrow I will be humbled, as I have been on many occasions, to be with those brave men and women as we commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day.

Commonwealth Games

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:10): My question is to the Premier. The Deputy Premier was stripped of the ministerial responsibility for the Commonwealth Games on 20 July. Given that compensation negotiations for the games that will not be held are still ongoing, why did the Premier strip the Deputy Premier of her responsibilities for the Commonwealth Games?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:10): Firstly, thank you to the member for Caulfield for his question. The Commonwealth Games delivery – well, they are not being delivered because they have been cancelled. Just as the Minister for the Commonwealth Games Legacy –

John Pesutto: You've still got to mop up the mess.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition, you have asked your question. Order!

Daniel ANDREWS: And if ever I needed advice on mopping up mess, you would be the first person I would call.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the members at the table to show some respect to the Chair.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, Speaker, the point was made about mopping up mess. The Leader of the Opposition is a mess, and his colleagues will soon mop him up. Instead of playing games –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, question time is not an opportunity to debate, as the Premier was, the issue, and I would ask you to bring the Premier back to the matter.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Premier to come back to the question that was asked.

Daniel ANDREWS: The Leader of the Opposition is on the record indicating that he would make the same decision in these circumstances.

John Pesutto: If confronted with your mess, yes. But you created the mess.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition! Order!

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like the Premier to be heard in silence.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Essendon used a completely unparliamentary term, and I would ask you to ask him to apologise and withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Was the unparliamentary term directed at you, Manager of Opposition Business?

James Newbury: I am sure it was, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Assistant Treasurer to withdraw.

Danny Pearson: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: I would ask members to cease interjecting. I will remove members without warning.

Daniel ANDREWS: Negotiations are ongoing in relation to these matters, and we will not say or do anything that would cut across those negotiations. It was appropriate that for the two ministers who served without salary because they are ministers for other portfolios, when the decision was made to

no longer host the games in 2026, those ministerial commissions were resigned to the Lieutenant-Governor, and that happened.

John Pesutto: To protect them from questions.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, no, not at all. And I am not taking lectures on protection from the Leader of the Opposition.

John Pesutto interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Again, honestly, the Leader of the Opposition constantly interjects. If you want to ask me a question, get up, find the courage to do it and do it. Get up and do it instead of yap, yap, yap, yap, yap.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Caulfield on a point of order. Leader of the Opposition, I would ask you to cease interjecting across the table again.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, if I could ask you to direct the Premier to answer the question. This was very specific in terms of dealing with work to be done and compensation payments that still will be incurred to Victorian taxpayers, and the Deputy Premier has been sidelined. And why has she been sidelined?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard your point of order, member for Caulfield.

Daniel ANDREWS: I think I have answered the question.

The SPEAKER: Premier, can I just rule on a matter here. When the opposition asks a question, I would appreciate it if they would listen to the answer – especially the Leader of the Opposition. These questions are not trifling questions. They are important questions that I would hope you would want to hear the answer to.

Daniel ANDREWS: I think I have answered the question in terms of ministerial responsibilities. Those negotiations are ongoing. Despite the very poorly hidden hopes of those opposite of very large amounts of money in compensation and all sorts of other terms, we know the outcome they want, and it is not in the interests of Victorian taxpayers. We will not do anything to cut across those negotiations. Ministerial arrangements are as advertised. They are very clear. These decisions were made, and they will not be changed.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier said earlier in his answer that the commissions were withdrawn because the games were cancelled but, on the record, the legal team was dispatched to London before the minister's commissions were withdrawn.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, Leader of the Opposition.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:15): Yesterday the Acting Premier said that the Premier now has responsibility for negotiating the Commonwealth Games compensation. When will Victorians know how much they will pay for the Commonwealth Games debacle?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:16): When those negotiations are finalised.

Ministers statements: Big Housing Build

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:16): There is no more important issue at the moment than housing. As we roll out the Big Housing Build, I am often left wondering why the Liberals and the Nationals do not support more regional social housing. I wonder why they will not call their federal colleagues and tell them to support the housing

package that is currently in the Senate. The Andrews Labor government is getting on with the job and delivering \$5.3 billion for the Big Housing Build, delivering over 12,000 social and affordable homes right across the state. As I have said in this place before, \$1.25 billion is being invested in regional Victoria, whether it is the more than 500 social housing homes we are delivering in Geelong, the more than 150 we are delivering in the city of Latrobe, the more than 300 in Ballarat, the more than 300 in Greater Bendigo or the more than 200 in Swan Hill and Mildura. Some of these homes have been completed and others are underway. Of course on top of that the Premier has announced a further \$1 billion regional housing package to deliver more social and affordable housing in regional Victoria. This is housing for people who are homeless, people who are fleeing family violence and people who are the most vulnerable in our society.

Roma Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for South-West Coast can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

Colin BROOKS: But we know we could do even more if the Liberals and the Nationals stopped blocking more housing in the Senate. When I talk to councils and housing providers and community service obligations in regional Victoria, they cannot believe that politicians in Canberra would be blocking more funding for social housing right now when it is needed so badly. The question I have is why the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationals will not pick up their phone and ring their colleagues in Canberra and urge them to support more social housing for Victorians in regional Victoria.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister asked a question. This is an opportunity for –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: The minister just said that he was asking a question in the middle of his ministers statement. Clearly that is not relevant to his statement.

The SPEAKER: The minister has discretion in how he makes his statement within his portfolio responsibilities and how it relates to other ministers, so it is relevant.

Colin BROOKS: I have a few seconds to go. I understand it is difficult – the Liberals and Nationals do not want to answer that question. But get on the phone and get more social housing for Victoria.

Government appointment process

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:19): My question is to the Premier. The government has recently appointed former minister Martin Foley as the chair of Alfred Health and chair of Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation. These part-time appointments come with a combined salary of up to \$263,000. Who was on the selection panel and what process did they follow for these appointments?

Steve Dimopoulos: Best person for the job.

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:20): As my honourable friend the minister for sport, tourism, major events and creative industries says, best person for the job – absolutely. These appointments are made on merit. It is very –

John Pesutto: Why is he a minister?

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, the person you referred to was the Minister for Creative Industries – and an outstanding Minister for Creative Industries. He has seen the inside of the cabinet room, mate. He knows how to be a minister, unlike some others.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Sorry will not cut it. You will be removed from the chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier knows to refer to people by their proper titles.

The SPEAKER: I ask the Premier to refer to members by their proper titles.

Daniel ANDREWS: But you referred to the Leader of the Opposition, who has never been a minister, so there you go. Is that a proper enough title for you? At the end of the day, appointments are made on merit. Martin Foley is an outstanding former minister and member of this place –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very simple: who was on the selection panel, and what process did they follow?

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

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, this is a cabinet appointment.

John Pesutto: Oh, so there was none? It's for mates.

Daniel ANDREWS: Again you are showing –

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, the cabinet kind of is a selection panel, mate. There is a group of people who have got a commission from the Governor and they make decisions on appointments. It normally happens at the end of the cabinet meeting every week. I am indebted to the Leader of the Opposition for drawing my attention to processes and cabinet, because just prior to question time, Leader of the Opposition, who has never so much as seen the inside of the cabinet room, I had my cabinet pre-brief. I have a number of these ahead of Monday's meeting, and while I cannot divulge what is happening at cabinet, one of your former colleagues is set to be appointed to a board on Monday. Yes. He, however, has seen the inside of a cabinet room, because he was a minister in that four years of Ted Baillieu and Denis Napthine. It is rather a sticky position, this, because you know what, they all see me walk down the street, and they cross Collins Street, these former Liberals – 'Could you get me a job? Could you put me on a board?' It seems they do not bother telling the Leader of the Opposition that they are petitioning the government to put them on things. And they will be appointments made on merit, just as Martin Foley's is an outstanding appointment on merit. We will wait and see how many other people were appointed on merit and will remain being appointed on merit as the year unfolds.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has divulged to the house that cabinet has made a decision and that it has formalised an appointment. I ask now that the Premier make that available to the house.

Members interjecting.

John Pesutto: You stepped into the doorway, my friend. You stepped into it. Make the documents available –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: This is very disappointing behaviour in the chamber today. Leader of the Opposition, if you have concerns about the Premier's response to your question or further requests for information, I would ask you to do it outside of question time. On a supplementary question?

John Pesutto: Speaker, if I may just address your last point, given what the Premier said about the cabinet processes, I will be seeking more information about the cabinet decision the Premier has volunteered today.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. On your supplementary question?

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:24): The Victorian Ombudsman is presently undertaking an ongoing investigation into the politicisation of the public service. Will the Premier cooperate with the Ombudsman's investigation in relation to each of the political allies that his government has appointed to paid positions on Victorian government boards?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:25): Every member of this place ought cooperate with any investigation or piece of work or inquiry that any integrity agency makes. That is a broad statement of policy, and it applies to everybody. As far as having kind of divulged something in my substantive answer, these are executive council appointments. Like, do you want me to send you a copy of the *Government Gazette*? It is there; there are formal processes.

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: Seriously, 'lost' doesn't cover you – you are absolutely at sea. You have no idea what you are doing, and your colleagues know it.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier to cease yelling at each other across the table.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was an important question. It is not an opportunity for the Premier to be obnoxious.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to rule on the point of order. I ask the Manager of Opposition Business to be more succinct in his points of order. And if it is about relevance, it is only about relevance; it is not about name-calling.

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Indeed. Apparently women are nasty and men are obnoxious – that is the view from Brighton apparently. That is the view from the member for Brighton.

The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question that has been answered. These appointments are made on merit. And as far as the Ombudsman or any other integrity agency goes, everyone, including the Leader of the Opposition, should cooperate – (*Time expired*)

Ministers statements: rural and regional health services

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:27): I rise today to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is continuing to deliver the health infrastructure that regional Victorians need and deserve. We have and will continue to deliver and build bigger and better hospitals and invest in the health and wellbeing of regional Victorians.

Let me take you through a list if I may: a landmark \$558 million redevelopment of Albury Wodonga Health; a massive \$595 million redevelopment of Ballarat Base Hospital; a \$230 million investment into the Shepparton Hospital emergency department; a new ambulance station for Armstrong Creek; more beds at Wangaratta hospital; a huge \$223 million expansion of the Latrobe Regional Hospital; funding for planning and early works for a new hospital for West Gippsland; a world-class cancer and wellness centre at Echuca; a bigger and better Wonthaggi Hospital; a state-of-the-art clinical services building at Warrnambool Base Hospital; more and better technology, including PET scanners, at Ballarat, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Warrnambool; and a world-leading co-designed mental health and wellbeing centre based in Geelong, the McKellar centre.

There is more. The Andrews Labor government will continue investing in rural and regional health through our dedicated \$790 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund. We have already delivered

630 projects right across rural and regional Victoria with this fund. We remember how those opposite, when they had the chance, went to war with our paramedics. They disrespected our nurses. They sold Mildura hospital off to the private sector, they shut down the Moe hospital and they bankrupted the Latrobe Regional Hospital, preparing to flog it off. Unlike those opposite, the Andrews Labor government will always invest in the people of rural and regional Victoria.

Public housing

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:29): My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday one of the items agreed to at national cabinet was the consideration of the phased introduction of inclusionary zoning and planning to support permanent, affordable social and specialist housing. I ask the Premier: will new developments that are built as part of the upcoming planning reforms be subject to inclusionary zoning, including a binding, mandatory requirement for 50 per cent of them to be public and affordable homes?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:30): I thank the member for Pahrnan for his question. The housing statement has not been finalised yet by the government. When it is finalised it will be released and everything that is in it will be obvious. And I am sure from the Greens point of view everything that is not in it will be equally obvious and they will talk about that in equal measure. I am drawn, though, to make the point that even if such a framework were put in place, it would still be opposed – that and more – by Greens-dominated councils, no doubt on form by Greens senators in the Commonwealth Parliament and, who knows, by Greens as local members. I was at a social housing project in this member's electorate on Tuesday with the Prime Minister, and he opposed it.

Sam Hibbins: On a point of order, Speaker, the relevant sessional order states that answers to questions need to be direct, factual, succinct and relevant. The Premier has literally conjured up a scenario out of his mind that some future reforms are going to be opposed by X, Y and Z. That cannot be in any way relevant to the sessional orders, and I would ask you to bring him back to actually answering the question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Daniel ANDREWS: The point of order invites us again just to remind every member of this place, including, it would seem, the Greens, who perhaps have convinced themselves they are not opposed to these things, that the Greens political party have voted against more housing than they have ever built. They have tried to frustrate more social housing projects than they have ever supported. I was at a project in Windsor, where there is a 90 per cent increase in social housing –

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is misleading the house. There are Greens-dominated councils like Yarra –

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Richmond, that is not a point of order.

Daniel ANDREWS: As I was saying, I was in the member for Pahrnan's electorate with the Prime Minister just the other day at a project that is nearing completion. It will be finished I think toward the end of this year – a 90 per cent increase in social housing. There will be in total some 620 people who will live there. Cheaper, brighter, safer, brand new – that is what we are doing. We do not just want the fight about housing, we want to work hard toward the fix. We do not oppose social housing, we get on and build it. The credibility of those who oppose everything and then come in here pretending to be supporters of it, great champions of renters and great champions of the downtrodden – stop opposing these projects, and then you might be taken seriously when you lobby for them. It is pretty simple: if your track record is one of 'no', if you are a bumper-sticker protest party and nothing more than that, then you will be treated that way. When you have got no substantive record and all you ever do is stand in the way of the most vulnerable in this community having a roof over their head, do not come in here lecturing this government, which has built more social and affordable housing than any

government in the history not just of this state but of this nation, about what ought to be done. Whatever is done will not be enough for you, because you are after the fight. The Greens political party are after the fight, not the fix – never the fix. That is why they stand opposed to social housing whenever they get the chance and twice on Sundays.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:33): I direct my supplementary question to the Premier, who is obviously confused about the difference between opposing the privatisation of public housing and building more public housing – a very easy distinction for us to make, very difficult for neoliberal Labor to make.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the question.

Sam HIBBINS: But my question goes to this: the Premier often refers to the issue of supply, but surely it is also the type of housing and the type of supply that matters. Last year the government backflipped on a social housing levy after developer pressure. This time I ask: will the Premier side with people in need of homes over developers, and make developers build their fair share of public and affordable homes as part of their private developments?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:34): The government will release a housing statement, and I can guarantee you that it will be about more housing. It will not be a Greens political party plan that is called a housing plan but actually delivers less housing – less housing – for Victorians. You cannot come in here – seriously, more front than Myer – and be lecturing the government that has built more social and affordable housing than any government in the history of our country – from people who oppose social and affordable housing. I will just give the member for Pahran a tip: of those 620 people, about half of which are in social housing that will move into that project in his electorate, none of them are going to stand at the threshold and say, ‘Oh, no, this is social housing. I want public housing’.

Tim Read: On a point of order, Speaker, responses need to be factual.

The SPEAKER: The Premier was being relevant to the question.

Daniel ANDREWS: They want a roof over their head, and that is exactly what this Labor government, despite the frustrations of the Greens political party, will deliver for a record number of Victorians on current policy, let alone those announcements we will make – well-considered announcements, in due course, as part of a housing supply strategy. It will be a housing strategy to build more houses, not to block houses for vulnerable Victorians.

Ministers statements: regional employment

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:36): I am proud to tell the chamber that regional Victoria has kicked another goal – in fact a goal that even Sam Kerr would be proud of – experiencing a jobs boom because of the investment of the Andrews Labor government. According to the latest ABS statistics the unemployment rate in regional Victoria is just 2.8 per cent, the lowest rate on record and almost 4 full percentage points lower than in November 2014. Just today we have learned that over half a million jobs have been created statewide since September 2020 – 140,000 more jobs than the second-greatest job-creating state, New South Wales – smashing our jobs target two years ahead of schedule by over 100,000 jobs.

We have achieved this by making targeted investments in jobs and growth. Our regional payroll tax, for example, has turbocharged business investment, coupled with four increases to the tax-free threshold since we were first elected. We have saved regional businesses millions. For example, from 2016 through to 2021, businesses in Bendigo saved \$90 million in payroll tax savings, businesses in Ballarat saved \$100 million and businesses in Geelong have saved \$220 million. In the most recent

budget we have committed to lifting the payroll tax-free threshold twice more to \$1 million so that a further 1000 regional businesses will be able to stop paying payroll tax altogether.

So I am happy to tell the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Berwick – oh, sorry, the member for Hawthorn – I am a month early, but I am prescient. I am happy to tell the member for Hawthorn that if this gig does not work out for him, there are plenty of jobs in regional Victoria.

Government integrity

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:38): My question is to the Premier. Senior Labor figure Garth Head said that IBAC's Operation Watts:

... failed to examine the fact that branch-stacking is –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Premier! Order! The house will come to order. Leader of the House! I want to hear the Leader of the Opposition's question. I would ask you to come to order. I will remove members from the chamber.

John PESUTTO: Senior Labor figure Garth Head said that IBAC's Operation Watts:

... failed to examine the fact that branch-stacking is endemic to the Labor Party and has been for well over 40 years.

IBAC ignored the systemic branch-stacking of the Left.

Given the Premier referred multiple then ministers to IBAC for misuse of public resources for systemic branch stacking, will he now refer the Minister for Energy and Resources to IBAC?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of the Opposition! I will allow the question because it included 'misuse of public resources'.

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:40): I will start with Mr Head. Let me be very, very clear: I did not intend to make any disparaging comments about Garth Head today, but I do feel obliged to make the point that the only person that would describe Garth Head as a 'senior Labor figure' is Garth Head. But I am wrong. That is what I thought as I came into question time. It would appear there are two people who would describe him that way: the Leader of the Opposition and he himself. I have not given a lot of thought to Mr Head. The last interaction that I had with him was when I was sitting at the state conference. I had given a belter of a speech. I then sat down, and we had a solemn moment. It is a very important one where we pay tribute to and honour all of those who are no longer with us. And his name popped up on the screen – in error. Since then I have not given him much thought.

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: No, he was still alive and describing himself as a 'senior figure'.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I know it is the last question of the day, but I ask members to try to calm themselves.

Bridget Vallance: On a point of order, Speaker, I know that the Premier sees this as frivolous, but this is about integrity and signing up dead people. I think it is a very serious matter. I would ask you to bring him back to the question, on relevance. This is about referring a minister to IBAC and not being hypocritical. If you could ask the Premier to come back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! On relevance, the Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Daniel ANDREWS: I was asked about Mr Head, and I am answering about Mr Head. You introduced him, not me. I am making it clear for *Hansard* forever that the only two people who describe Mr Head in those terms are Mr Head and the Leader of the Opposition. That is a matter of fact, and I am delighted that that is now recorded forever in *Hansard*.

On the issue of referrals, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to draw comparisons between what we all sat and watched on the *60 Minutes* program and what has been reported this week, well, I do not think there is any comparison. The second point I would make in relation to the direct question about referrals: the Leader of the Opposition ought know – perhaps he does not, is pretending not to or maybe he does not know – that integrity agencies do not need to have matters referred to them. They have ample powers. In fact they have more powers than they have ever had. They have got more money than they have ever had, and they do not need me or the Leader of the Opposition to be referring anything anywhere. Those matters can be looked at by those agencies, and to suggest that they are unable, unwilling or incapable of doing that is a reflection on them, and I do not think that is fair or accurate. As for any other commentary by alleged senior figures, I will let them run commentary. But again, there are office holders of our party, and I do not think that the individual quoted is such an office holder.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:43): Mr Head also said that:

The reality is that Lily D'Ambrosio's power base was built on the (Italian Federation of Migrant Workers and Families)'s historic connection, which was the basis of branch-stacking in Melbourne's north 40 years ago, and they've never stopped stacking.

Investigations into the misuse of public resources for branch stacking ended the careers of Minister Somyurek, Minister Kairouz and Minister Scott. Will the Premier now sack the Minister for Energy and Resources?

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:44): Well, I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for the State Electricity Commission –

John Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you asked your question; I would hope you would want to hear the answer.

Daniel ANDREWS: Leader of the Opposition, she has forgotten more than you will ever know. When she snores she makes a bigger impact than you ever would. You cannot hold a candle to the member for Mill Park.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I will be succinct: on relevance, the Premier was asked an important question around integrity and he is choosing – purposefully, clearly – to refuse to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: I cannot tell the Premier how to answer the question. He was being relevant to the question.

Daniel ANDREWS: I am reflecting on the fact that the minister for energy, climate action and the SEC –

A member interjected.

Daniel ANDREWS: Well, no, I would not say she was a rock star. That is what you are suggesting: 'She's a rock star'. She is not a rock star, and I do not think many of your colleagues think you are a rock star, actually. Not at all. The band might be getting a bit smaller, I think. But in any event, the minister for energy, climate action and the SEC is an outstanding minister. If you made one one-hundredth of her contribution to this place, you would be doing well, and I doubt you will.

Bridget Vallence: On a point of order, Speaker, I think the Premier well knows that question time is not an opportunity to attack the opposition. We know that the Labor government has no integrity. The question was about integrity and not an opportunity to attack the opposition.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for Evelyn! The Premier has concluded his answer.

Ministers statements: housing supply

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:46): There are time limits – there was no more time on the clock. Otherwise I could have kept going, regaling everybody about how good a job the minister is doing.

In any event, I am pleased to rise to talk about yesterday’s national cabinet meeting, where in the first instance, and almost regardless of the outcome – it was a very solid outcome, and I will come back to that – almost regardless of the billions of dollars in extra money for housing, it is so refreshing to have a national cabinet chaired by someone who knows where Victoria is. That is a good thing. Albo is from Sydney, but he is not just for Sydney, and is the first Prime Minister – well, Abbott, Turnbull, Morrison, at least those three – that has actually known where Victoria is, and he is determined to run a proper national government for every Australian in every part of our country. The contrast between, say, robodebt arrangements of recent times and yesterday’s meeting could not be stronger.

Members interjecting.

Daniel ANDREWS: If you want to reflect on members of your party and various IBAC reports and bags of cash, go right ahead. Down at Subway restaurants with members of your political party – maybe they were respected members of your political party, I do not know.

In any event, billions of dollars to build millions of houses is absolutely critically important. Residential tenancy reforms – I must say, I do not want to reflect on all my other national cabinet colleagues, but it is fair to say every other jurisdiction is raising their residential tenancy standards to Victoria’s level. What is more, can I also say that the degree of confidence around the room about meeting these targets – well, Victoria’s level was justifiably the highest level of confidence. We will deliver these targets and we will be eligible for bonus payments, and that is a fantastic outcome. While some keep yapping on and talking and making noise, we will keep making progress in delivering housing for all Victorians.

The SPEAKER: Question time has ended. We will move to constituency questions.

Cindy McLeish: On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to draw your attention to a number of outstanding questions on notice that I have lodged. Some of them are almost five months overdue, and I would greatly appreciate some follow-up. These are questions 152 to the Attorney-General, 154 to the Minister for Emergency Services, 273 to the Minister for Education, 401 to the Minister for Environment and 433 to the Minister for Housing. It would be greatly appreciated if you could follow those up.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Speaker, I have an outstanding constituency question. It is number 214.

The SPEAKER: That will be followed up.

Constituency questions

Kew electorate

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:50): (280) My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier release the \$200,000 scoping study and business case for upgrading the century-old Walmer Street Bridge in Kew, commissioned by the Andrews government in 2018? Residents in the electorate of Kew are

rightly frustrated by the management of Walmer Street Bridge. The bridge is comprised of three parts: the land bridge in Kew, owned by the City of Boroondara; the river bridge across the Yarra, owned and managed by the state government; and the land bridge in Richmond, owned by the City of Yarra. The river bridge has been facing persistent problems, including structural defects, splitting railing posts and failing beams. It is too narrow and simply not fit for purpose for both pedestrians and cyclists.

A failure of leadership and management by this government has led to both councils having to proceed with uncoordinated land bridge works, forcing prolonged periods of closure and greatly inconveniencing residents and cyclists. Despite committing to a scoping study to upgrade the bridge in 2018, the findings of which were never publicly released, this state government has since slapped a heritage listing on the bridge to prevent any improvements. As a result, when the bridge reopens the river bridge will have had no upgrade despite design and accessibility improvements to both land bridges. Residents in Kew need a new purpose-built bridge that meets the safety and accessibility standards, something I was proud that the Liberals and Nationals committed to at the 2022 election.

Preston electorate

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (14:51): (281) My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and my question is: is Gumbrae Street in Reservoir the shortest street in all of Melbourne? Now, we understand that the department has a comprehensive list of all of the streets in Victoria, and we are just hoping someone can sort it by length and confirm that – not lanes or places – the shortest street is in Reservoir. There is actually a great article online about the seven wonders of Reservoir, and it lists Gumbrae Street as one of those wonders. If you ever jog past it on Allan Street, you can see that they started this street and then they decided to put a park there, and they did not finish it. It is about 3 metres long. It is hard to imagine any street could be shorter, but we look forward to an understanding of where Gumbrae Street does sit in the citywide rankings.

Murray Plains electorate

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:52): (282) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns an elderly couple in Swan Hill. The husband has severe Parkinson's disease, and they have to come to Melbourne for regular health appointments. Because there is no disability toilet on the long-haul train from Swan Hill, they are forced to drive to Bendigo and then catch the train to Melbourne, and they are finding even the drive to Bendigo a challenge now. I ask the minister what information may be available about whether there will be a disability toilet provided on the long-haul train to Swan Hill in the future, because no doubt this couple are not the only people who have that requirement on the train.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:53): (283) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What improvements can be made to give students safer crossings to support walking and riding to and from Cowes Primary School? The school community have concerns, and having been there around both the morning and afternoon bells, I agree. Principal Rod McKenzie and his dedicated team have around 570 students, and if their recent ride to school day was any indication, it certainly amplified the hundreds that walk and ride every day. The school has strong community connections, a reputation for innovation, a learning environment where students are valued and inspired to pursue what sparks them, all whilst being nurtured to be responsible, active citizens. Beyond the bells they are positively enmeshed in all things local and beyond. Neighbouring them is the highly regarded and respected Phillip Island Early Learning Centre – and a big shout-out to Karen Treppo and her team. I look forward to hearing how we can make the kids' journey to and from school better and safer.

Rowville electorate

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (14:54): (284) My question is to the Premier. When will the Premier honour his government's free kinder mandate and actually provide sufficient funding for Knox council to keep open their 28 kinders without ratepayers being forced to carry the cost? Knox council's recent

vote to close 26 kinders in and around my electorate came as a shock to many parents who call the electorate of Rowville their home. Parents are now wondering where they will send their kids for kindergarten. In a ministers statement as recent as March of this year titled 'government achievements' the Premier touted that his Labor government has delivered free kinder for Victoria yet neglected to inform residents in my electorate that they would be expected to make up the massive shortfall in funding through their own council rates. Rates should not be the backup plan for making up for the shortcomings of this Labor government.

Wendouree electorate

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (14:55): (285) My constituency question is for the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, and I am glad she is in the house. Minister, how is our government listening to Aboriginal Victorians and enacting what they need to determine their own future? The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-op, known as BADAC, does outstanding work. Under the leadership of CEO Karen Heap AM, the organisation is going from strength to strength, delivering health, social and community development programs. I am pleased that the Andrews Labor government has listened to BADAC and supported their projects, including the Perridak art gallery, which is strengthening storytelling and the arts in our region; Yirram Burron kindergarten and long day care centre in Sebastopol, which is providing quality education and care, with an emphasis on culture and community; and most recently the elders independent living community for local Aboriginal elders in central Ballarat, which is currently under construction. I really look forward to the minister's response, and I thank BADAC for the great work they do in my community.

Mornington electorate

Chris CREWTHOR (Mornington) (14:56): (286) My constituency question is for the Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC. I was contacted by a local in the carpeting industry, Paul, whose WorkSafe bill is about \$21,400 for the year, a whopping \$10,700 per installer. Why is the tiling and carpeting services claim cost rate 4.6 per cent and the industry rate 14 per cent versus, say, the brothel and prostitution industry, where the claim cost is 5.5 per cent and the industry rate is 4.7 per cent? Why is there unfairness across industries when it comes to claim cost rates and industry rates? Paul is just one of many locals in different industries who has contacted me with concerns about this. Many of the numbers in the *Victoria Government Gazette* do not add up and seem to unfairly target some industries, stifling small business owners and tradies. Ultimately WorkSafe insurance costs should be shared equally across all industries. This is just another cost for many people already battling with growing public housing and rental waitlists, homelessness, cost-of-living pressures, food lines and more.

Kororoit electorate

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (14:57): (287) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Hopkins Road is one of the few roads that connect the Western Highway to the Princes Freeway and is a key movement corridor situated in two of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. As a government we are always looking at ways to improve our road and transport connections in Melbourne's western suburbs to make it easier for locals to travel. As I have said many times in this place, Melton is the fastest growing municipality in Australia. Our population in that local government area is booming, at 58 babies per week. Can the minister please tell me what improvements are planned for this important transport corridor?

Mildura electorate

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (14:58): (288) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and my question is: when will the Mildura West Primary School master plan be completed, giving students the flexible learning centres they need? Mildura West Primary School is a wonderful school in the heart of the city. It is a school that delivers a quality education for its students. It is an International Baccalaureate school with positive student outcomes; a supportive environment for parents, teachers and students; and excellent staff retention rates; and parent satisfaction is one of the

strongest in the region. However, they do not have the modern, open, flexible learning spaces that are conducive to learning in the 21st century, and that is despite the department having published not one but two different master plans, the latest in 2018. Meanwhile the main learning space is now full of white ants and being held together by plywood. It is preposterous. The very active parents groups are frustrated, and they are tired of being polite. They are simply asking for the completion of the latest master plan as a matter of urgency, not just another botox injection to make things look good.

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:59): (289) There is constant talk on the news, on the radio, on social media, in my community and indeed in this chamber about the lack of social and affordable housing in our communities. With rental fees going up and with the rates having gone up, there is real and intense financial stress not just within my community but right across Victoria. So my constituency question is to the Minister for Housing: could the minister provide an update to my community in the electorate of Hastings on what social and affordable housing is currently being planned or built in my area? As mentioned in my inaugural speech, there are jobs available in my community; however, due to the lack of affordable and social housing for people to live in, many jobs remain unfulfilled. This leads to a lack of economic stability in the community, greater distress to employees and the unfortunate result of businesses closing and shopfronts being empty. I look forward to hearing from the minister regarding the great work the Andrews Labor government is doing to provide social and affordable housing in my electorate.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Debate resumed.

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) (15:00): As I was saying very briefly before the break, I was afforded the opportunity to give a budget reply, so my take-note contribution will be a little bit of an update. To the Minister for Police, who is at the table: you might be interested in learning about some of these issues in the country, which you could perhaps spend a little bit more time getting out to on the odd occasion.

The first issue that I want to put on the record, as I touched on before lunch – we have the Deputy Speaker back in now – is around the timber industry and the callous decision by the government to just cut the timber industry with no forewarning and basically give workers what is the equivalent of six months to find new jobs. It turned the lives upside down of not only timber workers and their families but also all those spin-off businesses that rely on the timber industry for income. We find ourselves at a point in time, months after this budget was delivered, where I have still got timber workers in my community – mill workers and harvest and haulage contractors. I have still got people who were not directly employed in the timber industry. These might be people like the contractors who reseeded the coupes or the people who own the tyre services in these towns that service the timber industry trucks. We have one case of an electrician, and the bulk of his work was doing the electrical work within the mills.

Here we are, months later, and we have still got no information on the table as to what supports will be provided or what new job opportunities will be provided. It has left these communities in a great deal of limbo and is causing an enormous amount of stress for a number of families, not only in my electorate but in all the electorates around the state where the timber industry is a key economic driver. You would have thought that if you were going to basically scrap an entire industry, you would have had this stuff ready to announce to these families and these communities when you made that decision. But not only was that pertinent, relevant and important information not there when the decision was made, here we are, months later, and I have still got people who are affected by the closure of the timber industry coming into my office and wanting to know what their job opportunities are going to be.

There are even staff members from VicForests. I was at the footy a fortnight ago, and I had two VicForests staff members – these are state government agency employees – coming to me and saying, ‘Have you heard anything? Do you know if we’re going to be offered other jobs within a government department?’ These are people who have got kids at school, who have got mortgages and who do not know what their future holds, and it is a disgrace – an absolute disgrace.

The other issue that we have got here is a summer fire season again just around the corner, and removing our timber industry was just the worst environmental decision you could ever make. It is the only renewable building resource available in the world that grows back and stores carbon. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that we should be building everything with wood as the biggest mitigation measure, and what do we do in Victoria? We shut down our timber industry, and we have got imports going up from countries with less oversight. Can someone on that side of the chamber just please explain to me how that is a good environmental outcome? When Planet Ark’s slogan is ‘Do the world some good, build it with wood’, we closed down our native timber industry – one of the timber industries with the highest levels of oversight among jurisdictions around the world. What has happened is we have got consumers buying more wood, because that is what we are telling them to do, and now we have got to import it from countries with less oversight to meet that demand. It is just disgracefully environmentally unfriendly.

But getting back to my point from before I was sidetracked, we have removed the first line of defence for when fires hit. In East Gippsland and in other electorates around the state – the member for Narracan is here, and we have even got some people from the wonderful East Gippsland electorate in the gallery, and they well know the fire risk in that electorate – it is not a case of if we are going to get fires, it is when. I can tell you, in my 13 years in this job and my years as the local newspaper editor before that, countless times I saw our timber industry at the forefront, pushing firebreaks through flames and risking their lives to protect assets and protect the community. Now this government has just got rid of that industry, but yet we have no word, on the verge of another summer, of what is going to be done to replace that first-response effort. We heard some waffle at the time that these people were going to be re-employed in the department and there would still be that presence there as a first responder, but these harvest and haulage guys have heard nothing in that time. It is time this government comes clean and makes sure that they have the security to provide that important role they play in our communities.

I want to touch on roads: we saw more cuts in this Labor government budget to our roads maintenance funding stream. How is that ever going to end up? Our roads are a mess now, and the government cuts roads maintenance funding again by 25 per cent. I am not sure that that can end any other way but in absolute disaster. We have got roads in my electorate and roads the length and breadth of the state where the potholes are that deep they are causing significant damage to car wheel rims when they go over them. When they are fixed, it is a temporary fix, and they are back to being as bad as they were within a week. They are temporary stopgap measures that fix – well, they do not fix it; it is very, very short term.

I have recently been, through my shadow ministries, to Wangaratta and Ballarat in the last probably three weeks, and other areas of the state, and the country roads are a disgrace everywhere. I used to think that they were the worst in my electorate, but they are terrible absolutely everywhere. It cannot end any other way unless we have a very, very significant investment in our rural roads maintenance. This government ought to be increasing funding, not continually cutting funding, because as I repeat, it can only end one way. And the irony in all this is the state government – you guys on that side – spend a lot of money on road safety campaigns and programs and say we have got to get our road toll down, but you do not provide roads that are car worthy. You can spend all this money on road safety campaigns, but the key element in saving lives on our roads is having decent roads. That is where money ought to be invested. It was not invested in this budget, so it needs to be invested outside the budget process.

It would be remiss of me to be on my feet in this place talking about roads and not mention my beloved centre-of-the-road barriers between Bairnsdale and Sale.

Richard Riordan: How many are still upright?

Tim BULL: ‘How many of them are still upright?’ the member for Polwarth just interjected. I will take him up on that. Driving between them on the way to Parliament this week, I saw there are 12 of those bollards that are significantly damaged. One of them has been damaged for 14 months. That means in the last 14 months we have had at least 10 serious accidents, because these bollards have been smashed into a stage where they are in disrepair. There was one where a truck went through it – I think it was probably two to three months ago, where massive damage was caused to the centre-of-the-road barriers – and then the truck disappeared on the other side of the road and went through the side barriers. Driving down this Monday morning, I saw we have still got, after at least eight weeks, a warning sign that there is a traffic hazard ahead. We do not fix the roads. If something is damaged, do not stick up a sign and walk away for four or five months, fix the damn thing – absolutely. I will not use the term ‘pull your finger out’, because it is unparliamentary, but fix the things. Do not put up temporary road signs. Everywhere you drive around country Victoria, we have got temporary road signs up – ‘Slow down’, ‘Take care’, ‘Traffic hazard ahead’ – because you do not fix the roads, because you have cut the funding to the roads. We need more investment in that area to get things right.

I must mention the Commonwealth Games. Since I made my budget speech we have had the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games. I noticed a tweet came out from the Premier yesterday. It was along the lines of commenting on the Matildas – what great role models they have been and what a great increase in participation in soccer this will produce. Imagine what the Commonwealth Games would have done for our youth, all the kids. Participation levels would have gone through the roof. I am a firm believer that if we can get as many kids as we can involved in sport and around good role models and in that club environment, it leads to better outcomes for them later in life. But what do we do? We have cancelled the Commonwealth Games, and as we heard in question time today, we still cannot get an answer about what that is going to cost us. They have been cancelled without us knowing what the bill at the end of the day is going to be, and here we have a state debt that the forecasts say is heading towards \$170 billion. That is just so scary to even think about. The Premier wants to label it a COVID debt. Less than a third of it is related to COVID. The other two-thirds are related to mismanagement. A \$170 billion debt forecast by 2026 – that is scary and something that certainly needs to be reined in.

I also want to mention some of the cuts that have been made in this budget to government departments. We have got a lot less fuel reduction burning being done. I have spoken about the risk we have from the timber industry going. My great fear – I had a briefing last Friday from the CFA, who were telling me how it is one of the driest times we have had for this time of the year on record. If we do not get spring rains, my region will burn again. There is this fantasy philosophy that because we had fires four years ago we cannot burn again. The fuel loads in the bush are at astronomical levels. We are as dry as we have been heading into spring as any time that I can remember, and we are in trouble unless the department puts more resources into fuel reduction burning and brings that under control.

I also want to mention – I mentioned this last night briefly in my adjournment – the cuts to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action office opening hours. I stood in this place and said, ‘You’re closing them Monday and Friday’ – the offices in Bairnsdale and Orbost. These are areas where people want to get camping information, buy fishing licences, get data, get details. In seeking a response to my inquiry, the minister’s office called my office to get a contact because they could not get hold of anyone at the DEECA office to answer my question. It is like an episode of *Utopia*, for goodness sake. It is even more stupid than some of the stuff you would see on *Utopia*. They have rung my office to get an answer as to why they cannot get through to the department to answer my query as to why no-one can access them. It is just ridiculous. It was a very disappointing budget. This government needs to invest its money in the right places while it is reining in this debt that it has created, and I would like to see some announcements in the near future.

Natalie SULEYMAN (St Albans – Minister for Veterans, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Youth) (15:13): I rise today to speak on the budget take-note motion before the house, and let me say this year's budget is targeted and responsible so that our state can continue on our strong record of economic growth. Not only does it deliver strong budget management, but also the budget is delivering on our commitments that we have made, because we have been a government that is focused on doing what matters for all Victorians.

This budget makes game-changing investments in my electorate of St Albans, in particular when it comes to the healthcare system. I know locally these projects will be a breath of fresh air to our locals, including one that I have been passionately working on together with Western Health at Sunshine Hospital, the brand new PET scanner. I know that this will make a difference and an impact for local families not only for my electorate in St Albans but also across the west. Families that do need to access cancer services, we know, at times have had to travel into town to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and other hospitals. This will be important so they can be seen and have the appropriate tests locally at Sunshine Hospital.

I do want to add something about the great work that the cancer centre at Sunshine does. They have a fantastic team that looks after patients, as I know too well. In the last three years I was the carer of my uncle, who recently passed away. He had fantastic and excellent service at Sunshine Hospital; he was able to get a lot of the necessary care and support there. Numerous times he did have to travel to Peter MacCallum but most times it was at Sunshine Hospital, and I saw the great work that the team at Sunshine does.

I am very happy to see not only major investments in infrastructure investments at Sunshine Hospital, but we are the government that delivered the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital. We are the government that delivered a new emergency department at Sunshine Hospital. We have invested at Western Health and – I know the member for Footscray would be very happy for me to say this – in the brand new Footscray Hospital down the road. We do have a track record when it comes to delivering brand new hospitals and really improving health services in the western suburbs for families and children.

This budget continues on the great work of investing in women and children, in particular we will see a brand new women's health clinic at Sunshine Hospital. This was an election commitment – one that I am very proud to have been part of – and it will be really important. The new clinic will provide free care and support for women experiencing endometriosis and other health-related conditions that are very specific to women. It is fantastic to see this brand new clinic that will complement Western Health at Sunshine and the brand new Sunshine Private Hospital across the road, which works in partnership. This budget means that more Victorians will be able to receive the specific healthcare that women and children do need.

When it comes to education, I am very happy to also see that the budget will invest \$7.4 million for upgrades at University Park Primary School. Again, this was an election commitment. I am very happy to see that this will mean an upgrade, a modernisation, a brand new school entrance and administration building and various other amenities that are being changed at this school. I have had the delight to be part of University Park Primary School and see the great work the principal and the school community do for the children. Another one that is very dear to my heart is the \$2 million commitment that we made to Sacred Heart primary school. It is fantastic to see that students will be able to access brand new class facilities.

Most importantly, our government is building on their election commitment and upgrading schools right across Victoria, including in my electorate of St Albans. We are building on the great work we have done previously: the rebuild at Victoria University Secondary College, the rebuild at St Albans East Primary School and many other primary schools and secondary colleges that have received investment when it mattered.

When it comes to transport, let me say we are the government that removed one of the most dangerous, congested level crossings in the state, and that was the Main Road level crossing – and also the Furlong Road level crossing – in St Albans. These crossings had seen many, many fatalities and many unnecessary losses of life, and I am very proud to be part of a government that, as one of their first actions in government, removed those dangerous level crossings. Thankfully since then we have been able to connect the communities and connect the shopping precincts at Main Road. It is level crossing free, and the local traders are able to travel from north, east, west and south in a safe manner. It has been good and positive for emergency services and of course the locals, and it is thanks to this government. Again, it was an election commitment. Many said it could not be done, but let me say, it certainly has been done.

Of course we have seen one of the most significant investments by our government in this budget when it comes to our veterans and their families. We have seen over \$35 million delivered for the Victorian Veterans Card. At the last election this was a commitment that we said we would deliver, and as a national first, this is a card that really does serve for current and also former ADF personnel. No matter if you have served one day or 10 years, you are able to apply for this benefit. This benefit means that cardholders will receive \$100 off light vehicle registration, free trailer and caravan registration, free boat licences, fishing licence exceptions, free public transport on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, and access to – I am very proud that our state has led this – veteran employment programs.

I want to thank Major General McLachlan, who has been a leader in this space of providing those important employment programs for veterans to transition into civilian life. We know that that can be challenging. We know that they face enormous challenges, once they do complete their service, to actually be able to upskill and to find secure jobs. We have been leading this nationally, and I am very proud to be part of this. Of course we know that our veterans give so much to our nation and to our state, and this is very much a small way of saying thank you to our current serving personnel and those who are not serving. They are able to sign up and save via the Service Victoria app or the website, and it only takes 5 to 10 minutes. But most importantly, again, we are the first in our nation to introduce this scheme for our veterans.

Another thing that I am very proud to see in this budget is the bringing back of the Premier's Spirit of Anzac Prize this year – an opportunity for students from years 9 to 12 to be able to participate in the competition. It is an exciting opportunity. Applications are open at the moment, so I encourage all members in their electorates to actually encourage students to participate, from year 9 to year 12. It is an opportunity for students to experience our wartime and peacekeeping history. They will have the opportunity, successful applicants, to be able to travel to Türkiye and Gallipoli and retrace the steps of our Anzacs in places like Lone Pine in Gallipoli and other places as well in Türkiye. So I encourage all students to apply for this great program, and as I said, this is a great opportunity for all our members to promote and encourage students across Victoria to participate in the competition.

This budget includes funding for the multicultural small business initiative. As we have been champions in this space, our government knows how vital our multicultural communities are, and that is why we have committed to upgrade and revitalise our multicultural business precincts across Victoria. That means we will see 500 \$10,000 scholarships for our businesses across Victoria, who will be able to operate and revitalise multicultural business precincts from Chinatown in the CBD to Eaton Mall in Oakleigh and many other places across Melbourne. Of course funding of our multicultural traders group is also integral, because I know that they do valuable work in their local business precincts supporting local traders and businesses to be able to deliver programs, promote the local economy and deliver those important initiatives for our vibrant small businesses across Victoria. We know that our multicultural small businesses are absolutely important for our state's cultural and economic fabric, and with this initiative we know that we are backing them and making sure they grow and flourish in this space.

What we have seen in the youth portfolio is over \$23.4 million to continue vital early intervention initiatives for our young people across Victoria. Six community support groups, such as the Le Mana

Pasifika project and the Regional Presence Project, which I know is important for regional Victoria, will engage and support young people from vulnerable communities across Victoria so that they can continue to participate and be supported within their local communities.

We are also providing funding to continue to support and upgrade an additional six Scout halls. I know there are members that have been really excited to hear that we are continuing to upgrade our Scout halls across Victoria. We are building on our commitment from last term to build and upgrade 23 Scout halls. This investment will see young people in years to come accessing programs. I had the opportunity to travel to Ballan recently and I saw firsthand the importance of Scout halls, and not just for young kids. These halls become places where local communities can access these fantastic, brand new facilities. Whether it is your local SES or other community groups, they are able to use the facilities, and it is wonderful to see them in action. We know that investing in and supporting young people is so critical in the early years, and that is why we are making sure that we continue to support their mental and physical wellbeing, build their social networks and strengthen their engagement and confidence within their community.

This budget does deliver. It is an important budget because it is a responsible budget. It is doing what matters to all Victorians, whether that is more quality healthcare facilities for our local communities, better transport infrastructure and connections, or upgrades to our local schools. Our government will continue to make the tough decisions, responsible decisions, and make sure the investment is right for our local communities across the state. That is why this budget is one that we need. It continues to build for the future, for a state that is stronger, fairer and more compassionate. Also it is a budget that continues to really address the issues that matter most to our local communities.

This is a budget that, as I said, not only delivers for my electorate of St Albans but delivers throughout the state, including the regions. Most importantly, it makes sure that we are well equipped with the appropriate infrastructure spending, programs and supports. Whether it is for our local businesses, whether it is for our traders or whether it is for our youth programs or for our veterans and their families, we are continuing to invest and make sure that they have the necessary funding. As I said, this continues the great investment that we have made in the last 10 years. I commend this to the house.

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (15:29): I have to confess that I wrote this budget speech back in May, thinking that I would –

Richard Riordan interjected.

Kim WELLS: Well, I thought over May, June, July, August, what could possibly happen? There cannot be too many changes once the budget is brought down. I was on leave when a mate of mine Tony Holland, who used to be the mayor of Knox, texted me and said that the Commonwealth Games had been cancelled. I texted back and said, ‘What happened? How could you possibly cancel the Commonwealth Games?’ It just did not make any sense. Then I started to read some of the newspapers to find out that Victoria, under Premier Andrews, had made the decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games. When you look at Victoria, one of the things you think about Victoria is Melbourne and that we are without doubt – or we were – the sporting capital of the world. No-one comes anywhere near us when it comes to sport. I mean, we have got the grand prix for cars, we have got the grand prix for bikes, we have got the Australian tennis open, we have got the Melbourne Cup, we have got the AFL Grand Final –

A member: Ashes.

Kim WELLS: The Ashes on Boxing Day. Everything happens in Melbourne. Then for some reason, through sheer incompetence – financial incompetence – we find that the Commonwealth Games have been cancelled. Now how do we claim that we are the sporting capital of the world? We cannot. There is no way known.

We listened with interest to the Deputy Premier who said, 'Oh, we're not going to spend \$6 billion for 12 days of a Commonwealth Games', but all of those decisions would have been taken into consideration at the time of the announcement. You do not just all of a sudden discover that it is \$6 billion or \$7 billion for a 12-day sporting event. Something went very badly wrong. It cannot be anything else but financial mismanagement and incompetence, and what I want to know is: what role did the Department of Treasury and Finance have in this decision-making? To do the Commonwealth Games, they would have sat down and Treasury and Finance would have given numbers to the minister and they would have given numbers to cabinet. Based on those decisions, how can it go from \$2 billion to \$6 billion at the drop of a hat? To make it worse, why doesn't the government come out and justify all of it by saying here are the numbers, this is why it all blew out. It is financial incompetence, but we want to know why and how it came to be, because none of this makes any sense. The fact is that they are refusing to release any documentation. They know what the numbers are, because they keep on saying \$6 billion or \$7 billion. They know what the numbers are. If it has gone from \$2.1 billion to \$6 billion or \$7 billion, just release the documentation so we can all see it. We have the right as taxpayers to understand what went wrong, and we want to know what advice Treasury and Finance gave the Treasurer, the Premier and the relevant minister.

That is the first thing. Then on top of that there is the shambolic mess that we are going to have, and that is: we are up for litigation and compensation. Can you believe it? It is not just all the embarrassment that we have lost the title of the sporting capital of the world; we are going to have to pay money not to go and see the Commonwealth Games. The disappointment for all those regional centres – because that is what the Premier said: it was all about the regions. All of those centres were going to have upgrades to their sporting facilities – new facilities. All the people from the city were going to go to those country areas and book out accommodation and book out the restaurants. See what is going to happen now: they will not be doing it. There is nothing to go and see.

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: The mushrooms on the back bench – you have got to get those song sheets out. Every single one of you, get that song sheet out to make sure that you are singing from the same hymn. But the Commonwealth Games have been cancelled. It is embarrassing.

A member interjected.

Kim WELLS: Now we have got the legacy. We had the Minister for Commonwealth Games Legacy. How embarrassing is it that you are going to upgrade some facility? Why not release the costing for the legacy? Why not do it? You have got something to hide. It is embarrassing that we have lost the title of the sporting capital of the world. We have lost that title.

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: Member for Melton, you could not possibly believe that we are still the sporting capital of the world. While we have got the attention of the backbench, what international sporting organisation would ever commit an international sporting event to Melbourne? Who would do it? Who would make a commitment to Melbourne now? World soccer – are they going to make a commitment to Melbourne? I doubt it.

While Labor is in government you could never trust them. You could never trust the Victorian Labor government – never, ever trust them – to be able to fulfil something, based on what has happened with the Commonwealth Games. Do you seriously think that another sporting organisation worldwide is going to trust Melbourne? Do you reckon they are going to do that? Do you reckon they are going to rely on you, when you cancelled the games, and then have to go down the path of more litigation and more –

Paul Edbrooke: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I know I cannot wait to go to the international MotoGP event next month. I would invite the member to come with me if he would like, but keep this factual.

Richard Riordan: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Frankston might not want to book his accommodation, because it might get cancelled. I just caution him not to get too excited about planning for future events in Melbourne.

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

Kim WELLS: Let us move on to what has happened also since my speech. The issue is also what happened to the Knox kindergartens. Knox kindergartens – how embarrassing. The government and the Premier came out and said ‘free kinder’, so all the parents, all the families in Knox, thought, ‘Wow, this is fantastic’.

Richard Riordan: It’s a kinder surprise.

Kim WELLS: It is – very good. That is where they get the name ‘Kinder Surprise’. The government and the Premier said, ‘It’s free, except what we’re going to do is pass the cost from the state government on to Knox council ratepayers.’ And this is how it happened: the government said to Knox council, ‘We’ll pay you \$2500 per child per year.’ Knox council said, ‘But that’s not even going to cover our costs.’ They went back to the government and said, ‘You’ve got this wrong. The figures don’t make any sense.’ As usual the government gets it wrong through financial incompetence: \$2500 per child per year. And what happens now? As the *Age* reported a couple of days ago, 1000 kids in Knox are in limbo as the council pulls the plug on kinder services. Now, I know people are going to be very keen to blame the Knox council. They were going to be around –

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: Oh! Make sure we are on the record. The backbench of the Labor Party are blaming Knox council for this. Is that right? 100 per cent. Right, let us make it very clear that the Labor backbench – and I wish the member for Bayswater was here to listen to this so he could handle some of the complaints that he is getting. Where was the money going to come from? It was going to cost Knox council around about a couple of million dollars a year in shortfall. Where was that going to come from? Not the state government, no, no, no; they were going to get it from the ratepayers. It was a handball from the state government to the ratepayers.

Now I just quickly want to turn to the SEC. I still do not understand what you guys are on about when it comes to the SEC. I mean, you started to privatise the SEC back in 1992, and you led –

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: No, it was actually 11 June 1992 that the government put out a press release. Let us see what it says:

The Victorian Government’s decision to involve private investment in this new project is essential to our energy future.

Can you believe who said that? It was from the office of the Premier of Victoria Joan Kirner, so it was her that said it. Even in *Hansard* Mr Sheehan, the Treasurer, said:

It will be the first time that part of a major State power station will be part-owned and managed by a private investor.

The introduction of competition into the Victorian power generation industry, particularly the introduction of principal union coverage, will result in improved plant performance and industrial relations in the power generation industry in Victoria.

That is when they sold it off. What a classic. I still do not understand. You are going to put \$1 billion into this SEC. I want to understand – maybe one of the smarter people on the backbench can explain it to me – where you are going to get the rest of the money. Where are you going to get the rest of the money? You have got \$1 billion from the government. Where is the rest of it going to come from? It better not be coming out of my superannuation. My superannuation better not be investing in anything this low. Let us talk about –

Members interjecting.

Kim WELLS: You need to calm down.

Anthony Carbines interjected.

Kim WELLS: Anthony, you need to calm down. You have gone red in the face. You need to calm down.

Let me talk about the electorate of Rowville and how it has been neglected. We had commitments from Alan Tudge from the federal government about what they were going to fund in the roads of Rowville. We had commitments for Napoleon Road, Wellington Road, Dorset Road, Lysterfield Road, and what happened? The very first Albanese government budget – what do you reckon they did? They cut the whole lot. All the funding for Rowville roads has been cut. You cut the \$475 million for Rowville rail, you cut the \$50 million duplication of Napoleon Road – cut it – you cut \$100 million for the Wellington Road upgrade, and then there is the \$4 billion for the east–west link. It has all been cut by the Albanese government. When the Premier was asked about cutting funding for roads in the electorate of Rowville, what did the Premier say? ‘Oh, the Albanese government had higher priorities’ – higher priorities when most of it was funded by the federal government anyway. It was going to be funded. If it was announced in 2019, why did it sit in the VicRoads accounts doing absolutely nothing? Why didn’t the Andrews government get on and use the federal money to duplicate those roads in my electorate?

When you look at the schools, you look at Rowville Secondary College, you look at Scoresby Secondary College and you look at Scoresby Primary School – these schools desperately need funding. Isn’t it interesting that 90 per cent of all school funding goes into Labor seats, or something around that area? No longer is it based on merit. This budget has let down the good people of Rowville.

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (15:44): It is great to follow the father of the house on the budget take-note motion. This is my 13th budget reply or take-note motion on the budget, and I did sit through – how many, member for Rowville? One or two from your good self in your delivery of the budgets.

I do recall, though, that in amongst those there was a budget speech from the member for Rowville of about half an hour with no mention of the word ‘jobs’. It did not mention the word ‘jobs’ in there. We did a search, and it did not mention jobs. So I thought I should start, in acknowledgement of the member for Werribee, the Treasurer, with the 440,000 jobs that were secured for Victorians from that time at the height of the pandemic. That is 109,000 more jobs than New South Wales managed to create. Something like 3.6 million Victorians have found themselves in work, just short of a high watermark for the state. Victoria’s unemployment rate, as reported by the Treasurer, is 3.9 per cent – nearly three percentage points lower than the rate left behind by the Baillieu–Napthine government when they last sat over this side of this house. When it comes to jobs, our ambitious target on jobs of course was to produce something like 400 000 jobs – that is four MCGs worth of jobs – by 2025. It is a target achieved two years ahead of schedule, such was the commitment from our government to make sure that not only were Victorians’ jobs protected through the pandemic but that they were able to grow their opportunities for work.

I wanted to roll across a couple of ministerial responsibilities, particularly to pick up on the racing industry as a sport. We touched on significant sporting events with the previous speaker in relation to what the great state of Victoria offers when it comes to jobs. \$4.7 billion of economic activity is generated by the racing industry across our state. The member for Melton knows that – he is a big supporter out there in Melton of all that racing has to offer – and so does the member for Tarneit. I saw the member for Greenvale wander in too. He is in the house and is also a strong advocate for the racing industry. There are 34,900 full-time-equivalent jobs in the racing industry across our state, and 650 community and not-for-profit organisations use racing club facilities. There are 86,000 racing club members across the state and 92,000 participants who are engaged as stablehands, jockeys, trainers

and owners and so many more in administration. These are really significant. There are 1200 charitable organisations supported by the racing industry.

Of course we saw some pretty significant changes that we made in the lead-up to the budget, particularly around our funding arrangements for racing. The point-of-consumption tax is moving from 10 per cent to 15 per cent by August 2024 to secure splitting that 7.5 per cent each to the government and to the racing industry and to secure funding for the racing industry into the future – a really significant decision. You could hear the sigh of relief when I was at the Warrnambool carnival earlier this year, because it was about securing jobs and their futures right across the state.

When you go to particularly our regional brothers and sisters here on this side of the house, they understand that so many people are involved in the racing industry. The member for Cranbourne knows it well. Everywhere she doorknocks there is someone connected to the racing industry in the mighty facilities out there in Cranbourne that she is a strong advocate for. So saddle up for spring, which is a couple of weeks away, and particularly the racing industry and our government, which has had broadly bipartisan support from the member for Gippsland East to make sure we secure the future funding for the racing industry and the jobs that it supports, advances and protects – let alone what the spin-offs are for our tourism industry and the like.

I wanted to cut across to crime prevention. Since 2015 there has been \$100 million for 940 crime prevention programs across our state, because our focus has been to move away from justice-focused responses to those who need it most, particularly our young people, to make sure that our focus is on health-led responses, education responses and other opportunities to get young people engaged in community, engaged in work and engaged in the services they need rather than engaged with police and the justice system. We have also seen in this budget some \$13.5 million for our youth crime prevention project. I was at Meli for the Reignite Project in Geelong, which again is helping young people and families at risk of being caught up in the justice system to put them on a better path. We have done the same in Shepparton; we have done the same in Ballarat. There are some really great programs, and they will continue through funding outlined in our budget.

Can I say also that Victoria Police do hard jobs, really hard jobs. We touched on that yesterday in relation to the acknowledgement that it has been 25 years since Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller lost their lives – murdered – while going to work to protect Victorians. We touched on a Labor government commitment of \$4 million to BlueHub, which is a police-specific health service to provide police with the care and support they need to get back to work. The member for Melton, the member for Frankston and the many others here who volunteer in the community for the SES and others understand and know the tough and hard work that our first responders do. To have the tailored BlueHub support program for mental health and other supports that are needed, and to have health practitioners that understand what police and their families need, there is \$4 million in the budget delivered as an election commitment by our government to build on the work already done by the Police Association Victoria. It is a mighty program, and we are really pleased to see that continue to be funded.

Well over \$4 billion, since we came into government, has been invested in Victoria Police. There are 3600 additional funded police. Over 3000 of those additional funded police are on the job now. We are continuing to recruit additional police, and I can also point out that our crime stats, reported in the last month, are still lower than they were before the pandemic – a lower offence rate than before the pandemic. That is how significant the work has been of Victoria Police to keep people safe. There was a \$100 million cut to the police budget when they were last in office, and also they funded no additional police in the four budgets they had when they were last in office. They got a few through the academy that our last budget had funded under Premier Brumby, but they funded no additional police, which of course led to so much work we had to do under my predecessor, Minister Neville, the former member for Bellarine, to build up the recruitment of Victoria Police. So we funded 3600 additional police positions, and over 3100 of those police are currently on the beat serving Victorians.

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Tasers – we call them conducted energy devices. We have funded some \$215 million to give police the tools that they need. We have given them something like an additional \$4.5 billion in recurrent funding that has built up over the time since we came to office, and we have seen something like another commitment of 502 additional police at the last election, another 50 PSOs at our train stations and the like that have also been funded. That is a \$342 million commitment to recruiting those additional police and PSOs.

Of course all politics is local, and it is the little things that count. For the Ivanhoe Bowling Club there is a \$350,000 contribution in the budget to upgrade their change rooms. It has been a great venue. We celebrated some great wins there across 2010, 14, 18 and 22, and I reckon we will be back there in 26 and we might even be opening that \$350,000 commitment to grow the mighty Ivanhoe Bowling Club clubrooms – a club that has been in operation for over a century.

For the Banyule Support and Information Centre it might only be something like \$5000, but they are providing food relief to people in West Heidelberg, down there on Oriel Road near The Mall. Every day volunteers are supporting the community around food relief, and every little bit that we can provide in support to the Banyule Support and Information Centre is significant. There is a \$14 million commitment to Heidelberg Primary School, one of the last primary schools in my electorate to receive very significant funding for capital upgrades, and that planning work will get underway. There are some 650 students there. We made a commitment to the Macleod level crossing, and the Rosanna level crossing – gone. There is a new station at Rosanna. We duplicated the track between Heidelberg and Rosanna. We duplicated the tunnel. We duplicated the bridge at Heidelberg. That allowed us to run more trains. We have also of course done half a billion dollars of upgrades to services on the Hurstbridge side between Greensborough and Eltham, which my colleagues in Bundoora and Eltham know very well has altogether made a huge difference along the Hurstbridge line, bringing it into the 21st century. Now we are going to remove the three level crossings in my electorate. We have removed Rosanna. We have committed to removing the Macleod level crossing. That work will get underway through this term. That will be very significant and again just shows the demonstration of over 70 level crossing removals done across the state. Most of my colleagues will be able to tick one or two or more of those off already. I will be able to add Macleod to the list as we roll through this term in office.

Can I say also at Austin Hospital we have expanded the emergency department. It was a Labor government that built two hospitals on one site under former Premier Steve Bracks. There was the new Austin Hospital, Mercy Hospital for Women and now an expanded emergency department at the Austin committed to in this budget and at the last election. The planning works have been funded in this budget, a really significant development at the Austin Hospital, a hospital those opposite sought to privatise and to close under Jeff Kennett. No-one has forgotten that. I can also recall the building works for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre were funded by our government, another very significant project that is underway in my electorate.

I did also want to touch on some of the other significant projects that we have seen come to fruition across the Ivanhoe electorate. I was at, as I said the other day, *Legally Blonde*, the production at Viewbank College, my old school. But you have got to build those \$11.5 million performing arts centres at the schools and new science and technology classrooms, which we have been able to deliver, so you can actually have the students in those facilities and have the families there to celebrate the mighty, talented performances of the Viewbank College students.

We have opened our \$5 million science technology wing at MacLeod College, and there are more stages of work to be done there. We have rebuilt Olympic Village Primary School in West Heidelberg for \$6 million, for those students there that need it most. We also built the tree house for the foundation students, and that is \$4 million, and we built the beehive, both at Ivanhoe Primary School, a mighty school in my electorate that has seen significant investments. There was \$6.85 million, I believe it was, for the Banksia Street special development school in last year's budget, which is now starting to see those planning works conclude so that we can get underway with the construction and expansion of a very important special development school in my community. We have seen significant developments

too at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, where my daughter is now in grade 5. We have seen a significant expansion of the works there to include a very important deaf facility regional school in my community.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Anthony CARBINES: The works, I can say, were well underway – well, the works were not underway, but there was a very minor contribution before she was born, member for Polwarth, so I do not see that as a conflict. We came into government and funded it effectively so we could build it properly, and the works there have been really significant for the local community.

There is more to do at Rosanna Primary School, but I can say we have had over half a million dollars invested in the past couple of budgets just to do some further maintenance work that is really critical and important there. Viewbank Primary School – we have already opened the first stage of the redevelopment works. We provided in last year's budget over \$14 million to conclude the works there for administration and to build across the road and link the school together with some additional land that it has. They are very significant programs that are underway at the school there.

There is a \$1.5 million contribution for the MacLeod oval, the MacLeod footy ground, and that is going to be great, with a link with Banyule council. It will be a \$3 million development. We have got the under-12s playing in the finals – the under-12 girls – this weekend at the junior ground there, and to have a \$3 million redevelopment of the clubrooms is really significant. That work will start after we conclude the finals, and I wish the Macleod Junior Eagles, the junior footy club, all the best on the weekend as they embark on their finals campaign.

We have delivered also, up there with the member for Bundoora, the North East Link – 15,000 trucks off local roads, one of the most significant road development projects in the history of our state, a project that has gone to elections to determine the route, elections to determine the design and elections to determine the funding, and each time our vote has grown, our support for that project has grown. It is employing thousands of people. It will make a huge difference to the communities in the northern suburbs and how we get around our city. We are sick of being the traffic sewer for those trying to get from the city and the south-east to the Hume and the Metropolitan Ring Road, and that is going to end as we see now the development of the North East Link. I want to also just note that Ford Park is being redeveloped in my electorate down there in Bellfield and in Heidelberg Heights, again to offset some of the movement that we have had to have across the electorate as the North East Link construction site has come to pass.

There are so many projects that we have worked on together across the Ivanhoe electorate since we came to office. We have consolidated on those gains and the commitments that we made so many years ago. We will continue to deliver on those projects. We have funded our election commitments in this first budget, and now we are going to get on and deliver the projects, because Labor governments, and the Andrews government, get things done.

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (15:59): It is always a pleasure to follow my colleague – I was about to say friend, but I might cruel his chances of having any future success – the member for Ivanhoe and to hear him speak passionately about the electorate of Ivanhoe, which I have known very, very well for many years. I do, though, remember the member for Ivanhoe campaigning very heavily on the reopening of the West Heidelberg police station. Now that the member for Ivanhoe has been elevated in this government to be the Minister for Police, given there has been a 54 per cent crime spike in the suburb of West Heidelberg, I would just hope that he, after gloating about many achievements in his electorate – some near my old grandfather's place, up near Rosanna Golf Links Primary, for instance – might be able to deliver on reopening the West Heidelberg police station. But I think it was demolished, wasn't it? It was demolished under the Andrews government in 2017. It was demolished, which is a real shame because it should have been reopened to service the good people of West Heidelberg and Bellfield, who really do need that facility.

That aside, it is always important to take note of any budget, whether it is from your government or from my position as a member of the opposition. One of the points I am very concerned about in relation to this budget, although it was touched on again by the member for Ivanhoe as well, is around my electorate and is the North East Link. I think all of us from the north-east who, like me, grew up in the north-eastern suburbs or, like the member for Ivanhoe, know them exceptionally well, know that certainly from Watsonia through to the Eastern Freeway there have been significant traffic issues, particularly Rosanna Road. There have been many instances and ideas to solve traffic flow down Rosanna Road which to some extent have worked – and some have not.

But the issue, particularly in relation to this budget, that concerns me the most is the lack of respect with which the government has treated so many people and residents of my electorate who have very serious issues and concerns in relation to the construction of the North East Link. Particularly I note the planning scheme amendment – I think it is GC234 or 244, from memory; I cannot remember the exact number, but it is a GC amendment – which is in relation to the tunnel depth, which I understand the government has changed and given residents limited consultation on. Let us be honest, their consultation is not going to change the government's plans on this. The tunnel depth from the surface will be shallower, so the figure will be lower, and what that means for a number of residents in my electorate – the topography where it will go under is quite hilly, and those houses are stumped, they are obviously not on slabs – is very significant. What it means is that those residents could have significant structural damage to their homes.

They have been told by this government that they must sign a non-disclosure agreement – shamefully – before any discussion around compensation is entered into, and even then they have been told by the authority that there is no guarantee of any compensation for any damage to their home. Now, I would have thought that for any government in this state it would be just completely shameful to treat anyone in Victoria with absolute disrespect in this way. To rule out any compensation and then to come back and say 'To have a discussion with us you require a non-disclosure agreement' – which nonetheless has been asked of councils to date – is really quite horrendous, and to do this to elderly people. Many of the elderly people in the area of the electorate of Bulleen, particularly in the suburb of Bulleen, are older European people who have worked very, very hard in their lives and built a dream home in the 1970s and 80s. Now to be told that those homes are going to have a tunnel at a shallower depth underneath them, which may see cracks or instances of structural damage to their home, and that there will be no discussion around compensation until they sign non-disclosure agreements is quite disgusting.

There are not any school upgrades in my electorate. I heard the previous speaker boast about his, and, you know, phooey for him. But for areas like that of Birralee Primary School's, which has seen its student population double in just a few years, according to all the Department of Education and Training statistics, after reaching a certain level – I think it is 540 students; correct me if I am wrong – those schools are automatically entitled to a school hall. Way past that is Birralee Primary School, and that school council has raised that respectfully with government representatives, saying, 'Well, we now qualify. We now need this. We are at a level where our school population is significant. We're in central Doncaster.' No doubt, through the government stripping of councils' planning powers in central activities areas and major activities areas we will see a greater influx of students over the years to come. That means that those services need to be upgraded before those people – and those towers – arrive with kids who will live in them, and Doncaster Primary School and Birralee Primary School have borne the brunt of that to date.

I am a very big supporter of putting population in areas such as activities areas, because that is where it should go. That is a sensible thing, but you also then need to upgrade the infrastructure around it, and particularly if you are identifying major changes in planning responsible authority status before that is going to occur. It makes sense then to go back to those schools that will absorb the growth over the next five or so years and to actually provide them with the resources they are entitled to, and Birralee is entitled to at least just a school hall. We are not talking about a \$20 billion road project. We

are not talking about, you know, billions of dollars for the Commonwealth Games or whatever it may be. We are talking about a school hall in an area where the government is identifying growth into the future. Birralee Primary School has missed out.

We have been for years campaigning to make the Smiths Road–Reynolds Road intersection safer, again trying to get government attention simply to signalise this intersection, where a young girl was killed some years ago, where there have been repeated accidents. It is dangerous for kids being dropped off at Templestowe Park Primary School, where the government, this government, has just provided – albeit a very small amount – some money to assist Manningham council in rebuilding Pettys Reserve, which is a major soccer facility in Manningham, one of the biggest areas for soccer in the city. So you double the traffic flow on the weekends or more, and it needs to be signalised and it has not been. This is because again the visual of providing the sporting facility upgrade is not matched by the reality of providing the very small amount of funding, barely \$1.3 million, for the signalisation of that intersection, which needs to occur to accommodate the infrastructure. One should have begot the other, but that has not been the case. There has been very little compensation or discussion with residents in my electorate about the North East Link, which is deeply concerning. There are a number of intersections which I could talk about, such as Reynolds Road–Smiths Road, which I have talked about and which is deeply concerning, and places like Birralee Primary which again – like every other primary school in the electorate – miss out.

So then I ask quite seriously, well, where does that money go? The money does go somewhere. And the member for Rowville did outline to the chamber quite seriously that this is the consequence when a government starts to run out of money – and in this case has run out of money. We can all see it; it has run out of money. You can only put things on the credit card for so long. When you get to \$200 billion worth of debt and the lot is blamed on COVID, then you scratch your head and say well, hang on, New South Wales went through COVID – they do not have \$200 billion of debt. South Australia went through COVID, Western Australia went through COVID – we all went through COVID. We all had very similar restrictions. When it came to lockdowns and the support for workers at that stage, the bill was being sent to the federal government. The much-maligned Morrison government was picking up that bill of this state. So where has it all gone?

Then of course it comes back to infrastructure projects. No-one, again, opposes putting in place new infrastructure, but it needs to be done when you can actually pay for it. And if you are going to do it, you need to actually be able to manage that project. Managing a project is not having more than 50 projects blow out in terms of the budget. The Premier says ‘It costs what it costs’ – well, no responsible government says that. That certainly was not Steve Bracks’s attitude nor John Brumby’s attitude. I was in this Parliament with both those two Labor premiers, and they would never have come in here and said ‘It costs what it costs’ in an egregious and arrogant way just to dismiss those who say, ‘Well, actually, we do need to have some level of accountability’, because if we do not, we end up paying, as the member for Rowville said, \$15 million to \$22 million a day in interest just to service the debt we have now got. \$15 million to \$22 million a day could fix the problem I have in Birralee Primary about 40 times – in one day.

So the North East Link, as the member for Ivanhoe rightly said, is going to eliminate a huge amount of traffic flow from the north-eastern suburbs, and the concept of the North East Link does have bipartisan support. To have that project go from \$5 billion or \$6 billion to around \$18 billion – it is phenomenal. The mismanagement – I have never seen anything like it in Australian history. You can have a project costed at one level and come in at the other end at more than 300 per cent of the amount. I find it stunning. And it is just thrown away with the line ‘Well, that’s just going to cost what it costs’. But what it means is that the state starts to miss out – and miss out on projects that are needed.

If we are going to talk about planning reform – as the government does in this budget, looking to decentralise population to places like Geelong – the Geelong fast rail was a concept that was well supported, and it means now we cannot build Geelong fast rail. It means now we have not got the money – the government does not have the money – to electrify and quadruple the rail network out to

places like Melton, where it has been needed for a long period of time, where we have got some of the fastest growing suburbs in Australia still. But we are running V/Line trains, which are utterly unsuited to the Melton line, as the member for Melton, sitting in the chamber, would know. They are not suited for metropolitan transport – nor are they to Wyndham Vale, nor are they servicing Tarneit.

VLocity vehicles are there for regional rail services. They are a good vehicle. They suit that purpose very well, but they are not there to service metropolitan transport. That is why we have a metropolitan rail network. When we do not manage money on projects like the North East Link that means the longstanding promise from two or maybe three elections from the Labor Party to electrify and quadruple the railway out to Melton, which is an important project, cannot be done – Wyndham Vale cannot be done, the airport rail link cannot be done. That means you make all kinds of excuses not to do the Commonwealth Games. Going in – we all saw it from this chamber – it was the issue to gloat about for the Deputy Premier and the Premier coming into the last election, the issue to gloat about in the chamber: ‘We’ve secured the Commonwealth Games’. It was for 2032; it was them who decided to bring it forward for the election as a stunt, and then it all blew up in their face. They walked away because they have got no money, and country Victoria now picks up the tab. The member for Narracan will no doubt talk about this.

Wayne Farnham: I will.

Matthew GUY: The concept was a very important one around confidence post COVID for country and regional Victoria. They were given all of those assurances, particularly places like Geelong, and they now cannot realise a fabulous opportunity to showcase themselves to the world. They will miss out. Again, as I said, there are consequences for bad management, whether it is Melton rail, Wyndham rail, the Commonwealth Games, Geelong fast rail, the airport rail or smaller projects like duplication of the Bunyip River Bridge on the Gippsland line, which creates a bottleneck in the rail network between Longwarry and Bunyip, and even smaller projects.

Before the 2018 election the government committed out in the western suburbs, to Victoria’s growing, proud and strong Indian community – I note it was Indian Independence Day this week – to build a cultural centre and a statue of Gandhi in a park, all this in the western suburbs. Commitments were given to the Indian community, the Premier headed down in front of the Consul General to say that this was what was going to be delivered upon – the Consul General was there – boasting about what would be delivered to the Indian community in Victoria. Not a single commitment that was given in August 2018 in front of the Consul General by the Premier – maybe soon the then Premier – has been realised.

You talk about respect. I talked about respect and government respect for my residents on the North East Link at the start of this contribution, and I conclude with respect for Victoria’s Indian community and the Consul General when all those commitments were given and not a single one of them has been realised. They did not cost \$20 billion, and they are not asking for \$5 billion. The Indian community in Victoria simply want the commitments that were made to them to be honoured, and they are not being and they are clearly not going to be. If they are ever honoured, they will probably be honoured by this side of politics, because when we make those comments – as a former Minister for Multicultural Affairs I know that when you make those commitments to communities, you had better follow through with them.

I do have, as I have said, serious issues with the budget as it is and the lack of direction by the government given to areas which are not held by the Labor Party. This kind of adversarial approach is the historical judgement that will be made about this period of Labor government. It is very different to the Bracks and Brumby period and very different to the Cain period. Unfortunately for Victoria we will historically look back and say that of those three Labor governments, this was the worst.

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (16:14): I rise to also speak on the state budget 2023–24. I notice a little bit of a geographic theme going on here with the member for Ivanhoe, the member for Bulleen and now me. We are sort of slowly moving around the North East Link geography and, Deputy Speaker, you might be next on if we take that geographic approach.

But the member for Bulleen was talking about Birralee Primary School, and a large portion of that school zone does fall within the electorate of Box Hill. Many residents of Mont Albert North attend that school, and both I and a member in the other place Ms Terpstra have long been advocates for this school. Despite some of the media releases at the time that said that Labor had done nothing for this school, in fact in the 2021–22 budget, I would like to remind members, the school did receive \$4.16 million for a new permanent building to deal exactly with the issues that the member for Bulleen has raised. There was a growing school community, and that community needed to be catered for. That really has been a summary of the entire length of the Andrews government: doing the things that matter and looking after local communities, particularly in schools and local sporting communities.

I do want to focus a lot of my contribution on those two particular elements and how they relate to my electorate of Box Hill. I might just start by reflecting on how it is actually a really opportune time to be speaking about this this week, because there are a number of projects that we have committed to which really emphasise and highlight our government's commitment to female participation in sport. I would like to acknowledge at the outset just what a tremendous performance the Matildas had last night and for the last few weeks. They have been an absolute inspiration for our nation and also for a generation of young women coming through and seeing the potential that they might have. I noticed the viewing numbers for last night's telecast have been released, and there were more than 11 million viewers across the country. It was Australia's most watched sporting event ever, which is really an absolutely amazing achievement – to think that that was a standalone female event that captured the hearts and eyeballs of a nation. I think this also reflects on what this government has been saying for many, many years, and not just saying but doing – doing in terms of investment in community sport, investment in female sport and investment in the Matildas, Victoria being the home of the Matildas.

Locally the budget did deliver on our local election commitments, and in the community sport context that included \$1.5 million towards an upgrade of Springfield Park. Springfield Park is a local park in Box Hill North, and it is home to the Whitehorse Pioneers football and netball club and the Whitehorse Colts football and netball club. As with many football and netball clubs, particularly in the metro area, there are football facilities but there are no netball facilities. So while there is inclusivity in the club name and the club make a wonderful effort in trying to engage with all members of their club, whichever sport they are participating in, there is nowhere for their netballers to train let alone play. Most of the competition is held at larger regional venues. But unlike the junior footballers, who can come down and kick a ball at the oval at almost any time of the day, the netballers do not have that opportunity. Through a \$1.5 million investment in this year's budget there is a commitment to delivering a master plan and upgrading the facilities at Springfield Park to provide a multipurpose court that will be available for use for training for the young netballers of the Whitehorse Colts. I want to pay particular tribute to Melissa Collard, who was the president of the Colts netball club, for her tireless effort in her commitment to this project. Time and time again on this project there had been barriers put up by council and by others, giving reasons why the project could not be completed, and Melissa would not take no for an answer.

She did come to our office sometime in 2021. We helped her organise a petition, and within two weeks she amassed more than 1300 signatures on her petition to have a netball facility at Springfield Park, which was part of a petition that was delivered to council and really set this ball in motion. It was wonderful to be able to make that commitment prior to the election, and terrific to see that that commitment was being honoured in the budget.

I also want to highlight the investment of \$3 million into Mirrabooka Reserve in Blackburn South. Again, this is going to be much-needed investment in accommodating our female sporting participants. This will be combined with \$2 million, which was announced prior to the federal election and was

delivered in the first Albanese federal budget, to develop a new female-friendly pavilion at Mirrabooka Reserve. That is home to the Blackburn NewHope united soccer club and also the Blackburn South Cricket Club. Currently, would you believe, they operate out of a single change room – not even two change rooms for home and away. Home and away have to share the same change room – one change room for everyone. The girls who play there obviously do not use the change room. They change at home and then come in their kit, and then they will go home again and change out of their kit because it is simply not an appropriate facility. Both of those clubs have been pushing for investment for a number of years, and I was very pleased to be able to be down there at the time with the member for Chisholm, Dr Carina Garland. We have now got \$5 million towards that facility to make it female friendly and encourage female participation in soccer and cricket. We can see how well not just our Matildas did but how well our female cricketers did this winter in retaining the Ashes.

Again on our community sport, there is \$6 million for the Box Hill City Oval redevelopment. This project had a previous commitment from the federal government and local council. It is home to the mighty Box Hill Hawks. For a professional VFLW and VFL team, the lack of quality facilities that exist there at the moment is astounding. When the club tries to organise double-headers – the VFLW followed by a VFL match – the teams have to wait on the ground while the other team is changing or getting their rub-down because there simply are not facilities to accommodate male and female sport. This is a professional league. This is the second-highest league – the highest league below the AFL and AFLW – and we have facilities like these in our community. It is a massive investment and a much-needed investment, and I am really pleased that all tiers of government have been able to come together and will be able to deliver this really important project.

The other area of investment – and I touched on it briefly before – is about schools. I want to give a big shout-out to all of our schools, this week in particular, who are participating in National Science Week. Given my engineering background, I am really passionate about the promotion of STEM and STEM education throughout primary and secondary education, again really giving opportunities to women to participate in STEM and making sure that it is seen not just as a male domain. My professional background reminds me too much of a male-dominated profession. It is really important that we encourage all of these disciplines to be welcoming of both men and women.

I did, I guess you could say, open Science Week locally at Blackburn High at their fantastic STEM centre, which was committed to a number of budgets ago and was completed late last year. I had the opportunity to test-drive a robot that the school's robotic class had built from scratch. Luckily, I managed not to knock anything over. I completed the task. I am not sure if it was in time, but I did complete the task. It was just a fantastic group of students. Everything, literally, was built from scratch, including the circuitry.

In terms of the continuation of STEM education and its importance, I was really pleased to make the announcement during the election, and see that it was committed to in the budget, of \$13 million towards a new STEM centre at Orchard Grove Primary School, a primary school in Blackburn South with a large number of students. Many of the buildings are still the original buildings from the original establishment of the school back in, I think, the 1960s. It will be huge for the school to have this fantastic learning facility.

Of course we also made another school commitment, and that was \$8.9 million for Koonung Secondary College to deliver the next stage of their rebuild plan. The first stage of their rebuild plan was announced in the 2019 budget, and that was completed in, I think, early 2022. The students love it. It is mainly used for years 7 to 9, with a new amphitheatre. I know we have managed to take a number of ministers through there. The Treasurer has been there and the Minister for Education and the Premier have been there. It is just a fantastic space for students to gather, to have presentations and to listen and learn. The learning spaces are fantastic too. The project that was announced in the budget will fund the remainder of that building, extending that building out to the existing gym and performing arts centre. I know that the school community is absolutely rapt with the investment that

has been made over a number of years now in the school, after a period of many years where there was not any investment at all. The remaining buildings, again, mostly date from the 1960s.

I will turn to some of the other really important elements of this budget and focus on our CALD communities. In particular, Deputy Speaker, we share in common a large community from China, both from the Chinese diaspora countries and from China itself. They are very pleased to be part of the Chinese community infrastructure program. I think \$10 million was dedicated to that fund, which will help deliver a Chinese community centre in the east. I commend the budget to the house.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (16:29): I rise to speak on the state budget 2023–24. This budget has axed millions of dollars from roads, agriculture, health and infrastructure, and regional communities continue to miss out on critical funding. Let us start with the roads. Victoria's regional roads will continue to decay further, with maintenance funding in this budget having been slashed by millions of dollars. Since 2020 this funding has been axed by 45 per cent, yet sadly, 179 lives have been lost on roads in Victoria, up from 144 last year. More than 100 of those lives lost were on regional roads, an increase of 27 per cent from last year. I have never seen the roads in such a dangerous and unkempt condition, and this is a safety crisis. The recent report that no contracts for road resurfacing have gone to tender this year is shocking. The need to address the condition of our roads is urgent. It is also noted that there have been over 5000 new potholes reported statewide, an increase of 272 per cent. I am sure everyone in this chamber has a story to tell when it comes to potholes.

Agricultural funding is down 34 per cent on last year, from \$687.3 million to \$454.8 million. This directly impacts regional hubs like Shepparton. The Goulburn Valley is the nation's food bowl, something I am incredibly proud of. Our farmers and growers are still struggling to recover from COVID and last year's floods and weather events, yet the budget cuts critical agricultural funding. Trade and global development was cut by \$60.3 million – almost 60 per cent since 2020 – despite Victorian farmers and businesses continuing to face uncertain times. Regional development has been halved, from \$211.5 million to \$106.6 million. Since 2020 this funding has been slashed by 80 per cent. This is at a time when my region is trying to recover and rebuild. We were the most locked down regional city during the pandemic.

Flood recovery remains a major issue, with many still not getting the support they need. The budget overview says additional flood recovery support is yet to be agreed by the Commonwealth government, yet the Andrews Labor government failed to declare a state of disaster. While every other state will receive a share of the federal government's \$1.8 billion advance disaster recovery payments for declared natural disaster areas, Victorians miss out due to the Premier's refusal to declare the October 2022 floods as such.

There is also no funding commitment to critical infrastructure priority projects. Stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass will play a critical role in the progress and the safety of my region. Twenty-five per cent of the state's trucks are registered in the Shepparton district. Think of that number: 25 per cent of Victoria's trucks. This is a testament to the many successful and growing industries in my region, and many of you would know many of those brands: SPC, Campbell's soup, Huggies, White King. You will see these brands on supermarket shelves not only locally, not only across the state but also internationally, and we are very proud of that. We are a major transport route, and we have a continuous convoy of trucks going through the CBD of Shepparton and Mooroopna. This has a significant impact on the local businesses in the CBD, other vehicles and the safety of pedestrians. We need more efficient and safer movement of transport that caters for the significant growth and progress of our region. Stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass also includes a second river crossing between Shepparton and Mooroopna. We had significant safety challenges during the floods when the only river crossing between these two towns was closed.

The Victorian government allocated \$10.2 million in the 2017–18 budget for the finalisation of the business case for stage 1 of the Shepparton bypass. The federal government committed \$208 million in construction funding in the 2018–19 budget. This is an active project that must be committed to, yet

it continues to be ignored. We are experiencing a primitive road network and transport movement. This has gone on for over 30 years.

We have been calling for investment in the Shepparton sports stadium and events centre for many years. Built in the 1970s, the building is deteriorating at a fast rate and the community has outgrown the stadium, with both Basketball Victoria and the local council nominating this project as one of their highest priorities. The current seating capacity is limited, and fans and event holders are being turned away. When the floods hit my electorate last year this venue was unable to be used as an evacuation centre due to the building leaking, and it was the first priority to be used at that emergency time. The redevelopment includes a brand new facility with a 3000-seat show court catering to a diverse range of indoor events, something that we do not have the capacity to hold in Shepparton now. This multipurpose venue would also offer significant economic opportunities for the region by hosting major sporting tournaments and other major events, which are now being missed out on. We offer a lot of diverse opportunities through the clubs at this facility, including badminton and others, with many using the facility for sport. At the moment when we talk about sport and the Matildas – you know, that aspiration of getting young people into sport – we want that to happen in our region, but this facility is not fit for purpose and is limiting that opportunity.

With the completion of stage 1 of GV Health, we are left with an incomplete hospital redevelopment, with no funding committed in the budget for stage 2. Stage 2 works include construction of an integrated cancer centre on the GV Health site. I have consulted with an organisation who are looking to expand services to Shepparton to provide support and accommodation to cancer patients and their carers, but without a commitment from the state government this will be another lost opportunity to provide complete services to cancer patients. The new PET scanners for GV Health to assess cancers have been funded, yet an integral part of that care, the integrated cancer centre to support the cancer patients whilst they go through their cancer journey, is not being committed to. Stage 2 works also include increased acute and subacute inpatient capacity, additional care services for specialist clinics, additional car spaces, a helipad and clinical support and diagnostic services. GV Health service's primary catchment is forecast to grow by 17.5 per cent from 2022 to 2036. Seventy per cent of GV Health's primary catchment live in Shepparton, but a significant number of patients come from further away for treatment and are in need of ongoing treatment that they cannot access locally.

Regional Victorians are made to travel to receive medical care and treatment away from home. This puts enormous pressure and stress on both the patients and their families. This government has said that health care is a priority. Make it a priority for all Victorians, including those who need critical health care in my electorate. You cannot leave a hospital unfinished without the facilities needed to provide the very best of health care. We have had stage 1, but stage 2 is not committed to. We have a three-quarter-finished hospital. It is a disgrace.

The five regional Growing Regional Opportunities for Work programs have been discontinued due to lack of funding. GROW Greater Shepparton has driven inclusive employment outcomes at a time when there are unprecedented workforce shortages. This program has worked closely with local high schools to offer students with disabilities the opportunity to combine school with part-time employment and training. The program had made a significant difference, yet funding has now been cut. The local community connector program is another example, supporting over 100 local businesses and 500 professionals and key workers to relocate to Greater Shepparton. The community connector program assisted businesses to retain new talent by supporting the employee and their family to more rapidly connect to the community. It is a simple concept that masks a very sophisticated service. Fortunately, stakeholders indicate there is an appetite to continue the program; however, this would not be sustainable, and there is uncertainty whether this will happen. This is yet another example of Victoria footing the bill for the government when critical services for the prosperity of the region are taken away.

Under Labor, Victoria is broke and life keeps getting harder. The state's debt is costing Victorians over \$10 million per day, and we are yet to know the cost of cancelling the Commonwealth Games,

which will add another significant cost to our state. Victoria's debt is projected to climb to \$171.4 billion by 2026–27 and interest payments will more than double, to \$22 million a day. Imagine the roads that we could be fixing with the taxpayers money and the housing that we could provide, which are being neglected due to cost blowouts and out-of-control debt.

The Andrews Labor government is raising taxes in a cost-of-living crisis. People are struggling to pay their rent or their bills or to get a roof over their head. The Labor government have forced up the cost of electricity and gas by over 35 per cent. This is impacting on both households in Victoria and particularly businesses and our food manufacturing sector. This is one of the reasons that grocery bills for the average family have now risen by nearly \$1700 per year. Since being elected in 2014 the Andrews government is now on the cusp of having introduced or increased 50 taxes. Life has become so much harder for Victorians under this government. The budget is another example of the Andrews government's financial mismanagement, and regional Victorians continue to miss out under this government.

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (16:38): I also rise to speak on the motion that this house takes note of the 2023–24 budget papers. As you know, Deputy Speaker, we were debating this previously, on 22 June, and it is a pleasure to pick up on the debate now some 55 days later. The budget is a complex document, over 1000 pages in total. We did have a great opportunity to –

Mathew Hilakari interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Well, that is true, as the member for Point Cook mentions. But look, we have had a chance to debate and discuss a great deal of it in the sitting weeks during May and June. I will not try and recap all of that here. The key driving theme of the budget, if you like, which the Treasurer set out, was that we had a global pandemic, of course, that had very significant health effects and very significant economic effects. The government has access to finance. It can move around its expenditure in time, and the government made the very reasonable, sensible and widely supported choice to spend money first addressing the pandemic directly, but then also supporting economic activity during that period.

It was the right thing to do then. We would do the same thing now, and of course as others in this debate have noted, it was also very similar to the actions of the then federal Liberal government. We do, as part of the budget, have a COVID debt repayment plan, which will raise about \$30 billion over a decade by making some adjustments to land tax, payroll tax and expenditure within the public service. There was an interesting debate about that from the member for Prahran when he stood up on this motion for the Greens, and I was hoping to pick up on a bit of the debate with the Greens, but I notice that they are not here.

A member: A forlorn hope at this hour of the day.

Nathan LAMBERT: A forlorn hope indeed at this late hour on a Thursday.

Members interjecting.

Nathan LAMBERT: That is right, I am not sure they are still here. There seems to be a unity ticket on that one. I will save you all that debate with the member for Prahran, which I can take up with him privately, and skip perhaps to the equally important topic of the effects of the budget in Preston and Reservoir.

If I can, I would like to start with child protection. We saw approximately half a billion dollars of additional funding across the board for child protection and for improving outcomes of children in out-of-home care generally, and that is very welcome. But specifically within that there was an additional \$140 million to help Aboriginal-led organisations to provide child protection services to Aboriginal families and indeed to keep Aboriginal families together. Those of us who attended the Labor conference back in May will remember the Premier speaking about the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative, BDAC, and all the wonderful work that they do.

But closer to home in Preston we have the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and it has been in effect the major authorised organisation under the act for a long time now, almost 40 years. In fact if you go back in *Hansard*, you can read the former member for Werribee, Ken Coghill, back in 1984 talking about the great work that VACCA were doing then, and they have continued to do so since. I actually saw that Ken Coghill was in the paper just the other day with a great little letter in the *Age* about the Voice. It is good to see he is still going strong. But as I was saying, it is a source of pride to everyone in Preston that we have VACCA headquartered locally and indeed have done so since 2014. And as well as doing all the wonderful work that their several hundred employees do in that office, they also get out and grab their coffees from Moon Rabbit and Brown Bear Cafe and support our local businesses. So a shout-out to Leo and Santos and all the teams at those great cafes who will benefit from the additional caffeine-fuelled activity under this Labor government's further support for VACCA and the work they do to reduce Indigenous over-representation in child protection and out-of-home care.

While we are in that part of the world, it was great to see \$100,000 in the budget for Bridge Darebin, for their food relief services, which will support the wonderful work that CEO Chris Lombardo and Ramona and the rest of the team there do. We were down there chatting with them a few months ago with the Minister for Equality in the other place about their Queer Gathering program, and no doubt we will be back down there again soon to support all of the work they do.

If we do then head just further along Cramer Street to Melbourne Polytechnic, the budget provided, again, almost half a billion dollars in additional funding for TAFE, including \$90 million that continues to directly expand our free TAFE program. Free TAFE is of course a signature program for this government. We were recently at Melbourne Polytechnic – they have a great campus on St Georges Road – and we had a chance to see their early childhood training at work. For those who have not got along to that campus, they actually have a great set-up where you can go in and there is a one-way mirror so that the students can observe the kids and the way that other students are interacting with them as educators. You can sit back, sort of like a focus group room, if you like, and you can watch the way that the children and the educators are learning together. It is a fantastic facility and one that allows us to deliver some great education. They are supported by the free TAFE initiative of this government. And indeed we also dropped into one of the Auslan classes at Melbourne Polytechnic. Thank you to Wendy and the team, who do such good work there. Should anyone want to get into Auslan interpreting, there is a growing demand in that area, and I am sure Wendy and the team would be very happy to have you in their classes – again, I stress, funded by the free TAFE initiatives in the budget.

I continue my way along Cramer Street up to Preston Mosque. There was funding in the budget for a culturally appropriate health and mental health centre, which follows on from the very significant upgrade to the mosque that this government also had the opportunity to support previously. We do note the great work of Tarek, Mohammed, Jamal and everyone who is involved in running that very important centre for people of Muslim faith in the northern suburbs and indeed across the state. We had the pleasure of being joined there by the Premier just a couple of weeks ago to get on with the job of building that particular health and mental health facility, and we look forward to that taking shape on Cramer Street.

Further west, getting across to Newlands Primary School, some wonderful work continues there upgrading a very significant component of that school. I noticed there was also some extra funding there in the budget for their out-of-school-hours care, and I am sure parents at Newlands Primary will be grateful for that additional support. Many of those students then go on to Coburg High. I was going to talk at some length about our investments in Coburg High –

Iwan Walters interjected.

Nathan LAMBERT: Well, I say this to the member for Greenvale, I did notice, just looking at *Hansard*, that the member for Pascoe Vale has already mentioned that school 44 times this year –

A member: 44!

Nathan LAMBERT: 44 – expanding upon our \$18 million investment, so I will not add to that very considerable record that he has laid down. But I will note that we are in fact also funding the development of the new Coburg Special Developmental School next door on that site, and that will be a very welcome facility as that progresses.

Heading a little bit north up to Edwardes Lake, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the unfortunate death of Mabel the black swan. Mabel the black swan was a beloved local figure at Edwardes Lake, and unfortunately, she was killed in a dog attack that occurred a few months ago. I say ‘unfortunate’ that it happened – unfortunate given that there had been considerable advocacy by Friends of Edwardes Lake and their leader Kate Jost to Darebin council asking for a little bit more enforcement and a little bit more education around the way that people control their dogs around the lake, and I just say I fully support their efforts on that. We have seen since then some movement from council. Hopefully we will not see another death of a swan as we saw with Mabel. We welcome those changes, and we welcome whatever further changes are needed to protect wildlife at the lake.

If I continue around the electorate, getting up to Prace, which is a great facility that we have got up there, an adult education facility partially funded by our suburban development funds, I was very pleased to see them continue. There are a number of really important programs that have run directly out of the suburban development portfolio, and we work closely with Prace and indeed many of our local organisations on that.

Coming across to JC Donath Reserve – and I may if I can for a moment, just a suggestion or a policy idea – I do sometimes wonder if we still need to have the two initials out the front of many of our reserves. We have got GH Mott, JC Donath, and I could go on and on. I do not want to disrespect John Donath, who I understand that the reserve was named after, who served, apparently, admirably as treasurer of Preston City Council for 25 years, but I feel that John, I think, who has passed away, would be comfortable enough if it was just ‘Donath Reserve’. I do wonder if we cannot just rename some of those. I might talk to Darebin council about that –

A member: Are you thinking of Lambert Park?

Nathan LAMBERT: Okay, I can see some interest in the chamber in this exciting policy idea. Coming back to Keon Park football club, who I wanted to talk about, they play at the reserve. They are a great local club. The men seniors play in the men’s state league division 5 north, the women play in the women’s state league 4 north and they have junior boys and girls teams as well. I should note they are sponsored by Tonda Italian, a fantastic Italian place – a shout-out to Liza and the team who do such a good job at that little restaurant on Plenty Road.

Wayne Farnham: Hear, hear.

Nathan LAMBERT: A great restaurant I do recommend to the member for Narracan. Should he be up in that part of the world, he should check out Tonda Italian. But another supporter of that great football club is the Victorian Labor government, and we have contributed \$600,000 to upgrade their change room and pavilion. Of course this week, if any week, we note that that upgrade will improve female-friendly facilities for the young women and girls playing soccer there, and that is something we absolutely welcome. If you do get up to their clubrooms, they are of a 1980s vintage. I think there is probably some further work to do to really get them up to scratch, but we look forward to that investment taking things in a good direction.

There is so much to talk about in this budget, and I note that I probably will not have time, as I bring home the debate this afternoon, to touch on everything that has occurred in Preston and Reservoir. I might just quickly note as well that at Keon Park Children’s Hub we announced recently some funding for a new children’s crossing out the front of that great facility. That was funded through the TAC. I note that there was some further funding for food relief programs at Reservoir Neighbourhood House,

and on behalf of the community I would like to note the wonderful work that Angie Davidson did as the executive officer there for the last 12 years. Angie has just stepped down to take a well-earned break for a little while and no doubt go on to other great things, but we recognise her very significant contribution to the Reservoir East community. There was also funding for an upgrade of the art rooms at Preston Primary School and indeed some money for the new Reservoir East Family Centre, which is a new kindergarten that we have opened on the same site as Reservoir East Primary School.

I might draw things towards a conclusion. If we look at the broad picture of the budget, as you would expect of a Labor government, we are fundamentally committed to the core services that make up state government: health, education, transport and our justice system. We talk a lot of course about what changes in each budget, but it is important to note that we still see 75 per cent of our expenditure going towards those fundamental things that are so important to the community: staff and equipment for our schools and staff and equipment for our hospitals, our courts and justice facilities and so on. Then if we look across to the capital spending, again, that is where most of our spending goes, but particularly for this government there is that big capital spending within the transport area as we get through our Big Build.

I want to give some credit to the Deputy Premier and her team, because transport is not an easy area to do that sort of capital expenditure. You are often retrofitting stuff in urban environments, which can be difficult. It is an area in which the way that transport reacts to changes in population is not always easy to predict, but I just want to recognise the effort that has gone into that area by the Deputy Premier, her team, her department and her agencies. That has of course been in the budget for a good seven years now. They have built up their expertise, they have built up the workforce and we heard a little earlier this week about the great work they have been doing on the level crossing removal program, the Metro Tunnel and so on and so forth. It has certainly had huge benefits in our part of the world with the removal of the level crossing at Reservoir and the removals at Bell Street, at Cramer Street and at Murray Road, and in 2025 there will be the removal at Keon Parade.

I could talk at length about those particular projects, but I see that we are getting close to 5 o'clock. I will wrap up by saying it is a good budget, and I want to quote the member for Bentleigh earlier on in this debate. He said it is a budget that contains some tough decisions – that is true – but very sound decisions, and it is a budget indeed that contains a great deal of positivity for our state. I support the budget and I wrap up my remarks on the motion.

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:53): I am pleased to rise on the take-note motion for the 2023–24 budget. I suppose the first thing I will say is that everyone on that side thinks it is brilliant and everyone over this side does not think it is that good. I am going to carry through that opinion right now. I will start with the timber industry. The member for Gippsland East spoke earlier on the timber industry, and I support every comment he made. It was I think one of the cruellest things I have seen any government do in my life, when you give a guarantee to an industry until 2030 and then you just rip that out from under them with no notice, no compassion. It does baffle me. I still do not understand why.

When we talk about the reduction of carbon, it is scientifically proven the timber industry does it better than anyone else. They pull out those trees that are 80 years old and they plant new trees – and it is roughly three or four new trees to one old tree – which contributes to the reduction of carbon. This has been this government's main thing. They are talking about wanting to be at zero by 2045, or whatever year it is, but they had an industry up and going that was actually generating billions of dollars into our economy that they decided to shut down without notice. It is not just this; there are 21,000 affected jobs from the closure of the timber industry. I will say this to any member in this chamber and any member listening, especially on that side: if the timber industry is so offensive, go home tonight and pull everything out of your house that is made of timber, like windows. If you own a two-storey home, pull out the stairs. Pull all your chairs out, because a lot of people have chairs with timber on them, and put them on the nature strip. Back yourself. If it is that offensive – if the timber industry is that offensive – then do the right thing. Do not be offended; throw the stuff out on the nature strip and let someone else take it.

The member for Gippsland East had a very good point when he was talking about fire management. The timber industry are front and centre when it comes to fire management. When we have massive, massive bushfires, the timber industry are the first ones on the scene.

Kim Wells: With their bulldozers.

Wayne FARNHAM: Exactly, member for Rowville, with their bulldozers, with their grabbers. They are cutting through the firebreaks as quickly as they possibly can, and they put themselves in danger doing it. They have served this community for over 100 years, protected this community when it came to bushfires. I know what is going to happen. The problem we have now is we have lost a skill set – a skill set that would be able to support those CFA units out in the bush. It is a skill set that will be gone forever. I can tell you now there is not an excavator operator in the city that can do the work that they did in the bush – they would get bogged and they would get burnt – because this timber industry had a specific skill set that benefited every Victorian in regional Victoria. The fact that this government has ripped this industry apart is actually criminal.

I met with a business in Trafalgar – and this will show you the effect that these decisions have had from this budget – called Samba Metal Works. It is a mum-and-dad business. When this decision got put through on the timber industry, they had to sack 30 per cent of their staff and their turnover dropped \$400,000 to \$500,000. Now, that is a lot of money for a mum-and-dad business. So there have been job losses, and their turnover has dropped. The worst part is that they have got specialist machinery there now that is redundant. So when we talk about the compensation for the timber industry, the government needs to be very clear how far this goes. It is not just the loggers, it is not just the haulage contractors, it is the other 21,000 jobs affected by this. I do not think the government thought this through, I really do not. I think it was a kneejerk reaction.

The Premier did say – because the member for Gippsland South asked him the question directly – ‘We have to do this. Otherwise, if we reverse it, it will get tied up in the High Court.’ I have asked the Premier this, and I am going to ask him again, because it is not fair on these people when you make a statement but you do not follow it through. The Premier said, ‘It’s going to be tied up in the High Court. That’s our legal advice.’ We have asked this of the Premier before: release the legal advice. Release it, because it is not fair on this industry that they get shut down without warning and then there is no backup to the narrative. That is getting typical of this government: there is absolutely no backup to the narrative.

In my area, in the member for Morwell’s area, in Gippsland South and Gippsland East, we have been decimated by this decision. It is one of the cruellest decisions I have ever seen.

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.

Bills

Statute Law Amendment (References to the Sovereign) Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Danny Pearson:

That this bill be now read a second time.

And Jess Wilson’s amendment:

That all the words after ‘that’ be omitted and replaced with the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the government has provided clarity on the rationale of the amending provisions’.

The SPEAKER: The minister has moved that the bill be now read a second time. The member for Kew has moved a reasoned amendment to this motion. She has proposed to omit all of the words after ‘That’, replacing them with 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 Kew should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (53): Juliana Addison, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (22): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, David Southwick, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The question is:

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

Assembly divided on question:

Ayes (53): Juliana Addison, Daniel Andrews, Colin Brooks, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D'Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Gabrielle de Vietri, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Matt Fregon, Ella George, Luba Grigorovitch, Bronwyn Halfpenny, Katie Hall, Paul Hamer, Martha Haylett, Sam Hibbins, Mathew Hilakari, 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, Nina Taylor, Kat Theophanous, Mary-Anne Thomas, Emma Vulin, Iwan Walters, Dylan Wight, Gabrielle Williams, Belinda Wilson

Noes (22): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O'Brien, Michael O'Brien, Kim O'Keeffe, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, David Southwick, Peter Walsh, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to raise with you an outstanding adjournment matter that was raised with the Premier on 21 June. It is adjournment matter 235, and it relates to deaf children at Brighton Primary School not having adequate funding. That matter is still outstanding, and I would appreciate you raising that with the Premier and seeking a response on my behalf.

Matthew Guy: On a point of order, Speaker, I raise an outstanding adjournment matter, like the member for Brighton. Mine is number 220. It was raised on 31 May. It was to the Minister for Education around Catholic school funding in Manningham, and it still has not been followed up. I wonder if that could be done, please.

Roma Britnell: On a point of order, Speaker, I would like to raise an adjournment matter that I brought to the house for the minister's attention on 2 May 2023. It was the first sitting, actually, and it was a very important issue – adjournment matter 135 – about the recreation community being locked out of outdoor areas. It would be a great pleasure for me and that community if the minister could possibly take the time to answer my adjournment.

The SPEAKER: Could you reiterate which minister that was?

Roma Britnell: My apologies. It was the Minister for Outdoor Recreation. Let me see. Who is that? Is it Minister Kilkenny or is it –

The SPEAKER: That is fine. We have got the number.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Speaker, I have an unanswered adjournment matter. It is adjournment matter 195, and it was for the Premier in relation to lack of infrastructure spending in the 2023–24 budget. It was raised on 23 May and was due on 22 June.

Wayne Farnham: On a point of order, Speaker, I have an outstanding adjournment matter. It is question 149 from 3 May. It is for the Minister for Health, regarding drug rehabilitation services.

Annabelle Cleeland: On a point of order, Speaker, I would also like to raise several overdue responses to questions that I have sent to several ministers in this house. I currently have 16 overdue questions directed to the Minister for Emergency Services, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Housing. These include questions 183, 184, 185, 256, 257, 258, 259, 452, 453, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 512 and 513. I can repeat that if you need me to. The Minister for Education has actually failed to answer three of my questions about Broadford Primary School, which actually stand at 133 days overdue. I am sure the people of Broadford would

be thrilled to hear about the amount of time spent on thinking of the perfect answer to these questions. Speaker, I would really appreciate you raising all of these with the relevant ministers.

Brad Battin: On a point of order, Speaker, I would like to raise adjournment matter 181, which was an adjournment for the Minister for Education. A couple of students came into the office to talk about issues at Berwick secondary college, which are very important in relation to the condition of the buildings where students are forced to learn and which are beyond what they should be and below standard. They need to be brought back up to standard. It is disappointing that the minister has failed to answer this matter since May, and I request that it be followed up.

On a further point of order, this is in relation to an adjournment, which was recently responded to, about the Harkaway Primary School. Two students asked for the Minister for Education to come out to the school in relation to the removal of a safety crossing at the front of that school. I will forward the response to you, if you would like, Speaker. She effectively fobbed these kids off and said that she would not be coming out and meeting with them and said it was nothing to do with the Minister for Education. I find that offensive, and I think it is really important that we do follow that up and ensure ministers are accountable not just to those who vote but also to the next generation coming through.

The SPEAKER: I will take on board your first point of order. The second is not a point of order. The member for Caulfield on a point of order – oh, no, are you on adjournment?

David Southwick: I will be shortly. Thank you, Speaker, but I do have a point of order. My point of order is regarding question 191. This was an adjournment to the Treasurer on 23 May around Jewish day schools, and it is a very important issue because it deals with the schools tax. We are asking for an exemption for schools that are paying for security as part of the cost of actually running those schools. They are needing an exemption from that payroll tax. That question has not been answered, and I know that the Minister for Education has made some rulings on schools that are in and out of the tax system. These schools really need an answer, so I do ask if you can follow this up with the Treasurer to get a response, because those schools are in limbo at the moment. We are talking many Jewish day schools that are all facing uncertainty at the moment. Those parents are still in limbo as to whether they are going to be paying additional fees as part of that, and so I ask if you would do that.

I also note there are a number of unanswered questions – ministers clearly not doing their work – and we would expect, as everyone does, that the ministers actually follow up on some of these questions that have been asked today.

David Hodgett: On a point of order, Speaker, I too want to raise an unanswered adjournment matter, 231, which I asked on 21 June to the Minister for Housing. It is my normal practice in this place to perhaps go directly to ministers on unanswered matters. This one in particular I recall because it was a domestic violence matter where the lady was living in a car with her four-year-old child. I did have a personal discussion with the minister at the time offering to pass on, confidentially, the details of my constituent. Without going into the entire adjournment again, because of its sensitive nature it is a matter that I thought would be dealt with quite quickly. Given this was raised on 21 June, before the winter recess, I would have liked to have been able to report back to my constituent that this very delicate matter had been dealt with. I would appreciate very much if you would raise that with the Minister for Housing. It may or may not have been dealt with, but it remains unanswered in *Hansard*.

Richard Riordan: On a point of order, Speaker, my point of order tonight is also aimed at the Minister for Housing. I raised quite some time ago, back on 30 May, important questions around the waiting times for people currently on the waiting list, sitting for hours and hours on their phones trying to get through. In some cases, particularly in regional Victoria in my electorate, people do not have an office to go to, so they are forced to use the phone, and it is an intolerable amount of time. This question was question 201 asked on 30 May, and I know that the 67,000-odd families on the waiting list would like to know when the minister is going to respond to that.

Martin Cameron: On a point of order, Speaker, outstanding adjournment 133 was asked on 2 May 2023 to the Minister for Emergency Services regarding the Morwell CFA. If the minister has some time, I would like you to ask her to get back to us so I can elaborate with the Morwell CFA on the matter.

Chris Crewther: On a point of order, Speaker, I also have an unanswered adjournment matter. It relates to question 229, which was asked on 20 June 2023 to the Minister for Health about vaccine mandates, particularly as it relates to firefighters being able to work when they volunteer at a certain station but not being able to be paid at the same station. I ask that the Minister for Health respond to this matter as soon as possible.

Danny O'Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, I have an outstanding adjournment matter. It is adjournment matter 189 raised on 18 May and therefore due on 17 June to the Minister for Housing, who told us today that the Liberals and Nationals do not care about additional housing in regional Victoria. The contrary is true, because that was exactly what I asked the minister about and I am yet to receive an answer, so I would appreciate it if you could follow that up for me.

The SPEAKER: I will refer those matters. I will make sure that they are followed up.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Public transport safety

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:21): (301) My adjournment today is to the Minister for Public Transport, and the action that I seek is that the minister look at safety and training standards on buses and timetabling procedures to ensure that students are safe. This follows a recent knife incident on an Elsternwick bus service when students from Leibler Yavneh College were on that bus.

On Thursday 3 August 10 students from Leibler Yavneh College boarded the 604 PTV school bus on the way home before a passenger began to yell, 'Jews, money and drugs', according to a student on the bus. The man described himself as a Nazi. He then brandished a large knife and started menacingly waving the knife around. Students tried to have the bus driver assist but he seemed not to understand their concerns. The students were yelling and banging on the door asking for the door to be opened. Eventually the bus pulled over, the door opened and the students could get off the bus. Students said that at that time the bus driver did what he could, but it was noted after talking to both the principal of the school and the head of administration at the school that more can be done and more training needs to be provided to ensure that there is utmost safety. This time thankfully those kids were able to get away and are safe. Counselling has been provided to those students, and I want to thank everyone that has been involved, including Victoria Police. The Community Security Group has also been involved, providing a huge amount of support to the families and to those children. The school, Leibler Yavneh College, have been fantastic in supporting those kids, but we do need to ensure those kids are kept safe.

There are two elements in terms of that safety. One is to look at training standards for public transport workers, who already do a fantastic job, so that they are properly trained to handle these difficult situations when they arise. Secondly, the schedule for the route 604 bus could be much more suitable, because at the moment the bus arrives at 4:25 and school finishes at 4:05, so the timetable does not meet up. I believe it is a school bus that has been put on as an additional service for a number of the schools in the area, so if the minister can look at ensuring that that school timetable matches up to the bus service, that will help with safety, along with the training. I think, following the antisemitism report that we heard about and discussed today, we need to do as much as possible to ensure that our kids are kept safe.

Road safety

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:24): (302) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and concerns driver distraction and seatbelts. The action I seek is that the minister provide any information on education campaigns regarding driver distraction and seatbelt compliance and how this will assist my constituents in Narre Warren South. Recently high-tech cameras have been set up to catch distracted drivers. As a recent TAC survey revealed, 52 per cent of respondents said that they use their phone in their hands while driving, and many were using apps. A driver is 10 times more at risk of crashing while using their phone. The cameras have also caught thousands of drivers not wearing seatbelts, which has been extremely disconcerting, surprising and indeed very alarming.

It is a simple fact that seatbelts save lives and should always be worn, even on the shortest journey. They reduce the risk of serious or fatal injury by 50 per cent. Sadly, so far in 2023, 14 people have lost their lives on our roads while not wearing seatbelts. I very recently caught up with four of my constituents who were involved in that tragic Hunter Valley bus crash. They informed me that of the 10 people who died and the 25 people who were injured in that bus crash, only four people were wearing seatbelts on that bus. Of those four people wearing seatbelts, every single one of their lives was saved. So the proof is in the pudding: seatbelts just save lives.

I have been supporting Kidsafe and their push for greater seatbelt protections for children, and it has been confronting to hear the horror stories of people in accidents not wearing seatbelts or wearing belts that are not up to the required standards. It is astonishing that some people are simply not wearing them at all, which is also not a great example for our child passengers. I would appreciate it if the minister could provide any information on education campaigns targeting distracted drivers and seatbelt compliance and how this will benefit my electorate. I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

James Newbury: Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the chamber.

Quorum formed.

Country Fire Authority Gippsland South electorate stations

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:27): (303) Thank you, all, for coming in for my adjournment. It is a very important matter. The matter is, unfortunately, for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to fund the fire stations in my electorate that are in dire need of funding and replacement, in particular at Foster. I was informed last year that this was actually funded under the CFA budget for the 2023–24 financial year and that a new station would be built. I am also advocating on behalf of Mirboo North and Korumburra, and I will come to those in a moment.

With respect to Foster, I understand a site has been identified which is actually on VicTrack land, and so while it cannot be purchased, a lease arrangement was to be set up. The brigade have now been told by the CFA that they cannot proceed with entering into a lease arrangement for that land because the funding that was previously there for a new station, set by the CFA, has now been withdrawn, and that is due to budget cuts by the state Labor government. The Foster fire brigade has been fighting for this certainly since I was elected in 2015. The Nationals committed to building a new station in 2018 and 2022, but despite being on the CFA capital works program, it has still not happened, and now it looks even less likely to.

The other two I mentioned – Mirboo North was likewise on the CFA's capital works program, I believe, for this year. There have been some issues with finding an appropriate site for that rebuild, but that is one that is also necessary. I walked with the CFA brigade from Mirboo North at the recent Mirboo North Winterfest, and they told me that they are getting frustrated that this is still delayed. On Saturday in Korumburra I ran into the captain of the Korumburra brigade Shane Maskell, and he

reminded me of the state of the Korumburra station, which again is small and outdated. All of these stations are OH&S risks because they are not wide enough for volunteers to safely get changed in and have a truck moving in and out at the same time.

I do welcome the commitment by the government to funding for the Yarram rebuild, although I am perplexed given that that was also announced by the CFA last year and then reannounced as an election commitment by the government and somehow funded in this year's budget. Foster, Mirboo North and Korumburra must be funded, and I ask the Minister for Emergency Services to get on with the job, back our CFA and fund the rebuild of these stations.

Energy infrastructure safety

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (17:30): (304) My adjournment is to the Minister for Energy and Resources, and the action I seek is that the minister arrange a briefing for me with Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) to discuss the current regulations for electrical line clearance. Energy Safe Victoria is the independent regulator which oversees the enforcement of safety around powerlines to prevent vegetation growing too close and causing risks like fires, electrocution and outages. Our state knows the devastating impacts of bushfire. Every summer we tense up and prepare for what might confront us, so these regulations are serious and have wideranging impacts. In my community of Northcote, however, the nuance of these regulations emerges in a different way by virtue of our densifying inner-urban landscape, and I will give an example.

On Gladstone Avenue in Northcote a group of residents have been passionately advocating to save the majestic brittle gums adorning their street, which are slated for removal because of their proximity to the powerlines. Darebin council is required under the regulations to keep trees clear of electrical lines on the public land that it manages. As trees grow slowly, the expectation is that they can be pruned to accommodate for safety. In this case it appears that did not occur, and in July 2020 the council was asked to act to maintain the minimum clearance space. ESV provided Darebin with guidance on options to achieve compliance without removing the trees. These included measures like applying conductor covers, installing aerial-bundled cable, realignment or putting the lines underground. I have also visited to meet with residents and speak with council to broker some alternative solutions. Regrettably, all alternatives were rejected by Darebin, so unfortunately two trees have been already removed and locals are rightly aggrieved. These were beautiful gums, not easily substituted.

All of this serves to paint a picture of the tensions that exist between the regulations, compliance, local government and the need to balance amenity and safety in our communities. I note that the ESV regulations are due to sunset in 2025, and this will be preceded by a review process involving stakeholder engagement and community consultation. This is appropriate given the seriousness of these regulations. Ahead of that work I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with ESV about how the regulations can be nuanced to be more sensitive to the very real imperative to maintain tree canopy in urban areas like Northcote. Mature trees are vital in our densified suburbs, providing streetscape, improving air quality and, crucially, mitigating the heat island effect. With some parts of Darebin holding the highest rating on the heat vulnerability index, this is an issue that both I and other residents feel deeply about. I thank the minister for engaging so collaboratively on these policy issues and look forward to speaking to ESV about how regulations can be reviewed and improved.

Stalking law reform

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (17:33): (305) My adjournment matter is directed to the Attorney-General, and the action that I seek is for the Attorney to provide a formal response to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report on stalking, which was completed in June 2022, together with a time line for the implementation of recommendations that are agreed to by the government. A significant impetus for the referral by the Attorney to the VLRC was the tragic killing of 20-year-old Celeste Manno in 2020. As that matter is currently sub judice, I will be appropriately careful in what I say here. However, that tragic and avoidable case exposed significant flaws in not only our laws but the way in which the broader justice system in this state responds to non-family-violence stalking. I

take this opportunity to commend the advocacy of Celeste Manno's loving mother Aggie Di Mauro, who has been tireless in her efforts to see real systemic change to stalking laws so that other parents are spared the terrible burden that she and her family have endured.

I agreed with the decision of the government to refer the issues around non-family-violence stalking to the Victorian Law Reform Commission for inquiry. The commission provided an interim report on 6 April 2022 and finalised the report in June 2022. The government waited until September 2022 to table the final report, which contains 46 recommendations for reform. Since that time, we have yet to see from the Andrews government a comprehensive response to the very important issues raised in the commission's final report. There is an urgent need to act. As the VLRC itself says in the final report:

The law and justice system must change so that:

People who experience stalking are protected by adequate safety measures.

The justice system responds to the justice needs of victim survivors.

People who stalk are accountable for their behaviour and are given the opportunity to address it.

So while the enormous gaps in our justice system when it comes to dealing with non-family-violence-related stalking have been identified by the VLRC, and solutions proposed via 46 recommendations, so far the Andrews Labor government has failed to formally respond. This delay is not only concerning, it is dangerous. The longer the failures in our justice system are allowed to continue, the more innocent lives will be put at risk. A member for the South-Eastern Metropolitan Region in the other place Mr Limbrick raised these concerns in May this year, yet still the government has failed to act. That is why I call on the Attorney-General to formally respond to the VLRC report with a comprehensive time line for implementation, because lives are in the balance.

Frankston train station car parking

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (17:36): (306) I rise to ask the Minister for Public Transport to come and visit the Frankston commuter car park project site. Frankston has been evolving for a number of years now, and visitors to Frankston will step from the train station – the brand new, bespoke train station – onto a brand new Young Street, looking at a brand new redeveloped TAFE, stages 1 and 2. And soon, this summer, when they get off that train with their surfboards or anything that they need for the beach, they will be confronted with a brand new car park, a 500-space free car park for commuters in Frankston. We have taken into account what we heard during the community consultation, and that was: CCTV, access for all abilities and bike parking facilities as well. The project is getting off the ground as we speak. There will be excavators on scene, I think it is next week, and I know my community would look forward to the Minister for Public Transport coming down for a visit.

School zoning appeals

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:37): (307) My adjournment is to the Minister for Education, and the action I am seeking from the minister is to assist with the rectifying of a very sensitive situation, a school enrolment, in my electorate. As this matter is subject to an intervention order, I will be referring to people as 'the parent' and to schools by a letter, and I am happy to supply the minister further details off the record later in relation to particular schools to ensure that we can protect the privacy of these people. The parent lives in my electorate with her child, who currently attends one of our local primary schools. The parent submitted their preference to attend secondary school A; however, that was denied due to the school zoning, because they were classified as 'out of zone'. The child was instead accepted to school B. The issue with this is that the parent and their child have a current intervention order on another parent and the child of that parent at school B. Because of this the parent lodged an appeal, provided copies of the intervention order and wrote an extensive letter detailing the reasons why the child could not attend the school that they had been zoned to. And just to put it into perspective, the zone distance we are talking here is under about a kilometre and a half. We are not talking long-range, massive distances to travel; they are very, very close to where they are going.

Subsequent to this the parent received a letter saying that the appeal had been unsuccessful; however, there were no details or context as to why it was unsuccessful. It appears that it has not been reviewed correctly. They have followed up with the school and spoken to the principal via email, who also did not provide any explanation, just saying that the school is bound by zoning, which makes the parent feel like the appeal process is redundant if they cannot accept out-of-zone students in exceptional circumstances – which by any measure this certainly is. In the parent's own words, this is what they told me: 'This ordeal has been extremely traumatising for me, and the thought of having to be in the same place as this person when dropping my child off and at school functions is very distressing. On top of this, this presents an opportunity for this person to know my location and follow me, which poses a significant risk to my safety.' The parent spoke to the Department of Education, who were less than helpful, and the person that they spoke to had no idea what she could do to assist. She said someone would call the person back, and to this date, this has not occurred.

Minister, I am more than happy to provide all the details to you in relation to this and will do so once I leave the chamber, but I wanted to raise this issue as part of an overall broader issue of the lack of consideration of special circumstances when we are talking about school zones and enrolments, and particularly around the appeal process, to ensure that when people do appeal it is heard fairly. Every student has the right to a safe environment when they go to school, and if there are concerns, particularly legal concerns, whether it is between parents or non-parents, with intervention orders, that needs to be taken into consideration.

Thomastown electorate pedestrian safety

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:40): (308) I have a matter to raise with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that she arrange a time to accompany me on a visit to the Thomastown electorate to see what can be done to improve pedestrian safety in two locations in particular that have been raised with me by concerned residents. The first is the Aurora town centre. This has become a hub of activity with a wide range of shops and is surrounded by much-loved facilities. There is the Harvest Home Primary School on one side, a very popular school, which has thrived under the leadership of the foundation principal Anthony Simone and continues with new principal Mr Andrew Bouzikas to carry on this great work. This is a school built by Labor of course. On the other side of the centre is Galada Community Centre, which is always busy with people running programs, social events and meet-ups. There is also a library outpost run by committed volunteers like Ananya and staff from the Plenty Valley libraries – again made possible because of the Andrews Labor government's contribution to council investment in this community centre. But this burgeoning precinct needs support to ensure traffic flows well and pedestrians are protected and can move safely from place to place.

At the other end of the Thomastown electorate I have been working with local shopkeepers in the Alexander Avenue strip shops, residents and local principal Jeremy Blaney. Jeremy is principal of the very successful Thomastown East Primary School, and I thank him for his contribution and deep commitment to the local community and his admirable citizenship over and above his duties to the school. We have demonstrated to council that there is a great need for investment in safety and amenity in this area, and the Andrews Labor government continues to invest in the electorate and has provided funding to support the master plan and streetscape improvements for Alexander Avenue. But now, as more residents use the area, pedestrian safety and walkability is under strain and desperately needs solutions to ensure that pedestrians can be safe and that walking can be a pleasure in the area.

Shepparton electorate bus services

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (17:42): (309) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is that the minister funds an extensive bus service review for Shepparton. It has been 14 years since a review was last carried out, and it is well and truly overdue. The current services do not meet the growth and increased transport need of our region. I recently met with Greg Fitzsimmons and Roy Dyson from the Dyson bus group, a family owned and operated bus

company operating since 1952. They expressed their frustration that this review has not yet happened. They have been calling for this review for many years, and they see firsthand the growth in the region and the desperate need for these services to grow. They are inundated with requests for increased services from the community.

The region has grown significantly in the past 14 years, since the last review, with new housing estates right throughout the region. Services on Saturdays are limited, and there are no services provided on a Sunday. For the young, the elderly and others for whom driving may not be an option, buses are often the only way to get around. There is only one bus that services the train station on the hour, but it does not align with the V/Line time line. With the rising cost of living and people struggling to pay for fuel, insurance, parking and car registration, public transport should be a viable option.

When the bus plan was released in 2021, the minister said that this would include the regions. He stated the Labor government was committed to a bus network that better meets public transport needs and demand. I request that the minister support a bus review for Shepparton as soon as possible.

Brad Battin: Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Big Housing Build

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (17:44): (310) We all know that housing is an ongoing issue for many in the community, and it is something I hear constantly about when I am out and about in my electorate. I am proud to be part of an Andrews Labor government that has invested well over \$5 billion through our historic Big Housing Build, which aims to construct over 12,000 new homes throughout metro and regional Victoria. I direct my adjournment debate to the Minister for Housing. The action I seek is for the minister to come down to my electorate of Hastings to see where the Big Housing Build has helped my community and have a chat about what we can do to offer more affordable and social housing in the area. Since this big build started, over 7600 homes have been completed or are underway and more than 2000 households have moved in or people are ready to move into a brand new home. These homes also have a 7-star energy rating so that people are comfortable in summer and winter, but it is also saving tenants on their power bills. It just makes sense. I am happy that the Andrews Labor government is doing what matters for the community, and I look forward to the minister coming down to my electorate.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:46): The first adjournment tonight was from the member for Caulfield. He is no longer in the chamber. I will refer his action to the Minister for Public Transport as requested.

The second item was from the member for Narre Warren South. He had an adjournment matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action he seeks is an update and information on driver distraction and seatbelts. He had the courtesy of informing me that he had an event to attend and was not able to stay.

The member for Gippsland South had an issue that he raised for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services. He is no longer in the house, but I will refer the matter to the minister for her attention.

The member for Northcote had an action for the Minister for Energy and Resources, and she is seeking a briefing from Energy Safe Victoria so that she can better understand how Energy Safe works so she is well placed to take up to the council some of the issues in relation to the way they have not very effectively managed the trimming of trees in her electorate.

The member for Malvern, who has returned to the house, raised a matter for the Attorney-General in the other place, and the action that he seeks is a formal response to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's report into non-family-violence stalking.

The member for Frankston raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. Minister for Public Transport, he would like you to visit his electorate to inspect the fantastic 500 new free community car parks delivered by the Andrews Labor government.

The member for Berwick, who is in the house, raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and the action that he seeks is that the minister rectify a school enrolment situation that is quite sensitive, and the member undertook to provide further, more personal, information to the Minister for Education to assist her to do that.

The member for Thomastown raised a matter for the minister for roads, and the action that the member sought is that the minister for roads accompany her to two sites in her electorate to examine the ways in which pedestrian safety can be improved, particularly for children in her electorate at two primary schools, one of which is a school that was newly opened and funded by the Andrews Labor government.

The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport.

Ben Carroll: Do I have to go to Shepparton?

Mary-Anne THOMAS: No, she would just like you, Minister, to fund a bus service review for Shepparton.

The member for Hastings has requested that the Minister for Housing visit him in Hastings. The member for Hastings really looks forward to showing the Minister for Housing what a difference the Big Housing Build – the Andrews Labor government's Big Housing Build – is making to his constituents. That is the adjournment dealt with tonight.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Yibbida, yibbida. That's all, folks! We stand adjourned until Tuesday week.

House adjourned 5:50 pm.