



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

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

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Daniel Andrews

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Jacinta Allan

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Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

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

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

CONTENTS

CONDOLENCES	
Ernest Ross Smith.....	2493
Hon. Thomas William Roper	2493
MEMBERS	
Member for Warrandyte	2512
Resignation.....	2512
Premier.....	2512
Treasurer	2512
Absence	2512
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE AND MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
Commonwealth Games.....	2512
Ministers statements: Big Housing Build	2513
Commonwealth Games.....	2514
Ministers statements: housing affordability	2516
Commonwealth Games.....	2516
Ministers statements: energy policy	2517
Housing affordability	2518
Ministers statements: healthcare workforce.....	2519
Commonwealth Games.....	2520
Ministers statements: Big Housing Build	2522
CONDOLENCES	
John Karpathakis	2522
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
Gippsland South electorate.....	2523
Lara electorate.....	2523
South-West Coast electorate.....	2523
Box Hill electorate.....	2523
Nepean electorate	2524
Monbulk electorate.....	2524
Melbourne electorate.....	2524
Glen Waverley electorate.....	2524
Berwick electorate.....	2525
Pakenham electorate.....	2525
BILLS	
Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023	2525
Introduction and first reading	2525
PETITIONS	
Melton–Watergardens bus service.....	2526
COMMITTEES	
Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee	2526
Alert Digest No. 8.....	2526
DOCUMENTS	
Documents	2526
BILLS	
Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023.....	2529
Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023	2529
Council’s agreement.....	2529
ANNOUNCEMENTS	
Parliamentary Integrity Adviser	2529
BILLS	
Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023.....	2529
Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023	2529
Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023	2529
State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2023	2529
Victorian Future Fund Bill 2023	2529
Royal assent	2529
MOTIONS	
Commonwealth Games.....	2529
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	

Standing and sessional orders.....	2530
MOTIONS	
Commonwealth Games.....	2530
Integrity and Oversight Committee	2531
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
Notices of motion	2532
Program	2532
ANNOUNCEMENTS	
Petitions	2538
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
Commonwealth Games.....	2539
Simon Crean.....	2539
VicRoads testing fees	2539
Melbourne livability	2540
Commonwealth Games.....	2540
World Environment Day	2541
Refugee Week.....	2541
Afri-Aus Care.....	2541
Pakenham Arthritis Self-Help Group	2541
Living & Learning Pakenham and Have a Little Hope	2541
Housing crisis.....	2541
Morwel Atar Morwel	2541
Commonwealth Games.....	2542
Barwon Heads Road upgrade.....	2542
Morwell electorate sporting infrastructure	2542
Visy Packaging	2543
Chatham Primary School.....	2543
Endeavour Foundation	2543
Kew electorate Rotary clubs.....	2543
Phil Emery.....	2544
Bellarine electorate climate action	2544
Government performance	2544
North East Link Program.....	2544
Alistair Urquhart.....	2544
Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships program	2544
Mullauna College	2545
Coburg West Primary School.....	2545
Pascoe Vale South Primary School	2545
Westbreen Primary School	2545
Wendouree Senior Citizens Club.....	2545
Women in sport	2546
State Emergency Service Nillumbik, Heidelberg and Manningham units	2546
Greenhills Neighbourhood House	2546
BILLS	
Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023	2547
Second reading.....	2547
ADJOURNMENT	
Commonwealth Games.....	2568
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	2569
Latrobe Valley social housing.....	2570
Pakenham Consolidated School.....	2570
Commonwealth Games.....	2570
Tarneit electorate Islamic community	2571
Short-stay accommodation	2572
Glenallen School.....	2572
Wild dog control	2573
Truganina Business Association	2574
Responses	2574

Tuesday 1 August 2023

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

The SPEAKER: Before we commence this afternoon, I would like to acknowledge in the gallery the presence of the many family members, friends, former members and colleagues of the late members who we will condole today.

Condolences

Ernest Ross Smith

The SPEAKER (12:04): I advise the house of the death of Ernest Ross Smith, member of the Legislative Assembly for the district of Glen Waverley from 1985 to 2002. I would ask members to rise in their places as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased.

Members stood in their places.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members. I will convey a message of sympathy from the house to the relatives of the late Ross Smith.

Hon. Thomas William Roper

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (12:05): I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death of the Honourable Thomas William Roper and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as member of the Legislative Assembly for the districts of Brunswick West from 1973 to 1976, Brunswick from 1976 to 1992 and Coburg from 1992 to 1994, and Minister of Health from 1982 to 1985, Minister for Transport from 1985 to 1987, Minister for Planning and Environment and Minister for Consumer Affairs from 1987 to 1990, Treasurer from 1990 to 1992, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs from 1987 to 1990 and from 1991 to 1992, and Minister for Employment, Post-Secondary Education and Training and Minister for Gaming from January to October 1992, and Leader of the House from 1989 to 1992.

Living your values is not always easy. It can mean agitating when others accept the status quo, and doing the right thing is not always the same as doing the popular thing. Tom Roper was a man who lived his values: no matter the circumstance, no matter the challenge, he would always fight for what was right.

Tom was born in New South Wales, and even in his youth he showed the trademark determination we all came to know. At around 12 years old Tom decided to hitchhike from Sydney to Tenterfield. That effort got him on the cover of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It was his first media appearance, but it most certainly was not his last. Over his long ministerial career in the Cain and Kirner governments, as we have noted already, he held eight different portfolios, and in every single one of them he stuck to his values.

Tom's passion and advocacy for the environment shone throughout his 21 years in Parliament. Even before climate change was something we all knew and understood, Tom was working to combat its devastating impact. He fought for stronger protection for the ozone layer and warned against greenhouse gases. At that time it was a concept which may as well have been science fiction to most, but Tom knew just how important it was. Not only did he help start the conversations about climate change, he considered how Victoria could grow and grow sustainably.

Tom took a long-term view – a 40-year view – on urban development. He helped to identify Victoria's growth corridors to ensure families had a proper place to settle down. He wanted these families to have good hospitals to care for their loved ones and schools that gave every Victorian kid the best start in

CONDOLENCES

2494

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 1 August 2023

life. He knew too that Victorians wanted that fairness and deserved that equality no matter their postcode. But that was not the only issue Tom was ahead of the times on.

He was disgusted by the unfair, racist and brutal treatment of Australia's First Nations people. He supported the 1965 Freedom Ride that shone a light on this segregation. At a time when some Australians felt it acceptable to exclude, his values pushed him to include, so he stood shoulder to shoulder with those who needed him most. He brought that passion and those unwavering values to Victoria. As Aboriginal affairs minister, he was among the first to introduce cultural heritage arrangements protecting sacred sites. His work laid the foundations for the path we now walk on here in this state to reconcile with Victoria's First Nations people. Reconciliation may not have been popular at the time, but that did not matter to Tom because he knew what was right.

He approached the role of health minister like he approached all portfolios – with his values in tow. Some of those involved in running the health system at the time were comfortable with the old ways, but Tom was all about the new ways, the better ways. For example, his work on tobacco was groundbreaking, leading to smoke-free areas and better support for prevention and those suffering from disease. At a time when smoking was still very common and accepted, he took it on. He stuck to what he knew was right.

It was this dedication to making our health services better that arguably led to his greatest achievement: Tom brought together the former Queen Victoria Medical Centre, Prince Henry's Hospital and Moorabbin Hospital, creating the Monash Medical Centre, a legacy that has saved countless Victorian lives and will keep on saving lives. The Australian Medical Association spoke fondly of Tom, describing him as particularly hardworking and well informed. In other words, Tom got things done.

Those that knew Tom well also knew that he was a lover of sport, a passionate supporter of Carlton and a wily spin bowler for an indoor cricket team. He liked golf, although he was not quite sure where he hit the ball some of the time. This is according to Tom's colleague John Harrowfield, who said, as a golfing companion he was a determined, relentless searcher for lost golf balls.

Whilst Tom's reputation with a golf ball was not the greatest, his reputation as a member of this place and throughout Victoria was of the highest standard. If you needed to find him here late on a sitting day, your better bet was in the library than across in the Strangers bar. He preferred a book in hand rather than a beer. Policy – he was fascinated by policy, policy that made Victoria a better place, policy that gave a fair go to all Victorians, policy that reflected his values. It was that inquisitive and curious nature that made him such a force, and indeed this was reinforced last week when I spoke to David Kennedy, the former both federal member for Bendigo in the federal Parliament and state member for Bendigo who served in this place with Tom. David said that Tom took a committed and intellectual approach to politics. He got hold of issues, he mastered them and then he acted. David firmly stated he was an outstanding minister who was also a wonderful bloke. Tom's standards were high, and he always held himself to account. So too he expected that of others, and some found that difficult. But a person driven by their values tends to make those known to everyone no matter where you sit in this place. A quote arose after Tom's passing that sums it up well: 'It was possible to disagree with the minister, but we'd usually be proven wrong.' That was Tom. He was focused on doing what was right. If what he was doing was not going to help a Victorian, then he was not particularly interested. He was always approachable to listen to and debate ideas.

Tom too continued his fight long past his career in this place, particularly with Greenfleet. They are establishing a forest previously cleared on a site called Ngulambarra. That means 'meeting place', and this forest will help restore an important ecosystem and give refuge to endangered species. It will be known as Tom's forest. This is where Tom's ashes will be spread. To his wife Anita, to his children Annabelle, Bronwen and Peter and to his grandchildren Lily, Mackenzie, Primrose, Tuppence, Harry, Gabriel and Molly: Tom was a Labor giant. He fought for what was right, he fought for Victorians and, most importantly, he lived his values. While he may be at peace, that work and that fight still continue, and we will do him proud, just as he did us proud. Vale, Tom Roper.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (12:13): I am pleased to join in support of this condolence motion on behalf of this side of the house. The passing of the Honourable Thomas Roper this year at the age of 78 marks the loss of a committed former member of this Parliament and minister. Tom served his local community in the inner north with great pride and the Victorian community more generally too. He was a dedicated minister and someone who made a significant contribution to our state and our community's fabric. Amongst Liberal circles he was known for his approachable and respectful manner. He never shied away from engaging in spirited debates, but he was always willing to listen and weigh up opposing views. Ultimately this approach was designed to produce better outcomes for all Victorians.

Born in the Sydney suburb of Chatswood in 1945, he completed school at North Sydney Boys High School and then went to Sydney University, where he graduated with honours in arts, majoring in history. At Sydney University he became involved in politics and Indigenous issues. He supported the 1965 Freedom Ride to expose and change racial segregation in rural New South Wales, working with the late Charles Perkins, former New South Wales Chief Justice James Spigelman and others. He went on to become an education adviser for the then federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gordon Bryant.

In 1973 Tom was elected to this Parliament. Over the next 21 years he held the seats of Brunswick West, Brunswick and Coburg, reflecting changes in electoral boundaries. He served the Victorian people in this Parliament for 21 years with a ministerial career that spanned many portfolios across 10 years in the Cain and Kimer Labor governments, including treasury, health, transport, planning and the environment, consumer affairs, employment, post-secondary education, gaming and Aboriginal affairs.

Tom considered the creation of the Monash Medical Centre as one of his most significant reforms and achievements. The centre, opened in 1975, brought together the former Queen Victoria Medical Centre, Prince Henry's Hospital and Moorabbin Hospital to provide integrated state-of-the-art health services. As Minister for Planning and Environment he advanced policies to address the protection of the ozone layer, amongst many other environmentally focused objectives.

After retiring from politics in 1994, Tom Roper went to work in environmental policy. In 2001 he was appointed to the board of Greenfleet, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to protecting the climate by restoring native forests. He was also president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council from 2009 to 2015. Tom spent significant time abroad after leaving politics, with his wife Anita, where they continued to promote environmental sustainability. In Washington Tom joined the board of the Climate Institute. He became a conduit linking Australian policymakers with US leaders on environmental issues.

Tom had many interests outside of his work, including history, cooking and most notably sport. In his younger days his chosen sport was Rugby League, but as we have heard, he grew to become a passionate supporter of AFL, including Carlton, something I can readily identify with. He was a proud father and grandfather. On behalf of this side of the house I convey our appreciation for the Honourable Tom Roper's service to the Victorian Parliament, the Victorian people and the community of which we are all a part, and we extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends. May Tom Roper rest in peace.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (12:17): If you read any eulogy or account of the life of the Honourable Tom Roper and his time in office, it is clear that he used his intellectual weight with real purpose. It is clear he never forgot his reason for entering politics in the first place: to use that intellect, to use his drive to understand the detail of an issue in order to deliver policy and outcomes with purpose for those people who have always relied on Labor governments to do the right thing – that is, working people and those who are disadvantaged in our community.

While I know that throughout his career Tom spent time in a wide range of roles, I would like to focus of course on his time as health minister and his longstanding relationship with Victoria's health system.

Tom spent almost a decade as either the Shadow Minister of Health or as the Minister of Health advocating for a system that works in the best interests of all Victorian people, a task which by all accounts he took to with the same ferocity of purpose that he took to any endeavour throughout his very rich and fulfilled life.

I reflect on the fact that when the Cain government was elected Tom was appointed Minister of Health with two staff members. You can reflect then on how significant his achievements have been. In reflecting on the parallels between Tom's achievements and the work of the Andrews government I want to take this time to commit to *Hansard* just how ahead of its time the health agenda of the Cain government was under Tom. As minister Tom oversaw, as we have heard, the creation of the Monash Medical Centre, an amalgamation of the Queen Victoria Medical Centre, Prince Henry's Hospital and Moorabbin Hospital, with the centre opening on 1 July 1987. Today of course we take for granted the existence of these health services serving Melbourne's rapidly growing south-eastern population. The Monash Medical Centre is and remains the centrepiece of Monash Health facilities, which now include the children's hospital and the Victorian Heart Hospital.

It is hard to fathom a Victorian health system without Monash Health and the Monash Medical Centre at its heart. Monash Health today is the largest health service in this state, with over 40 locations catering for more than 20 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne's population. Wait for it – 3.24 million episodes of care are delivered annually through Monash Health, and of course the Medical Centre has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state. Monash Health also employs more than 14,000 full-time equivalent staff.

Today I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the decisions that Tom Roper made as minister and the enormous impact that those decisions had and continue to have today. The Deputy Premier has already spoken about the important foundational role that Tom played in the Cain government's leading tobacco reforms, which of course saw the abolition of tobacco sponsorship of sports and arts and the establishment of VicHealth, but Tom did other very progressive things in his time as well. He prepared and negotiated through the Parliament the world's first comprehensive legislation on IVF, on donation and surrogacy. Just take a moment to think what a job that would have been. I reflect on how important this legislation is, how life changing it has been, and the foundation that it lays for our government's – the Andrews government's – work on expanding in-vitro fertilisation, or IVF, as we now call it, making it public here in this state and establishing our first public egg and sperm bank. Public IVF will make the joy of starting a family a reality for so many more Victorians: single parents, couples with fertility challenges and members of our LGBTIQ+ community.

Tom chaired the health ministers conference for some time. That is a role that I have now just taken on, so I can empathise with some of the challenges. However, at the time Tom was chairing it the HIV/AIDS pandemic was sweeping the world, and people were still coming to grips with what this disease meant. I am pleased to be able to report that as a Victorian minister Tom was a leader in our nation's response to HIV/AIDS through challenging the stigma and discrimination that were very much a part of the initial response to HIV. Tom worked to deliver a response that was informed both by innovation and, most importantly, by compassion. Under Tom's watch Victoria helped shape the Commonwealth response, including working with community organisations to lead a grassroots response to listen to those people who were most impacted by HIV/AIDS and respond to their needs. This reflected Tom's approach to policy more broadly, making sure that those who were most impacted or affected by change were brought along in the policy response. We know that it is that groundbreaking response to HIV/AIDS which has informed the way in which we have dealt with so many other communicable diseases, most recently our very successful response to an outbreak of mpox.

Tom also oversaw the first ever long-term health capital works program, foreshadowing the massive \$15 billion infrastructure pipeline that we have today. Amongst these big headline achievements, though, I think it is also the more discreet and compassionate side of Tom's work that shines through in any reflections on his life. When his work program included overhauling mental health services in the state and closing down outdated hospitals for people with disabilities, he ensured that residents of

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2497

St Nicholas Hospital were afforded community-based accommodation before its closure. It was this kind of eagle-eyed attention to detail and to social justice that weaves through everything Tom achieved in his ministerial career.

On his return to Melbourne in 2008, Tom became a regular visitor to Melbourne's major hospitals, including Peter Mac, St V's and the Royal Melbourne Hospital. His complex health issues meant that he interacted with so many aspects of our health system and its services. It was the many health professionals he met along the way who supported him in his endeavours to continue to live life to the fullest. His treatment experience confirmed the quality of Victoria's health system for Tom. He felt fortunate to be in the best place to receive first-class treatment. He felt privileged to have met many exceptional professionals who treated his immediate health issues and then supported him through programs of rehabilitation.

There are two particular people that I have been asked by Anita to acknowledge, who delivered care to Tom over the long term and for that reason deserve special mention. The first is Professor John Seymour AM from Peter Mac. Professor Seymour oversaw Tom's cancer treatment for the last 10 years. His wealth of knowledge and experience was invaluable as he navigated the complexity of Tom's condition. He took the time to thoroughly explain every step of the treatment process, patiently addressing Tom's concerns and ensuring that he fully understood all the options of care that were available to him. His clear communication style empowered Tom and Anita to make informed decisions together as a team.

The second is Dr Simon Andrade, Tom's GP, together with the practice nurses from the Collins Street Medical Centre. We all know how important it is to have a great GP, and Dr Andrade and the Collins Street Medical Centre provided personalised care during Tom's frequent visits as a patient. Dr Andrade's commitment to Tom's wellbeing extended beyond the walls of the clinic in providing not only medical care but also emotional support to both Tom and Anita during such a challenging time. He promptly followed up on every aspect of the treatment plan, and his dedication did not waver even during evenings and on weekends, always being just a phone call away for any emergencies or concerns. It is with heartfelt gratitude that Anita expresses her deepest appreciation to both Professor Seymour and Dr Andrade for their exceptional care and support for Tom. The Roper family will always be grateful for the tireless efforts of these health professionals, which they are in no doubt helped prolong the time that they spent together as a family and embody the true definition of remarkable health care.

Tom's approach to a decade of serious health issues while living overseas and back here in Melbourne was characterised by his resilience. Tom would not let his health setbacks stall his love of life. Tom became wheelchair-bound after a stroke in 2017. Despite this he approached rehab with his usual determination and the often-said motto of 'There is nothing I can't do; I just may have to do it differently'. With this mindset Tom continued to actively participate in all aspects of his life with his wife Anita. He refused to let his disability hinder his adventures and his determination.

In this vein it would be remiss of me not to address Tom's passionate climate sustainability advocacy in his post-ministerial career. As we have heard, in 2001 Tom was appointed to the board of Greenfleet, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to protecting the climate by restoring native forests. Tom was also president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council from 2009 to 2015. ASBEC brought together the property and construction sectors across government, industry and academia to improve the sustainability of the built environment, and ASBEC awarded Tom an honorary life fellowship in 2016.

The reason why I wanted to focus on this of course is that the principles that Tom championed throughout his life and that so many of those organisations like ASBEC have also championed are now in place in some of our biggest infrastructure projects. Proudly we are on track to deliver the first all-electric hospital at Melton, which I know is something that Tom would be extraordinarily proud of, and Footscray is also being significantly electrified to ensure that it is a sustainable hospital into

the future. Passive design at the heart hospital and water conservation systems at Frankston all owe their design to the legacy of people such as Tom. It is in these projects that Tom's tenacity to deliver, his attention to detail and his commitment to reform will live on in our health system for years to come, and generations of all Victorians from all walks of life will be better for the life and work of Tom Roper. As our current Labor health minister, it is an honour to be able to continue the legacy of Tom's work for all Victorians in this chamber. Vale, Tom Roper.

Emma KEALY (Lowan) (12:30): I am pleased to join my parliamentary colleagues in this condolence motion to pay my respects to the late Tom Roper and recognise his contribution to Victoria as a member of this place for over 20 years. I would from the outset like to pay my respects in particular to Tom's family and friends who are in the gallery today. As someone who did not meet Tom, it has been wonderful to hear the reflections upon his contribution to this place, and not just about him in terms of being an MP over certain periods but about how he did his job. It is very, very clear that Tom was always a passionate advocate for doing what was right for the things that he believed in.

Born in Sydney to a truck-driving father who was later an oil company clerk and a beloved and very proud mother, it was clear from the outset that Tom was a very intelligent man. He was dux at Hunters Hill High School and went on to study at Sydney University, earning a bachelor of arts honours degree in history and government. It was here that Tom's journey into politics and advocacy really began. Tom was a self-described student activist, seeking changes in attitudes on Australia's role in Vietnam, around Aboriginal rights and on equality in education.

It was these exact same issues that Tom highlighted in his inaugural speech as an MP. He highlighted the inefficient education systems, our inadequate health facilities and inefficient low-cost housing. It seems that some things do not change over time. He also raised concerns about limited educational support for migrant children, looking at those first-generation Australians who simply were not achieving the same learning outcomes as people who spoke English as a first language. He spoke about his concerns around changes regarding cost shifting to local government and the burden that that put on councils, and he raised that perennial issue of green wedges in the northern suburbs. Of course Tom continued to push all of these key issues that he believed in in every single thing that he did in Parliament. As we have heard today, Tom held a number of ministerial portfolios, most notably the health and transport portfolios, and he was so enormously proud of his most significant legacy, the Monash Medical Centre.

But it is not always what you do, it is how you go about it, and reading through some newspaper articles shows what a character Tom was and his ability to capture a media headline. I was very intrigued to see that he had been photographed with giant toothbrushes, dead possums, powerboats, power drills, tractors, curly drinking straws and of course babies, but he even took time out when he was Minister for Transport to don a stationmaster outfit and feature in a cameo in a TV series for children, *Kaboodle*. He was always looking at doing things a little bit differently, but most importantly humanising and engaging with the wider community.

Tom will be remembered as an active local member in Brunswick who worked hard for his electorate and added verve to the Labor seats in this chamber. Upon his retirement he did make note and commented to the media that the pressure for all politicians on families is enormous, and it is especially the kids who suffer. After retirement Tom dedicated so much of his time to his family and spent a lot of time by his lovely wife Anita's side, particularly looking at their shared interest in improving advocacy around climate change through his role in the Climate Institute and Greenfleet but also through the work of the Stroke Foundation. I do thank both Tom and Anita for that ongoing advocacy right until Tom's last days, and I am sure Anita will continue that work. I extend my sincere condolences to Peter, Annabelle and Bronwen and of course Tom's beloved wife Anita. Vale, Tom Roper.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (12:35): I rise to contribute to the condolence motion for the Honourable Tom Roper. Many have said that he is a giant of the labour movement, and he

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2499

certainly had a major, profound impact on our state in many, many different ways, and for the most of it I think he left a legacy that was well ahead of its time in terms of his dedication to particular causes that really served to carve a pathway for many of us even decades later. We know of his well-loved care for the environment, and he was a very early champion of climate action. He was a force of nature who very much dedicated his life in this house, within his community and of course in retirement to serving the Victorian people and the broader goal of environmental improvement. I certainly do take this opportunity to pass on my heartfelt condolences to his family – his wife Anita, his three children, Peter, Annabelle and Bronwen, and his grandchildren.

Tom of course will be remembered as a very tireless, passionate, smart, kind person who left an impression on everyone who met him. No-one who ever met Tom Roper would forget Tom Roper. I think that is a fair thing to say, and it speaks to the calibre of his person but also of the purpose with which he grabbed life and squeezed every moment out of it – and he absolutely did that. You always understood where you stood with Tom – always – and even though he and I were in different factions and probably different generations, I would say that if there was a Tom Roper around today, he would probably be a member of the left. Others in the audience might suggest differently, but that is more a mark of how the left has changed, I might add, over the last couple of decades. But Tom Roper as he was then would be very much the same Tom Roper if he had started his career today. That is the point that I am making.

He was first elected in 1973 to the seat of Brunswick West. He had a very long and distinguished ministerial career spanning eight portfolios across the Cain and Kirner governments. There were many upheavals during that period, but he performed every role to his utmost and really shone. We do need to remember the fact that, whilst he served in those governments, he also spent a long time in opposition in the very, very lonely days of Labor before 1982, when Labor had been in opposition for many, many years – many decades, I should say. But he was just the person, stepping into opposition at the time that he did, in the early 1970s, to steer and work through a very, very difficult and bumpy period for the Labor Party in terms of its refocus – some people could say ‘refocus’, others could say very fundamental changes in the way that the Labor Party was organised. He was part of that change, and he went along for the journey because he understood and valued the need for the Labor Party to be in government to do the very, very good things that he wasted not a single day in doing when Labor was finally elected in 1982.

Certainly he was a wonderful Minister of Health and also transport; planning and environment; consumer affairs; employment and post-secondary education; and gaming over his decade of service in the cabinet. He also served as Treasurer from 1990 to 1992 and twice as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs between 1987 and 1990 and then from 1991 to 1992. Obviously there were very tumultuous periods towards the end of the Cain–Kirner period, but he was a stand-out in every sense and in every portfolio that he had. Once labelled ‘tenacious Tom’ by the *Herald Sun*, Tom spent every day as a minister working for the Victorian people and delivering the state-changing ambition which those Labor governments were known for. When I became an adult the first Victorian election that I got to vote in was – I actually missed out on the first Cain government in 1982; I had not quite turned 18, so everyone can work out my age, and that is fine, but I can tell you how happy I was.

They certainly do not make people like Tom anymore, and I think that is very important for us to remember. It was a lifetime commitment, dedicating his life to being an activist. We know of his many writings, his many history lessons that he shared with people, reluctantly or otherwise, certainly on his holidays overseas – and at the memorial we heard a lot of great stories of Tom having planned many of the routes to tourist destinations for Anita and friends, who are here also. He was a historian basically during that whole period. He loved to learn, and he loved to share that knowledge and make the rest of us much wiser for that. Certainly he had a very passionate and steadfast commitment to justice for Aboriginal people in this state, and I can talk at length about that work. He always backed the right causes. He had a knack for understanding what was right and what was wrong, and that is one thing that I think, again, serves us very well to reflect on.

Tom was also of course Minister for Planning and Environment. He very much took a long view on Melbourne, what it could look like and what it should look like. He commenced working on a 40-year urban development plan, identifying growth corridors to accommodate future population growth – and it has served us well for a number of decades, but this is always an evolving area. He taught us so much about how to do those things well. He understood much earlier, more than most people, the risks of climate change. Again, he had a knack of understanding the emerging issues, either for people in their communities, whether it was health or other matters to do with planning – that foresight that he had, but also his sheer application to doing things with them and about them.

He very much advanced protections to the ozone layer with the EPA that were adopted nationally, and that is something that we need to remember him for. I did indicate that he was a forward thinker. He saw the need for dramatic action on climate, and he did something about it. Some of Victoria's earliest understanding of the implications and the risks of greenhouse gases was initiated under Tom's guidance, and decades before some caught up – and still some are catching up; they are not quite there. We are much wiser for him. When you have a think about the progress that has been made in this state, across the country and globally – and I would say definitely for this country – the path that he laid the foundations for in terms of our understanding and the tangible things that we could do in government really has served us very, very well. I think today Victoria is very much a leader in a lot of the work that needs to be done in terms of climate and protecting the environment, and that early work was done by Tom Roper, absolutely.

We know that past retirement, he did not finish there; his commitment to climate action followed him into retirement. He was appointed as a board member of the Climate Institute in Washington, DC in 1994, where he was the head of a team that was looking to rescue small islands from rising sea levels. Who would have thought? That was 30 years ago, almost. And in 1999 he became the project director of the Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative, which, importantly, aided small island states to introduce renewable energy. In 2001 Tom was appointed to the board of Greenfleet, and that has been mentioned a couple of times. You think you know what it is like, but it is not what it sounds like. But it is very much green, and it is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to protecting the climate by restoring native forests. He was also president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, ASBEC, from 2009 to 2015. Through his drive, ASBEC brought together the property and construction sectors across government, industry and academia to improve the sustainability of the built environment. ASBEC awarded him an honorary life fellowship in 2016.

I had the pleasure during that period to become reacquainted with Tom and had many meetings with him on a number of occasions during that period. He was as steadfast, committed and purpose driven as he ever was when he was in his career in politics – such was the person who would never let go. I think at some point someone described him as a dog with a bone, and he certainly was that, and we were lucky that he was because he did so much.

At his memorial I joined with hundreds of others who gathered to remember him in all of the parts of his life that people were happy to share with us, including his personal life – spending a lot of time with grandchildren and becoming connected to a son that he never understood that he had until late in life and the great love that came from that for everyone, I think, that shared in that discovery. At the end of the day, the most fitting way to have really marked the measure of Tom Roper and everything that he was able to achieve was the creation of Tom's forest, as the Deputy Premier referred to it earlier, a lasting legacy created through Greenfleet within Ngulambarra in his memory. Certainly that really talks to his commitment around sustainability and climate and the role that the natural environment can play when we nurture it to be able to help mitigate against the worst aspects of climate change.

Robert Fordham also shared at the time, and Robert was a contemporary member of Parliament, but he was, I think, Deputy Premier at one point – I am looking at Anita, definitely – and was a very firm friend of Tom's during that period. He shared at the memorial that he was 'bloody brave', 'a legend in his time' and 'a fair taskmaster'. Now, I would argue that you cannot be one without the other; I do not think you can. I do not think you can be bloody brave or a legend in your time unless you are a fair

taskmaster, because a fair taskmaster is someone who demands a lot of themselves but also others who go along for the journey. That is a mark of a really true leader and someone who gets things done. He never wasted a day, as I said earlier, squeezing every drop out of life with the drive to do good things for his community and the environment.

I could go on, but I will not. I will finally say that my condolences go to Anita and his children and grandchildren. He was a remarkable man who lived a remarkable life and one who always said, 'Why can't we do something? Why can't I do something?' I think if we each ask ourselves that very same question in everything we do in life, not only will we be better people but we will make the community a much better place to live.

Tim READ (Brunswick) (12:48): As the member for Brunswick, I am going to make a couple of brief observations and share some reflections of Tom Roper – Mr Roper, as he was to us back in the 1980s when I first heard of him. We were medical students paying attention to what was happening in tobacco control. I think I first heard his name in connection with Victoria's first Quit program, which was established in about the mid-1980s, and also the Quit organisation which has a longer name but is the tobacco control arm. He became famous, at least in the circles in which I mixed, for those achievements. So I already knew about him when I moved into a house not far from his electorate office, which, if memory serves me, was on the corner of Lygon Street and Glenlyon Road. It became a massage parlour after that, but we will not go there.

I was reading a history by Margie Winstanley from the Cancer Council Victoria from years gone by, and she said that the idea of buying out sports and cultural sponsorship actually originated with Tom Roper. It came from him. That was the genesis of what became the Victorian Tobacco Act 1987, which he introduced to this house, and which – again according to her, I have not gone back through *Hansard* – passed with the support of both sides of the house. Tom Roper, the health minister David White and I think the opposition health spokesperson – it might have been Mark Birrell at the time – all collaborated to get the Victorian Tobacco Act through in a remarkable display.

It is important to remember that back in the mid-1980s there was a Marlboro ad or a Winfield ad on every second street corner. The tennis and the cricket were sponsored by Benson & Hedges – I am really showing my age here, folks – and the opera and the ballet. People alleged that our sporting and cultural life would collapse if we got rid of tobacco sponsorship. It was the work of Tom Roper and his colleagues here and at the Anti-Cancer Council, as it was then called, in creating the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, which is now known as VicHealth, using a hypothecated tax on smoking to fund arts and sports and so on which removed that as an argument. It just nullified that argument. I will not go into any more detail except to reflect, after the excellent speech from the Minister for Climate Action, on her comment that he had a real knack for picking issues that would stand the test of time. Whether it was climate action or health promotion, we all owe him a lot. Condolences not just to Mr Roper's family but also to all Victorians. We have really lost a visionary.

Gabrielle WILLIAMS (Dandenong – Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples) (12:52): I rise today to join colleagues in offering my condolences on the passing of the Honourable Tom Roper and to acknowledge the significant contribution he made to the state of Victoria. As news of Tom's passing filtered through the community, my office and our department began to receive a barrage of messages fondly recounting and noting his important contributions, especially in the advancement of Aboriginal rights.

In preparing for this it struck me that his contribution pretty much spans all of my portfolios, and his reformist hands and enormous brain touched all of the work that I currently have the great privilege of carrying forward. But more than that, his influence and his contribution have touched my personal life, as they will have for many in this place and outside of it, particularly his work on IVF, in regulating IVF services, and of course his work in the establishment of Monash Medical Centre. My son is one of the thousands and thousands of IVF children who represent the legacy of just one part of Tom's

work and he also happened to be born at Monash Medical Centre, so two intersections there of extreme importance and two small signs, I guess, or legacies of Tom's enormous contribution.

Tom achieved, as we have already heard, much in his time across numerous senior portfolios throughout a 21-year parliamentary career and a very significant, it should be said, post-parliamentary contribution as well. It shows not only a man who cared deeply about his job but a man for whom that work was much more than a job. It was a passion and a lifelong dedication, which I think points to exactly why he has the legacy that he has, because it was a heart job. It was something that he cared about long before he entered politics and long after he left politics.

It was his career-long dedication to advancing Aboriginal rights in Victoria and across Australia that I want to spend some time recounting today. Tom's advocacy began during his time studying arts at Sydney University, where he majored in history. During this time he became involved in student action for Aborigines, which had been set up at the university by prominent Aboriginal activist Charlie Perkins and others. Tom supported the 1965 Freedom Ride, which we heard about in the Deputy Premier's remarks, an event that exposed and looked to change racial segregation in rural New South Wales, and he worked with Perkins and former New South Wales Chief Justice James Spigelman to that end. He was also involved in significant advocacy action around the 1965 New South Wales state election, where he helped stage a 100-hour vigil outside both party headquarters in a bid to draw attention to Aboriginal rights.

After this experience Tom and several others decided to take their action to the national level, joining Abschol, the Aboriginal affairs department of the National Union of Australian University Students, and in 1967 Tom went to Melbourne and became its national Aboriginal director. During Tom's leadership he set up a national structure with active committees in all Australian universities. Tom played a really key part in broadening the agenda at this time beyond just a focus on raising funds for educational scholarships to really shining a light on broader issues of systemic injustice affecting Aboriginal people and communities. This included an agenda committed to improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal students and giving practical support to the Gurindji people in their uprising at Wattie Creek.

After three years with the national union, Tom moved to the school of education at La Trobe University, where he was to undertake in-depth research in the area of Aboriginal education and educational inequality. During this time he published a number of books, including *The Myth of Equality*, which outlined the structural disadvantages experienced between large numbers of students in the public and private sectors, and he also edited the book, *Aboriginal Education: The Teacher's Role*. His expertise in the area was noticed at the highest levels, and in 1973 Tom was asked to be the educational adviser for the then federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gordon Bryant, and in the short period in the role before joining the Victorian Parliament in the 1973 election, Tom again had a very significant impact. He helped shift the focus of the Commonwealth department, who would start for the first time an Aboriginal education program, and using the insights from his travels to First Nations reservations in the US, particularly the Navajo, he supported Whitlam to begin the now much-celebrated bilingual educational movement that allowed Aboriginal children to learn in their first languages, something that we continue to talk about and want to drive further even today.

Tom's focus then turned to Victoria, where he twice held the portfolio of what was then called Aboriginal affairs, firstly in the Cain government and later in the Kirner government. As minister, Tom was amongst the first in Australia to introduce cultural heritage arrangements that codified the protection of Aboriginal historical and sacred sites. In 1987 he worked with the Commonwealth to amend federal legislation to allow Victorian traditional owners to have for the first time a say over cultural heritage decision-making on their country. This principle of self-determination finds its legacy in the strong traditional-owner-led protections that remain in place to this very day and a proud process for ongoing strengthening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage protections to this day. We have to a very significant degree built on Tom's work and on the principles that underpinned

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2503

that work. There is still much more work to do to that end, but he paved the way for Victoria to have the strongest cultural heritage protections in this country, and it is a mantle that we are very proud of.

Tom was to have a particularly deep concern, following the release of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report, for outcomes for our First Nations people and communities, and he chaired the first ministerial conference that was to engage with the issues that that report outlined. He also oversaw the development of a project funding initiative to enable local Aboriginal co-ops to invest in projects with Indigenous economic and employment outcomes. Throughout his state parliamentary career Tom would continue to keep an eye on federal matters, recounting the pressure he put on the Commonwealth at ministerial council meetings to take responsibility for Aboriginal affairs, helping to instigate pivotal land rights reform.

His lifetime of dedication and advocacy for First Peoples rights is something that has not been lost on community here in Victoria. Outgoing co-chair of the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria Auntie Geraldine Atkinson remembered Tom fondly as a warm man who was great to work with and with whom you could discuss difficult issues freely without him ever becoming defensive or offended. Similarly, at Tom's state funeral senior Wurundjeri elder Auntie Joy Murphy Wandin told a packed room that he was:

... a man well, well before his time and such a strong campaigner for us.

She went on to say:

All our community is exceptionally proud of you, and we're sorry [to have lost you].

As we remember Tom today and bid him farewell, we do so as our state embarks upon a process of negotiating treaty, which will commence later this year. In this place we often have cause to reflect on the fact that we all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. As a man who passionately worked throughout his career to further the rights of First Peoples in this state and across our country, Tom had very sturdy shoulders on which people like me have had the great privilege of standing.

To Anita, to Tom's children Annabelle, Bronwen and Peter and to his grandchildren, thank you for giving Tom to the service of our state for so long. Our pain can never match yours, but his contribution continues to guide and shape us and will for many, many generations to come. Vale, Tom Roper.

Danny PEARSON (Essendon – Minister for Government Services, Assistant Treasurer, Minister for WorkSafe and the TAC, Minister for Consumer Affairs) (13:01): I join the condolence motion to remember the life of Tom Roper. As mentioned, he was the son of a truck driver. It was an interesting time, those post-war years, when we saw the rollout and expansion of tertiary education that enabled people who would previously have been denied the opportunity for an education to get that education. It was a time when more and more young people from diverse backgrounds started studying at university, and it was a time of great ideas – a way of rethinking the world, a way in which ideas were being influenced by what was happening on university campuses across America and was imported here in terms of the rise of the SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, and the civil rights movement in the US. It must have been an incredibly exciting time for Tom to have been the national Aboriginal affairs officer in that period of 1968 to 1970, right after the 1967 referendum.

As has been mentioned, Tom came to Melbourne from Sydney with that purpose of setting up a scholarship system for Aboriginal children, at the very young age of 22. It obviously was that background that had that profound influence that reverberated down the decades of his life and through the different experiences he had. It led to him being appointed as a ministerial adviser to Gordon Bryant. Gordon Bryant was the member for Wills in that period of time, who was succeeded by Bob Hawke.

When Tom came to this place it was a very difficult time. I often tell people I had a very traumatic childhood because when I was growing up in the 1970s Collingwood always came second in the grand final and the Labor Party always came second in the state election. It was always quite difficult. Tom was clearly a Carlton supporter, and I would probably say on that point nobody is perfect. I did make

the observation once to Martin Pakula that if Tony Abbott was a Victorian, he would have barracked for Carlton. Martin had no response to that observation.

When Tom came here in 1973 Labor only had 18 seats in this place and we had lost seven elections in a row. The Liberal Party had 46 seats. The National Party, or the Country Party then, had eight seats and there was one independent. That 1973 election was a real attempt by the Liberal Party to Whitlamise Hamer, and that is talked about in Tim Colebatch's great biography of Hamer – the fact that the Liberal Party were very adept at that stage at recognising that Hamer was a very, very different leader to Sir Henry Bolte. There were similarities with which Dick could portray his new government, even though it was a government that had been in power since 1955, as being quite different.

In terms of Tom's work ethic – we have heard about his work ethic as a minister – in that 1973 election he doorknocked half the electorate and personally visited 3000 homes. In terms of being up and about and being out there – and this was a very safe seat – he posed a significant challenge and he worked incredibly hard. That was when he arrived. You would think that maybe things were going to start getting better, but 1976 was probably just as bad, if not worse. The chamber increased in size from 73 seats to 81 seats, but Labor only increased its seats to 21.

I have always been fascinated by the 1976 election. People might think there is something wrong with me, but I will just run you through the roll card. 1976 represented a change in the guard in this place and in the other place. Members who were elected in 1976 included John Cain, Ian Cathie, Steve Crabb, Bill Landeryou, Pauline Toner – who became the first female cabinet minister in the state of Victoria – Evan Walker, Peter Spyker, Jack Simpson, Jeff Kennett, Geoff Coleman, Phil Gude, Graeme Weideman and Rob Knowles. I understand that a Bruce Atkinson stood in Melbourne against Barry Jones for the Liberal Party but lost – I am not sure whether it was the Bruce that we know. Also, Ken Jasper and Pat McNamara. David White was elected at the by-election following the death of Jack Tripovich, who was a member for Doutta Galla.

I say that because of the fact that those members who were elected at that time completely redefined this state over the next 25 years. All of them made significant contributions in their own way, either on this side of the house as ministers of the Crown or in their local communities. John Brumby said at the time that Tom retired that he was a part of the rebirth of Labor in the 1970s. It was a really different time. I do note that in 1979, which was Hamer's last election, there was a very large swing away from the Liberal Party. Interestingly, as an aside, Tom was opposed by two candidates at that election: the Liberal Party stood a candidate as well as the Communist Party. The Communist Party's candidate was Philip Herington, who, as many on this side of the house would know, was Andrew Herington's brother and the last secretary of the Communist Party of Australia. Interestingly, Philip would talk about the fact that as a member of the Community Party he had to host Nicu Ceaușescu, who was Ceaușescu's son, on a visit here to Monash University. Ceaușescu was, I think by all accounts, according to Philip, a rampaging alcoholic and kleptomaniac. But Philip went on to serve with distinction as a ministerial adviser working with the member for Northcote's father when it came down to the co-investment of Edison Mission.

When you look at the election of the Cain government, there was a 1982 headline about a 'Government of graduates'. I think that reflected the fact that Labor in power represented that passage of time when we were a more diverse cohort and a more diverse government. Yes, there were trade union leaders, and yes, there were people who had left school very young – Paul Keating being the epitome of that. But there were people who had the great privilege and experience of going to university, who diversified their skills and were able to make a really significant contribution. At the time there was an argument that this was technocratic labourism. I remember asking a question of Gough Whitlam about that in a letter – I said, 'Are you familiar with this term?' – and he rang me at home one night to talk to me about technocratic labourism. It was very interesting living in a shared household in the 1990s when you found that Gough Whitlam was on the other line for you. But it was about recognising the fact that we were trying to professionalise the way in which we could govern and we could

administer and that you needed to have more people with more diverse experiences and backgrounds, because diverse organisations make for stronger and better organisations.

It was interesting to note too that Tom made a great contribution in terms of preventative health. I know my colleague the Leader of the House talked to this in her contribution. He specifically talked about the importance of having good recreational facilities in inner urban Melbourne and the importance of public open spaces. I think that certainly this is something that, as we have seen population growth occur at a greater rate in inner Melbourne, still remains a real issue. But the work that Tom did in identifying this as an issue has stood us well. As minister he said he would like to be the minister for health rather than minister for illnesses. I think that that is something that is incredibly important as well.

He also discussed the importance of making sure there were appropriate facilities for people with a mental illness – and the Minister for Mental Health touched on this – as well as for those with an intellectual disability. It was that early recognition that there was a need to make sure that we start embarking on a process of deinstitutionalisation to shift that. That was obviously accelerated when David White became Minister of Health in the second Cain government, but these were important steps.

Tom's achievements in the capital works area in health included the construction of the Monash Medical Centre, which is just such a fantastic facility that services the south-east of Melbourne. He established a new north wing at Geelong Hospital, he refurbished Box Hill Hospital and he looked at that process of making sure that we decanted the Queen Victoria Hospital to the Monash. He also recognised the importance of community health, and again I think that comes back to the importance of having that level of engagement and focus on the ground at the grassroots level in that preventative space. Interestingly, after the election of the Kennett government, he remained on the front bench briefly, but he handed over the shadow health portfolio to John Thwaites.

After the election, he worked as the Manager of Opposition Business, and I think those of us that are of a certain age remember that the then Labor opposition sought to make a number of points against the Kennett agenda at that time. And this place, as I understand it, had very, very late night sittings to try and identify some of the deficiencies, as the Labor Party saw it, from an opposition's point of view in relation to the Kennett government's agenda. But he also acknowledged the fact that his time had passed, and when he indicated that he was retiring before the election, he said that he would train up the class of 1992 and it was right to move on – people like John Brumby, who came down to this place from Doutta Galla, or Peter Batchelor or John Thwaites, that cohort of individuals who worked really hard throughout that period of time.

As Minister for Transport, Jeff Kennett once said that 'His arrogance knows no bounds', which I found quite amusing, but also as transport minister he pioneered Port Melbourne and St Kilda light rail and allowed the Sandridge Bridge over the Yarra to remain. I think those of us who celebrate our richness and our diversity, who celebrate multiculturalism, will walk across the Sandridge Bridge and look at the contribution that so many people from all corners of the globe have made to our great city and our great state, and it is a lasting tribute.

As Minister for Planning and Environment he provided heritage protections for over 300 buildings, and it is interesting because if you look at some of the challenges that Dick Hamer got himself into in relation to the Rialto, that represented that changing of the guard, where we started to try to preserve the remnants of Marvellous Melbourne. Looking at the fact that we had this cultural cringe that started really in the 1950s and led up until right through the 70s, where anything that was old was seen as being decrepit and fit to be destroyed despite its innate beauty, because of the time it represented, when we were a truly global city up until the 1890s, he looked at making sure that those protections were in place, and indeed he used innovative techniques to try and deal with that.

A great classic case in point would be if you look at 333 Collins Street, which was the building that broke the bank of South Australia at the time of the recession in the 1990s but was the old Commercial

CONDOLENCES

2506

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Bank of Australia. He tried to make sure that you keep the facade but you are allowed to build behind it and build up, and that is why we have got some of the great heritage buildings that still exist now. It is for that very reason.

Again recognising the fact that not everyone was as fortunate, as privileged, as others, he looked at making sure there was funding for a special school at the site of the old Coburg North tech school, which I think was a really important contribution. It is interesting when you think back to his times. When he left he was quite concerned and felt that he had not done enough to protect the Upfield line. He was worried that the Upfield line was going to be closed. Thankfully that important corridor services the north to this day, and I note that along its route there have now been further investments made, significant investments made, to make it far more accessible and usable to people in the north.

My colleague the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples talked about the contribution he made as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the fact that when he had the great privilege of serving in that portfolio for a second time while also Treasurer of Victoria he handed over a cemetery near Healesville to the Wurundjeri people. I think that if you think about that for a moment, that would have been probably at that stage one of the largest land transfers that existed to First Nations people, and he did that. Again it spoke to his values and the influence he had. As a young student he recognised that this was a challenging issue, and when he had the power to do something about it he did it. He did it because he knew that it was the right thing to do.

In the end he was one of only four cabinet ministers to serve end to end for those 10½ years – Trezise, White, Crabb and Tom – and we are now left only with David White and Steve Crabb. But he made such a huge and profound contribution with the things that he did, the way in which he lived his life and the way in which he went above and beyond to try and make sure that those reforms were done in a very systematic way to make sure that he made a real, rich and meaningful contribution over an extended period of time.

As has been said recently, the environment became something that he was incredibly passionate about. Again, when I read the material that was provided by the parliamentary library – and I want to thank the library for their work and their contribution – I am struck by the fact that what he was talking about 30 years ago really is so germane to today's debate. I think the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action has talked to that – the fact that he was able to really identify this as something that needed to be done, and the challenges that he could clearly articulate and identify right back in the mid-1990s are the very issues that we are continuing to confront and challenge today.

He also, I note, after his very sad stroke, which made him lose his mobility – he was required to use a wheelchair – became an advocate for disability on our tram network. He talked about that lived experience of the real challenges of being stuck on a tram and not being able to get off because there were no platforms available. I think that talks to the way in which he was able to use the skills he had acquired as a member of this place to be able, in a very meaningful way, to identify practical measures by which he could try to effect change. Using his public profile to recognise that this was a very real challenge was something that he was able to do to great effect.

I note that he and Anita both had strokes and were active in relation to providing more research into strokes. They were able to really go out there and highlight this, with Tom again using his public profile in a very public way to highlight the devastating consequences that strokes can have on individuals, and he was able to really put this to great effect in a really public way.

Tom's legacy lives long and lives large. He worked tirelessly on behalf of his community. He was a great local member who was incredibly connected and engaged. He was a tireless advocate. He lived his values large. He recognised the fact that he needed to really use the great opportunity that political power provided him to give effect to change, and he was a very successful minister. The fact that he managed to serve those 10½ years and served this state with distinction and served his community with distinction I think speaks widely to that.

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2507

I really wanted to get up today and speak on this motion because I recognise that times have changed, and that Tom put himself forward. I think the Leader of the House talked about the consequences that public life has on families. He put himself forward. He put himself into the fray at a time when Labor governments were seen in Victoria as abnormal, as like a rare sort of interlude, something infrequent. But he marks that time between the old and the new, and the contribution he made played such a huge role in terms of making Labor relevant to the community and making sure that we were able to embark upon a whole range of reforms and initiatives that still stand this state so well to this day.

When he was asked to talk about his contribution at the end when he retired, he said that:

I've always been driven by the fact that my voters don't just want to elect a member for Coburg, they want to elect a Labor Government.

I think that when he came in and then he was supported by the class of '76, those members wanted that. They wanted the opportunity to lead the state. They wanted the opportunity to govern and to start to implement real, meaningful, legislative reforms that would profoundly impact the lives of ordinary Victorians. That is what motivated him. That is what drove him.

Now, it is easy to some extent to put yourself forward when you think you are going to win, when you think there is a chance. It is very difficult when you think that you have got very little chance of doing that, but he put himself forward at a time of almost like the Labor Party's darkest hour here in this state, and he stayed the course. He stayed true to his values; he lived his values. He pushed it hard. He worked so incredibly hard and he made such a huge contribution to the state in different ways. He touched the state in so many ways, whether it was in terms of architecture or Indigenous affairs, whether it was about the environment, whether it was about transport, whether it was about the fact that we have now got fantastic light rail that runs right through the southern suburbs of Melbourne, yet we managed to keep the Sandridge Bridge, which really embodies that north-south linkage and celebrates multiculturalism and diversity in our community.

To Anita, his children and his grandchildren, I thank you for sharing Tom with us. Thank you for everything that Tom gave to our state and gave to our community. We are so much richer, we are so much better, for his contribution. Vale, Tom Roper.

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (13:19): I rise to convey the sorrow and condolences of the people of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West at the passing of the Honourable Tom Roper and to place on the record my community's gratitude and sincere thanks for the valuable contribution rendered by Tom through his 20 years of service as the member for Brunswick West from 1973 to 1976, as the member for Brunswick from 1976 to 1992 and as the member for Coburg from 1992 to 1994.

There really is no other way to describe it: Tom Roper genuinely was a Labor giant. In making my first speech to this chamber just in February I paid tribute to Tom as a former local member for much of the area I now humbly represent. In doing so, however, I am sad to say that I never got the chance to meet Tom before his passing, but my family and I, who were his long-time constituents while I was growing up, certainly were aware of who Tom Roper was, as humble beneficiaries of his advocacy and commitment to improving the lives of local working people.

While today's contributions have highlighted much of Tom's service as a senior minister in the Cain and Kirner Labor governments over a 10-year period, I would like to draw the house's attention to some of the influential advocacy Tom undertook on behalf of his constituents locally. In this respect we do not need to go any further than Tom's first speech to Parliament of 11 September 1973 to see just where his priorities lay as a parliamentarian – where the local community was always at the centre of his work – where he said:

... my main duty ... to take whatever steps are necessary to safeguard the interests of my electors ... it is my aim that the electorate of Brunswick West should get an equal share in present development programmes. In fact it should receive a better deal to compensate for past difficulties it has suffered.

CONDOLENCES

2508

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 1 August 2023

... My theme really is why can't "it happen" in Brunswick West and similar less affluent areas?

Hear, hear to that. Over the course of his parliamentary career Tom advocated on a wide number of local issues but mainly on the need to improve local schools, support migrant communities and improve local parklands, sport and recreational facilities. Tom's insights and conviction around the importance of lifting educational resources and outcomes particularly were striking and remain relevant today for many communities across the northern suburbs when compared to other areas. I quote from his first speech:

... the number of migrant children attending schools in my electorate ... are quite staggering ... At the Brunswick West Primary School –

for example –

there are 249 students of whom 200 are classified as students for whom English is not the mother language ... These students suffer a particular difficulty ...

Results from two schools, Brunswick North and Malvern East primary schools, showed that the Brunswick North Primary grade 6 students':

... average reading ability compared badly with that of the grade 4 children at Malvern East Primary ... even though the children at Malvern East Primary ... were two years younger.

Many of these children Tom was advocating on behalf of at the time would have been largely from Italian migrant backgrounds as well as Greek, Cypriot, Lebanese, Turkish, Maltese and many other southern European and Mediterranean backgrounds – children of migrant parents who arrived here with nothing but a suitcase on their backs, migrant families who came here with very little in their pockets but a whole lot in their hearts to give to their new country, migrant families such as mine and children such as me and my siblings, who were the beneficiaries of being educated in the very local public schools Tom Roper was advocating on behalf of during his time as the local MP.

I am grateful to have had Tom Roper as my local MP in the early 1990s as I attended Coburg West Primary School, which along with all of our local schools he diligently represented to help lift local educational investment, resourcing and outcomes but particularly for culturally and linguistically diverse children.

When it came to local parklands and open space and sport and recreational facilities Tom was just as fierce an advocate on local issues, as shown in his first speech on these issues, much of which I believe is still actually pretty relevant, particularly given that we as a state government are now increasingly turning our minds towards reforming the planning system and the provision of infrastructure in local communities. Tom said back in 1973:

The paucity of recreational space and facilities in the inner suburban areas of Melbourne is a scandal. In Brunswick, there are 80 acres of park for 50,000 people. If there were enough ... space to satisfy the requirements of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works it would total 350 acres. Coburg is somewhat better off as it has 250 acres of parks and gardens. However, it should have more than 400 acres. The same situation applies in most ... inner areas of Melbourne ...

He continued by saying:

To make matters worse, Brunswick and Coburg ... have lost land to freeways. If Freeway F2 ...

was completed along the Merri Creek, which thankfully it was not, thanks to the efforts of Tom Roper and many others at the time such as Ann McGregor, Brunswick would have lost a further 21 acres of parkland, as would Coburg:

There seems to have been no great effort by the Board of Works or the Government to replace the 15 acres of parkland lost to Brunswick in 1967 for the Tullamarine Freeway. That ... has still not been fully made up.

Tom would be pleased to know that since then of course the state Labor government has increasingly continued to invest and improve many of our local parks and open spaces through Brunswick and Coburg. However, legacy issues still remain from that era that Tom referred to and that I as a local member am keen to continue working on.

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2509

On Saturday 22 July, just recently, I had the pleasure to attend and celebrate the Brunswick Hockey Club's centenary evening. As part of this evening the 500 or so guests were treated to a video presentation on the long and rich history of the club, which was a victim, sadly, of the Tullamarine Freeway construction referred to by Tom through the loss of the Holbrook Reserve in Brunswick West, which was the club's original and spiritual home.

Fast-forward to today, and while the club operates from the synthetic pitch it now shares with Brunswick Secondary College, it continues on its quest to find its true home, where it can consolidate its clubrooms, playing field and amenities in the one location, which I look forward to working with the club to help achieve one day in Tom's honour. Of course, as touched on by the member for Essendon, there are many other landmarks across the electorate – such as the Coburg Special Development School on the old Coburg Tech site and the Upfield rail line, which continues to operate and be enhanced to this very day – which are there because of Tom's advocacy and efforts.

In preparing my remarks today, I did also speak to many other local Labor people about Tom's contributions to our community. As described by the Honourable Kelvin Thomson, the former state Labor member for Pascoe Vale:

Tom Roper was a great Member of Parliament and a great human being. His working life started as National Aboriginal Affairs Officer with the National Union of Australian University Students in 1967, quite some time before such work was fashionable.

Originally from Sydney, he moved to Melbourne and managed to secure Labor Party pre-selection ... and election to the Victorian Parliament as Member for ... Brunswick West at the ripe old age of 28.

On being elected to Parliament, Tom worked with new Labor MPs such as David White, John Cain, Steve Crabb and Rob Jolly, a lot of whom believed, according to Kelvin, that the older MPs 'had become too comfortable and resigned to Opposition'. Tom Roper and the new MPs created the climate for the change in government in 1982. Kelvin described to me how he served with Tom from 1988 to 1994, and that Tom:

... had two outstanding qualities as a Parliamentarian, which were recognized when he was made Leader of the House. First, he had a remarkable capacity to absorb and remember information. The only person I ever came across –

according to Kelvin –

who carried more information in his head was Gough Whitlam ...

Secondly, he was very adept at putting together and communicating an argument, and producing a one liner that got to the heart of the matter. He didn't have formal legal training, but he prosecuted a case like a barrister, and was rarely bested in an argument.

He wasn't a soft touch, and he didn't particularly court popularity.

Kelvin and Tom's electorates were adjoining. In the run-up to the 1992 election, Kelvin told me, he arranged for Tom to visit and meet with residents of Newlands and East Coburg who were anxious to see a shopping centre retained in the development proposal of the Ministry of Housing project on the corner of Murray Road and Elizabeth Street in East Coburg. Kelvin brought Tom out to hear the arguments of locals, and Kelvin was very keen to do what he could to keep these residents happy.

Murray Road was the shared electoral boundary at that time, and some of the people who came along were also Tom's constituents, but Kelvin told me that this did not stop Tom from telling them, much to Kelvin's dismay, that he did not think the government had any business in building shops. Fortunately, Tom later relented, Kelvin told me. I can report to the house today that the shops are still there, thanks to Tom's efforts at the time, and the member for Preston and I both continue to share that boundary.

Kelvin later stated that Tom was an integral part of the Cain–Kirner Labor years, which transformed Victoria and Victorian politics and showed that government could be used positively and constructively to make people's lives better in areas such as health, housing, transport and the environment. Labor has now been in power for 20 of the last 24 years in Victoria, and Kelvin believes

CONDOLENCES

2510

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday 1 August 2023

‘this is in significant measure due to the legacy and foundations left behind’ by Tom Roper and his ministerial colleagues of that era.

Tom Roper’s successor as the member for Coburg, Carlo Carli, described Tom to me as someone who was a ‘major supporter and advocate of the Brunswick and Coburg area’ and said Tom was especially committed to wanting working-class schools adequately resourced, as I touched on earlier. Tom was a very active local member, a loyal Labor member and a big supporter of Carlo as his successor. Tom was a strong supporter of greenhouse action, carbon reduction and the environment. Locally, Tom supported the establishment of what is the CERES environmental and renewable energy park in East Brunswick, an initiative that was years ahead of popular opinion.

To echo the words of Tom Roper, ‘Why can’t it happen in Brunswick West as well as Coburg and Pascoe Vale?’ I reckon this will be my new mantra in his honour and in his legacy. I seek to do justice to his local contributions now and into the future, so that the children of today in my community can also be the beneficiaries of my service tomorrow – the same legacy he created for me in my area for young people growing up. On behalf of the people of Pascoe Vale, Coburg and parts of Brunswick West, I do extend our deepest condolences to Tom Roper’s family – Anita and his children Annabelle, Bronwen and Peter – and I do thank him for his outstanding local service, which I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of. Vale, Tom Roper.

Michaela SETTLE (Eureka) (13:29): I stand to pay tribute to a great member of Parliament, a son of the labour movement and a good man, Tom Roper. Tom was a legendary member of this Parliament, serving as the member for Brunswick West, Brunswick and finally Coburg from 1973 until 1994, as well as being a minister across eight portfolios over 10 years, including as Treasurer from 1990 to 1992. There have only been 12 different Labor treasurers in the rich history of this state. Tom served in a difficult job at a difficult time, serving with distinction and passion for reform.

Tom was a New South Welshman in his early life, the son of a truck driver. He attended North Sydney Boys High School and later the University of Sydney, where he was a student leader and activist. Like many working-class kids at that time, Tom was the first in his family to go to university, and it is clear that his education and his witnessing of the disparity in education across the wealth divide had a formative impact on his values and his priorities. Tom’s landmark book, *The Myth of Equality*, was released in 1971 and outlined the disadvantages experienced by a large number of students, in particular in public education. It was well received and became a text in a number of universities across the nation.

Tom won preselection for the seat of Brunswick West and joined this Parliament in 1973, after the election of that year saw the Labor Party reduced to an opposition with fewer than 20 seats. At just 28 years of age and in the aftermath of the Whitlam government’s election, it must have been sobering arriving in this place with such a mountain to climb. In his inaugural speech Tom spoke of his passion for education and his shock at visiting a Brunswick primary school, at a time when Brunswick was well and truly a lower socio-economic suburb, and learning that children in year 6 at the school were performing at the level of year 4 students from the more affluent Malvern East primary just across the Yarra. Tom was never motivated by self-interest or self-gain. He was what is now called a ‘values politician’ who made the wellbeing of Victorians, and especially struggling and vulnerable Victorians, his top priority whenever he was in a position to make or influence decisions. Everything he did, he did wholeheartedly, with his trademark integrity, dedication and respect. Everything he did was with a view to making Victoria a better place for all.

Tom was a scholar, a true student of history with a wide range of interests and passions. When Labor was finally returned to government in 1982 Tom was appointed Minister of Health, where he oversaw landmark reforms that benefit Victorians even today, including the establishment of the Monash Medical Centre. In 1987 he was one of Australia’s first ministers to consider and make First Nations affairs a top-tier issue when, as Aboriginal affairs minister, Tom oversaw arrangements to codify the protection of Aboriginal historical and sacred sites. In this role he was also integral in chairing the ministerial conference to address issues in the Aboriginal deaths in custody royal commission reports.

CONDOLENCES

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2511

I understand from someone who worked with him during this period, Megan Stoyles, that these were really some of his proudest achievements. Megan talked about the great inspiration he was to work with and for.

Another of Tom's great passions was the environment, again, back before it was widely considered a top-tier issue. He wisely saw the risks of climate change much earlier than others, and it was through this portfolio and this passion that my mother Christine Forster came to know Tom. I am delighted to say that in more recent years Tom, Anita and Megan have been great friends to my parents and have shared some really wonderful social times. I know that my parents would want Anita and her family to know what great respect they held Tom in and how much they enjoyed the company of both of you.

After Parliament Tom served variously as president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council and as a board member of the Climate Institute in Washington, DC. He was Greenfleet's longest serving board member, during which time over 10 million trees were planted. As has been mentioned, John Thwaites said in his eulogy that in recognition of Tom's long-term contribution, Greenfleet is establishing a forest on previously cleared land in central Victoria, which will be known as 'Tom's forest'. Tom would have been humbled and perhaps even a bit embarrassed by such an honour, but he well and truly deserves that recognition.

As Treasurer of Victoria, Tom always tried to make the economy work for the community, to shield vulnerable Victorians from economic backlash and to invest in the things that matter for working Victorians, like good jobs, schools, hospitals and community services. His investments in making life easier for disabled Victorians, like modifying public transport to make it accessible, were groundbreaking and led the way for other states and other governments to follow. He introduced three-year budget forward estimates as part of the annual state budget process, established the Treasury Corporation of Victoria to ensure the coordination of state borrowing activities and chaired a group made up of members of government and the private sector that developed guidelines for private investment in public infrastructure.

In recent years, when Tom has had numerous health challenges, he was still there to offer advice and to help. I was honoured, along with my good friend and colleague the member for Wendouree, to meet with Tom and Anita in Ballarat in 2021 as they continued to advocate for survivors of stroke. He was that kind of a man: always ready to chip in for the cause.

Tom was a great Victorian, a man who wore his values on his sleeve and an example of someone who selflessly dedicated their life to causes that they believed in. In many ways Tom's passions were before their time. But history has shown that his early work on environmental causes, support of First Nations Victorians and policies to reduce inequality and protect vulnerable Victorians led the movements that followed, and they place him firmly on the right side of history.

A great man, a great scholar, a soldier of the labour movement, Tom will be dearly missed. I give my heartfelt condolences to Tom's wife Anita and to his three children, Annabelle, Bronwen and Peter. Thank you for the sacrifices that you must have made to share Tom with all of us. Vale, Tom Roper.

Motion agreed to in silence; members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (13:38): I move:

That, as a further mark of respect to the memory of the late Honourable Thomas William Roper, the house now adjourns until 2:45 pm today.

Motion agreed to.

House adjourned 1:38 pm.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 2:47 pm.

*Members***Member for Warrandyte***Resignation*

The SPEAKER (14:47): Before we commence question time, I wish to announce that on 7 July 2023 I received the resignation of the member for Warrandyte. In consequence of the resignation, I issued a writ on 13 July 2023 for a by-election to be held on Saturday 26 August 2023.

Premier**Treasurer***Absence*

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:48): I rise to inform the house that today I will answer questions on behalf of the Premier and the Assistant Treasurer will answer questions for the portfolios of Treasurer, industrial relations and trade and investment. I further table for the house an updated ministerial representative arrangements list.

*Questions without notice and ministers statements***Commonwealth Games**

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:48): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Why will Victorians have to pay compensation, estimated to be up to \$2 billion, because of the government's decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:48): The government, and indeed the Premier and I, have already, through a number of press conferences and media statements over the last couple of weeks, been really clear that when the information was presented –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. The choice became very clear. Six billion dollars – indeed, in excess of \$6 billion – for a 12-day sporting event was just too much, particularly when you consider that the key reason why the government agreed to host these games in the first place was because of the legacy benefits that would come to regional Victorians through housing, through investment in community sporting infrastructure and through tourism and events. Indeed I do note that this was a bipartisan position from the member for Caulfield.

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: No, no, the support for the legacy outcomes was indeed something that was supported by the member for Caulfield. And so that is –

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to bring the Deputy Premier back to answering the question. The question was about the \$2 billion of taxpayers money which is being wasted, and we would like to ask the Deputy Premier: why do taxpayers have to pay \$2 billion for her mismanagement?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. A point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. I will refer the house to this quote:

That was the reason why we were doing this, to create legacy projects.

That came from the member for Caulfield. That was the key focus for the government, and that is why –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for South-West Coast can leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Member for South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: the \$2 billion is going to be invested in regional Victoria for at least 1300 social and affordable homes. Those of us particularly on this side and a few over there as well know that there is no bigger issue for Victorians at the moment.

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question is very simple: why will Victorians have to pay compensation for the decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games? Why compensation?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Deputy Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked, and I remind members that a point of order is not an opportunity to repeat the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, the key reason why we agreed to these games in the first instance was those ongoing legacy benefits, and that is why that is exactly what we are doing by investing in housing, in community and sporting infrastructure, and in tourism and major event support across regional and rural Victoria.

Now, in terms of questions that the Leader of the Opposition directly referred to, negotiations are underway. We have also been very clear that we are not going to cut across those negotiations. We are going to need to let those negotiations run their course. There will be an update to the Victorian community once they have concluded, but it is absolutely appropriate that we do not cut across those negotiations with any reckless public commentary like we are seeing from the Leader of the Opposition.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:52): Will the Deputy Premier guarantee to the Parliament and all Victorians that the government will publicly release the full costs of cancelling the Commonwealth Games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:53): Well, I answered the supplementary question in the substantive question from the Leader of the Opposition. We have been very clear that there are negotiations underway. We will let those negotiations run through the appropriate channels – around the negotiating table, not the dispatch box. We will let them run through that, and there will be a full update to the Victorian community once those negotiations have concluded. That is the appropriate way to conduct these negotiations.

At the same time, though, I will say we are getting on and delivering that \$2 billion regional package, with 1300 social and affordable homes, with community sporting infrastructure and with support for tourism and major events.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary asked whether the full costs will be revealed – not an update – and I would ask you to bring the Deputy Premier back to that very specific question.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: Big Housing Build

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:54): I was delighted to be in Hawthorn this morning inspecting a new social and affordable housing development. Hawthorn is a great area with a great local MP – until the last election, when John Kennedy missed out on re-election. But Mr Kennedy did chair a consultative group for this development at Bills Street – 103 new social housing apartments, nearly doubling the amount of old,

run-down social housing that was there previously. There is also a great tenure mix, with 103 affordable rentals there. It is part of the Andrews Labor government's Big Housing Build, creating 12,000 new social and affordable homes and creating more than 40,000 construction jobs right across the state. 7600 homes have either been completed or are underway. Thousands more social housing homes are being delivered for Victorians who need them the most.

We know that we will likely see continued pressure on our social housing waitlist due to pressures in the broader national economy, but I am pleased to advise the house today that the June quarterly data will show a slight drop in our housing waitlist. I want to thank everyone in the housing sector who is supporting our Big Housing Build and helping to change people's lives. On top of that, our government has also created the new \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund to deliver more than 1300 social and affordable homes right across regional Victoria.

Incredibly we have seen opposition to many of our projects and to the federal government's housing package by the Liberals and the Nationals and the Greens. Imagine opposing more funding for housing in a national housing crisis. Only Labor is committed to delivering more housing, because only Labor does what matters.

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call for the next question, I remind members that they will be removed from the chamber for interjecting and speaking over the member who is on their feet.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (14:56): My question is to the Deputy Premier. The chief executive of Commonwealth Games Australia Craig Phillips says the government's \$7 billion cost for the Commonwealth Games is a gross exaggeration. Will the Deputy Premier commit to the immediate public release of the \$7 billion cost estimate?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I assume, having asked the question, that the Leader of the Opposition would be interested in hearing the answer.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:57): As has been pointed out by my colleagues, in terms of answering this question from the Leader of the Opposition, I answered a large part of this in the earlier question today. There are negotiations underway, those negotiations will continue and when they are concluded there will be an update provided. When it came to the simple choice about \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event, where the cost was more than double the estimated benefit to the state, it became a really clear choice for the Victorian government. That is why we have made that decision, but at the same time those key legacy benefits, which have bipartisan support – it has bipartisan support, that approach, member for Caulfield –

Members interjecting.

Jacinta ALLAN: Speaker, I know it is disorderly to pick up on interjections, and I will resist that temptation –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer is warned.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I think the Deputy Premier misunderstands. The question related to the \$7 billion figure that the government keeps referring to and releasing the estimates relating to that \$7 billion cost, rather than any other matters.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, there is no point of order. The Deputy Premier is being entirely appropriate. She is explaining – if only those on the other side would listen – why it is not appropriate at this time as negotiations continue.

Emma Kealy: On the point of order, Speaker, this question is very narrow. It is specific to providing the costings in regard to the quoted \$7 billion the Premier has said and now the \$6 billion that the Acting Premier has said. Victorians just want to know how much. I ask you to bring the Deputy Premier back to the question and provide the costings.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: I was referring to the key reason why the government agreed to hosting these games in the first place and that was the bipartisan support we have for the legacy benefits that come for regional Victoria – the billion dollars that has been added to the very busy housing minister. We already have a very busy housing minister; he has just been made even busier with \$1 billion to invest in social and affordable housing across regional Victoria.

Danny Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Treasurer will come to order.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question had nothing to do with the Minister for Housing's diary. The question related specifically to the release of the \$7 billion estimate that the government has provided repeatedly and providing detail to the community on that figure.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Speaker, it is the very same point of order that we have just heard and that you ruled was not a point of order. What we see from those on the other side is they are merely time wasting and trying to stop the Deputy Premier from giving the answer. The problem is they are not listening to the answer. The point of order is that there is no point of order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Assistant Treasurer will come to order. The Deputy Premier had strayed a little from answering the question. I ask her to come back to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: Thank you, Speaker. As I was indicating, and I have said this a few times today and, at risk of predicting what might come next, I may say it a few more times this afternoon: \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event became too much. On that, I have mentioned also a couple of times a bipartisan position. The Leader of the Opposition has said very clearly that he supports the decision. He would make the same decision.

John Pesutto: No, I would not have made a decision without due diligence.

Jacinta ALLAN: Hang on, 'I would have no choice but to do what has been done' – from the Leader of the Opposition.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Geelong withdrew from chamber.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:02): The chief executive of Commonwealth Games Australia Craig Phillips also says the government ignored advice to run events in existing facilities to keep the games within budget. Why did the government ignore this advice?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:02): The government agreed to host the Commonwealth Games because of the enduring legacy benefits we could see for regional Victoria in those key areas of housing, community sporting infrastructure, tourism infrastructure and major events activities across regional Victoria, and that is why we are continuing to provide that support with a \$2 billion package in those

key priority areas for regional communities. I do remind the Leader of the Opposition that the agreement that was struck with Commonwealth Games officials was for the games to be held in regional Victoria. That is what we agreed to, that is the investment we were making and that is why when the cost became \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event, the government made the decision to hold on and invest the \$2 billion in regional Victoria. We will let the negotiations continue their course.

Ministers statements: housing affordability

Sonya KILKENNY (Carrum – Minister for Planning, Minister for Outdoor Recreation) (15:03): I am pleased to rise today to talk about this government's focus on achieving great planning outcomes for the people of Victoria. In less than a decade Melbourne will overtake Sydney as Australia's largest city. Looking ahead to the 2050s, Victoria is projected to be home to approximately 11 million people. By then Melbourne will be the size of present-day London, and our regional population will exceed 2 million. New people require new homes. As Minister for Planning, I am focused on ensuring that these homes are affordable. I am focused on ensuring our homes create opportunities for people to thrive by living in attractive, well-designed and connected neighbourhoods, with good access to transport, jobs and services, close to family and friends.

Plan Melbourne is the guiding strategic planning document which sets a vision for what we need to achieve by 2050. This plan is due to be updated every five years, and we are working on that update now. The next plan must focus on housing affordability and choice. The next plan must focus on building homes that are quality homes, durable and built to last. I recently visited terrific developments in Brunswick with a member for the Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place. These projects demonstrate it is feasible to build sustainable, comfortable homes in established Melbourne while also partnering with community housing providers and delivering 20 per cent affordable housing.

I also recently had the pleasure of visiting the member for Northcote's electorate with the member for Preston to see an excellent townhouse development where a group of families came together to co-design and develop the land. Good developments like these show the opportunity that is in front of us, and the Andrews Labor government is ready to take it. There is a very meaningful role for all members of this Parliament to play in a big community discussion about the future of our cities and regions. We must have a conversation with all Victorians about the best way to build homes in established suburbs, and I invite all members to join me on this journey ahead.

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:05): My question is to the Deputy Premier. When did the government first become aware that it would have to cancel the Commonwealth Games?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:06): The Premier went to this question at the press conference a fortnight ago. The Premier was very clear that cabinet resolved the decision on the Monday. In terms of the time difference between Melbourne and London, there was a meeting with Commonwealth Games officials overnight our time Monday night.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The member for Berwick can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Member for Berwick withdrew from chamber.

Jacinta ALLAN: The Premier and I and Minister Shing had a press conference early Tuesday morning to advise of the decision that when it came to the key reason why we agreed to host the games in the first place, it was that ongoing investment in housing.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was not when the cabinet decision was made. The question was when did the government first become aware.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Deputy Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: I was referring to the \$2 billion investment that we are making for regional communities in those key priority areas, which were the key priority areas –

John Pesutto: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier – drawing on the fact that the Deputy Premier has referred to the Premier's comments in the media – told the media that he had a sense that it was going to cost more. The question is not when cabinet made the decision. The question is when did the government first become aware that they would have to be cancelled. The very comments that the Deputy Premier is talking about from the Premier make it clear that the government knew well before the cabinet decision that they would have to be cancelled.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot direct the Deputy Premier how to answer the question. She was being relevant to the question.

Jacinta ALLAN: Despite the previous bipartisan support for the legacy benefits for regional Victoria, the opposition are not interested in hearing about the legacy benefits across housing, community sporting infrastructure and the tourism and major events sector in regional Victoria, which we are going to continue to invest in through our \$2 billion package.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:08): Does the Deputy Premier share the concerns of the former chair of the Australian Sports Commission that the decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games has irreparably damaged Victoria's reputation on the world stage?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:09): I just remind the house that the Leader of the Opposition has supported the government's decision to not proceed with a 12-day sporting event at a cost of more than \$6 billion. There is bipartisan support for the position that the government has taken on this matter. The Leader of the Opposition himself has said that they support the decision that has been taken.

In terms of Victoria's performance as a major events capital, last night was an outstanding example of this state's and this city's major events record. This has been built on decades of investment by Labor governments –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will come to order! The Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, the Assistant Treasurer and members at the table will come to order.

Jacinta ALLAN: decades of investment by Labor governments in our major sporting infrastructure, our events program, and that will continue long after you are gone, Leader of the Opposition.

Ministers statements: energy policy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (15:10): I am delighted to update the house on our government's commitment to lower Victorian energy bills and lower emissions with new all-electric homes. Last Friday the Minister for Planning and I announced that from 1 January next year all new homes requiring planning permits will be all electric. This is an important step that will help save new home owners around \$1000 a year on their energy bills – each and every year – and more than \$2200 when they pair it with rooftop solar. We know that electrification is the future, and that is why industry has already begun making the switch to modern, energy-efficient electricity appliances. It is also why our decision has the backing of the Property Council, Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Master Builders, the Asthma Foundation, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Energy Efficiency Council, Environment Victoria, the Climate

Council, the Green Building Council, the Clean Energy Council and the Grattan Institute. I just need to refer to two comments which really articulate and sum up the benefits of this policy. The Brotherhood of St Laurence said, 'New homes are better off without gas, and this move will reduce gas costs for existing customers too. This is a great step towards a plan for electric homes that can lower costs for all households and reduce emissions.' VCOSS said, 'Gas is yesterday's fuel. Today's announcement of a ban on gas connections to new homes after Jan 1 is a big step forward in the transition to cleaner, greener, cheaper renewable energy.' That is absolutely what this is about: lower bills, lower emissions. Those who oppose this policy, including those opposite, are simply mouthpieces for the gas industry who only care about locking in Victorians to decades-long gas bills. That is not our way, and we are going to get this done.

Housing affordability

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (15:12): My question is for the Deputy Premier. On any given night 30,000 Victorians are sleeping rough. They are in cars, they are in tents or they are on the street. The longer we wait, more people will join them. We have had assurances from Labor that they are finally considering rent reforms, but after months of inaction we are yet to hear of any solid proposal to protect renters from homelessness. Renters are barely hanging on, and they are wondering how long this Labor government will just stand by while they face yet another unmanageable rent increase. Deputy Premier, when will this government introduce a freeze on rent increases in Victoria?

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:13): I thank the member for Richmond for her question, which is an issue that has been canvassed in this place and indeed publicly on a number of occasions. As the government has indicated, we are working – a number of ministers, and indeed as the caucus we are working together – on looking at a range of measures that need to be taken across a range of different portfolios that affect the availability and affordability of housing in this state. There is no more pressing issue in Victoria right now than the inability of people to be able to afford a home in the suburb they want to live in, and particularly for the most vulnerable in our community, having a safe and secure roof over their head is critically important.

That is why we have been really clear that through this process – and the time line may not suit the political aspirations of the member for Richmond in terms of when we will make certain announcements – we are working through these matters through careful policy process, because these are big and important issues. We have said clearly that in the coming months we will have more to say about these reforms that we need to deliver to provide for an increased supply of housing but also to make sure that we can help people get into a home at all levels of the housing affordability spectrum.

In terms of the member for Richmond's comments about people right now facing housing vulnerability – pass the bill in the Senate. There is a bill in the Senate that would unlock billions and billions of dollars for this very issue right across the country. Now, I think we have become used to expecting the Liberal Party and the National Party to block important social policy reforms, but the Greens political party – for goodness sake. We have got the Greens political party standing in the way of billions and billions of dollars being unlocked for this very issue that the member for Richmond claims to care about.

Ellen Sandell: On a point of order, Speaker, the Deputy Premier knows that question time is not a time to attack other members of this place. If the bill actually unlocked billions, we would pass it, but it does not – it makes the matter worse.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: I was going to conclude on that point. We have seen where there is an opportunity to work with the federal Labor government. We had an investment a few weeks ago of \$500 million into the already busy housing minister's even busier housing program. We would love to see more of

those funds come to Victoria for these very issues if we could see the Senate pass this important piece of legislation that would provide the opportunity for more homes to be built for more Victorians.

Gabrielle de Vietri: On a point of order, Speaker, the question was about Victorian Labor and the state government's responsibility to look after renters.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (15:16): While I appreciate the Deputy Premier's considered response, the response also went to the supply of properties, and right now we do know that there are over 80,000 homes on the short-stay market. Another rumoured reform has been a toothless tax of a proposed \$5 per booking on holidaymakers. That will do absolutely nothing to make more homes available to renters, and we know that because Airbnb has wholeheartedly embraced the proposed tax with open arms. Will the government introduce meaningful reforms that will free up homes for renters and stop investors from hoarding properties by limiting the number of days a home can be on the short-stay market to 90 days a year?

The SPEAKER: Member for Richmond, your question was not quite the same as your main question. If you can relate it back to the first question you asked, the main question, which was around rents, I will allow the question.

Gabrielle DE VIETRI: My question was around the availability and affordability of renting and the proposed reforms that have been flagged by the Labor government, which include both a cap on rent increases and a reform of short-stay accommodation, including a tax, so those things go to the supply and the affordability of rental properties.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The house will come to order. Member for Richmond, I will allow the question on this occasion, but I think all members need to note that main questions and supplementary questions have to have the same theme. The Deputy Premier will respond to the supplementary question.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:19): As I indicated in my answer to the substantive question – I will not repeat what I referenced other than to say the government is working on a package of reforms that go to the very question of affordability and availability of housing supply. But I will also point out to the member for Richmond that the Andrews Labor government has already taken significant steps to reform support for renters and indeed has already introduced more than 130 rental reforms that are around strengthening renters' rights to protect vulnerable renters. To address rent increases, we have already reduced the number of times rent can be increased to once every 12 months, so we have not been sitting on our hands. There has been already significant reform in this place. We plan to do more, and we would love to do even more should we see that very important bill that is sitting in the Senate, which would provide more funds for more homes for more Victorians.

Ministers statements: healthcare workforce

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (15:20): I rise today to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government is making sure all Victorians, no matter where they live, have access to the right care at the right time in the right place. Of course this includes regional Victoria. We recognise that you cannot do this without a world-class workforce. We have and will continue to back in our healthcare workers. As the house well knows, we are delivering scholarships to train more than 17,000 nurses and midwives, including 10,000 to make nursing and midwifery free to study. We have got sign-on bonuses across Victoria to make sure that we keep the best and the brightest in our public health system, and we have recruited almost 2000 healthcare workers from overseas, with one in four of those finding a place to work in regional Victoria.

But we recognise that housing for our regional workers continues to be an issue. This is no different in health care. That is why we have invested \$4 million to deliver a new student accommodation hub in Maryborough, building on our \$100 million investment to redevelop and expand the Maryborough and district hospital. It was so great to be there with the member for Ripon. The member for Ripon opened this accommodation. Meanwhile the member for Ripon and I had the pleasure of turning the first sod on this very exciting redevelopment. What is terrific about the accommodation at Maryborough District Health Service is that it is being funded through our Regional Health Infrastructure Fund – \$790 million. Round 8 is now open, and I encourage health services right across rural and regional Victoria to think about the applications that they will make for this round. Our government understands that we need to continue to expand housing options in order to get the – *(Time expired)*

Commonwealth Games

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:22): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the government apologise to the athletes for shattering their dreams to compete on home soil as a result of the decision to cancel the 2026 Commonwealth Games?

Danny Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER: The Assistant Treasurer will come to order.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:22): As I have indicated already a couple of times to the house today, the government was faced with a choice, and the choice became very clear: a choice between a \$6 billion investment in a 12-day sporting event became too much, particularly when that is more than double –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Lowan! Come to order, Deputy Premier. Through the Chair.

Jacinta ALLAN: That \$6 billion was more than double the cost for half the estimated –

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Extremely disappointing.

Sam Groth: On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked a specific question around an apology to the athletes. There is no greater honour for an Australian athlete than to pull on –

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: The Minister for Police can leave the chamber for half an hour.

Minister for Police withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: Member for Nepean, there is no point of order.

Jacinta ALLAN: As I was saying, \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event became too much. That is why, for those athletes across regional Victoria, we have held on to those legacy reasons. The bipartisan reasons why we wanted to have the games in the first place were to invest in those key areas of housing, tourism and events, and also important community sporting infrastructure and community sporting programs. These are going to be particularly important with the new \$40 million all-abilities sport fund that is going to help people with a disability be able to participate in local community sport. From the reaction of those opposite, it is really clear that it is all about them and their little noise over there.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Malvern can leave the chamber for half an hour. Question time is clearly not good for your health.

Member for Malvern withdrew from chamber.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, under standing order 58 the Deputy Premier is required to be direct. The question asked whether the Deputy Premier would provide an apology to athletes. It is an important question. If the Deputy Premier chooses not to apologise, she can say that and sit down.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked.

Jacinta ALLAN: I recall I was referring to the investments that we are making in community sport, particularly around regional Victoria. I can appreciate – because I have spoken to them over many months, as indeed all of us have as we connect into our local communities – there are some people who are disappointed with this decision. But the decision before government became very clear about the choice between \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event as opposed to the key reason why we wanted to invest in the games in the first place, which was to support the ongoing legacy benefits for regional Victoria. What I would say to those athletes is beware the Leader of the Opposition who speaks with a forked tongue. He agrees with this decision. He supports this decision, and anything he says to any athlete is completely deceptive.

David Southwick: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Deputy Premier was asked if she would apologise to athletes. I think she should at least do that. Victorians deserve an apology. Will you apologise, Deputy Premier, yes or no?

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Deputy Premier has concluded her answer.

John PESUTTO (Hawthorn – Leader of the Opposition) (15:28): Will the Deputy Premier take ministerial responsibility for the Commonwealth Games scandal and resign?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition asked a question. I am going to allow it because it is relating to the Commonwealth Games, but it was completely separate to your first question.

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:29): Firstly, let us be clear, as I have said on a number of occasions today and as has been said often in the last two weeks, when the choice was presented to the government, \$6 billion for a 12-day sporting event was just too much. The opportunity to invest in the legacy benefits for regional Victoria continue with our \$2 billion regional package. I want to be clear for the Leader of the Opposition's benefit: I am not in the business of cutting and running when things get difficult and challenging. You might be.

Also, Speaker, I remind the house that the Leader of the Opposition fully supports this and would do the same. He has already stated very clearly that he fully supports the decision of the government to make this decision.

Ministers statements: Big Housing Build

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (15:30): I am pleased to update the house today on the Andrews Labor government’s ongoing investment in the Big Housing Build. Victorians know that it is only the Labor government that will deliver the bricks and mortar Victorians need for access to secure housing. We also know that Victorians – and this goes to the work we are doing on reforms to our housing industry – want a property industry where the priority is affordable places. There is no bigger issue than housing for Victorians. Those opposite might want to block and stop it at every opportunity –

John Pesutto interjected.

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

Jacinta ALLAN: Those opposite might want to join with the Greens in Canberra and block and stop it at every opportunity, but we take this work seriously and are doing hard work now –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 109 requires the Deputy Premier to keep to the subject. It is clear that the Deputy Premier has strayed from the subject, and I would ask you to refer her back –

Members interjecting.

James Newbury: I understand. The rules of debate require the Deputy Premier to keep to her own subject.

Danny Pearson: It’s a statement.

James Newbury: Yes, that is right, but you cannot talk about anything.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier is being relevant to a ministers statement.

Jacinta ALLAN: Yes, a ministers statement on housing, Speaker, and I am delighted to provide the house with some facts. Since the Big Housing Build began, 7639 homes have been completed or are underway, and we are well on track to deliver more than 12,000 new homes. Importantly, too, this is supporting 40,000 jobs during the construction phase, an important pipeline of jobs.

Even better, the Big Housing Build fast-track program, which the very busy Minister for Housing is undertaking, is delivering 350 homes in Flemington, 250 homes in Brighton – you had better tell the member for Northern Victoria that – 180 homes in Ballarat and 120 homes in Bendigo as well. We have heard already today that Minister Brooks was in Hawthorn seeing the work there with 103 social and 103 affordable houses. This is what Victorians care about – delivery – and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government will continue to do.

Condolences

John Karpathakis

The SPEAKER (15:32): Order! Members, before moving to constituency questions, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of John Karpathakis. Many of you will have known John, who worked here at Parliament as part of the Wilson Security team. John unexpectedly passed away on 28 June after serving here for seven years, helping to keep all users of this building safe. His smiling face and friendly demeanour will be missed by all of us, and particularly the parliamentary staff who worked closely with him.

Constituency questions

Gippsland South electorate

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:34): (230) My question is to the Minister for Housing. Following the disastrous Commonwealth Games decision, which has affected my region of Gippsland, we need to try and salvage something for my region, so I ask: how many new public housing homes, on a net new basis, will be constructed in the municipalities of South Gippsland, Latrobe and Wellington from the proposed regional housing fund? I ask this given the Big Housing Build so far has delivered just six new homes in South Gippsland shire. That is one for every 5000 residents in South Gippsland shire versus, for example, Latrobe, where it is one for every 900. We actually have a housing crisis in our region, and it affects all parts of the region, including rural areas like South Gippsland. We need more than just six. I ask the minister to explain how many new houses will actually be provided under the regional housing fund.

Lara electorate

Ella GEORGE (Lara) (15:35): (231) My question is for the Minister for Veterans, and I ask the minister to outline how the new veterans card is supporting Victoria's veterans. We all understand and appreciate the profound contribution that our veterans make to our state and our nation, and there are more than 90,000 veterans in Victoria. In the electorate of Lara we have a large and proud veterans community, from the Norlane RSL to the Lara RSL, of course including our Vietnam veterans. I recently had the honour to represent the minister at the Vietnam War memorial in North Geelong to honour those who served in the Vietnam War, and this year on 18 August we mark a significant milestone: the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. On 18 August and on every day, we honour those who served and sacrificed in the Vietnam War. Commemorative days are an important reminder of the contribution veterans make while serving and, once they return to civilian life, volunteering and contributing to their local communities right across Victoria. So my question is: can the minister please outline the veterans card?

South-West Coast electorate

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:36): (232) My question is for the Minister for Health. The Port Fairy cemetery has been a victim of multiple break-ins. Mrs Maria Cameron, president of the Port Fairy cemetery trust, explained how they are desperately trying to upgrade their outdated shed, which they use to store the equipment donated by volunteers, such as shovels, mowers and hedge trimmers. The trust applied for a grant to repair their outdated shed to mitigate the risk of break-ins. The department's response to the requested \$39,000 grant was that it had received more applications than it could fund. These people are volunteers, who responsibly and respectfully bury our dead. This government manages to look at regional Victorians like Mrs Cameron in the eye and say, 'Our government wasted billions of dollars on the Commonwealth Games, but your volunteers at the cemetery are not entitled to a \$39,000 grant.' As the minister responsible, why isn't there adequate funding in place for cemeteries in this year's budget so that these volunteers in South-West Coast can do their job without fear for the cemetery's safety?

Box Hill electorate

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (15:37): (233) My question is for the Minister for Education. What is the latest update on the new competition-grade gymnasium at Kerrimuir Primary School in Box Hill North? Kerrimuir Primary School is a fantastic local primary school under the stewardship of principal Michael McLean, and the school was absolutely rapt when we announced in the 2021–22 budget that the school would receive funds for a long-awaited gymnasium. There are more than 500 students at the school. It does not have an indoor area where the students can assemble for an assembly. I know this indoor facility will make an enormous difference to the community, not just for the school during assemblies and their indoor sporting events but also for the broader community by providing another very important basketball facility for all of the local basketball clubs.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:38): (234) My question is for the Premier. This question would have been for the minister for the now abandoned Commonwealth Games, but they have already resigned. Nepean residents have been calling out for upgrades to educational and health infrastructure and services across my community for over a decade. Repeatedly we have been let down by the Andrews Labor government, who have put political priorities before the constituents in my electorate. Now the government has announced that the callous cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will apparently deliver \$5 billion in extra savings. Can the Premier clarify how much of the apparent \$5 billion we will save will be allocated as additional funding to schools and health services in my electorate?

Monbulk electorate

Daniela DE MARTINO (Monbulk) (15:38): (235) My constituency question is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. Minister, what impact will we see across the electorate of Monbulk from the introduction of free three- and four-year-old kinder, an increase of early childhood education hours of up to 30 per week? It is well established that access to kindergarten significantly reduces rates of developmental vulnerability amongst children. We know that free kinder is also helping with the cost-of-living pressures, with savings of up to \$2500 in fees per child per annum.

Early childhood education and care is unaffordable for about 386,000 Australian families. It is great to see that here in Victoria the Andrews Labor government is addressing this affordability issue. The increase in female participation in the workforce is also sure to benefit from this excellent initiative. Minister Stitt, I would be keen to communicate the positive impacts to my constituents, because education is a lifelong journey and we know that the first five years of a child's life are so critical for healthy development. Your response will allow me to better inform the parents of Monbulk of the benefit this policy will have.

Melbourne electorate

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:40): (236) Today I have a question for the Minister for Creative Industries. Here in Melbourne we do not have an opera house or a harbour bridge. People do not come here to see the Eiffel Tower or Buckingham Palace. Instead we have something different: we have small studios and galleries down mysterious laneways and little gems hidden behind hidden doors. Over the weekend many of these doors were flung open for Open House Melbourne. I led a tour of the Art Deco Nicholas Building on Flinders Lane. We took dozens of people through the building, visiting milliners, tattoo artists, galleries, jewellers and more. People were shocked to discover that we are actually still at risk of losing this place, with rents being hiked up and the building up for sale. It is at risk of being turned into a luxury hotel or commercial space, pushing out the creatives that make Melbourne Melbourne. Minister, you say you will not buy the building, but my question is: will the state government do anything to stop us losing this Nicholas Building community from Melbourne altogether?

Glen Waverley electorate

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (15:40): (237) My question is for the Minister for Environment in the other place, and I ask: what is the progress on the Healesville freeway reserve upgrade? When those opposite or beside me were last in government they tried to sell off the reserve to developers. The local community from Forest Hill, Vermont and Vermont South put up a fight to stop the overdevelopment of this wonderful open green space. Ahead of the 2014 election we committed to saving the Healesville freeway reserve, and we have delivered on our promise. The Andrews Labor government has now committed \$10.5 million to transform the reserve into a user-friendly space for everyone in our community. Currently the reserve holds 35 hectares of unused space, spanning 3.5 kilometres from Springvale Road to the Morack Public Golf Course. From installing proper walking tracks to playgrounds through the reserve, the master plan will provide vibrant and usable space for those in my district. I know that my constituents are looking forward to

seeing progress on the reserve, and I look forward to the minister's response with an update on this great project.

Berwick electorate

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (15:41): (238) My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources in relation to what information the minister has received on the cost of constructing a home out in the growth corridors, particularly in my electorate of Berwick, once the new ban on gas comes in for new homes and developments. One of the biggest issues that many are facing at the moment in the cost-of-living crisis is it is getting more and more expensive to build a home. We already know from decisions by this government that we are going to be importing timber from other states or overseas at a higher cost, which increases construction costs to build your first dream home out in the growth corridors. We are starting to see issues in relation to what is happening with staffing and trying to find tradies, because tradies are working on exorbitant wages on the Big Build projects. Now we are seeing the government ban gas, which will increase the cost of putting in new electrical heaters et cetera within a home, and these costs will never be paid off because the amount you will save per year will not be anywhere near the extra cost it will be to build a home. What information does the minister have on these buildings?

Pakenham electorate

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (15:42): (239) My question is for the Minister for Energy and Resources. With power bills increasing, this government has committed to providing some cost-of-living relief through the fourth round of the power saving bonus. Coming off the massively successful third round of the bonus, which had 1.85 million applications, I know that my constituents of the Pakenham district are taking up the bonus and putting the money right back in their pockets. Through the Victorian Energy Compare website you can also compare your bill and get the best deal. Many have used this resource to find a cheaper energy provider, and Victorians across the state are saving through finding a better rate. I have used this website to compare my own provider and change companies. So I ask: Minister, how many applications for the \$250 power saving bonus have there been in my electorate of Pakenham?

Bills

Energy Legislation Amendment Bill 2023

Introduction and first reading

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (15:44): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 and the National Gas (Victoria) Act 2008 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (15:44): I ask for a brief explanation of the bill.

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (15:44): The bill will introduce decision-making criteria to be used if the Minister for Energy and Resources needs to trigger the retailer reliability obligation, which is an existing mechanism available to ensure adequate electricity supply when shortfalls are forecast by the Australian Energy Market Operator. The bill will also enable alignment of gas wholesale market civil penalties with the national framework and update outdated references to the Essential Services Commission's gas distribution system code.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Petitions

Melton–Watergardens bus service

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) presented a petition bearing 479 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that there is no public transport bus service between Melton and Watergardens Train Station/Shopping Centre or any bus service that travels along the Melton Highway. Due to no public bus service or any public transport option residents cannot access the local Sikh Temple known as Dal Baba Bidhi Chand Ji Khalsa Shaouni. This temple is an important cultural and religious gathering place for thousands of members of the Sikh community particularly those in the Western Suburbs.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly through the Minister for Public Transport the Hon Ben Carroll create a new bus service that connects Melton and Watergardens Train Station/Shopping Centre. The new bus service to travel through the new suburbs of Bonnie Brook, Plumpton, Aintree, Deanside, Woodlea and Fraser Rise and for bus shelters to be established on both sides of the road at 1288–1364 Melton Highway Plumpton allowing the Sikh community a public transport option to attend their essential cultural and religious gathering place.

Ordered that petition be considered tomorrow.

Committees

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee

Alert Digest No. 8

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:46): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being *Alert Digest* No. 8 of 2023, on the following bills:

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023

Statute Law Amendment (References to the Sovereign) Bill 2023

together with appendices.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Auditor-General's:

Annual Plan 2023–24 – released on 27 June 2023

Effectiveness of Rail Freight Support Programs – released on 27 June 2023

Results of 2022 Audits: Technical and Further Education Institutes – released on 30 June 2023

Results of 2022 Audits: Universities – released on 30 June 2023

Community Visitors – Report 2021–22 – Ordered to be published

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:

Orders under s 17B granting licences over:

Alexandra Gardens Reserve

Lynch's Bridge Historical Precinct Reserve

Orders under s 17D granting leases over:

Part of Albert Park Reserve

Part of Brighton Beach Oval Reserve

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission:

Annual Plan 2023–24 – released on 29 June 2023

Operation Sandon: Special report – released on 27 July 2023

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

Code of Practice for Worksite Safety – Traffic Management (*Gazette G29, 20 July 2023*)

Statutory Rule 36 (*Gazette S327, 26 June 2023*)

Statutory Rule 40 (*Gazette G26, 29 June 2023*)

Melbourne Cricket Ground Trust – Report 2022–23

Ombudsman – Annual Plan 2023–24 – released on 30 June 2023

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 – Government Responses to the:

Integrity and Oversight Committee's Report on the Inquiry into Performance of the Victorian integrity agencies 2020/21: focus on witness welfare

Pandemic Declaration Accountability and Oversight Committee's:

Review of the Pandemic (Quarantine, Isolation and Testing) Orders

Review of the Pandemic (Visitors to Hospitals and Care Facilities) Orders

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

Ballarat – C236

Boroondara – C367

Brimbank – C237

Casey – C293

Corangamite – C61, C62

Frankston – C162

Glenelg – C104

Greater Dandenong – C245

Greater Geelong – C434, C435, C456, C458

Hepburn – C73

Hume – C271

Latrobe – C126, C138

Melbourne – C452

Melton – C219, C237

Merri-bek – C219

Monash – C169

Mornington Peninsula – C299

Moyne – C74

Port Phillip – C195

Pyrenees – C53

Stonnington – C334

Towong – C39

Victorian Planning Provisions – VC234

Wellington – C114, C116

Yarra Ranges – C208

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 – SR 65

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 – SR 70

Community Based Sentences (Transfer) Act 2012 – SR 56
Confiscation Act 1997 – SR 74
Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 – SR 64
County Court Act 1958 – SRs 73, 77
Crimes Act 1958 – SR 75
Dangerous Goods Act 1985 – SR 69
Disability Service Safeguards 2018 – SR 71
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 – SR 61
Family Violence Protection Act 2008 – SR 72
Fisheries Act 1995 – SR 63
Health Services Act 1988 – SR 57
Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 – SR 76
Magistrates' Court Act 1989 – SR 68
Marine Safety Act 2010 – SR 66
Partnership Act 1958 – SR 55
Residential Tenancies Act 1997 – SR 58
Road Safety Act 1986 – SR 67
Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 – SR 59
Tobacco Act 1987 – SR 62
Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007 – SR 60

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under section 15 in relation to statutory rules 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 73, 77

Documents under section 16B in relation to:

Dairy Act 2000 – Dairy Food Safety Victoria Determination of Licence Classes and Fees for Dairy Businesses – 1 July 2023–30 June 2024

Education and Training Reform Act 2006:

Ministerial Order 1414 – Structured Workplace Learning Arrangements (Non-School Providers)

Ministerial Order 1415 – Work Experience Arrangements (Non-School Providers)

Financial Management Act 1994 – Order to declare a class of specified entities

First Home Owner Grant and Home Buyer Schemes Act 2000 – Home Buyer Scheme Declaration (HomesVic)

Payroll Tax Act 2007 – Declaration of exempt schools

Planning and Environment Act 1987:

Extension of period of declaration of Bellarine Peninsula and Bass Coast as distinctive areas and landscapes (two orders)

Extension of period of declaration of Surf Coast as a distinctive area and landscape.

PROCLAMATIONS – Under SO 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamation fixing an operative date:

Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Amendment Act 2022 – Parts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9, and Division 2 of Part 8 – 1 July 2023 (*Gazette S333, 27 June 2023*).

*Bills***Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023****Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023***Council's agreement*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:49): I have received messages from the Legislative Council agreeing to the following bills without amendment: the Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023.

*Announcements***Parliamentary Integrity Adviser**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:49): I have received a message from the Legislative Council agreeing to the appointment of Professor Charles Sampford as parliamentary integrity adviser.

*Bills***Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023****Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023****Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023****State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2023****Victorian Future Fund Bill 2023***Royal assent*

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (15:49): I inform the house that the Lieutenant-Governor has given royal assent to the Appropriation (2023–2024) Bill 2023, the Appropriation (Parliament 2023–2024) Bill 2023, the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition, Aboriginal Self-determination and Other Matters) Bill 2023, the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2023 and the Victorian Future Fund Bill 2023.

*Motions***Commonwealth Games**

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:50): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the state government's cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games;
- (b) notes the \$4.4 billion cost blowout; and
- (c) calls on the government to release full detailed costings for both the original \$2.6 billion figure and the new blown out \$7 billion figure.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:50): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the state government's decision to tear up contracts for the 2026 Commonwealth Games; and
- (b) notes the possibility of Victorians being forced to pay up to \$2 billion in cancellation fees.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:51): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the \$4.4 billion blowout in costs for the Commonwealth Games;
- (b) notes the \$30 billion in blowouts across major projects; and
- (c) calls on the government to stop wasting taxpayers money in a cost-of-living crisis.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:51): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the \$6 billion to \$7 billion revised estimate for the 2026 Commonwealth Games is 50 per cent higher than shared with Commonwealth Games Australia in June; and
- (b) calls on the government to urgently clarify this large discrepancy.

Leave refused.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (15:52): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the financial, economic and reputational damage caused by the Deputy Premier's mismanagement of the Commonwealth Games and major projects; and
- (b) calls on the Deputy Premier to resign.

Leave refused.

Business of the house

Standing and sessional orders

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (15:52): I desire to move, by leave:

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

Leave refused.

Motions

Commonwealth Games

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:52): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (1) recognises that the Andrews Labor government's cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games has severely damaged Victoria's reputation as a global major events destination.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:53): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the substantial damage the government's abrupt cancellation of the Commonwealth Games has done to Victoria's international reputation; and
- (b) calls on the government to urgently reform its management of major events.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:53): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes that Victorian taxpayers will pay at least \$25 million to cover the salaries and offices of now-defunct Commonwealth Games executives; and

MOTIONS

Tuesday 1 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

2531

- (b) calls on the government to release all costings and information related to Commonwealth Games personnel.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:53): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the negative impact the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will have on businesses, sporting associations and local infrastructure in Ballarat; and
- (b) calls on the government to ensure the Ballarat community is not let down again.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:53): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the impact the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will have on businesses, sporting associations and local infrastructure in Bendigo; and
- (b) calls on the government to ensure that the Bendigo community is not let down again.

Leave refused.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (15:54): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the impact the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will have on businesses, sporting associations and local infrastructure in Geelong; and
- (b) calls on the government to ensure that the Geelong community is not let down again.

Leave refused.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (15:54): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes that taxpayers were paying almost \$1000 per week for the former Parliamentary Secretary for the Commonwealth Games;
- (b) calls on the member to repay money received since the games' cancellation; and
- (c) explain what percentage of the massive cost overruns were in his own electorate.

Leave refused.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (15:55): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the impact the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will have on businesses, sporting associations and local infrastructure in Gippsland; and
- (b) calls on the government to ensure the Gippsland community is not let down again.

Leave refused.

Kim O'KEEFFE (Shepparton) (15:55): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house:

- (a) notes the impact that the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games will have on businesses, sporting associations and local infrastructure in Shepparton; and
- (b) calls on the government to ensure that the Shepparton community is not let down again.

Leave refused.

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) (15:55): I desire to move, by leave:

That this house condemns the appalling conduct of the members for Bayswater, Narre Warren North and Hastings and member for Southern Metropolitan Ryan Batchelor MLC for their politically motivated attempt to smear the Honourable Robert Redlich AM KC, former IBAC Commissioner, at a hearing of the Integrity and Oversight Committee.

Leave refused.

Michael O'Brien gave notice of motion.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Notice given.

Program

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (15:57): I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5 pm on Thursday 3 August 2023:

Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023.

It is great to be back after a bit of a winter break, though I do want to make the point that whilst we talk about it as a winter break, certainly those of us on this side of the house have been hard at work in our local communities and relishing every opportunity that presents itself to let our communities know about how the Andrews Labor government continues to deliver for the people of Victoria whatever corner of the state that they live in. And there were so many events and opportunities to showcase so much of this work during that winter period. How exciting was it to see the first test runs of trains through the Melbourne Metro Tunnel? The Big Build is paying dividends, and I know that right across our communities, including in regional Victoria, people are very excited about what Melbourne Metro is going to deliver for our public transport.

I know that the member for Wendouree and member for Cranbourne were very excited. There is so much on in our community at any given time, and they took the opportunity to go and see the Doggies at Mars Stadium, Ballarat.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, this debate is on the government business program. It is not a diary inventory of the members on the other side of the chamber and what they did in the last five weeks, and I would ask you to bring the Leader of the House back to the question before the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: It would be appreciated if we could stick to the government business program.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Certainly. Thank you, and I appreciate your guidance. It was a little preamble before I get back into the business of the government business program. My point is we are fighting fit, back here ready to make contributions on the bills that are before the house this week and also to make contributions in so many other ways as enabled by the various procedures within the house. I know those on the other side like to jump up and say that they do not have opportunities to debate things and so on. We look forward to each and every one of them making contributions on the bills that are before the house at this time.

The hardworking Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for Climate Action is at it again. We know how important it is that we have a properly regulated electricity system and how important that is to meeting the needs of our government's commitment, which, quite simply, is transformative when it comes to energy generation, distribution, delivery and so on. We have comfortably surpassed our 2020 renewable energy target of 20 per cent, we have increased our 2030 renewable energy target

from 50 per cent to 65 per cent, and as a government we will continue to be ambitious as we strive towards 95 per cent renewable generation in this state by 2035 – I nearly gave the Minister for Climate Action a heart attack by saying 2025. We are well on track. That is why members on this side of the house are very keen to get up and debate the energy legislation amendment bill, which will ensure that newer technologies like batteries, wind farms and solar farms are held to the same standards as existing generation and network technologies – a bill I am sure that all members in the house could get behind.

We know how important it is, with our government's Big Build program, to ensure that we have the tons and tons of extractive resources that we need for our tunnels, train tracks and roads. Of course with demand for new housing, as we have heard – which will be a feature, I am sure, of many of the conversations and debates that we have this week – at a high, it will continue to place pressure on our quarry and cement industries for years to come. The bill that will be debated, the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill, goes to this very issue. Once again, I am proud to be back, excited to be back and looking forward to this last half of 2023 as our government continues to deliver on our very full agenda.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (16:03): The coalition will be opposing the government business program. The government, each week prior to a sitting, publicly announce what they intend to debate in the chamber. They make that available to the broader community and stakeholders and other members of this place and then come into the chamber and move a motion relating to the government business program, as they have just done. Last week the government gave notice of the government business program and referred to the two bills and again referred to – this is a direct quote – ‘the government may also debate some of the motions on the notice paper’.

I notice the Leader of the House did refer to both the two bills up for debate but also other matters and members having an opportunity to debate other matters throughout the week through those other motions. For context, the government has not given any indication around what those motions will be or when members will be provided an opportunity to speak on those matters. I would expect and hope that members will have an opportunity to speak on the budget motion, which is a continuation of the budget papers take-note motion, because I know so many members of our side of the chamber want to speak about their communities being let down in relation to the budget. But on the notice paper as it stands there are six government motions, 11 coalition notices of motion –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the leader of opposition business should know that, strictly speaking, the government business program only comprises –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order is –

Mary-Anne Thomas: It is on relevance.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Relevance?

Mary-Anne Thomas: I am sorry, yes. It is on relevance because, strictly speaking, the government business program only comprises the bills that are to be debated.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. There is no point of order.

James NEWBURY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for confirming that there is no point of order. The notice paper as it stands has six government motions, 11 coalition motions and a number of Greens motions. Today we have just seen the coalition introduce 15, the Greens one and the government one. What we have seen over this year are repeated instances of the government moving motions in this place without notice. Those motions for debate are effectively an opportunity to attack the coalition. The government has given notice to refer to those motions throughout the week. What they are we do not know, so the community is none the wiser about what will be debated. I think it would be fair to say that is why it is clear to the broader community that the government has lost its way in terms of managing the house, because the government business program is an opportunity to let the community know what is happening in this place and the government has not done that. So we are none the wiser

on any of the motions that will be debated and how much of the Parliament's time will be wasted on debating the government's attempts to sledge the opposition. We are none the wiser as to how much time will be spent on that.

As I referred to, in terms of the motions on the notice paper, we know that disproportionately almost 30, as of tomorrow, will be coalition motions, and there is no opportunity for members of the opposition or non-government members to debate any of those matters – both the coalition and the Greens have raised this issue repeatedly – whereas the government regularly brings motions to this place with no notice and lines up to sledge the coalition rather than outlining an agenda. It is very disappointing to see parliamentary time used in that way. The Parliament's time should be used to debate important issues for the community. There are so many important issues: issues around the \$2 billion wasted as a result of the government cutting the Commonwealth Games – \$2 billion of taxpayer funds wasted. I mean, the government are going to raise almost \$2 billion in new taxes this year, as announced in the budget, and those new taxes are straightaway wasted in the government's waste on the Commonwealth Games. So we will be opposing the government business program because of their lack of capacity to run this place.

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (16:08): It is the first sitting week after the winter break, and I hope everyone is feeling rejuvenated. I am very pleased to be speaking in support of the government business program. The program of course includes two very significant bills – bills that once again demonstrate to the people of Victoria that Labor is just getting on with the job. In particular we have before us the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023, which speaks to the Labor government's commitment to a clean energy future, something which my community of Northcote is immensely passionate about and something which I have been proud to be a champion of since I was elected. Victorians do rightly expect that their government is making changes to the law to embed principles of energy efficiency, energy security and energy safety. That is why since coming to government we have seen a great deal of legislation come into Parliament which gives effect to our ambitions when it comes to addressing climate change.

This bill is yet another, and it is actually emblematic of two very core values and imperatives within our Labor government: worker safety and our transition to renewable energy. Victoria, as we know, is undertaking a rapid transition to renewable energy, with an outstanding target to run the state on 95 per cent renewables by 2035. We are decarbonising at speed, and this also means our state has cut emissions more than any other in the nation. The legislation on the program today is another mechanism in that broader work we are doing as world leaders in renewable energy. It is a critical component, because it goes to the safety of the new and emerging technologies that we are seeing as part of our transition and ensuring of course that technologies such as batteries, wind farms and solar farms are held to the same safety standards as the rest of the energy network.

Members of this house have had quite a lot of opportunity to contribute to debates about our energy sector through the sheer volume of reform that we are undertaking in Victoria as we drive forward our clean energy future, and I must say that these debates are always quite colourful because we know that there continue to be pretty stark ideological differences between the way that our Labor government understands and is addressing climate change and that of the conservatives on the other side and indeed some of the empty showboating of the Greens.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, as much as the member wants to entertain an ideological discussion, I would remind the member that this is a debate around the government business program, and I would ask you to bring the member back to that question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The point of order was on relevance. I take it. The member can come back to the government business program.

Kat THEOPHANOUS: Sure. I was just reflecting on the fact that, as energy legislation comes up, it is an opportunity for us to elucidate those differences in our ideologies, and I think there is nothing

wrong with that. That is what this parliamentary house is for. It provides us with an opportunity to analyse and to reflect on our fundamental position as a Labor government as opposed to the opposition, and what we are about is real climate action.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance, I know that the notes are quite clear and the member is reading from them, but I would say that you have ruled. There are opportunities in this place to debate the questions the member is talking about. It is just not now.

Mary-Anne Thomas: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, there is no point of order. The member for Northcote is being highly relevant to the government business program in her contributions, and I request that you let her get on with it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: On the point of order, I would encourage the member not to branch into debating the bill at hand and to come back to the government business program as a whole.

Kat THEOPHANOUS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It is interesting how touchy those opposite are on this. The second bill on the business program is of course the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023. I know that we rely a great deal on earth resources for many vital aspects of our lives, so I am looking forward to hearing that debate in the house later this week. I understand that it proposes some stronger penalty units to ensure the industry operates at the highest standards, and I will be listening intently to that. There was also – oh, I have run out of time, it appears, but I commend the government business program.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (16:13): How wonderful it is to be back in this place, all looking rejuvenated, smiling, and some of us with a golden tan from our time off. How luxurious – not me. We are looking forward to debating the government business program. However, as the Manager of Opposition Business stated, we will be opposing it on this side of the house for the simple reason that we do believe that there are many issues listed on the notice paper and many issues that are not listed on the notice paper as yet that perhaps are of higher priority, particularly for those out in the regions.

There are also, as the Manager of Opposition Business stated, any number of motions that have been listed that we could be debating, one of those from the member for Gippsland South regarding an inquiry into road trauma and road safety. If you have driven anywhere outside of the freeways or urban roads of late, you would know that this is of the utmost importance and absolutely should be a topic being debated – whether we have a joint parliamentary inquiry into road safety and road trauma in this state, possibly because of the condition of the roads. They have been bad for a long, long time and they are getting worse. That is one of the notices that we could be debating.

Also, the member for Melbourne drew –

Mary-Anne Thomas: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I am somewhat reluctant to do this, but on the issue of relevance, it would appear that the member for Mildura has not taken any heed of what the Manager of Opposition Business was saying in his points of order, and I ask that you draw her back to the government business program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Similarly to the member for Northcote, I encourage us all to stick to and around the government business program.

Jade BENHAM: Thank you – yes, around it. There are some bills here that are very, very relevant to my patch. Let us make no mistake: mineral resources are in abundance in the north-west of this state, and that is certainly something that I am looking forward to contributions on from both sides of the house. Energy safety, again, is something that is very relevant in my electorate, with the amount of investment that has gone into solar farms in particular and the investment into wind farms. And of course let us not forget the big powerlines that are being considered at the moment to get all of that power, because we have an abundance of sun – more sun than the Gold Coast – in the Sunraysia region. But getting that power from our patch into the city – yes, that needs to be debated as well.

A member: And across regional Victoria.

Jade BENHAM: And across regional Victoria.

Like the member for Brighton also stated, there are many notices – none of which we actually know we are going to be debating. As the Nationals Whip in the Legislative Assembly I put together the speaking list on a weekly basis, and it is getting very full. We like one-page, very concise, direct timetables, and it is getting very full because we have to be – well, we are – very prepared. But that page is getting very, very full with a list of motions that could be debated. Whether or not they will be we do not actually know.

One of those, for example, might be the budget take-note motion, which has been delayed and delayed and delayed. Why would that be? Probably because it is not a great budget. We could be debating the outcome and the fallout of the Commonwealth Games cancellation and what that will mean for regions like Mildura, for regions like Morwell and for regions like Shepparton. We should be able to have a debate in great detail regarding that cancellation as well as the non-government business that is listed on the notice paper. The community have a right – all Victorians have a right – to have their electorate matters and the issues that matter to them heard in this place. That is what we are elected to do; that is what the government business program should allow us to do. If we cannot do that, it does make our job all that more difficult. There are ways to work around it, but for the sake of particularly regional Victorians and people on this side of the house and their communities, it would be of great benefit.

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (16:18): I am pleased to make a contribution on the government business program. We got underway this morning with a condolence motion for Tom Roper. I had not heard about his involvement in the Freedom Ride led by Charlie Perkins. As somebody who finds that something to be inspired by, I was inspired by hearing about Tom's contribution to that. His involvement in student politics led him to do that, and my time in student politics hearing about things like the Freedom Ride is why I am sitting on this side of the chamber, so it is great.

This week we will be debating the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023 and the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. Both bills are fundamentally about a government with foresight, a government that is looking to the future. They are about this government continuing its program of modernisation. Like a lot of the work of this government, the focus is triplefold, if that is a word. We are looking at the benefits for the community – the people of Victoria – the benefits for the environment and the benefits for industry, and we are seeking to futureproof arrangements to make sure that we are always keeping in lock step with advances. Our bold vision for the future needs to be worked towards step by step and bill by bill, so I am glad to be in the chamber this week taking that next step as we introduce the next bill, bringing that foresight into close view.

We have got new technologies in Victoria, and with them come new risks to be managed. Things are not the same as they were when my father-in-law worked at a goldmine fixing diesel engines, and they are certainly not the same as they were when my grandfather built machinery at a coalmine. Times and technology have changed. That is why it is important that this is debated in the house this week. It is so important that we have careful oversight of the mineral resources and energy infrastructure in Victoria. We know that Victoria is one of the most fire-prone regions in the world, and we are responding to that carefully, just as we are responding to the opportunities that are afforded us by being in Victoria with all of the renewable energy advances that we are seeing here. I note that the member for Mildura also noted the investment in solar energy and wind farms, and I am glad that she has noticed our investments.

A member interjected.

Lauren KATHAGE: More sun than the Gold Coast. But these things do not just happen. It takes a government that looks to the future, that has a vision and that rolls up its sleeves and gets it done. You know, we are not worried about having too many names on a piece of paper or the difficulties of figuring out who is speaking. We are very busy getting it done. We have got our sleeves rolled up, and

small barriers will not be the reason for us to introduce procedural delays or slow down the work of the government. We have got things to do, and that is what we are getting on and doing.

I did leave the house on a bit of a cliffhanger last sitting week, and I do apologise for that. I was the last speaker on the budget take-note motion, but you may be pleased to know I do have a few minutes left. I am looking forward later in the week to speaking more about what the budget means for the people of Yan Yean. I think I made it through the sport and education investments, but I am looking forward to speaking more about the infrastructure investments for the people of Yan Yean.

I am hoping that this week we will see contributions from both sides of the house. We heard from the member for Brighton that he is looking forward to having people opposite speaking about the budget and what it means for their communities, and certainly that is what this place is all about. I am sure he will have stories to tell of their support for free kinder and their support for the cost-of-living measures that were built in our budget. There will be a lot to say, I am sure, for the many people living all across Victoria that this government continues to deliver for.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:23): This is the laziest government that I think Victoria has ever seen. They have come to this place when we are in a cost-of-living crisis, when we have debt blowing out to unprecedented levels and when we have the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, and we expect this government to come here today ready to work. Instead we have got two bills to discuss. This is what we have seen time and time again from the laziest government you could ever imagine, a government that literally has let Victorians down. They have let Victorians down at a time when we desperately need leadership, and we are getting none of it from this government – two bills.

We have got one bill here on energy. Now, energy is a classic example of how this government has completely led us to a cost-of-living crisis. Victorians cannot afford to heat their homes. Victorians cannot afford the power bills that they get every day. They are shivering through winter. We have seen a 25 per cent increase in our energy bills, and what does this government say? This government says, ‘Another policy, another \$1000 off your energy bill.’ If you counted how many times the energy minister has said that Victorians will be getting a discount on their energy bills, we would be getting a rebate – the government would be paying us for our energy bills right now. But instead we are all paying the price for the government’s mismanagement and their waste. It is time this lazy government actually got up and did something.

If you want the best example that Victorians have ever seen, there is another wasted \$4 billion, we are talking now, in terms of a blowout, and \$2 billion of waste in terms of cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, and we are not talking about it. The government is hiding. They are hiding as quickly as they possibly can. They have taken the Commonwealth Games portfolios off two ministers. They have got the parliamentary secretary, who they are paying \$1000 a week – they are still paying him – and they are taking his portfolio off him. This government is in an absolute mess, and ultimately Victorians are paying the price each and every day – a billion dollars. We saw the cancellation of a contract when the Premier was coming in, and on his way out there is another billion dollars for a cancelled Commonwealth Games.

Kat Theophanous: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I understood from your previous rulings on the government business program that it was not an opportunity to debate legislation or to attack the government, and you are pretty clear about your rulings. So just on relevance, could you please bring the member into line.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. The member for Caulfield has strayed somewhat, and I encourage him to come back to the government business program.

David SOUTHWICK: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. I understand that. It is because I am very passionate at the moment and very angry in terms of what this government has actually done with the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games.

This is a very light-on program. It has got two bills. This would be the perfect opportunity for the government to roll up their sleeves and start talking about the issues that matter to all Victorians. What are we going to do about the cost-of-living crisis that we are all facing each and every day? We have got energy on the agenda here as a bill but no solutions in terms of how we are going to bring energy prices down other than spin – spin after spin after spin. This government is wasting its way into oblivion. We are all paying the price.

It is the worst government that we have ever seen, a government that is so lazy. In the last term of government we would see four or five bills – in their term. They have turned off the lights. They have effectively said, ‘We’ve given up.’ It is lazy and it is incompetent at a time when Victorians need leadership. We should be talking about these issues. We have got motions on the table here that we should be debating. We have budget take-note motions in each and every one of our portfolios and in each one of our electorates, where money should be spent to help Victorians get along in terms of improving their lives, and that is not what we are talking about at the moment. That is not what we are discussing. We are not talking about what the government could be doing to manage things better. Signing themselves up to a contract for the Commonwealth Games and then cancelling it – I mean, what a disgrace. And another cancellation fee that all Victorians will pay – they all will pay – with no details, no transparency. This is the worst government that we have ever seen.

The Deputy Premier should resign, quite frankly, for what she has done to Victoria – \$30 billion worth of budget blowouts under the Deputy Premier and now another \$4 billion for the Commonwealth Games. This Deputy Premier needs a calculator. She cannot manage anything, certainly not numbers, and she wants to be the future Premier of Victoria. It is a joke; it is a laughing-stock. The Deputy Premier should resign. She should be ashamed of herself and what she has done to Victoria. Ashamed of herself – that is what the Deputy Premier should be. It is a disgrace.

Assembly divided on motion:

Ayes (52): Juliana Addison, Jacinta Allan, Colin Brooks, Josh Bull, Anthony Carbines, Ben Carroll, Darren Cheeseman, Anthony Cianflone, Sarah Connolly, Chris Couzens, Jordan Crugnale, Lily D’Ambrosio, Daniela De Martino, Steve Dimopoulos, Paul Edbrooke, Will Fowles, 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, 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

Noes (25): Brad Battin, Jade Benham, Roma Britnell, Tim Bull, Martin Cameron, Annabelle Cleeland, Chris Crewther, Wayne Farnham, Sam Groth, Matthew Guy, David Hodgett, Emma Kealy, Tim McCurdy, Cindy McLeish, James Newbury, Danny O’Brien, Michael O’Brien, John Pesutto, Richard Riordan, Brad Rowswell, David Southwick, Bill Tilley, Bridget Vallence, Kim Wells, Jess Wilson

Motion agreed to.

Announcements

Petitions

The SPEAKER (16:33): The Clerk has advised me of an error when announcing petitions earlier today. In reading the petition details to the house the Clerk reported that the member for Polwarth had presented a petition to do with bus services between Melton and Watergardens. This was an error; the petition was presented by the member for Melton. Can I thank the clerks and the member for Polwarth for their cooperation in resolving this error.

*Members statements***Commonwealth Games**

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (16:34): What do \$30 billion in budget blowouts and \$4 billion worth of Commonwealth Games blowouts have in common? The Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier is the minister responsible for budget blowouts. The Deputy Premier said in February 2023 that:

The Andrews Labor government has grabbed with both hands the opportunity to bring the games to regional Victoria. The benefits will be significant and the legacy long-lasting ...

The legacy of the Deputy Premier is to ensure that the games have been cancelled – an absolute disgrace and failure. The Deputy Premier should resign. The Deputy Premier is a local member for Bendigo. Local residents in Bendigo are absolutely embarrassed by the fact that their own local member has let them down – a member that should be out there advocating for regional Victoria has instead let them down. This is a huge embarrassment on the international stage. We have never seen an embarrassment like this before. The Deputy Premier should be ashamed of herself, and the fact that she is standing around here today laughing and smiling is a disgrace. Victorians have been let down. This is a disgrace.

Juliana Addison interjected.

The SPEAKER: The member for Wendouree!

David SOUTHWICK: To see waste and mismanagement at a time when we have a cost-of-living crisis – all Victorians are paying the price. The Deputy Premier, quite frankly, should resign from not just her portfolio of Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery, which she has handed back, but also as Deputy Premier and from each and every portfolio that she has.

Simon Crean

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (16:36): I rise to pay tribute to a friend, a mentor and an incredible Australian, Simon Crean. I was so lucky to cross paths with Simon when I was just 19. I was even luckier that I got to work with him, a journey that lasted eight years but that has stayed with me my whole life. Some politicians come and go. Some are the real deal, genuine with vision and integrity, always trying to encourage and see the best in people, to change Australia for the better. Simon was one of those people. He had solid values, the utmost integrity, a prodigious work ethic, a big intellect and spades of courage. He was cheeky and humble and inquisitive. Those who had the pleasure of meeting Simon were always left with the impression that they were the most important person to him. At an event, no matter how big, Simon made it his business to try and talk to everyone there, and it was not just talk – he listened. He wanted to know and understand your story.

Simon leaves an incredible legacy in every portfolio he led, from employment to trade and the arts and more; as leader of the Labor Party and ACTU president; and locally in his electorate of Hotham. While he never did get to contest an election as leader, I firmly believe that Simon Crean would have been a highly capable and successful prime minister. Simon was among the best human beings I have known, and Australia is a better country because of his work and his humanity. He was a towering figure in the labour movement, the Australian Labor Party and Australian politics, a person who will be remembered and revered for generations. Our love and care now and always to Carole, Sarah, Emma, David and all the Crean family. Vale, Simon Crean, a friend and a mentor.

VicRoads testing fees

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (16:37): As the cost of living soars in Victoria under the Andrews Labor government, I met with an 87-year-old Cobram man who only last week was forced to undertake a driving test, a test he was well aware of and was given ample notice to do. Unfortunately, this man failed the test and his licence will now be revoked. He accepts that. I accept that. His driving

skills are no longer adequate. What I cannot accept is that he was charged \$500 for a 1-hour driving lesson and a further \$150 for the actual test by VicRoads. This is daylight robbery for our older members of the community, those who are already struggling to pay their electricity bills, grocery bills and rates and taxes. He did not get a choice to do this test: he was forced to take it.

When I called one of my local driving instructors they informed me that a 1-hour driving lesson is \$75. Now, how does an 87-year-old get charged \$500 for an hour-long lesson that a 17-year-old is charged \$75 for, in the same car and with the same instructor? I am appalled at the way this government allows the financial gouging of Victoria's pensioners. If we are serious about road safety, these tests should be free or heavily discounted so family members can ensure that their loved ones are tested to be sure that they can still drive safely. Who is going to proactively encourage their elderly family members to take a driving test so that they can rest easy knowing that the person is still safe to drive when you are charged \$650 to take the test? It is another example of the Andrews Labor government, who cares more about revenue than safety. The cost-of-living crisis is being aided and abetted by this out-of-touch government.

Melbourne livability

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (16:39): It may not be Australian Music Month, but over the winter break many socials and much commentary have been filled with the lyrics of a certain Taylor Swift. It has been great to see, but to those people I say: I knew you were trouble. Now, don't blame me, but look at what you made me do.

It is with great pleasure that I remind the house this August of the biggest news since 1989, and it might even beat our result in 2022. Melbourne is the number three most livable city in the world and, as we know all too well, it is where it belongs, as Australia's most livable city. It is the best day, and it makes me want to begin again. There is no bad blood with the good people of South Australia. I will try and be delicate, but are you ready for it? There is another reason why they will have a cruel summer, and it is not the midnight rain. There is daylight between the reputations of Adelaide and Melbourne. Taylor Swift is not going to Adelaide, but she must be enchanted with our bejewelled city because fans have been thinking of their moment in their wildest dreams. There is no hoax with happiness. I am telling you that she is coming to Melbourne; it is karma. The Swifties from all over the country and New Zealand will be wearing their cardigans and coming here with style. Now, haters gonna hate, but we will shake it off because there is no dear John letter here, just a blank space on the Adelaide Oval stage. This is a love story with Victoria forever and always.

Commonwealth Games

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (16:40): Today I want to recognise all of those who will be missing out as a result of the Andrews government's cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games. This includes athletes, local sporting clubs, small business owners and the wider Victorian community. As a former athlete myself I can speak to the personal pride and gratification that comes with representing Australia, especially on home soil. Pulling on the green and gold is an irreplaceable privilege that has now been taken away from Australian athletes across the nation. They have been robbed of the opportunity to compete at home on the world stage.

Local athletes and sporting communities will feel this decision just as hard. The Commonwealth Games plays a vital role in recruiting Victorians into sports; the next generations of athletes are born from those who are inspired to get involved by seeing their heroes compete here in Victoria. Now they will miss out on this opportunity. Just as this lack of local activity and visitation will impact sporting communities, it also threatens to decimate small businesses, many of whom were relying on the Commonwealth Games for a substantial increase in their incomes. Now they will miss out, and many will be left financially worse off. With this cancellation also comes almost certain delays to legacy infrastructure, leaving social housing, sporting clubs and event spaces even further behind. When it comes to the Andrews government's callous cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, it is all of Victoria that misses out.

World Environment Day

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (16:42): In June I joined federal minister Andrew Giles and many of my parliamentary colleagues, including members and friends from over 60 local community groups, at the Officer Sikh temple for World Environment Day. I have visited Siri Guru Nanak Darbar in Officer on many occasions, and each and every time I have been delighted to attend. This is where we see our community at its best. My dear friend Harpreet and the wonderful volunteers at the gurdwara put on a day that did not disappoint. We planted 200 trees, shared stories and talked about taking care of our planet. Together we are building a greener and more sustainable future. The Officer Sikh temple is a wonderful example of bringing people together at an inclusive space for all to enjoy. I have said it before, and I will say it again: our community is very grateful for the work that you do.

Refugee Week

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (16:43): Other great events that I attended were the celebrations at the Cardinia Cultural Centre for world Refugee Week, with so many fabulous organisations and community groups.

Afri-Aus Care

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (16:43): I went to the Changing Narratives high tea to join Afri-Aus Care, who hold regular events to empower the lives of women and girls from a very young age.

Pakenham Arthritis Self-Help Group

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (16:43): It was a pleasure to join the Pakenham Arthritis Self-Help Group for a beautiful soup lunch.

Living & Learning Pakenham and Have a Little Hope

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (16:43): I stopped in to see Living & Learning Pakenham and Have a Little Hope to say thank you to the wonderful staff and volunteers and thank them for the support that they offer to our most vulnerable. Times are tough for many at the moment, and this is a reminder that if you are able to donate any non-perishable foods or toiletries, there are places that are looking for donations.

Housing crisis

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (16:43): Last Friday a young woman came to my office with a suitcase. She had nowhere to sleep. My office called Launch Housing. They called the Salvation Army, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Safe Steps, Red Cross, Brigidine Sisters, Sacred Heart Mission, St Mary's House of Welcome, Opening Doors and St Kilda crisis accommodation, on top of urgent calls to the housing minister's office – but no-one could help her. Not one single bed was available. After 5 hours of dead ends my staff and I were trying to work out what to do when we closed our doors, when the Missionaries of Charity offered her a bed for the night. But the reality is that next time – and there will be a next time – we might not find somewhere.

This government's failure means that MPs' offices deal with cases like this regularly, but we are not crisis centres. The desperate situation that this woman faces and the difficulty we had finding a bed for just one night are not unique. The number of Victorians without a home increases every day. Homelessness services are at capacity and underfunded. They need more government support, and urgently. But this government can also stop people from reaching that crisis point. No-one should be begging for a bed. The government must step in now and stop this crisis from growing.

Morwel Atar Morwel

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:45): During the Parliament break in July I had the opportunity to attend some fantastic cultural and creative events, a really enjoyable part of the job. The highlight was an invitation to the Morwel Atar Morwel 2023 fashion show and exhibition on 23 July.

Morwel Atar is an artist who has launched a fashion line, called Morwel Atar Morwel, of beautiful cultural designs printed on fabric to be made into clothing, soft furnishings and homewares. However, Morwel Atar Morwel is more than just a fashion brand. It celebrates art, culture and creativity with designs that reflect the richness of African heritage and tell captivating stories through patterns, colours and textures. Each piece is a work of art that carries the essence of the past, a vision of the present and the promise of a bright future. The designs also incorporate aspects of Australia, as the designs also give expression to the experiences of the artist.

Morwel Atar Morwel the artist started life in South Sudan and moved to Australia in later life. He is an author, poet and artist as well as taking up the important role of community leader and elder. At the fashion show and exhibition we had a taste of the beautiful, vibrant fabrics, and the guests were treated with an awe-inspiring night, kicking off with exciting cultural dancing followed by talented models of all ages, genders, shapes and sizes strutting their stuff. It was an unforgettable evening, with Florence Basanyukira shining as the master of ceremonies and lots of behind-the-scenes work by Morwel Atar's daughter Ash and son. It was a great night with dancing and laughing.

Commonwealth Games

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (16:46): Everyone in this chamber knows I love to talk about my community of Narracan, and today I talk about the disappointment my community of Narracan has after the disgraceful decision by the government to cancel the Commonwealth Games. So much in that budget affected regional Victoria, and the one thing they were looking forward to was the Commonwealth Games. My community had the timber industry ripped out of it – so did those of the members for Morwell, Gippsland South and Gippsland East. The one bright hope we had was the Commonwealth Games, and this government has managed to destroy that hope as well.

It is an absolutely shameful decision – shameful. It would have benefited my community. It would have benefited towns like Erica, Rawson, Walhalla, Noojee and Powelltown. Those regional towns have been so affected by the timber industry that that could have equated to tourism for them, to boost their economies. But this government does not care about regional Victoria; they dump on regional Victoria every opportunity they get. And the only bright light in all of this is what this government has managed to do for the member for Morwell after taking away EV, the SEC, Hazelwood and APM Maryvale as well. What they have done is given this bloke a 20-year career, because I can tell you now there is not a person in Morwell that will vote Labor again.

Barwon Heads Road upgrade

Darren CHEESEMAN (South Barwon) (16:48): On Sunday I had the great privilege of attending the formal opening of the Barwon Heads Road upgrade, and at that formal community opening we had the opportunity to have a smoking ceremony and a naming ceremony to name a couple of components of Barwon Heads Road. The first component that was named in local Wadawurrung language was the bridge, and the second element that was named in local Wadawurrung language was the joint user path that runs alongside Barwon Heads Road. Barwon Heads Road has historically been a very important tourism road, servicing the Surf Coast and wonderful Bellarine Peninsula communities. Over the last decade or so, as Armstrong Creek has grown, it has become a very, very important commuter road, and of course the Andrews Labor government over the last few years has delivered a \$365 million upgrade to that road to recognise that important growth that has been happening in that community. I commend the partners for delivering this road.

Morwell electorate sporting infrastructure

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (16:49): As the local sporting clubs and volunteers pick up the pieces after Labor's decision to cancel the Commonwealth Games, attention is now rightly turning to when the regions can expect the promised infrastructure upgrades. In my electorate of Morwell we were excitedly gearing up to host cricket, badminton, road cycling, shooting and rugby sevens, along with building an athletes village. Local facilities expecting upgrades as part of the Commonwealth

Games included Latrobe City Stadium, Morwell Gun Club, Ted Summerton Reserve and Gippsland Regional Indoor Sports Stadium. The user groups are contacting my office with valid questions as to how and when these upgrades will commence and what level these upgrades will now be. Will they be the standard of the Commonwealth Games build or a watered-down version? Other groups in our community are asking if any of the funding is now going to be spent on other facilities or infrastructure. We have had the games pulled out from under us, and we do not want community groups divided on where and what this money can be spent on. We have been promised that all Commonwealth Games infrastructure will be completed, but local sporting clubs and volunteers have not been given an indication of when this will happen. Can the Premier provide a time frame for delivery of each and every infrastructure upgrade that was promised?

Visy Packaging

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:51): Some weeks ago I rose in this place in support of workers at Visy Packaging in Shepparton who were undertaking industrial action at the time in search of a better pay deal from their employer. It gives me great joy this afternoon to update the house that after some 25 weeks of industrial action the Visy Shepparton dispute has come to an end, with the workers there accepting an enhanced package from the company. These members would like to take a moment to express their heartfelt thanks to everybody who supported them and their families through what was an incredibly difficult time. Taking industrial action and indeed withdrawing labour is something that is always incredibly difficult, both emotionally and financially, particularly in today's tricky economic times. According to the workers, had it not been for the financial support and well wishes received, they certainly would not have got the result which they did. There are far too many to thank individually, but a special thanks to all those workers and workplaces who ran fundraisers and donated to Visy workers along the way. Also a special shout-out to the AMWU Victorian branch's Tony Piccolo and Tony Mavromatis. Go Blues! The lid is off.

Chatham Primary School

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:52): I rise to speak about a wonderful initiative at Chatham Primary School in Surrey Hills, who now proudly boast a community garden within their school grounds. It was wonderful to join the Chatham school community for their new kitchen garden planting and to help plant. The garden will provide students with opportunities to learn about horticulture and to use the plants in their cooking classes. My team and I also cooked up a barbecue lunch for all the hardworking parents and students to enjoy. Congratulations to the parents and families of Chatham, who have long planned for the garden and have put a huge amount of work in to see it planted and launched.

Endeavour Foundation

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:53): My sincere thanks to the Endeavour Foundation in Kew for hosting me last month. The Endeavour Foundation is a brilliant organisation that supports people with disability to achieve social and economic participation. From its base in Kew the Endeavour Foundation employs over 80 people on site in their food packaging business, and it was great to have a chat with them about the importance of their work. Endeavour also hosts the QArt Gallery studio on their Kew site, which sees contemporary art made by talented professional artists with disability. I loved having a chat with the artists about what inspires them. I was incredibly honoured to be presented with a painting by Kew artist Julian Campomizzi, which is now hanging proudly in my office for all to see.

Kew electorate Rotary clubs

Jess WILSON (Kew) (16:54): Last month was an important date on the Rotarian calendar, being changeover season. I was delighted to join all my local Rotary clubs as they thanked their outgoing executive teams and passed the baton to the new leaders. Congratulations to incoming presidents Tony

Nguyen of Canterbury Rotary, Brian Lacey of North Balwyn Rotary, Kim Wen of Kew Rotary and Russell Jones of Balwyn Rotary. A big thankyou to outgoing presidents too.

Phil Emery

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (16:54): I rise to mark the passing of Phil Emery OAM. Phil was well known and respected in our Bellarine and Greater Geelong community, known for being a kind, generous and active community member. He was long associated with many organisations, including the Barwon Coast Committee of Management, which he led as chair from 2014 to 2021, during which time he also oversaw the redevelopment of the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club and Dunes restaurant. Phil was a founder and committee member of the Ocean Grove Harriers, a running club, since 1985; a committee member and director of the junior football program at the Ocean Grove footy club; and the inaugural president of the Shell Road sports and community pavilion. Phil's generosity, kindness, wise words and good humour were clear to all who knew him. His dedication and contribution to the community saw him awarded an OAM – Order of Australia Medal – in 2021 as part of the Queen's Birthday honours. Vale, Phil. You will be missed by an entire community. My deepest condolences to Phil's partner in life Davina and family.

Bellarine electorate climate action

Alison MARCHANT (Bellarine) (16:55): With the time I have left, I would just like to talk about hosting the Minister for Climate Action in Queenscliff in May. We met with the incredible climate activists from Queenscliffe Climate Action Now and the borough's mayor and councillors to discuss the nation-leading climate agenda of this government.

Government performance

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (16:56): Three quick things: the best predictor of future behaviour is of course past behaviour. A billion dollars not to build a freeway, a billion dollars not to run a sporting event – we are just wondering what is going to be next: probably a billion dollars not to build the Suburban Rail Loop.

North East Link Program

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (16:56): The second thing, if I can: I was with the federal member for Menzies and the members for Kew and Caulfield at a North East Link forum in Bulleen, at the Veneto Club, and was astounded to find that residents are now being forced to sign non-disclosure agreements when having contact with the North East Link Program simply to fix cracks in their own houses. What kind of disgraceful, bullying and intimidatory government forces people to sign non-disclosure agreements simply to have damage – that they caused – to people's houses fixed?

Alistair Urquhart

Matthew GUY (Bulleen) (16:56): The third thing, if I can, in conclusion: I want to pay tribute to a very good friend of mine, and I think of many people in this chamber from both sides, a fellow by the name of Alistair Urquhart, who was a wonderful bagpiper, a Melbourne Scot who did business on Collins Street and connected people, a decent, decent human being who was one of the quirkiest but loveliest people I have ever met. Ali was the Liberal candidate for Jagajaga in 1993 – that is where I got to know him. Nick McGowan in the other chamber and I were very passionate about supporting his campaign. Vale, Alistair Urquhart. Our love goes to Mary.

Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships program

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (16:57): We shall miss Mr Urquhart and most especially his socks.

My members statement is about the pleasure I had recently with Leroy, who is a year 10 student at Mullauna College who joined the office for work experience. Leroy leapt at the opportunity to get hands-on experience of an MP's working environment and even helped me write this speech. Leroy's experience highlights the value of starting a career journey at an early stage, and Labor understands

that young people should not have to leave school to do that. That is why we have been proud to launch the Head Start program. This new program gives year 10 to 12 students paid work experience in an industry they are passionate about, which goes towards completing their VCE or vocational major. Students just like Leroy get expert counselling and networking whilst trying the job for themselves, making Head Start a practical way to accelerate employment in key sectors. Under this government students can go even further, with free TAFE as well.

Mullauna College

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (16:58): Learning outcomes can always be improved within schools, which is why Leroy was eager to mention how grateful Mullauna College is for the \$17.6 million investment allocated to them in the recent state budget. Upgrades to Mullauna were a key election commitment and a local win for my electorate of Ringwood, and I am proud to see the F block getting a well-deserved face lift right next to Leroy's locker. This funding will also deliver brand new science, tech and food rooms, along with an innovative outdoor learning space and a new canteen. Thanks for the great week on work experience, Leroy, and I hope that all the students will in time enjoy the new facilities.

Coburg West Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:59): On 3 April I visited my former primary school Coburg West Primary to answer students' questions and to talk about my journey from Reynard Street to Spring Street and back again. The school first opened in 1917 and has a vibrant local history, with its iconic yellow and purple uniform very much unmistakable to the eye of any local. As part of the visit I caught up with principal Mark Colagrande to talk about the school's plans to support its 460-plus students as well as to see the ongoing benefits of previous Labor investments, which have included \$393,000 through the state's Minor Capital Works Fund to upgrade indoor learning and classroom facilities and the school's modern multipurpose hall, sport and music building delivered under the Building the Education Revolution program, which is a world away from the old prefab building that former students such as Anton Hockey, Paul Hockey, Ben Nucci, Kieran Barnes-Jenkins, Ryan Williams and I experienced back in the 1990s.

Pascoe Vale South Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (16:59): On 9 June last year, while on the campaign trail, I visited Pascoe Vale South Primary School. Along with meeting school councillor Liz Carey, principal Carmel Lancuba and several parents, I toured the school to inspect its upgraded facilities, which have all been made possible by the over \$5 million invested by the Andrews Labor government since 2014, which includes a new learning centre with six teaching spaces and a new school hall. These have been the biggest upgrades the school has received since it first opened back in 1954 and will ensure today's 300 students are well supported. Separately, I look forward to both Coburg West Primary and Pascoe Vale South Primary doing battle at this year's annual Showdown football match, the battle of Reynard Street, which is coming up on 27 August at Shore Reserve.

Westbreen Primary School

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:00): On 24 July I joined the member for Broadmeadows to visit Westbreen Primary School and see school principal Tony Cerra and others.

Wendouree Senior Citizens Club

Juliana ADDISON (Wendouree) (17:00): The Wendouree Senior Citizens Club is an outstanding organisation in my electorate, providing social and recreational activities for residents aged 55 years and over. It is so important that older community members remain physically active and socially connected, and the Wendouree Senior Citizens Club plays a vital role in providing opportunities for this. Over the last year the club has held many well-attended events, including a bus trip to Mount Gambier and Beaufort, special lunches, outings and events. I am proud to support them and have

welcomed the opportunity to attend meetings to help them apply for the \$250 power saving bonus. It was an honour to attend the Wendouree senior citizens AGM earlier this week and officiate proceedings for the election of office bearers for the next term. Congratulations to president Daryl McFarlane, vice-president Jenny Severino, secretary/treasurer Keith Moore, assistant secretary Winnie Parra and assistant treasurer Dawn Wright, and congratulations to new committee members Annette McFarlane, Jessie Coyle, Joy Meaney, Ken Stowe, Jane Dodson, Helen Quick and Paula Sargent. I wish to acknowledge the contribution of retiring vice-president Kenneth Withers. Thank you, Ken – who is 97 years old – for decades of service to the Wendouree Senior Citizens Club. Congratulations to the newly appointed life members Florrie Malla, Dorothy Smith and Nancy Weston and to John and Judy Harley on receiving their 30-year membership.

Women in sport

Lauren KATHAGE (Yan Yean) (17:02): Like many households across Australia, we were glued to the soccer last night, watching that fabulous team of female role models just absolutely ace the game as amazing sportspeople. I was so happy, when my three-year-old woke up, to tell her that the ‘dadas’ had won, and she was very happy too.

It is so important that women are involved in sport. At a recent visit to Hazel Glen College I spoke to the female school leaders and asked them which of them play sport – and I tell you, it was not all of them; it was not even most of them. It is so important that we invest in sports facilities so that young women continue to play sport throughout their lives, for all of the benefits that it can bring to them.

I did meet a new netball team in Doreen last week. It was the Doreen Saints, which is a new netball team that started at St Paul the Apostle school – their first ever team, and they are improving with every game. Well done to them. The ‘Saints’ name I think also extends to their principal there Phil Doherty, a saint who taught my husband in school. That is why I know he is a saint.

I also dropped in on the Mernda Netball Club for their first day of training supported by this government, making sure that sport is fun and safe for the women of Victoria.

State Emergency Service Nillumbik, Heidelberg and Manningham units

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (17:03): During Volunteer Week I joined with the member for Jagajaga Kate Thwaites MP and member for North-Eastern Metropolitan Region Sonja Terpstra MP to thank our local SES volunteers from Nillumbik, Heidelberg and Manningham for all they do for our communities. We brought with us snags, salads, sauces and bread for our SES hosts, a small token of our gratitude for the late-night call-outs, the rescues, the training and all the work that is done around the clock to help support our community.

Throughout the night volunteers from the three SES units competed in an SES Olympics of rescue skills challenges based on agility, strength and teamwork, with events including a stretcher-handling obstacle course, a radio and map navigation search, sandbag and pumping sand skills and a teamwork challenge. Congratulations to the Manningham unit for their win this year, and my particular thanks to Tim Hamilton and his crew from Nillumbik SES for their assistance in organising and hosting such a fabulous event. I thank all members of VICSES for their support of and service to our communities.

Greenhills Neighbourhood House

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (17:04): Congratulations to Greenhills Neighbourhood House for their fantastic family fun day, holding a handmade craft market, family-friendly activities and morning tea. We celebrated the amazing work the Greenhills Neighbourhood House does to support our local community, creating many meaningful connections through classes, community projects and support programs run with the specific contribution of volunteer work, and I thank all the Greenhills volunteers for their work. This event also marked the opening of their fabulous new playground, funded under JumpStart!, VicHealth’s Future Healthy initiative. It is just one of 123 organisations funded across Victoria. This will deliver a program for children in my community to learn about sustainability.

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

David HODGETT (Croydon) (17:05): It is a pleasure to rise, coming back after the break, well prepared to talk and make a contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. You might recall that this bill, I think, was dropped into the house in early June, if my memory serves me correctly, with another bill. So it has been some time, but it is good to have it on the government business program; it is important legislation. And I note that we are carrying the legislative agenda this week, the Minister for Energy and Resources and my good self. The minister has two bills in – this one and of course the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment Bill 2023, which will be debated this week too – and I note from today's introduction of bills that we have got another bill coming. It is great to see a bipartisan approach to getting the legislative program here up and running in the chamber.

On this bill: it is very straightforward and clear-cut legislation, and of course, with the title 'Energy safety', it is very important. It might be straightforward and might be clear cut, but we cannot underestimate the importance of energy safety. Therefore I do say at the outset that we on this side of the house are actually supporting this bill, supporting its passage through the house here, and I will proceed with the time allocated to me just to make a number of points and, as per usual, just put on record the main purposes of the bill, any concerns that I raised that were being addressed through the minister's office, any background, any other main provisions and those sorts of things, just so I have got that on record. But we are supporting the bill because of its importance, and it is, as I said, straightforward and very clear-cut legislation.

The bill is part of the government's package of reforms aimed at making Victoria's energy systems more sustainable and accountable to delivering consumer-focused outcomes. The bill will amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 to strengthen the energy safety compliance framework. Simply put, obviously our energy safety legislation was designed to suit a system that is changing very rapidly. It was designed for a system where you had a number of large, centralised generators delivering power to local centres. It did not account for new technologies like solar, wind and batteries at the utilities scale and rooftop scale, so the government committed to a large-scale review of energy safety legislation. I think, if my memory serves me correctly from the bill briefing, there was an independent review into energy safety legislation. It was the Grimes review of 2017, which was the background behind this legislation. Out of that came some long-term measures and some short-term measures – again, if my memory serves me correctly from the notes I took at the bill briefing.

I think certainly in the short term the priority for the government is around what changes are needed to address some of the issues arising with the introduction of those new technologies – that is, solar, wind and batteries. So that is what it is aimed at doing, and the aim is to ensure that renewable generators such as solar and wind farms are treated in the same way that traditional energy companies are so that they have the same duties and obligations in terms of safety that the traditional energy companies do.

It also bulks up the ESV – Energy Safe Victoria – inspection powers. Again we have had examples where there have been a few issues with small-scale batteries, where ESV had a limited amount of time that they could hold on to a battery for investigation. So this bill fills a gap in the legislation. Obviously ESV needs time to take these components away so they can conduct a proper investigation so they can make an assessment and make changes. That was a gap in the legislation, and I think there were a couple of examples there where they went to investigate that and time was against them, so

that is fairly straightforward. Clearly ESV need that time to take the components away so that they can undertake that proper investigation and make changes or recommendations or certainly make an assessment. The bill also ensures that the new forms of generation pay fees to ESV so that ESV is resourced to do the job that it does. That in a sense is the summary of the bill that was outlined to us at the bill briefing.

I want to now turn to the main purposes of the bill and put those on record. The main purposes of this bill are to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 in relation to:

- (i) requirements for certain owners and operators of electrical installations; and
- (ii) general duties of owners and operators of complex electrical installations and railways; and
- (iii) modifications of supply networks and changes to safety management systems; and
- (iv) revised electricity safety management schemes and bushfire mitigation plans; and
- (v) voluntary electricity safety management schemes for operators of complex electrical installations; and
- (vi) the period within which things seized by enforcement officers must be returned; and
- (vii) preservation of serious electrical incident sites; and
- (viii) acceptance and enforcement of written undertakings; and
- (ix) the period within which a proceeding for an offence against that Act may be commenced; and
- (x) penalties for offences against that Act ...

The bill, in part 3, will amend the Gas Safety Act 1997 in relation to:

- (i) preservation of gas incident sites; and
- (ii) modifications of facilities and changes to safety management systems; and
- (iii) revised safety cases, and
- (iv) the period within which things seized by inspectors must be returned; and
- (v) acceptance and enforcement of written undertakings; and
- (vi) the period within which a proceeding for an offence against that Act may be commenced; and
- (vii) penalties for offences against that Act ...

Part 4 of the bill will amend the Pipelines Act 2005 in relation to acceptance and enforcement of written undertakings and penalties for offences against that act.

By way of background, as I said in my introductory comments, in terms of the history of our energy safety legislation, what it was designed for and what changes are needed, over the past two decades, driven by a range of policies at state and federal levels, the electricity sector has been replacing carbon-intensive generation with zero-carbon technologies. We all know that, we are all supporting that and we are all moving towards that at various paces. But at the same time the sector is moving away from a small number of large-scale facilities owned and operated by a handful of companies towards smaller scale, more widely distributed electricity production. This exponential growth in new energy technologies, particularly in renewable energy and storage, has exposed critical gaps and other weaknesses in the energy safety legislative framework.

The current safety framework was developed and based on risk profiles of regulated entities in the late 1990s, which did not factor in uptake investment in small-scale renewable and battery installations. These risks are real, with two serious incidents in 2021 underscoring the inability of Energy Safe Victoria to regulate these facilities before these incidents occur. Back to the point I was making before, given that background and the pace we are moving at and how our energy safety legislation was designed, that is changing rapidly. With wind, solar, batteries and, at the utility scale, rooftop, the government needs to ensure that they are all abiding by the same rules or, as the point I made, that they are all treated in the same way that traditional energy companies are so that their duties and obligations in terms of safety are the same as those traditional energy companies from the 1990s.

In terms of main provisions, the bill makes amendments to the Energy Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 that will improve community safety through more effective and targeted regulation of new and emerging energy safety risks, including those posed by emerging technologies. The bill will do this in a number of ways, and I will just put those on the record. The bill will do this by extending the mandatory requirements under the Electricity Safety Act 1998 for major electricity companies to prepare an electrical safety management scheme and bushfire management plan to declared owners and operators of specified electrical installations. These amendments will mean that those businesses identified as posing a greater safety risk to surrounding lands from the operation of their electrical installations will be required to demonstrate a clear plan for mitigating those safety risks. These businesses will also be subject to certain safety duties and obligations commensurate with a major electricity company under the Electricity Safety Act 1998.

The bill will also do this by minor technical amendments to the administration of safety management plans by the relevant entity to ensure they remain current to technological changes in electrical installations or the supply of gas. The bill will align the existing general duties under the Electricity Safety Act 1998 for companies with complex electrical installations with those existing general duties for companies with electricity supply networks. The bill will require an electricity supplier to preserve the site of a serious electrical incident and a gas company to preserve the site of a gas incident for inspection by an enforcement officer or authorised inspector.

It will extend the period Energy Safe Victoria can hold on to seized things for an affected company or person. Again, back to the point I was making before, we had an example of a couple of incidents, a few issues with small-scale batteries, where Energy Safe Victoria were limited in the amount of time that they could hold on to batteries. That was a gap in the legislation, so that fills that gap. It extends that period in which Energy Safe Victoria can hold on to seized things from an affected company. It will provide Energy Safe Victoria and the Minister for Energy and Resources with the power to enter into enforceable undertakings with regulated entities as an optional tool instead of bringing court proceedings. Finally, the bill will do this by increasing maximum penalties for offences by energy entities relating to maintaining safety networks.

In terms of areas of concern, we did receive some feedback from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, the AEIC, via the member for Lowan. Again, it is interesting how the bill process works, where we go out to stakeholders. Our members consult with stakeholders and get feedback, and one of the things that works well is often we get feedback from people that are also providing the exact same feedback to the department and to the minister's office, so there are no secrets there. There are no surprises. They are raising matters, and then we are able to go to the minister's office or the department and either get answers to those through points of clarification or raise those as concerns in the debate. I just wanted to outline the process here, because it is a good example of how some of these cooperative work practices actually come together in getting to this stage of the bill and help us form a view on what we do in terms of supporting, opposing or moving a reasoned amendment on a bill.

As I said, we did receive some feedback from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner via the member for Lowan, and the AEIC raised the following:

We note that s 142 of the Electricity Safety Act 1998 requires that an electricity supplier must report to ESV any serious electrical incident that occurs in relation to its supply network and that cl 38 of the Bill seeks to extend this obligation to declared owners and operators.

There have been several recent safety incidents at renewable energy facilities, for example, a blade drop incident, that were not due to an electrical incident.

We would therefore like to highlight the opportunity for the scope of reportable incidents to be expanded from a "serious electrical incident" to include any event that has caused harm or has the potential to cause harm to any person or the environment.

What the AEIC were doing there was they gave an example of a blade drop incident and just suggested that the scope of a reportable incident be expanded from a serious electrical incident to include those events. The email from the AEIC went on to say that:

Additionally, we suggest that the Act be amended to include an obligation on an electricity supplier or declared owner or operator that has reported an incident to provide a report to the ESV on the root cause of the incident.

We got that feedback, and then on Saturday 27 May I raised this with Mr Nick Parry, the minister's senior energy adviser, who advised that Andrew Dyer, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, had also raised this matter directly with him. Then Nick Parry sought clarification from the department, and on 29 May he provided the following information, which I will go into.

Again I put this on record as an example of where we get a bill dropped in; you might not have the background information or history of how that bill came about. You get a briefing where you ask a number of questions, you get feedback from stakeholders and then often you have got to form a view and get back into the house to debate the matter a week or so later. In this case it does give an example where, over the course of a weekend, we were able to have access to and contact the minister's office and put on record some concerns, which they were already aware of because in this case the AEIC had also raised them directly with the department or the minister's office. So Nick was aware of that. He was able to quickly get clarification from the department and alleviate our concerns – or answer our questions – which meant that in turn we could go back to our members and say, 'Here are the questions you asked. Here's the information we've got' et cetera. It is a good example of the way the process works.

Mr Parry did come back to us. It was terrific dealing with Nick. Having spoken to the department and Energy Safe Victoria, the minister's office confirmed that the definition of a 'serious electrical incident' under the Electricity Safety Act will include anything that could cause death, damage or serious risk to public safety, and this includes a blade drop at a wind farm. Just to restate that, the minister's office was able to come back to us and say, having sought advice from Energy Safe Victoria and the minister's office, that they could confirm that the definition of 'serious electrical incident' under the Electricity Safety Act will include anything that could cause death, damage or serious risk to public safety, and that does include a blade drop at a wind farm. On the second point, ESV has the power to require information in relation to an incident, which includes a root cause analysis. So I received further advice from the minister's office, who had spoken with Andrew Dyer, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. The AEIC were satisfied with that, and that was confirmed.

I know I am repeating myself here, but I outline this process just to show the cooperative work that can go on in dealing behind the scenes with the department and the minister's office from an opposition's point of view to show how that occurs to allow us to get points of clarification – otherwise it makes it very difficult to form positions on bills and to answer questions – but also to thank Nick Parry and the departmental staff for their assistance in this matter. Practices occur when clarifying areas in a bill – and in this case we are supporting the bill. When we are trying to form a position on a bill we want to have an informed view, an informed position, which in turn allows a smooth passage through the house or allows us continually to raise those points on behalf of stakeholders in the house for the minister or the department to perhaps take away in between both houses in the course of the debate of this bill. But this case was a terrific example.

Over the course of a weekend, which was a pleasant surprise, we were able to get the answer back very quickly. Sometimes these bills come on quickly. In this case, as I said, it was dropped in early June, and here we are debating it on 1 August. But sometimes you get a bill where you have week on, week off sittings and you might have to have this information back to debate it a fortnight later. So I thank the departmental representatives – and I will come back to them – and I thank Nick Parry from the minister's office for the service we were able to get in terms of getting our points clarified and questions answered.

Like with all these things, we try to consult widely when a bill is put into this house. We have our own databases where we go out to any number of stakeholders, including of course our own state Liberal–Nationals MPs in the coalition. We write, phone or invite people to make comment on the bill from all sorts of stakeholders. Apart from that feedback that came via the member for Lowan from the

AEIC, there were no other areas of concern raised or identified with the bill. As I said at the outset, it is pretty straightforward legislation, pretty clear-cut, albeit very important, so given the bill briefing we were not really expecting anything from the stakeholders to set off any alarm bells there, and in that minor clarification we were able to do that.

I do want to, in the time left, just put on record my thanks firstly to Nick Parry from the minister's office. I hope I have got all the names right because, as I say, we had two bill briefings back to back from department officers and there were a couple of different officers from different sections to deal with the two bills we had. My apologies if I leave any of them out. Mr Nick Parry, Holli Smith, Lisa Opray, Barbara Blake and Solly Marshall-Radcliffe – I think they were all the people. They have got another bill coming in. We are carrying the legislative agenda – the minister has got two bills this week and another one next week. I say that in a genuine way, and I say that every time I do get up and speak on a bill. The process of being able to contact the minister's office, get a speedy bill briefing organised, get a bill briefing and invite any members from our side to have points clarified and raised allows us to form a view and to get back in here for the smooth running of the house. I do genuinely put my thanks to Nick, Holli, Lisa, Barbara and Solly for the efforts and advice and feedback that we got there to get those questions answered.

As I said at the outset, we are supporting the bill. Without re-emphasising the points, just to go over it again, simply put, obviously our energy safety legislation was designed to suit a system that is changing very rapidly. It was designed for that system where you had a number of large centralised generators delivering power to local load centres. It did not account for new technologies like solar, wind and batteries at the utility scale and rooftop scale. This aims at ensuring that renewable generators – solar, wind farms et cetera – are treated in exactly the same way that traditional energy companies are so that they have the same duties and obligations in terms of safety that the traditional energy companies do.

In summary, the bill is about modernising the safety framework around the delivery of energy. The bill ensures that renewable generators such as solar and wind farms are treated in the same way the traditional energy companies are so that they have the same duties and obligations in terms of safety that the traditional energy companies do. As such we are supporting the bill and have taken that position as the coalition. I look forward to hearing the contributions of other members of this house.

Paul EDBROOKE (Frankston) (17:28): I rise this afternoon to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. From the outset can I just say that it is great to hear that the opposition will not be opposing this very important bill. I also thank the minister, the department and the minister's staff. We have got Holli and we have got Molly as well. It was Holli that taught me all about heat pumps a few weeks ago, so thank you for that. They are all over their brief, that is for sure.

This bill will modernise Victoria's energy safety legislative framework to improve community and worker safety and create more effective and targeted regulation of new and emerging safety risks that are posed by emerging technologies as the state undertakes a rapid energy transition to renewables. This is part of a global shift away from fossil fuel to achieve the goals set by the Paris climate agreement of seeking to limit the average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Global energy systems are phasing out fossil fuels as the dominant energy source. These reforms will strengthen the safety compliance network by increasing obligations for electricity and gas companies, including owners and operators. Basically, much like we see with the gig economy, we are having to catch up in a legislative framework way.

This legislation gives Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) the legislative power to compel owners and operators of critical and complex installations, such as batteries, to reduce safety risks prior to energising their infrastructure, and it ensures that newer technologies like batteries, wind farms and solar farms are held to the same standards as existing generation network technologies. The bill will also provide Energy Safe Victoria with an enhanced enforcement toolkit to effectively regulate the transforming energy sector, which has come a long way since 2014, when this government aspired to be outperforming the nation, as we are now, in this sector. The bill also, importantly, will help ensure

the safety of workers and communities as we continue with our journey and transition to a renewable energy future, and I know the member for Narracan thinks this is very important too.

As everyone in this chamber should well know, Victoria is leading with one of the fastest energy transitions in the world. We have had more than triple our share of renewables in power generation in just the last eight years. We have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs, reducing bills and giving them control over their energy. We held the Victorian renewable energy target option, the country's largest reverse auction on renewables. We have installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, and we have made Victoria the home of big batteries. Through these actions we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014 – and we have only just begun.

Having comfortably surpassed our 2020 renewable energy target of 20 per cent, we just increased our 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. We have set a 2035 target of 95 per cent, and this target will be backed by separate targets for offshore wind and energy storage as well. We will have at least 2 gigawatts of offshore by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and 9 gigawatts by 2040, and to support this increase in renewable capacity we will have at least 2.6 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts of battery storage by 2035. We have also brought forward our net zero emissions target from 2050 to 2045. That will require the transformation of our entire energy system, including transport and industry, but our energy safety legislation just has not kept pace. This is nothing short of the most fundamental technological transformation in our lifetimes. It is exciting. It means jobs, it means cleaner and cheaper energy, and it means cleaner air. But it also means that we need to maintain the safety of communities and workers, and our energy safety rules must keep pace with that technology. That is why we are here today.

This legislation does that by making commonsense amendments to Victoria's energy safety legislation. It aligns our energy safety obligations for renewable energy companies with the traditional companies and strengthens the investigative and enforcement powers of the independent safety regulator Energy Safe Victoria. We have had some recent incidents that have highlighted the urgency of these amendments. Over the past two decades the electricity sector has been replacing carbon-intensive generation with zero-carbon technologies. I think you would be living under a rock if you did not know that. The sector is obviously moving away from having a small number of large-scale facilities that have historically been owned and operated by a handful of companies – Engie would be one, down at Hazelwood – towards a more decentralised and widely distributed electricity generation industry.

Why do I mention Hazelwood? Because it is one that comes up quite often – that governments would be stopping private owners or closing down power stations. In reality these private owners have no choice. Stockholders and investors are just not investing in fossil fuels; it is a dirty word out there. Nations are already pressing ahead at a great rate of knots. One example would be Scotland, which is actually exporting electricity into Europe from its wind turbines. The exponential growth in these new technologies has exposed some critical gaps that we need to actually attend to. This legislation provides a crucial safeguard for consumer protections and confidence by ensuring the safe delivery and regulation of these new technologies.

The bill also makes amendments to the Electricity Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005 to increase civil penalties up to sixfold from previous amounts. This is really important when you consider, for example, in 2018 the Terang and Garvoc fires, which were caused by powerlines, destroyed 6000 hectares of land and property and were found to be caused by Powercor. The fine imposed by the court was \$130,000. That does not meet community expectations.

It is not all about money, though. We have had to deal with private energy provider issues before and make reforms to make sure disasters did not happen again. The largest example of that would be the privately owned systems that were tragically highlighted, I think, in the Victorian bushfires on 7 February 2009, which claimed 173 lives and destroyed thousands of homes. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission found that five of the 11 major fires that began that day were caused by

failed electricity assets. Among those fires was the one at Kilmore East in which 119 people died, and that was caused by several privatised power assets. The current penalties do not align with the potential implications to life, property and the environment that may result from failing to fulfil safety obligations. Low penalties potentially incentivise business to take safety risks as well.

The Andrews Labor government is unapologetic about our energy safety regime. Victoria's robust energy safety framework is proactively updated to ensure that we continue to keep workers and our community safe. There are inherent risks with all electrical infrastructure, but these risks are mitigated through appropriate energy safety rules. Following the fire that occurred at the Victorian Big Battery in 2021 during testing, ESV was given control of the site and immediately made recommendations to the government. We always endeavour to implement recommendations made by our state energy safety regulator. As I have said, safety is non-negotiable to this government.

At the election we committed to a comprehensive review of energy safety legislation for the long term, but these proposed reforms are a good first step, representing a range of quick wins here today. As we continue the transition to renewable energy, we will maintain our proactive approach to safety, and that is why we need this bill. Previous governments were able to privatise the ownership of essential community infrastructure such as electricity generation and distribution assets, but we will never be able to privatise the risk, responsibility or consequences of poor private sector maintenance, investment or safety on our community.

In saying that, that is why I am so happy that we are bringing back the SEC. Born and bred in the valley, the SEC means we can focus on not just increasing the safety of new energy but the impact it has on the cost of living, and of course that has been a huge focus of this government. We would not like anyone out there today to take it on themselves to tell people that this legislation might be a huge impost on people in our community. We want to assure Victorians that analysis by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Better Regulation Victoria indicates the proposed change to the safety framework is unlikely to significantly impact costs. The total financial impact across the entire sector is anticipated to be less than \$1 million per year. That is about \$1 per bill in current cost to consumers.

We are absolutely leading the nation when it comes to climate action. We are decarbonising at the fastest rate in the country, and since this government was elected in 2014, we have cut emissions by more than any other state. We have the strongest climate change legislation in the country, and Victorians voted overwhelmingly for the next steps in our ambitious plan. Our targets of 75 to 80 per cent reduction by 2035 and net zero by 2045 align Victoria with the Paris goals of limiting global warming to 1.5°degrees Celsius. We do not just talk about climate change; we are delivering on it with policies like this. I heartily commend this bill to the house.

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (17:39): As the member for Croydon indicated, we are supportive of this bill and actually in support of renewables and the transition to renewables more broadly in a practical and commonsense way so we can not only keep the lights on and cook a good stir-fry but so our farms and factories can keep doing what they do best – that is, manufacturing and producing food for not only the rest of the state and the rest of the country but indeed the rest of the world. I assure you that currently sun and wind just do not do that. Energy systems obviously need to be safe, they need to be sustainable but they also need to be reliable, and we need to remember that.

I do thank the member for Croydon for a very comprehensive bill briefing and summary on the changes that we are debating in this place today. This bill seeks to amend the energy safety compliance framework in a rapidly changing landscape, and it is evolving very quickly, so this bill will modernise that for that very quickly evolving space.

This bill seeks to ensure that renewable energy companies are meeting the same compliance requirements as traditional electricity operators and companies, and this topic is vitally important to the entire electorate of Mildura. With the explosion of renewable energy investment right across the

region, companies have recognised and they have taken advantage of the abundant sunlight that we have in our region and the incredible amount of wind, particularly through the spring and summer months, and they are really harnessing that, taking advantage of it, with solar farms on massive scales being developed. That also has an enormous impact on local economies not only with the creation of jobs while those farms are being constructed but also with the financial injection into small towns such as Wemen, Robinvale and Bannerton, those small communities where these solar farms have been constructed. That has huge economic value as well as obviously the benefit for renewable energy while they are in those locations building those farms.

Let us hope, though, that this also means that companies are rolling out the projects with regard to renewable transmission lines, because once we have those farms constructed in the regions, we have got to be able to get that power everywhere else. We need to be able to transmit all of that power that is generated through these solar and wind farms, so let us talk about the infrastructure to do that, like the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West project. People in particularly the south of my electorate are very concerned about the VNI West project after having what they thought was the preferred option for the new 500-kilovolt transmission lines changed without consultation. Imagine how confused they were to learn that all of a sudden there was a new option, option 5, and be told that that was now the preferred option. There were a few community meetings that were held but poorly advertised, and we have worked with the market operator around that.

Submissions were called for as well, and submissions were received. One very interesting one was from Professor Bruce Mountain and Simon Bartlett AM, who submitted a very detailed document outlining a few important points. With that submission, a report says that if developed, VNI:

... will be the biggest single expense in the Victorian transmission system in more than 50 years and the biggest mistake in transmission planning in living memory.

The Victorian Government has used its legislative powers to make the Consultation Report the last step in the regulatory approval process.

Simon Bartlett is not just a guy that has decided to write a submission. He was previously a member of the national electricity market's reliability panel and a professor of electrical engineering and chief operating officer of Powerlink. Professor Mountain is the director of the Victoria Energy Policy Centre at Victoria University. They did submit this very detailed critique of the Australian Energy Market Operator consultation report; they have been working very closely with the community from Charlton, Donald, St Arnaud, up through Kerang, Horsham and right through the region; they have attended many meetings and spoken with the community at length; and they did conclude that the development would be, as they state, a monumental mistake. They say, and there are five key points, that it would:

Drastically increase Victoria's susceptibility to state-wide blackouts through exposure to natural disasters and ... bushfire risk –

and I am paraphrasing here, just to save time –

Double transmission charges in Victoria and lay the foundation for further transmission developments that together will triple transmission charges in Victoria.

Force new renewable generation along the ... VNI route where AEMO predicts congestion which will mean that up to 50% of the renewable generation built along that corridor will be wasted through spills as a result of transmission congestion.

It all gets very, very technical, but in the end it was reported by Mr Bartlett and Professor Mountain that there could be far more elegant solutions to being able to transmit all of the renewable energy from the region's solar farms and wind farms in a much more cost-effective way and a much more energy-efficient way than the new proposed 500-kilovolt lines that are sought through VNI West.

The community are still fighting for consultation. They are in constant contact with all of their local members, myself included and our federal member, and working for the detail that they need, because we all know that the devil is usually in the detail when it comes to these matters. I have stood with these communities, like I said. I have held informal meetings, and although everyone agrees that a

shift to renewables is needed, at what expense is that needed? We also need to remember that compliance with safety should also mean compliance on new infrastructure builds. Community consultation should also be a part of that.

Like I said, I have stood with these communities, I have talked to them at length and I text them often. These are communities not just in my electorate but also in a neighbouring electorate. The young farmers in St Arnaud have been very vocal about this. The Victorian Farmers Federation branches in Charlton and Coonooer Bridge have been very vocal about it, and they have a wind farm there as well. We obviously know that the transmission lines are needed to get all of that energy into the grid, but at what cost? So when we talk about electricity safety and the communities that electricity will be generated in as we transition to renewables, we need to remember them and not disregard those communities who – and I bang on about this all the time, but I will remind everyone once again – are producing our food and fibre, your food and fibre. They should be shown the same, if not more, respect than the communities they are producing it for, because without them we do not eat and we are not clothed. We are broadly in support of this bill, but the compliance element also needs to extend to those companies to make sure that they are consulting with communities in the proper way.

Nick STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (17:48): It is indeed a pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. Although it is a fairly narrow bill, a very technical bill, it does point to a larger agenda of the Andrews Labor government, and that is in terms of increasing the proportion of renewable energy in this state and bringing down greenhouse gas emissions.

It is equally a pleasure to follow the member for Mildura in this debate. One thing I would say is renewable energy is nothing to be afraid of – absolutely nothing to be afraid of. You know, we remember the Gillard years and the debate around the carbon tax and those ugly protests against the carbon tax and the scaremongering that we saw – things like the Sunday roast is going to cost \$100 if the Gillard government introduces a carbon tax. Now we are hearing that we might not be able to cook a stir-fry at home if we go down this track. But do not worry, member for Mildura, there will be plenty of stir-fries because when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining, we are investing in storage. We actually have storage targets, which I am going to come to in a moment. Forget about cooking a stir-fry at home; you could open a restaurant in Mildura to sell stir-fries. There will be plenty of renewable energy powering our state. In fact, this is actually the fastest transition in our country.

Over the past five years renewable energy in Victoria has doubled. Renewable energy has doubled, and that is a good thing, because we are all about reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. The energy sector accounts for roughly around half of Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions, and that is why we have these ambitious targets when it comes to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, where our target is net zero by 2045. When it comes to our renewable energy targets we have an equally ambitious agenda. We had an agenda of 25 per cent by 2020, which we have already achieved, but we have updated these renewable energy targets, which are now 65 per cent by 2030 and 95 per cent by 2035, and in addition to that – I said I would come to the storage targets – at least 2.6 gigawatts of energy storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035.

We can do this because this government is bringing back the State Electricity Commission, which those opposite privatised in the 1990s. They privatised it in the 1990s. People lost their jobs. These multinational companies made billions upon billions of dollars, and what have Victorians got to show for it? Higher prices and ageing infrastructure. Well, we are taking a far different approach. We are investing in renewable energy, and we are doing it at such a fast pace that we need to ensure that we are doing it in a safe way and that we are adapting energy safety regulations and the energy safety framework in this state to fit in with this new energy landscape of renewable energy. As with all new technologies, they come with new risks and risks that we must protect against to keep our energy transition going as we strive to reach the targets I just spoke about. This bill provides Energy Safe Victoria with an enhanced enforcement toolkit to effectively regulate the transforming energy sector. It introduces reforms that strengthen safety compliance through obligations for electricity and gas

companies, including owners and operators; it gives Energy Safe Victoria power to compel owners and operators of installations, such as batteries, to reduce safety risks prior to switching them on; and it ensures newer technologies, like batteries, wind farms and solar farms, are held to the same safety standards as existing technologies.

Certainly when you consider our Solar Homes program, a very successful program – in fact I was with the Premier and the minister back in 2018, before the 2018 election, when that was announced. We were in the home of a family in Moorabbin announcing the Solar Homes program, and since that time I think around a quarter of a million households in Victoria have actually installed solar panels under the Solar Homes program, a massive achievement. It is not just about reducing our emissions, it is about cost of living, because we know that renewable energy is the cheapest form of energy. Victorians understand that. Not everybody on the opposition benches yet understands that, but this really does have to be about science over ideology, and that is certainly what this government is about. But in terms of –

Will Fowles interjected.

Nick STAIKOS: Science over idiocy, that is exactly right, member for Ringwood.

But on solar homes, because we were suddenly installing solar panels on so many more roofs on so many more households, safety was a prime consideration, and in my electorate we have Holmesglen TAFE's Moorabbin campus. I will call it solar central. It is where many of our solar workers receive their training. In fact at Holmesglen a working safely in the solar industry course was developed, which is now, as I understand it, offered statewide. It is a free course, and it is the course that all of our workers on the Solar Homes program must complete prior to commencing their work. This government, throughout this renewable energy revolution, has always had the safety of workers and the safety of the community at the forefront of its agenda.

These are all very, very important initiatives, but when we think about bringing back the SEC, again it is about investing in renewable energy to bring our greenhouse gas emissions down and investing in ensuring that we keep our energy bills down as well. The recent budget that the government handed down included funding to kickstart the revival of the SEC, and at the state election campaign we committed \$1 billion towards delivering 4.5 gigawatts of power through renewable energy and storage projects. That is the equivalent replacement of coal-fired power station Loy Yang A, which is set to close in 2035. It is just something that makes sense. It makes sense that we would invest in the cleanest and cheapest form of energy. That is exactly what this government is doing. We have ambitious renewable energy targets, which we are meeting, and we have ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, which we are also handsomely satisfying, and that is something that we are very proud of.

This government has a big, bold vision for Victoria. We are ambitious for Victoria, and renewable energy and green technologies are the future. They also create thousands upon thousands of jobs and opportunities for Victorians. That is what we are all about. We are going at a fast pace, investing in renewable energy, investing in energy storage and bringing back the SEC, and as we are keeping up this pace and making these investments we also need to ensure that we are doing it in the safest way possible. This is what this bill is all about. I commend it to the house and I wish it a speedy passage.

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:57): I am rising this afternoon to contribute to the bill before us, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. Anything that we can do as a state to make the inherently dangerous commodity of energy safer is a good thing. Whether it is electricity transmission and generation or whether it is gas development, transmission and usage – whatever it is – it is important that we keep our communities safe. The one thing that we know about the renewable energy transition that Victoria is undergoing at the moment is that we are actually spreading this risk much more comprehensively right across the state.

If I can talk about the wonderful seat of Polwarth for a moment in terms of its contribution to Victoria's energy rollout, we have both plentiful natural gas supplies and plentiful wind supplies. We have got solar installations and we have got battery installations – the whole lot of it can be seen in my electorate. Of course when your community starts living with these potentially dangerous installations, then risks and danger can arise, and it is important that government has the necessary legislation and programs in place to protect people.

Why is this important? Well, one of our chamber colleagues here earlier, the member for Frankston, talked about the need for corporate responsibility. He talked about the effects of the fires down in my patch, the Garvoc fires and the Terang fires, and he spoke about the inadequacy of this current government's penalties, where literally millions and millions of dollars of private assets and livestock were lost in the St Patrick's Day fires and yet only a very small fine was issued to the power company involved. That does not meet community standards; I agree with the member for Frankston about that.

But let us talk about where we are at now with this. We are spreading this generation of electricity, this generation of energy, which is inherently dangerous. It has also coincided with a very benign weather pattern that we have had now for about the last four or five years, particularly in western Victoria. Really it was back in 2015, 2016 when we had our last quite bad fire period in that area, and it has been pretty benign since.

We have had an enormous growth in renewable infrastructure. As we speak now, I have just looked on the national electricity market site, and in my area, nearby we have got the largest wind farm. It is soon to be surpassed by Rokewood and Golden Plains. But the Macarthur wind farm, sitting here right now, has zero production midweek. Right at the point of the day when people are coming home and using energy and equipment it is zero. Mount Gellibrand, which I can see from my bedroom windows, has zero production as we speak now. Dundonnell, which I can see on a clear day across the various western Victorian lakes, has zero production right now. And of course Mortlake South has only just, after three years, been connected to the grid, and it is producing zero.

So today we are actually using gas. We are using gas taken from my electorate. It is being pumped up to Mortlake, and it is actually the Mortlake gas peaking plant that is supplying good clean energy in western Victoria right now, not any of the billions of dollars that we have spent on wind farms. They are all sitting on zero, which is quite ironic. We actually need it right now. It is a cold, miserable day, and all those houses that are only going to have electricity will be relying on gas to keep that electricity going for them on a day like today. Then we can look at the Newport power station. It is going flat out right now because the wind is not actually working today and is providing zero energy into the grid. We need complex levels of electricity transmission.

We can also cite, in my electorate, two major transmission line failures just in the last three years. The minister and others will be familiar with the fact that the Salt Creek wind farm powerline arms collapsed. They fell down and caused quite a bit of destruction in a fairly built-up part of the rural landscape. Of course early in 2020 a windstorm came through and brought the biggest powerline in the state crashing down all over the road, just missing cars, and knocked out the main transmission line that so much of our renewable energy will be relying upon. We have not really had the necessary investigations into both those collapses, and I would hope that this legislation will in fact feed into the necessary understandings that we need both as a community and as an industry to make sure that these potentially very catastrophic events do not happen again and certainly do not happen any time soon.

We also, in preparing for this legislation, understand that it does not necessarily deal with other types of accidents that do not actually involve the transmission of energy, whether it is gas or electricity, and that might be other catastrophic failures that occur in the production of energy. We have seen at the Dundonnell wind farm, for example, the propellers just fall off the turbines. One of the advantages of that is that in a paddock you might not have people under them. But farms are active and dynamic workplaces, and the fact of a big, 80-metre-long propeller coming flying through the air and landing on top of your head is probably not a good thing. So it is probably important that this type of legislation

would deal with that. We are also familiar with hoses blowing hydraulic oil and other critical incidents that may form something that will cause a great deal of harm not only to a community and to individuals but to the energy system as a whole.

Another great concern that has come about, and there has not been the research or understanding, because of the benign weather I spoke about earlier, is that modern day western Victorian firefighting relies incredibly on the use of air support, whether it is fixed-wing or helicopter support. Right throughout our region we will require good firefighting skills and expertise from aerial pursuits. We have not actually yet had a full investigation to make sure that these firefighting methods will not be hindered by the use of a growing renewable energy industry, whether it is the actual structures themselves or the transmission infrastructure that is required.

We welcome any reviews of this, but the one thing I think that really sits in the back of the minds of so many people in my electorate and western Victoria generally is some of the reviews that this government has overseen. For example, the Auditor-General's report back in October 2020 spoke about the fact that there is so much known about the cause of fires, particularly with electrical infrastructure, and one of the most catastrophic statistics out of that is that approximately 80 per cent of all property and life lost in bushfires in Victoria since the 1940s has been caused by electrical installation failures. Those electrical installation failures have occurred in particular weather patterns and at particular times of year. So essentially your hot north wind fire is the one when a power pole comes down and causes catastrophic problems. We have long identified the simplest solution. It is putting power underground; it is insulating wires. Referring again to the member for Frankston's point about the inadequacy of the way we perhaps dealt with Powercor after the St Patrick's Day fire, that same company went and installed another 6 kilometres of bare wire in the middle of the Otway Ranges, the home of the worst parts of the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983. So only weeks after being chastised very, very loosely with a warm lettuce from this government and a \$130,000 fine, they still went about installing the types of infrastructure that caused this fire.

I would hope that in any review process or legislation that this government brings about to make companies more responsible about the way they expand and grow the renewable energy resource, they will also take into account the need to make sure that we are not saying one thing on one hand and doing the complete opposite on the other. Unfortunately there is more than enough evidence. We talk a lot in this chamber about what we are doing with energy and how we are growing renewable energy, but we are not actually matching that on the ground and in practice in the communities that care. So I support this legislation to the extent that it is going to start bringing into focus the need for all the elements of the changed energy system to be more cognisant of communities and safer in operation, and we only hope that this will grow and develop in a way that truly keeps all Victorians safe in their homes and on their farms.

Chris COUZENS (Geelong) (18:07): I am pleased to rise to contribute to the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. Can I start by thanking the minister and her team for their significant work on this bill – and not just on this bill but on all issues around climate change and the environment and for listening to the people of Victoria, because that is what they want. Only today in this place we heard about the pathway set by the Honourable Tom Roper and the significance of his work in those early days, and I think our ministers in this government are continuing that work and will leave a legacy in this state.

I think the issues around climate change and environment are huge in my local community. People are talking about them all the time and about what needs to happen to make significant change. They most definitely support what this government is doing – the different legislation that we have brought forward in this place and the different programs and projects that we have put forward to look after our environment but also to address the issues around climate change. We have only got to look at what is happening in Europe and in the US at the moment with the extreme heat and the predictions of that maybe not being as bad but coming into our next summer and those going forward. The community is really concerned about these matters.

We also heard last week reports in Geelong that we are looking at a 0.8-metre sea level rise, which will impact on communities across our region, in particular the Bellarine. This is really concerning for communities like Geelong. We are hearing these reports; people are concerned about what this means for their future and for their children going forward. To have this significant legislation and all the other pieces of legislation that we have brought into this place to really address those issues is really important, and I do commend the minister and her team for the work that they have done on this.

The bill will modernise Victoria's energy safety legislative framework to improve community and worker safety. It will create more effective and targeted regulation of new and emerging safety risks that are posed by emerging technologies as the state undertakes a rapid transition to renewable energy. The reforms will strengthen the safety compliance framework by increasing obligations for electricity and gas companies, including owners and operators. This legislation gives ESV legislative power to compel owners and operators of critical and complex installations, such as batteries, to reduce safety risks prior to energisation. This bill ensures newer technologies, like batteries, wind farms and solar farms, are held to the same standards as existing generation and network technologies. They will also provide Energy Safe Victoria with an enhanced enforcement toolkit to effectively regulate the transforming energy sector.

At the election we committed to a comprehensive review of energy safety legislation for the long term, but these proposed reforms are a good step representing a range of quick wins. This bill will help ensure the safety of workers and communities as we continue with our journey and transition to a renewable energy future. This also is about jobs. It is about skills and training leading to those jobs that we need going forward. It is important for our communities. We have to have people with those skills, and the investments we have made in the training and skills area are significant. I understand that Federation Uni in Ballarat have received funding from this government for the wind farm generation and skilling up, providing the courses needed to do that. Communities are benefiting not only from the climate and environment side of things but also in jobs and skills and training, and young people are looking to those jobs as being opportunities for their careers in the future, which is really exciting.

Of course Victoria is leading the way as one of the fastest energy transitions in the world. We have more than tripled the share of renewables in power generation in just eight years. We have helped nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs, reducing bills and giving them control over their energy. This is making a huge difference for so many people. I know in my community of Geelong people are taking up the option of having solar panels put on their roof because not only do they want to reduce their bills but they want to do something towards protecting our climate. Many people are now talking about what the next step is, what else we can do to address climate change in our local communities, and the roof panels are really important.

We held the Victorian renewable energy target auction, the country's largest reverse auction for renewables. We have installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, and made Victoria the home of the big batteries. Through these actions we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by more than any other state in Australia since 2014, and we have only just begun. Having comfortably surpassed our 2020 renewable energy target of 20 per cent, we increased our 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent. We have set a 2035 target of 95 per cent. This target will be backed by separate targets for offshore wind and energy storage. We will have at least 2 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and now 9 gigawatts by 2040. To support this increase in renewable capacity we will have at least 2.6 gigawatts of storage capacity by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. We have brought forward our net zero emissions target from 2050 to 2045, which will require the transformation of our entire energy system, including transport and industry, but our energy safety legislation has not kept pace.

This is nothing short of the most fundamental technological transformation of our lifetimes. It is exciting. It means more jobs, cheaper energy and cleaner air, which is exactly what all our communities want. But to ensure that the safety of workers and communities is maintained, our energy safety rules must keep pace with the technology. This legislation does that by making commonsense

amendments to Victoria's energy safety legislation. The amendments will align the energy safety obligations of renewable energy companies with those of traditional companies and strengthen the investigative and enforcement powers of the independent safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria. Recent incidents highlight the urgency of these amendments. Two serious fires in 2021 at the Victorian Big Battery and the Cohuna solar farm highlighted the limitations that Energy Safe Victoria has in regulating facilities such as solar farms and battery installations. ESV was unable to intervene or regulate these sites until the fires had occurred.

Over the past two decades the electricity sector has been replacing carbon-intensive generation with zero-carbon technologies. The sector is moving away from having a small number of large-scale facilities that have historically been owned and operated by a handful of companies towards a more decentralised and widely distributed electricity generation industry. The current framework was originally developed based on a small number of large, regulated entities in the 1990s and did not factor in possible uptake and investment in renewable energies or the technological diversity that has emerged in both utility and residential-scale installations. It is critical to safeguard consumer protections and confidence by ensuring the safe delivery and regulation of these new technologies. I commend this bill to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:17): I rise to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. I am glad that the Minister for Energy and Resources is in the chamber today, because energy transition, energy security and energy affordability and reliability are one of the key issues – it is something we must get right. We have got too many Victorians struggling to keep the lights on and struggling to pay their energy bills. We have got to do it. We have got to transition sensibly. We have got to do this responsibly, and we have got to actually do it with the experts, because one of the things that many experts say is that if you rush too quickly, the consequences are absolutely severe. I want to commend the great work that Alan Finkel has done in his book *Powering Up*. If you ever want a road map for how we go about doing these things, you should listen to Dr Alan Finkel, a former chief scientist of Australia, who had a role on the government's SEC until he stepped down from that. He said in his book:

It won't be easy getting to zero ...

...

It will take mining on a massive scale to extract the minerals needed for batteries and solar panels. It will take giant factories to build the parts for towering wind turbines. It will take untold miles of high-voltage transmission lines to carry the electricity to power the mines and factories and the 24-hour buzz of civilisation.

It will take engagement with and support for affected communities; financing at unprecedented scale; strategic government policies that convert targets into actions.

The interesting thing he says is:

Between 1990 and 2021 the behemoth known as global civilisation only reduced its fossil-fuel diet from 87% to 83% –

From 1990 to 2021 – that is 31 years – we went from 87 per cent to 83 per cent. He said:

We shaved off 4% in the last 30 years. In the next 30 we need to shave off 83%.

That is huge. That does not mean we should not be trying and we should not be working, but we have got to do it in a planned manner, because if we do not, we are all going to end up paying the price.

We have also got to ensure that the private sector are a major contributor in all of this, and we have got to ensure that we bring them to the table and utilise their R and D to look at innovation and different ways of doing things, because you cannot expect that we just one day flick off coal, which is gone – it is finished; there is no future for coal. We need to ensure that when turning off coal everything else can plug and play and we are able to keep the lights on and do it in an affordable way. This is one of the things that Alan Finkel also says:

Coal-fired plants have no future but shutting them down before the firmed solar and wind generation plants are built would risk extended electricity blackouts. That would not just be a disaster for modern life; it risks rescinding the social licence for moving as fast as we can to net zero.

These are some of the real issues. They are big issues. One of the things that Alan Finkel has been a strong proponent for is the use of gas firming and the use of gas peaking. He understands that gas is an important transition fuel. Natural gas is something that you should not be burning each and every day. But what you can do is that when you need it, it should be there. To do that it has got to be part of that mix, because you cannot go from zero to hero overnight and not expect there to be real issues with all of that.

We really, really are concerned with the way the government is managing this. The government has effectively said to the private sector, 'We're going to shut you out. We're going to put you to one side. We're going to run the show. We're going to create this big monster called the SEC. We're going to invest in things. We're going to ensure that we know who are winners and who are losers, and we're going to actually run the show.' Ultimately they are going to decide how we are going to get to net zero without a plan. We are seeing that already have huge disastrous effects. We have got a lot of wind and a lot of solar throughout Victoria that is not connected back to the grid. One of the big issues, again that Dr Finkel talks about, is actually how we connect up those pipes. How do we connect them up? It is the connectivity cost of laying down the lines but also the actual cost of compensation for many of those landowners to put the powerlines in to connect up much of the solar and the wind, which still does not have the connectivity piece. As I have said many times, it is a bit like buying a Ferrari or the best electric vehicle that you can possibly have but not having the roads to run it on. You have got to be able to have the lines to be able to run the power down and through. Again, without a plan what we have had is a lot of investment – lots of big, grand projects are up and running – but not the connectivity that goes with it. That is why things like the Latrobe Valley are great opportunities for some of this, because you have already got the connectivity there and you have already got the pipelines to be able to connect things back. We should be exploring and looking at different ways to do that.

This particular bill talks a lot about safety, and safety is a really key important part of all of this. You have got to do it right. You have got to do it in a safe way, and you have got to ensure that whatever the transition is, we do that in such a way. I think we are still a fair way away in terms of understanding, when you are sending up literally farms of batteries, what you will need to do in terms of security and managing some of that. Some of the disposal of that, at the end of life, we still have not got that right in terms of how we are disposing of a lot of these new materials as they are coming into the market. It is a really important part of the safety. They are an important part of the energy mix. Also we need to be looking at things like hydrogen, what role hydrogen plays in terms of green hydrogen, which can be created by renewables. What role there will be for hydrogen as it comes into the market is an important piece with all of this as well.

The minister on many, many occasions has spoken about prices coming down. In fact with the recent announcement on the banning of gas they said there will be savings of \$2000 or \$1000. We have heard this many, many times before from the minister. I have not met anyone in the state that has actually seen their power bills come down – not anyone. We are seeing that for most people their power bills have doubled. We have heard of situations of on average a 25 per cent increase just recently in electricity bills. It is probably the first time I think we have ever seen this in Victoria, where people that have not actually even cared much before are really caring, really noticing and are having to make conscious decisions about what they do.

That might not be a huge issue for some, but it is very much a huge issue for those that can least afford it, the disadvantaged. We have heard many people talk about issues in terms of the housing crisis and homelessness; these are basic services that we need to ensure. Energy is an essential service. We have got to have it available, we have got to make it reliable and we have got to make it affordable. We do not have it affordable at the moment. There is no plan to make it affordable. And sure, once we are in a position where we have got renewable energy running 24/7, we have got the technology to cope with

that and we have got the connectivity that actually connects it all up, then I am sure things will change. But we are not there yet, and we have got to use the best experts we can, like Dr Alan Finkel, to actually provide us the pathway to get there.

We have also got to ensure that we are working with stakeholders in the private sector that have experience and that are willing to invest. We have no manufacturing capability here in Victoria. We have potential, but we are not actually using that capability here in Victoria the way we should be. We should have not just renewable hubs for using renewable energy but renewable hubs for manufacturing technology as well. And it is not just competing on the big stuff, like solar panels and everything else, which we will not be able to compete on with the likes of India and China and other places; there are other value-added parts of the technology where we can. That is where we should be.

We have got great universities that are doing fantastic things. Swinburne years ago invented some solar paint, which is an add-on for what solar panels could be used for. That technology has been around for a while. That should be adapted, created and commercialised. There are great opportunities that we should be investing in here in Victoria. We have got to see how that fits in to the overall market, but to do that we need confidence. We need the government to actually provide that confidence, and we need competition. The government does not want competition here in Victoria, and that is the real issue with the fact that the SEC is a dud plan. It is going to cost Victorians, and that is why a lot of the private sector is going elsewhere, and ultimately Victorians are going to end up paying the price for more electricity prices.

Will FOWLES (Ringwood) (18:27): The member for Caulfield has made a range of very, very sweeping statements in relation to the SEC in his contribution. I did want to take just a moment to address some of those. He suggests that the private sector will be going elsewhere as a result of the SEC being reintroduced in Victoria; I think in fact the opposite is true. There are these great partnership opportunities now. We have never said that the SEC will be an entirely government-owned or government-run affair. It is an independent entity and is only going to be majority owned by the government, and that gives us the opportunity to partner up with the private sector on a whole range of technologies. We know that this transition is happening, we know that it is happening quickly, and we know that there is a strong role for government as a partner and as a lead investor to make sure that the transition happens in a way that ultimately benefits the climate but benefits Victorians in their capacity as consumers.

Whilst the member for Caulfield is fond of making very, very broad generalisations about what the SEC may or may not be, the lived reality will be different. It is very easy for the other side of the chamber to just chip away at government policy, saying this will not work and that will not work. I mean, those opposite were pretty fond of saying the Metro Tunnel would never happen and various other things would never happen, and of course they are all happening. It is very easy to say things will not occur, and then by the time these very large and complicated things are rolled out, people have forgotten exactly how vocal the naysayers perhaps were at the start of the process. But the SEC policy is good policy. It is policy that was endorsed by Victorians.

The member for Caulfield of course snubs his nose at all those Victorians who so resoundingly endorsed this policy at the last election, an election that was won comprehensively by those on this side of the chamber, as evidenced by our numbers stretching all the way around the corner there. I think it is churlish at best to be saying that Victorians got it wrong in relation to the SEC and that the government has got it wrong in relation to the SEC. We are in the early stages of the rollout of what will be an outstanding partner for good. The SEC will help us deliver on our renewable energy targets, help us deliver on our carbon emission targets and help ultimately to put power back in the hands of Victorians.

This is the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. It is ultimately a bill that reflects the maturing state of the renewable energy industry, and it is ultimately about an industry that is coming into adulthood. So when you run an adult government and you have maturing industries, you

need to make sure that you have a legislative framework that adequately captures both the nature of the changes in the sector but also make sure that the regulatory environment is fit for purpose, and that is simply what this bill seeks to do. I am pleased of course that the opposition are supporting the bill but amused by the fact that they see it as an opportunity to take a swing on a whole bunch of frankly entirely unrelated matters.

What does the bill do? It is about reforms that are going to strengthen the safety compliance framework by increasing obligations for electricity and gas companies, including owners and operators. It effectively says that the obligations that currently run if you are a brown coal-fired generator or a gas-fired generator, that level of safety and compliance, will also apply if you are a solar generator or a wind generator, if you are running a storage facility, if you are involved in work connecting those things to the grid or otherwise – that we have a safety regime that reflects the level of risk, not a safety regime that simply reflects the age of the underlying technology. That is an appropriate response, that is a smart response, and I am very grateful to the minister that is at the table, the Minister for Energy and Resources, for bringing this bill to the house.

We are in the middle of a global shift away from fossil fuels, and the member for Caulfield quoted Alan Finkel, who I had the pleasure of working with at a business called Better Place a number of years ago. We are in a global shift away from fossil fuel, and the targets that the Victorian government have set have been exceeded again and again and again as we make this transition in this jurisdiction faster than almost any other jurisdiction right around the globe.

We need to limit global warming. We can already see the very real consequences of global warming. There are some frankly frightening numbers coming out about the polar ice cap melting at the moment that I think are going to put the global climate under some pretty serious pressure. We on this side of the chamber have been absolutely consistent on our support of taking action on these matters and making sure that it is meaningful. No-one on this side of the house has engaged in doublespeak around climate change. That cannot be said for others. We have been absolutely consistent that we need to set good targets – aggressive targets but achievable targets – and we have done that, and then we have gone and exceeded them. We have comfortably surpassed our 2020 RET – renewable energy target – of 20 per cent. We increased our 2030 renewable energy target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent and we have set a 2035 target of 95 per cent of Victoria's energy coming from renewables. Just think about that for a moment – in 12 years time 95 per cent of our electricity coming from renewables. That is a seismic shift in the space of a generation, and it will deliver not just on our carbon commitments but new jobs, new industries, new technologies, new IP, a better way of going about powering the state and ultimately the ability to do so more cheaply than if we were lagging behind the rest of the world on these things.

I am very excited about offshore wind. I know the minister is also pretty excited about offshore wind, with 2 gigawatts coming by 2032, 4 gigawatts by 2035 and by 2040 9 gigawatts – 9 gigawatts; it is a monstrous number – coming from offshore wind. We are very fortunate that Bass Strait is geographically not too far from some of our origin points in terms of the existing poles-and-wire infrastructure and that it is really, really, really windy, and that is a great opportunity for this state to be able to do more – to well surpass our own needs in terms of renewable energy but to assist in the very important national transition.

If you are going to go down this transition path, you have to ensure that the safety of workers and communities is maintained. The energy safety rules themselves have to keep pace with the changes in technology, and that is what this legislation does. It makes really sensible amendments to our energy safety legislation to align those obligations of the renewable energy companies with those of the traditional companies and, in addition to that, strengthen the enforcement powers, the investigative powers, of the independent authority, which is of course Energy Safe Victoria. We know that there have been instances where some of the participants in the newer parts of the energy economy have had safety issues. That only serves to highlight that as they become a bigger and bigger part of the grid

we need to make sure that the regulatory environment adequately addresses that to make sure that we are not allowing regulatory shortcuts to infect that new part of the power supply system.

It is probably amplified to some degree by the fact that we now have upstream and downstream movements of electrons, ultimately, and that is placing unique pressures on our poles and wires. You actually can have voltage spikes that were not contemplated in the original design because it was all: generate in the Latrobe Valley and disperse across the state. You have now got generators at the other end of those poles and wires, and there are some unique challenges that fall out of that. If you are going to be managing those challenges and managing them well, you need to have the right regulatory framework to do it.

Ultimately, as we go to this decentralised and widely distributed electricity generation model, we accept the absolute reality that that is where the investment markets are moving and that is where government policy is already taking us. Whilst we might have had at times a slower pace of change from national regulators around some of these issues, as the Victorian government, as the government of the most progressive jurisdiction in the nation and as the most carbon-responsive jurisdiction in the nation, we will continue to be a leader when it comes to making this transition work, making it sensible, making it stick and, most importantly, making it safe.

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (18:37): I rise to speak on the Energy Legislation Amendment (Energy Safety) Bill 2023. I do thank the member for Croydon, who has put in a monstrous amount of work to actually get information for us on the bill. The main purposes of the bill are to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 in relation to requirements for certain owners and operators of electrical installations, general duties of owners and operators of complex electrical installations and railways, modifications of supply networks and changes to safety management systems. For a long time in the power industry we have been fossil fuel based, so we have had all the safety requirements for a very long time. But as we change and transition to renewable energy we need to make sure that these amendments are coming through to provide safety for our workers and for us also.

Revised electricity safety management schemes and bushfire mitigation plans – we need to make sure they are changing and that we amend voluntary electricity safety management schemes for operators of complex electrical installations and the period within which things seized by enforcement officers must be returned. So if something goes wrong, they need to get in there quickly and do their due diligence to work out what has gone on. Legislation around preservation of serious electrical incident sites is going to change and diversify to many sites around the state. The acceptance and enforcement of written undertakings and the period within which proceedings for an offence against that act may be commenced will change. We also have penalties for offences against the act, and all these need to be changed as we diversify out of coal-fired industry and into renewables. We also need to amend the Gas Safety Act 1997 in relation to preservation of gas incident sites, modifications of facilities and changes to safety management systems. Provisions will change in relation to revised safety cases and the period within which things are seized, as I said before, and when the inspectors must return it.

Forever and a day the Latrobe Valley has been the hub and the heart of powering Victoria. Obviously we have Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B down there, Yallourn and also Hazelwood, which is now shut. For so long we have been able to contain where the power generation was going to be so the safety measures that are being introduced here are needed. We need to make certain that our workers are safe and that the actions to build the renewable infrastructure are scrutinised and we are doing the right thing. With Loy Yang and Yallourn, and to an extent when Hazelwood was there, the safety measures were controlled by the unions, obviously. That made sure that with time frames and when work needed to be done and shuts needed to be done they were carried out to a certain standard. These standards are changing as we move right across the state with renewable energy, whether it be in wind – both onshore and offshore – or solar panels and the solar hubs that we are going to have. Before the member for Caulfield was talking about hydrogen options and how all that ties in. We need to make sure that no matter where we are heading, safety is paramount for all of these.

We spoke about obviously the option of having massive batteries right around the state. In Hazelwood in my patch down in Morwell we have a massive battery that has just come online. With the infrastructure that is needed and the way that the workers need to go about building the batteries, we need to make sure that it is done in a regulatory fashion. With the actual time frame that the Andrews government has given us for the closing of the gas-fired power stations and transitioning into renewables, we need to make sure that, if we are pushing hard for the renewables to take over from fossil fuels, corners are not cut, because the time frame is hugely tight. If you talk to people that actually run the coal-fired power stations in the valley at the moment, that is their biggest concern – not that we are moving out of fossil fuels and coal-fired power stations, but the actual time frame and having enough energy supply available to the whole of Victoria, solely looking at renewables.

We need to have the infrastructure for the offshore wind farms being built – and they are massive. I have spoken about it before. One blade hangs on the end of the wind turbine, and when you put the second one on, it is higher than the Eureka Tower. They are massive infrastructure bits and pieces that need to be put in place, so we need to make sure that the safety of all our workers is not jeopardised and we are not cutting corners. These are things that need to be taken into account when we are doing this.

The Longford gas plant is further on, out of my electorate, but we talk about being able to utilise gas. One of the biggest concerns with the local industry down in the valley is that when a generator actually drops off, we have got to restart that generator. We are talking about being able to store the energy in a battery at a power station to be able to start up another generator. They have got grave concerns – these are the workers that work there – about whether enough power is going to be able to be held on site to actually start a generator. We need to make sure. This is a very, very tight time frame for moving into the renewable sector, and I am assuming that the time frame is not allowing for things to go wrong, because we are shutting the Yallourn power station at the end of this decade and then early in the next decade, in the 2030s, we are shutting Loy Yang. We are hoping that it all is going to work properly, because if we shut the power stations and stop gas, we are not going to have the supply to keep the lights on in Victoria. That is a concern that people are telling me about when we talk about the transition to the renewable sector.

The actual bill that we are talking about here is to make sure that everybody is safe, all our workers. We have got transition lines to build at the moment. With the current transmission lines that carry the power for the state, where we are not relying 100 per cent on electricity to power us, is the infrastructure on those poles good enough to carry the power into Melbourne and into our regional towns? Is there enough there to be able to do that? Or are we going to transition and all of a sudden it is going to be, 'Oh, do we need to upgrade the powerlines there?' We hope that it is actually all being thought out properly. I am sure they have done their due diligence, but it is that time line of transitioning that I keep coming back to. We just need to make sure that that is working properly.

But when we are doing all the works there, hopefully we will be manufacturing in the Latrobe Valley, because that is what we do down there in the power industry. We make stuff for the power industry. So instead of having stuff brought in from overseas and made overseas, hopefully a majority of it can be made here in Victoria in my patch down in Morwell in the Latrobe Valley, because we have got the infrastructure there to do it, and we have got people there that can actually carry that out.

At the end of the day, with safety, no matter what happens we want our mums and dads that are going to work to make all this happen in a very tight period to be going home at night. We do not want accidents happening. This is why we are supporting the bill to go forward, because we need to make sure that no matter how we get there and in what time frame we get there, if it is a short time frame or, as we are all thinking, it is going to be an extended time frame, most of all it is a very, very safe time frame. We do not want anyone going to work to make sure we have got lights on here in the chamber and not going home at the end of the day.

As I said and the member for Caulfield said, we will be supporting the bill, and hopefully time frames and everything like that will be worked out at a sensible rate and we can put at ease the minds of the

general public that are asking those questions: 'Is it a very tight time frame? Will renewables be there when we shut the power stations?'

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (18:47): The member for Morwell said it correctly: when mums and dads go to work, we want them to come home. That is fundamental to this bill, and I appreciate those sentiments leading off into my own contribution, so thank you.

The community is committed to changing our energy system, and Labor is absolutely committed to doing that too in Victoria. Thousands of people in the community that I represent are already making that change. They have made the change: they have got electric vehicles, they have gone to solar, they have got batteries. This bill seeks to modernise Victoria's energy safety legislative framework. It is about improving community and it is about improving worker safety. The bill ensures that the new technologies that we are using today – batteries, wind farms, solar farms – those technologies of the future, have the same standards as existing generation and network technologies that are already in place.

Victoria is rapidly making this renewable energy transition. I am so pleased to see the Minister for Energy and Resources at the table here, who is driving forward a lot of this energy change. We have helped as a Labor government nearly a quarter of a million Victorian households install solar panels on their roofs. We have reduced their bills. We have made sure that they have got control over their own energy. In my own community we have had massive uptake of solar panels. In the community of Point Cook, where thousands are seeing the benefits of this every day, we have more than tripled the share of renewable energies across the state, and that has occurred in just eight years.

Victoria is leading one of the fastest transitions to change of anywhere in the world. It brings challenges, fast change. Of course it brings challenges, but we are up to the task in this Parliament to meet those challenges. We have reduced greenhouse gases in Victoria more than any other state government since 2014, and we are passing the targets that we have set for ourselves – 20 per cent by 2020 renewable energy – we have ticked that box. We have increased our target from 50 per cent to 65 per cent by 2030. We have set a target for 2035 of 95 per cent – massive changes, ambitious changes. We only have to look at the brutal summers experienced overseas, the brutal summers experienced here, to understand why we need to make these changes and make them rapidly.

We have installed the Victorian Big Battery, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, and Victoria is the home of big batteries. The targets that we are putting forward are backed by targets for offshore wind and energy storage. Offshore wind off the coast of the valley is going to be one of the big drivers of electrical change in Victoria. We have set ourselves targets of 2 gigawatts of offshore wind by 2032, 4 by 2035 and 9 by 2040 – huge changes to our system. We have increased renewable energy capacity targets. We will have at least 2.6 gigawatts of storage by 2030 and at least 6.3 gigawatts by 2035. We are undertaking an entire transformation of our energy system, of our transport and of our industries. It is the most fundamental technological change of our lifetimes that is going on, and we are part of it, and Victorian Labor is leading it. It is exciting. It is not just a challenge that should be approached with difficulty. It is exciting because it means new jobs, clean jobs and a transition of our economy that works for people and a sustainable planet. And we must do it.

Safety of our workers – for the last two decades the electricity sector has been replacing carbon-intensive generation with zero-carbon technology. The sector is moving from large-scale producers to small-scale producers distributed across the state, decentralised, needing transmission but needing more facilities to build this power. The exponential growth in technologies has exposed critical gaps in our framework and our safety. These reforms are needed to make sure that we meet that compliance framework and increase the obligations on electricity and gas companies and the owners and operators. It is to ensure, as the member for Morwell said, that workers come home every night – and you know that just as well as everyone with the electricity sector and the long, great history that we have had in the valley. This legislation does that with commonsense amendments to Victoria's energy safety legislation. The amendments will align safety obligations of renewable energy companies with those

of traditional companies and strengthen the investigative and enforcement powers of the independent safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria.

There have been some incidents that have caused us to really think this through very strongly, including two serious fires in 2021 – one at the Big Battery and one at the Cohuna solar farm. They highlighted the limitations that we have at Energy Safe Victoria. They highlighted the need for change. Energy Safe Victoria was unable to intervene in a timely manner until the fires and the incidents had occurred – after the fact, not beforehand – and we know that good safety is about getting there before the incidents happen. The current framework was developed on a base of larger facilities built through the 1990s and before and well regulated and well unionised to protect a large amount of that safety, so it is crucial to safeguard our consumer protections with confidence and ensure the safe delivery of regulations to these new technologies. This bill will provide Energy Safe Victoria with a toolkit to do this.

These regulation changes come from all the way back in 2017 and the Grimes review into the network safety framework and the obligations, incentives and other arrangements of the sector. In 2018 the government responded to this review, supporting or supporting in principle 42 out of the 43 recommendations. Half have been completed and the other half are on the way. At the last election we committed to undertaking a full-scale review of safety legislation. It is a timely review because of the changes in technology and the sector. This bill changes three acts: the Electrical Safety Act 1998, the Gas Safety Act 1997 and the Pipelines Act 2005. This bill makes changes to allow the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister for Energy and Resources, to declare certain electricity installations to be of a class where duties and obligations apply – a sensible approach which allows more to be brought in over time as it is required.

These obligations are comparable to those currently imposed already on major distribution and transmission companies. The bill increases the civil penalties which have not kept pace with community expectations. When 6000 hectares of land and property were destroyed by a fire caused by Powercor, as ultimately was found to be the case, Powercor were fined \$130,000 – \$130,000 for 6000 hectares of land and property. It is not acceptable. It provides the wrong incentives to power companies and distributors and it defeats the intent of the previous legislation. In line with these community expectations, increasing penalties will give the right incentives to companies to do the right things by our communities and to keep our communities safer than they already are. When power poles fall and cause fires, when powerlines clash together and cause fires, they go on to affect thousands and thousands of people, both immediately in the vicinity and then much further beyond. So it is important that we actually get this right, that we send the right incentives for breaches of legislation and that we are able to actively investigate what went wrong rather than having the incidents removed from the site – so we can actually get it right.

This proposed legislation will also change the start period of when Energy Safe Victoria can bring court proceedings against a company that breaches these safety obligations. The current safety framework only allows ESV to bring court proceedings three years after an offence has occurred, and investigations often take much longer than that. That is even when ESV becomes aware of a breach of the legislation.

As I said earlier, the community is changing. They are ready for change. They are up to taking on the change. They are taking on the solar panels, they are taking on the batteries and they are taking on the electric vehicles. We are equally committed to making that change and making sure that we have the legislative framework to make sure that parents do come home at night, that our workers are safe. I commend this bill to the house.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (18:57): I have got a couple of minutes to speak on this bill. I was not actually going to speak, but I have just been listening to some of the diatribes coming from the other side about what a wonderful job this government is doing on energy. It is really disappointing that the Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister for the State Electricity Commission is going out the door as we speak, because I have actually been listening to what has been said over there and

what government members are saying: 'It's such wonderful stuff, the policy that this government is producing. The SEC, it's going to save us all, it's going to drive down prices, it's going to deliver renewables.' I cannot remember which one said it, but I think it was the member for Bentleigh who said that, thanks to the SEC, we will be able to deliver renewables, because apparently the SEC invented renewables and that is the only way we are going to get any. Well, that will be news to all the developers around the world that have been delivering renewables without the assistance of the SEC for some time, in particular the Star of the South.

I heard the member for Ringwood and the member for Bentleigh and the member for Point Cook talking about offshore wind – 'our offshore wind plans', the Labor government members say. Star of the South first came and saw me about an offshore wind project off the Gippsland coast in 2017. When was the first time this government mentioned it? In 2021 – four years later, after the private sector had already started developing an offshore wind farm. Now this government is trying to claim credit for it.

We heard the member for Ringwood say, 'We're great here in Victoria. We've got Bass Strait, we've got great wind, we've got close connections to the Latrobe Valley.' There was no mention of the people in between those connections in Bass Strait and the Latrobe Valley who are going to have 80-metre-high pylons marching across their landscape to connect all of this. We have got this great offshore wind farm that is going to be fantastic for Gippsland. The government says there will be lots of jobs and we going to have the port in Hastings. We are going to build a brand new port in Hastings and completely ignore the Gippsland ports. I think there could be great opportunities for us in offshore wind, but Gippsland runs the risk of seeing this government have giant offshore wind development going off our coast and absolutely nothing coming to Gippsland in terms of the jobs because they are choosing Hastings and ignoring the opportunities for Gippsland in somewhere like Barry Beach.

We have heard from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings –

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am required under sessional orders to interrupt business now. The member may continue next time we revisit the bill.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Commonwealth Games

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (19:00): (251) My adjournment tonight is to the Deputy Premier, and the action that I seek is for the Deputy Premier to resign. Be it the Commonwealth Games debacle or the \$30 billion in project blowouts, the Deputy Premier's incompetence has sent the state broke and is giving us the highest debt in the country – more than New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania combined. This costs Victorians each and every day. It means Victorians do not get the services they deserve, as the government cuts \$1 billion from health to make up the shortfall. It means that communities like mine go without and cannot get the basic services right, like our hospital upgrades, our schools that are in desperate need of repair and our green open space. Those opposite talk about so many infrastructure projects, which, again, the Deputy Premier has been responsible for, including level crossings that have blown out. Thirty billion dollars in transport infrastructure has blown out under the Deputy Premier's watch, and now the Commonwealth Games has \$4 billion worth of blowouts. The Deputy Premier today said that this is a legacy that has bipartisanship from both sides, and we supported absolutely the legacy for regional Victoria from the Commonwealth Games. Now the regions do not get the Commonwealth Games legacy. It is questionable as to when they will get it, what they are going to get and ultimately what is the most important part of the legacy that they should be experiencing.

A throwback on the Deputy Premier's Facebook page said Bendigo was gearing up, just a few months ago, to host the basketball. The throwback was to 20 years ago, when we were gearing up for the basketball for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games, and now we were gearing up 20 years on to host the Commonwealth Games. We were grabbing this opportunity 'with both hands'. In May she said:

Check out Bendigo's athletes village!

With 1,030 days to go, the countdown to the Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games is on.

Today crews in Bendigo begin the early works by digging small holes to locate existing underground utilities.

More extensive construction on the site will begin ...

Digging holes – the biggest hole that the Deputy Premier has dug is a hole for herself in cancelling these Commonwealth Games. Regional Victorians will miss out. Regional Victorians are still wondering why, how much this is going to cost and ultimately why the Deputy Premier and the Premier signed a contract without knowing how much this was going to cost. Waste, mismanagement – every taxpayer is going to pay the price for the Deputy Premier's incompetence. Why on earth has the Deputy Premier got us into this mess? It is simply because Labor and the Deputy Premier cannot manage money. She should resign.

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Nathan LAMBERT (Preston) (19:03): (252) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Child Protection and Family Services, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in a visit to the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, or VACCA, in Bell Street, Preston. VACCA has a long history. It was founded back in 1977 – so it is about the same vintage as me – with just five staff and a typewriter in a small office in Fitzroy. It was founded by Aunty Mollie Dyer out of her concern with what was then a common practice of taking Aboriginal children out of their families and placing them into the care of non-Aboriginal families. Thanks to the advocacy of Aunty Dyer and VACCA, that practice was ended, and over time VACCA secured support for the important principle that Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations should make decisions about the protection of Aboriginal children. That principle is at the heart of what VACCA do; they support Aboriginal children to live with their families. They have had a lot of success in making sure that wherever that is possible that is what happens, but where it is not possible, they provide alternative care and support. It is a model that this Labor government supports very strongly – I know it is close to the heart of the Premier and the minister – and it is one that we have committed to supporting through legislative changes and funding expansions earlier this year.

That brings me back to the VACCA head office. As I said, they started in Fitzroy in a small office, but because of the positive impact they have had over a long period of time, they have now relocated to a much larger office in Bell Street in Preston – in fact just three doors down from our office; theirs is much larger and fancier – and they now have a team of over 100 people there as part of a team of 500 staff statewide, the majority of whom identify as First Nations Victorians.

It is a source of great pride to those of us up in Preston that we have VACCA and other Aboriginal community controlled organisations in our patch, but I do think it is actually something as a community we could learn a bit more about. I am very keen to make sure that people do not just drive past these organisations but that we locally understand what it is that they do inside, so I am hoping that the minister's visit will help facilitate that. I am sure she speaks regularly with Muriel Bamblett, who is the very impressive CEO of that organisation. The minister's visit will be a chance for us to learn a little bit more about what they do locally and the important child protection and family support work that they do across the state with the support of this Labor government. I thank the minister for her consideration.

Latrobe Valley social housing

Martin CAMERON (Morwell) (19:06): (253) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Housing, and the information I seek is on the Commonwealth Games rescue package promised for the Latrobe Valley as part of the Comm Games cancellation. The Andrews Labor government has misled Victorians from the beginning with the Commonwealth Games debacle. But more importantly, at a local level in my electorate of Morwell we were ready and raring to host a range of Commonwealth Games events, and this catastrophic decision will have a monumental impact on residents, community clubs and small businesses.

We had repeatedly been told that the athletes village in Morwell would be repurposed and used as social housing infrastructure, which is desperately needed in the Latrobe Valley as we experience a homelessness crisis unlike any we have seen before. Data from the Council to Homeless Persons shows homelessness in the valley has increased 85 per cent in the five years to 2021. Given this data is now two years old and given the cost of living is spiralling out of control, we can safely assume this figure has increased substantially. People are slipping through the cracks, and this data does not even account for the huge number of people and families who are sleeping in their cars or couch surfing. Some 2783 people in the Latrobe Valley local government area accessed specialised homelessness services last financial year – 2783 of them – more than any other regional municipality in the state.

Even more frustrating is the fact that constituents have visited my office to report vacant properties across the valley, some of which have been built by Homes Victoria for the purpose of social housing, yet they are incomprehensibly sitting empty while people are sleeping on the streets. I have written to the Andrews Labor government several times to report these vacant properties and request urgent action, but I have not received a single response. For three years we have been promised more social housing, but all we have received are platitudes and excuses while the supply of homes is dwindling and homelessness is skyrocketing. So how are we supposed to trust a government mired in record debt and caught in the web of its own lies and financial incompetence to deliver any of the promised \$2 billion worth of legacy projects? After years of empty promises, inaction and underfunding people in the Latrobe Valley need more than just words to believe anything this government says. Minister, when will the construction of affordable housing in the Latrobe Valley begin, and will you commit to a time frame for delivery?

Pakenham Consolidated School

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (19:09): (254) My adjournment is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me to visit Pakenham Consolidated School to see the progress on modernising this wonderful local school in my electorate. Pakenham Consolidated School received \$10 million in the 2020–21 state budget through the upgrade and modernisation funding stream, which is being used to create a dedicated space for specialised student programs and to upgrade the junior toilet block. These works are progressing really well and the project is set for completion in 2024. This school has a proud history of serving the Pakenham community. Generations of children have attended this site since 1997. Prior to that the school community, which was formed in 1951, was located on the main street after the consolidation of several small primary schools from around the district. It is important that all schools are maintained and improved to meet changing student needs. I look forward to showing the minister the progressive work at Pakenham Consolidated School.

Commonwealth Games

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (19:10): (255) My adjournment tonight is for the Premier, and the action I seek is for the Premier to produce the financial analysis in full that estimated the Commonwealth Games would cost between \$5 billion and \$7 billion, as he has claimed since announcing the games' cancellation. Legacy is an important word and one that we have heard a lot of from the government throughout its time over there on the government benches, but recently we have seen something new for any Victorian government: abruptly cancelling a major international event and destroying much of the certainty around the billions of dollars of legacy projects that would have come with it. And why?

Well, because in the space of two months the cost of the Commonwealth Games exploded from \$2.6 billion to \$6 billion, and then in the next sentence it was \$7 billion. Only in Victoria could the Premier in one sentence rack up another billion dollars in costs.

Those legacy projects were not just about adding to the glitz and glam of a major sporting event. They were about providing the bedrock for sustaining community sport across Victoria for generations to come and alleviating one of the worst housing crises that this state has ever seen. Just some of the projects that were supposed to be delivered and are now obviously questionable were millions in investments for Geelong; a new swimming pool at Armstrong Creek and an aquatic centre – 25 metres by 25 metres, a very, very odd project to be committing to for legacy; an artistic gymnastics, weightlifting and para powerlifting venue at Waurin Ponds; new hockey pitches at Stead Park, which we have already heard about winding back from two pitches to one and an upgrade to a facility instead of a rebuild; and investments in the Geelong games village, which we know is up in the air. We heard the member for Caulfield mention that a couple of little holes were dug; that does not seem like much of a legacy project. Major investments in Ballarat include upgrading Eureka Stadium but no events platform, which is what they really need, and out there a housing development that will not go ahead because of contaminated soil. In East Gippsland, as we have heard from the member for Morwell, there is a need for social and affordable housing and a refurbishing of the facilities at their indoor sports stadium in Traralgon.

All of this, though, we were told was funded in the budget back in May and would be delivered in time for the games in 2026. Actually most of this was meant to be delivered in 2025 so they could provide test events at these venues. All that apparent certainty has collapsed under this government's incompetence – the Premier's incompetence and the Deputy Premier's incompetence. This government's budget – and I will borrow a term coined by the Premier himself – is not worth the paper it is written on. As for the extra \$4.4 billion in cost blowouts, I hope we get to see them, but I have very, very little faith that this government, that this Premier, that the Deputy Premier and that anyone who has touched the Commonwealth Games will ever deliver the full figures that these blowouts are based on.

Tarneit electorate Islamic community

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (19:13): (256) My adjournment this evening is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The action that I seek is that the minister consult with my local Islamic community in Tarneit to work on delivering an anti-Islamophobia campaign. In my electorate of Tarneit we are home to thousands of Islamic people and indeed a thriving Islamic community, which includes three fantastic mosques: the Melbourne Grand Mosque, the Golden Wattle Masjid and the Virgin Mary Mosque. Over the last few months I have visited these mosques countless times for Friday prayers and of course for mosque open day recently. I was also invited into the homes of so many families during Ramadan to join them in their celebrations. I want to thank every member of the community who has come and spoken to me over the last few months and welcomed me into their homes and their mosques with open arms.

Having been given the opportunity to speak directly with local members of the Islamic community, I have heard their countless stories and experiences of racism and Islamophobia. This type of behaviour is not just disgusting, it is abhorrent, and it should not be allowed to continue. There is no room for discrimination based on faith or ethnicity in Victoria. When the Labor government announced that if re-elected it would be investing \$3 million to fight Islamophobia, there was an immense amount of support in my community of Tarneit amongst not just the Islamic community but the entire community. This announcement meant that they would be able to have a say in what our government was doing to help keep them and their families safe.

Tackling the problem of Islamophobia is about developing a well-rounded campaign with the community that is led and informed by the Islamic community, because nobody can inform us of their experiences better than they can. It must be able to support victims and make prosecution of those who

incite hatred and bigotry far easier. Our government also recognises the importance of the on-ground support that the community leaders and mosques provide to victims of Islamophobia. I am incredibly excited by this campaign, and I thank the minister for his consideration.

Short-stay accommodation

Ellen SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:15): (257) Today I am here to ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs to put a yearly cap on short stays in Victoria to help solve the housing crisis and bring thousands of Airbnbs back onto the long-term rental market. If you want to stay in an Airbnb tonight in my electorate in the City of Melbourne, there are over 5000 whole homes available – that is roughly 5 per cent of all the properties in the City of Melbourne. But if you are looking for a long-term rental tonight to actually, you know, have a place to live, well, you are out of luck, with vacancy rates at record lows. It is really quite ridiculous.

The thing is, almost 70 per cent of those Airbnbs available at the moment are owned by people who have multiple properties on these types of platforms, and most of the homes are empty for much of the time. The government could right now take action to bring some of these empty homes onto the long-term rental market for people who need a place to rent. In fact it is something that I have been calling for since 2014, almost 10 years ago – for the Labor government to intervene in the broken system and regulate the short-stay market by putting a yearly cap on the number of days someone can rent out a whole home.

In the 10 years since I have been calling for this change, what was touted as the sharing economy has actually become the taking economy. People buy whole properties to put on short-stay platforms like Airbnb because they can make so much more than in the long-term rental market. It has also fundamentally changed our city, and we need to do something about it. It pushes residents out of our city. It makes the housing crisis worse, but it also makes life hell for neighbours who want to live in a community but actually just end up living in quasi-unregulated hotels.

Now, there has been a bit of pressure on the government lately, with the housing crisis hitting fever pitch, and finally Labor has said that they will consider some solutions. But what have they actually put on the table? It is nothing except a potential tax of \$5 per stay on Airbnb. It might give the state government some easy revenue, but actually just a simple tax of that amount will do nothing to put these homes back on the rental market. It will still be much more lucrative for a landlord to put a home on Airbnb if they are only being charged \$5 a week – maybe up to \$35 a week – than to rent it out long term, so this proposed solution is actually not much of a solution at all. It is just a way for Labor to claw back some money for the budget hole, but actually we need proper solutions.

We need what we have been proposing, which is a cap of 90 days per year on how long someone can put an extra home on Airbnb for; the creation of a register of short stays; and the actual regulation of this industry, like other cities are doing, still allowing people to put their home on Airbnb if they go away but stopping the sharing economy becoming the taking economy.

Glenallen School

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (19:18): (258) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to open the new facilities at Glenallen special school in my community. My electorate of Glen Waverley is home to some of the best schools in our state, and one of these schools is Glenallen special school. The school looks after students with physical disabilities and severe health impairments while providing learning programs for students with a broad range of intellectual abilities.

This incredible school, like every special school, is a place where some of Victoria's best work is on full display. The teachers are compassionate and empathetic and, most importantly, they are committed to delivering the best care and education for kids with special needs. I want to give a big shout-out to the teachers, the carers, the teachers aides and everyone at the school who does such an

excellent job and a big thankyou to principal Michael Cole and assistant principal Jennifer Healey and the school councillors for all the work that they do.

As part of the Andrews Labor government's proud legacy of investing in and funding upgrades to every single special school in our state, Glenallen School received \$7.988 million for modernisation upgrades in the 2020–21 budget, and I would like to give you a special shout-out, Deputy Speaker, for your advocacy on this project. This is on top of \$700,000 in the 2018–19 budget and \$2 million in the 2016–17 budget. The government stands on our record of fully funding and delivering the school's modernisation master plan. Previous upgrades included refurbishment of the student toilets in both the junior and senior school buildings and upgrading the pool change rooms, which has made an unbelievable difference in being able to get the students from change rooms and into the pool there.

It is great to see the completion of this promised upgrade to Glenallen. As with countless other schools across Victoria, this government is ensuring an opportunity for all by investing in our education system. I had the pleasure of visiting Glenallen last week for the national tree planting day last Friday, and I thank Mardi Scott from Waverley Toyota and Phil Ryan from the Mazenod Panthers for organising this brilliant event. I hope that the minister can join me at Glenallen special school for the official opening. I look forward to the minister's response.

Wild dog control

Bill TILLEY (Benambra) (19:21): (259) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the Tallangatta Valley to meet with landholders with lived experience of wild dogs about the success of the 3-kilometre buffer that is currently under her review. The buffer gives the state wild dog controllers the authority to bait and trap wild dogs on public land within 3 kilometres of the farm fence. The orders relating to this buffer will expire on 1 October this year.

Those who have lived through the torment and the terror pre the buffer zone say it has proven to have saved livestock and protected humans. They tell stories of sleeping in swags for six weeks to protect their livestock. One farmer lost 200 sheep in a six-week stretch – animals torn apart, others left with their insides dragging along the ground, livestock slaughtered for the thrill of the kill. You need to hear these stories; you need to hear the voices as they tell of the brutal night-after-night attacks. They can show you the pictures. I can show you the pictures. I can show you live footage.

A member interjected.

Bill TILLEY: What? Listen up. I met with landholders last month who say it is not just the stock losses; the removal of the buffer would reduce their ability to patrol and protect their livestock, cut their working land in half and decrease productivity and viability. They will tell you about an increasing presence of wild dogs howling through the night, six shot on one property in a fortnight, while the remnants of deer culls are scavenged within two days. One former trapper that I know was worried when his dogs were staying unusually close to him through a bush section of his property. He stopped and called out to the wild dogs. There were nine responses surrounding him. These landholders will talk of mental health toll issues – studies like, you know, you name it, first responders, Vietnam vets with PTSD. They can speak with authority of *Neospora caninum* carried by these wild dogs, which leads to cattle aborting calves.

Already you will be hearing opposing voices – the Australian Dingo Foundation and others – talking up non-lethal methods of wild dog control that include additional fencing, maremmas and alpacas. Landholders will tell you that they do not work; they can provide evidence of alpacas killed by dogs and video footage of dogs navigating around fencing and traps. Some will argue that these dingoes are whelping once a year and having about three to four pups. The lived experience is that wild dogs have three litters every two years, with some recently shot bitches carrying seven and nine pups respectively. I have seen it personally.

These are previously domesticated dogs – perhaps part dingo but well and truly under the 80 per cent that is required to prove dingo – that are a constant threat to livestock and humans. Without the buffer the trappers will be limited to private land and the dogs will be free to attack from the bush boundary at will. Please, Minister, these are your dogs coming from your land – our land. We need the buffer to maintain the status quo, and these people can tell you why.

Truganina Business Association

Sarah CONNOLLY (Laverton) (19:24): (260) My adjournment is for the Minister for Small Business, and the action I seek is that the minister join me out in Truganina for the launch of the Truganina Business Association. As the minister knows, Wyndham is home to one of the fastest growing communities here in Victoria, and the same is true for small businesses, with a growth rate of 35 per cent. Truganina has seen a number of small businesses open up over the past couple of years, with a growing shared commercial and industrial estate popping up along Leakes Road.

When I was the member for Tarneit last term one of the things we were able to deliver as part of the Tarneit revitalisation project was assistance in starting up the Tarneit Business Association, which provided small businesses in Tarneit with the opportunity to foster a sense of shared community and networking. If I am not mistaken, Tarneit Business Association recently held their annual awards night, which tells you just how far they have come.

That is why it is so heartening to see so many small business owners in Truganina come together and learn from the success of the Tarneit Business Association to set up their own association of small businesses in Trug. They will be launching on 26 August, and it would be wonderful to have the minister join me at their launch to hear about their hopes for the present and, most importantly, for the future.

Responses

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (19:25): Can I start by addressing the issue raised by the member for Tarneit in relation to my responsibilities as Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The member asked me to visit his local Islamic communities, and I am very pleased to say to the member I would be very keen to join him in visiting those communities in his electorate. In fact our Muslim communities right across the state are an absolutely integral part of our wonderful, rich and diverse multicultural Victoria. I understand that the electorate of Tarneit has a Muslim community of over 11,000 – so a significant Muslim community in that part of Melbourne and Victoria. This government absolutely condemns any forms of racism, hateful conduct and vilification, and those behaviours have no place in modern Victoria. Discrimination and vilification based on faith or ethnicity is completely unacceptable, and as a government and as, I am sure, a Parliament we will continue to work hard to fight against this.

You would be aware that at the election we made a \$3 million commitment, which was followed through with funding in the recent budget, to stamp out discrimination and vilification of Muslims in Victoria. This will lead to approaches and a policy and a program to fight Islamophobia. It will also provide more Victorians with the opportunity to understand and appreciate the significant contributions of our Islamic communities. And of course there will be significant consultation with our Islamic communities in the development of that anti-Islamophobia campaign. Part of this investment is a \$500,000 commitment to fund an exhibition to celebrate the life of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – and share the history of our Islamic communities. This is an important exhibition as it will enable Muslim Victorians to celebrate the Prophet's life and give more Victorians the opportunity to understand and appreciate the significant contributions made by our Islamic community to our whole state.

I should just say, while I have the chance, that the government has also committed to implementing the recommendations made by the inquiry into anti-vilification protections. Our government supports 34 of the 36 recommendations made by the inquiry, and of course late last year we also committed to strengthening the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 to make it easier to prosecute individuals

who incite racism or hatred. So we are very keen to join with the member and engage with the Islamic community in his electorate.

In relation to the issue raised by the member for Morwell, I was tempted to take a point of order in that he had not specifically sought an action. It is important for members, particularly newer members in this place, to remember that the adjournment debate is an opportunity to raise issues for action as opposed to questions or seeking information, as people do in question time. I think that it is important that I address the issues that he has raised, and so I will take that away and come back to him in good faith in terms of some of the vacant properties, the follow-up on correspondence and the homelessness issues that he has raised.

I would just make the point, and again not to be overly political with this, to ask members on the other side of the house to engage with their federal colleagues and encourage them to support the housing package through the Senate. More funding for social and affordable housing from the federal government will help us to provide more social and affordable housing in all of our communities right across the state.

Before coming to responding to other matters, I just wanted to, through a point of order, raise the first issue that was raised by the member for Caulfield. The member called on the Deputy Premier to resign and then launched an attack on the Deputy Premier. *Rulings from the Chair* very clearly sets out that numerous previous Speakers have ruled that attacking other members through adjournment debates and reflections on other members are out of order. So I would ask you to either rule it out of order now or refer it to the Speaker for a ruling at another time.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. If you wish to continue, I will respond to that at the end of your responses.

Colin BROOKS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The member for Preston raised a matter for the Minister for Child Protection and Family Services seeking for the minister to join him in visiting the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency in Preston – a fantastic organisation, VACCA, led by the dynamic Aunty Muriel – and I am sure that the minister will attend that meeting with the member. The member for Pakenham raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking for her to join the member at the Pakenham Consolidated School, and I will ensure that the minister gets that request. The member for Nepean raised a matter for the Premier for him to produce costings for the Commonwealth Games, if I have got that correct. The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs requesting that he introduce a yearly cap on short-stay properties.

The member for Glen Waverley raised a matter for the Minister for Education in relation to joining with him to open new facilities at the Glenallen special school, and I will make sure that the minister gets that request. The member for Benambra raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture seeking for her to visit Tallangatta Valley to meet with locals on the issue of wild dogs. The member for Laverton raised an issue for the Minister for Small Business to join her at Truganina to meet the Tarneit Business Association, and I will make sure that those matters are referred on as well.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. On the point of order, given the adjournment has already been completed, I will refer that to the Speaker to review all adjournments. I appreciate that you addressed the member for Morwell's point, so that may be moot, but thank you for that. The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7:33 pm.