



Hansard

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

60th Parliament

Thursday 31 August 2023

Office-holders of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Speaker

Maree Edwards

Deputy Speaker

Matt Fregon

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

Jacinta Allan

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

Ben Carroll

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

John Pesutto

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

David Southwick

Leader of the Nationals

Peter Walsh

Deputy Leader of the Nationals

Emma Kealy

Leader of the House

Mary-Anne Thomas

Manager of Opposition Business

James Newbury

Members of the Legislative Assembly
60th Parliament

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Addison, Juliana	Wendouree	ALP	Lambert, Nathan	Preston	ALP
Allan, Jacinta	Bendigo East	ALP	Maas, Gary	Narre Warren South	ALP
Andrews, Daniel ²	Mulgrave	ALP	McCurdy, Tim	Ovens Valley	Nat
Battin, Brad	Berwick	Lib	McGhie, Steve	Melton	ALP
Benham, Jade	Mildura	Nat	McLeish, Cindy	Eildon	Lib
Britnell, Roma	South-West Coast	Lib	Marchant, Alison	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Colin	Bundoora	ALP	Matthews-Ward, Kathleen	Broadmeadows	ALP
Bull, Josh	Sunbury	ALP	Mercurio, Paul	Hastings	ALP
Bull, Tim	Gippsland East	Nat	Mullahy, John	Glen Waverley	ALP
Cameron, Martin	Morwell	Nat	Newbury, James	Brighton	Lib
Carbines, Anthony	Ivanhoe	ALP	O'Brien, Danny	Gippsland South	Nat
Carroll, Ben	Niddrie	ALP	O'Brien, Michael	Malvern	Lib
Cheeseman, Darren	South Barwon	ALP	O'Keeffe, Kim	Shepparton	Nat
Cianflone, Anthony	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Pallas, Tim	Werribee	ALP
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 ³	Warrandyte	Lib
Edwards, Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Southwick, David	Caulfield	Lib
Fowles, Will ¹	Ringwood	Ind	Spence, Ros	Kalkallo	ALP
Fregon, Matt	Ashwood	ALP	Staikos, Nick	Bentleigh	ALP
George, Ella	Lara	ALP	Suleyman, Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Grigorovitch, Luba	Kororoit	ALP	Tak, Meng Heang	Clarinda	ALP
Groth, Sam	Nepean	Lib	Taylor, Jackson	Bayswater	ALP
Guy, Matthew	Bulleen	Lib	Taylor, Nina	Albert Park	ALP
Halfpenny, Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Theophanous, Kat	Northcote	ALP
Hall, Katie	Footscray	ALP	Thomas, Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hamer, Paul	Box Hill	ALP	Tilley, Bill	Benambra	Lib
Haylett, Martha	Ripon	ALP	Vallence, Bridget	Evelyn	Lib
Hibbins, Sam	Prahran	Greens	Vulin, Emma	Pakenham	ALP
Hilakari, Mathew	Point Cook	ALP	Walsh, Peter	Murray Plains	Nat
Hodgett, David	Croydon	Lib	Walters, Iwan	Greenvale	ALP
Horne, Melissa	Williamstown	ALP	Ward, Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Hutchins, Natalie	Sydenham	ALP	Wells, Kim	Rowville	Lib
Kathage, Lauren	Yan Yean	ALP	Werner, Nicole ⁴	Warrandyte	Lib
Kealy, Emma	Lowan	Nat	Wight, Dylan	Tameit	ALP
Kilkenny, Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Williams, Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
Wayne Farnham	Narracan	Lib	Wilson, Belinda	Narre Warren North	ALP
			Wilson, Jess	Kew	Lib

¹ ALP until 5 August 2023

² Resigned 27 September 2023

³ Resigned 7 July 2023

⁴ Elected 3 October 2023

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Thursday 31 August 2023

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

Petitions

Eildon electorate roads

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) presented a petition bearing 1817 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the rapidly deteriorating condition of the highways between Yarra Glen and Mansfield. The Melba Highway, the Goulburn Valley Highway between Yea and Yarck and the Maroondah Highway from Yarck to Mansfield have a significant number of potholes, crumbling shoulders, and broken bitumen, which is jeopardising driver's safety. Drivers are forking out costs for blown tyres, busted rims, and wheel realignment after hitting potholes.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly through the Minister for Roads & Roads Safety ensure extensive road works and resurfacing works are conducted as a matter of priority to repair the condition of the Melba Highway, Goulburn Valley Highway and Maroondah Highway to improve driver's safety.

Cindy McLEISH (Eildon) presented a petition bearing 60 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the state of our roads in Victoria is shocking it is putting peoples lives at risk and causing damage to the vehicles of everyday battlers costing tyres and damage that they are unable to claim compensation from VicRoads.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly call on the government to fix the roads and to enable all damages to vehicles and tyres to be claimable from VicRoads no matter how much it costs.

Ordered that petitions be considered next sitting day.

Local history grants

Tim BULL (Gippsland East) presented a petition bearing 84 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the withdrawal of funding for the Victorian Community History Awards and Local History Grants Program. History in Victoria receives so little support in the way of funding or recognition yet it is essential for many policies. Creative efforts are inspired by history, environmental projects are influenced by their history, planning is influenced by history and local communities are the front line custodians of collections and research. The Local History Grants Program ensures that the sustained work of over 350 volunteer driven heritage organisations continues to develop and contribute to the ongoing research into history. It is a small price to pay for thousands of hours of volunteer work that benefits the collective memory. The Community History Awards support historians, authors, creators, printers, designers and more. They also encourage deep investigation and truth telling as more resources become available. It is a small thing to seek recognition of the work done. There are no grand finals for historians to compete in – just years of work to reach an ultimate goal. Why should historians be denied their “Brownlow”?

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly direct that the Department of Government Services reinstate funding for the Community History Awards and the Local History Grants Program as administered by the Public Record Office of Victoria and Royal Historical Society of Victoria. They are critical to the ongoing growth and digitisation of the State's archive that is in community hands.

Ordered that petition be considered next sitting day.

Care leavers redress scheme

Michael O'BRIEN (Malvern) presented a petition bearing 50 signatures:

This petition of residents in Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly my campaign seeking changes for Voluntary Placement Survivors to be formally identified as Care leavers because, even though horrific atrocities were committed against us while Placed in Out of Home Care. I am asking the you to consider my petition on behalf of the thousands of forgotten and invisible Voluntary Placement Survivors so that we can receive the same respect and advantages as State Wards because as to date we have No rights and we have no paperwork proving care because NO Court Order was necessary for a child to live outside of their parent's care, so countless children were forgotten about and lost in system. We do NOT qualify for the National Redress • We can NOT be called Forgotten Australians • Law firms will NOT represent as we have no childhood records The fact remains that the Victorian government failed in its responsibility to protect us as children by abandoning us and leaving us at the mercy of abusive family carers. We were failed in its responsibility to protect us as children by abandoning us leaving us to the mercy of sadistic carers. I am often asked why I continue to push for survivors of voluntary placement to be recognised as care leavers when it is clear that no one is interested. I can only respond that "I care," as do the thousands of other Voluntary Placement survivors who after being abandoned, by their parents were shunted between uncaring informal foster families, left to be neglected, and forgotten, and treated with apathy. Imagine – having a childhood that was so damaging that you have spent your entire adult life fighting to repair the damage to your mind.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly advocate for survivors of voluntary placement to be acknowledged as out-of-home Care leavers and Forgotten Australians. I look forwards to the day when the Victorian Government formally apologises to all Past and Present Survivors of Voluntary Placement for failing to recognise the suffering we have experienced throughout our lifetimes and especially during our time in care. Having no identity and believing that your abuse was insignificant has re-traumatizing effects. Growing up with the knowledge that you are a member of the invisible generation, that no one sees or hears, is a cruel thing. It should NOT matter if the Abuser was a Family Member or a Member of an Institution,

Ordered that petition be considered next sitting day.

Documents**Documents**

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT – The Clerk tabled:

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 – SR 91

Gender Equality Act 2020 – SR 94

Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 – SR 92

Planning and Environment Act 1987 – SR 93

Surveyor-General – Report 2022–23 on the administration of the *Survey Co-ordination Act 1958*.

Business of the house**Adjournment**

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (09:35): I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until 3 October 2023.

Motion agreed to.

*Members statements***Werribee Football Club**

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (09:36): I rise to update the house on the marvellous efforts of the Werribee Tigers in the 2023 VFL season. The Werribee Football Club has a rich history, and the club has been a meeting place for the local community since forming in 1965.

Sport is so important beyond its physical benefits. Whilst it encourages teamwork, fitness and friendship, it can bring communities together, and the Werribee Tigers have done this year after year, building rapport with our vast multicultural communities that make Wyndham their home. A special thanks goes out to Mark Penaluna, CEO of the club, whose contributions to Wyndham have not gone unnoticed. The Tigers are running home on a Werribee straight with 15 consecutive wins, with the team finishing second on the season ladder, just missing out on the minor premiership by a percentage point. It was heartbreaking. This incredible achievement was made possible due to the stellar leadership of captain Nick Coughlan and the excellent coaching of Michael Barlow and his team of assistant coaches. This weekend I will be at Chirnside Park cheering on the Tigers as they play Box Hill in Saturday's qualifying final. I encourage all of Werribee to join me to cheer on our local team. Kick-off is at 2 pm. Tickets start from just \$10 for adults, and it is free for kids. I wish the team the very best of luck as they march towards the grand final.

Service Victoria

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (09:37): On behalf of the employees and employers of my electorate, I wish to point out how jobs are at risk because of the reams of paperwork demanded by bureaucratic inertia for the most simple of opportunities. I have one constituent who is on the verge of losing a job he has not even started because his police check has been in the system for 23 days – and counting. He is so desperate. He has had three tries at applying, with no luck, and his appeal for assistance received the following reply:

The Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission advises there is no definitive amount of time it takes to process a police check ... it is always advisable to allow as much time as possible.

How long is a piece of string? Tell that to the employer, who has had a bus off the road for a month waiting for that check. The applicant, who is already on the Service Victoria register, has worked for both the ADF and the Shire of Campaspe. Right now the company's only alternative is to ask existing drivers to extend their hours – always a risk factor. This man has brought his frustrations to my attention, rightly asking what happens if there is an accident, because he sees Service Victoria and the national police check system being partly responsible for failing to have adequate staff to process this application on time. He should have started work as a bus driver this week. Instead, he is waiting to hear whether he will have a job or not – from a check that is mandated by the Victorian government.

Regina Leung-Huning

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (09:39): I rise today to speak about the wonderful Regina Leung-Huning, a stalwart of the Whittlesea Chinese Association, local constituent and someone I am proud to call a friend. Regina has been a longstanding member of the Whittlesea Chinese Association and its president since 2013. After 10 years of dedicated service to the club, Regina decided not to recontest the position of president at the annual general meeting held yesterday. The association under Regina's presidency has done so much fantastic work for the community, such as delivering hampers during COVID to those who were isolated – hampers of course containing food and other essential items; running information sessions on COVID vaccinations and the importance of that, not just to save lives but to keep the broader community safe; and holding many successful cultural events as part of their annual program, often inviting many different community organisations and different cultural organisations so that everyone truly could have a multifaith and multicultural

experience. Regina has also participated in the Whittlesea Multicultural Communities Council, being an active member in helping organise cross-cultural events and engaging proactively with government. Her service to the community has never stopped and never waned, even during recent years when she has endured significant personal hardship. Thank you, Regina, for all of the work you have done and will continue to do in our community. You have our love and grateful respect.

Energy security

David HODGETT (Croydon) (09:40): I was intending to speak about another topic today, but when you rise this morning to headlines about the dire outlook for our state's energy supply, it cannot go unnoted – headlines such as:

SHOCKING TRUTH EXPOSED

Nightmare blackouts alarm in sweltering summer of discontent – Victoria singled out as worst state for energy reliability – Household bill hikes as gas ban to worsen supply shortages

What the hell has this incompetent, lame government been doing? It paints a grim outlook, calling for urgent investment by this government. It warns of an east coast summer energy crisis. Again, what has the government been doing? It is asleep at the wheel. When you read headlines such as:

Victoria is facing more regular blackouts ... Coal, gas and diesel shortfalls have been identified as a “material risk” to the grid ... The Andrews Government’s ban on gas will have a significant impact on winter electricity consumption ... Victoria’s concerns will spike with the closure of the Yallourn power station in 2027–28 ... Transmission projects coming online aren’t keeping up with the pace of traditional coal-fired power stations closures

it is a deep concern, the picture this paints. The media reports go on to say:

Victorians have been given dire predictions of potential blackouts this summer, with the nation’s electricity and gas market watchdog ranking the state as the worst in Australia for energy security.

What has this government – (*Time expired*)

Ivanhoe electorate public housing

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (09:42): I thought I would just give the house a public housing update about West Heidelberg and Tarakan Street, a \$63 million investment from our government: 669 jobs and 130 homes, which will be open before the end of the year. That construction is on track with one-, two- and three-bedroom homes, a 5-star green star rating and a 7-star Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme average rating. A significant percentage of those homes will be fully accessible, with Disability Discrimination Act 1992 compliance there, with drop-off areas and paths and the like. It replaces a lot of the 1950s homes that were built that were great homes for many years post the Olympic Games here in Melbourne, but it is well past time for those to be knocked over for a new investment in West Heidi.

Just across the road is Launch Housing in Bellfield – 50 dwellings over four levels, a \$24 million development. In partnership with Launch Housing, the Victorian government contributed over \$18 million. That will also be open before the end of this year. That land was provided by Banyule City Council, so it was a real team effort across the board to get that project concluded. Of course the Minister for Housing, my colleague in the electorate of Bundoora, knows about the \$18 million development opened just last week in Bell Street: 42 modern homes, particularly for women and families with a history of homelessness and complex needs. There are 11 one-bedroom, 30 two-bedroom and one three-bedroom social housing homes now providing a roof over the heads of so many people who need it in my electorate. Right across West Heidelberg we are seeing social housing being delivered by the Andrews Labor government.

De Castella Run

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:43): The De Castella Run is a charity event that takes place annually along the iconic and picturesque Kew boulevard in Studley Park. I was delighted to participate again in the 5-kilometre run for the event which aims to put a spotlight on our mental health crisis by supporting a range of charities. There was another huge turnout this year of runners and walkers. The run is named after world champion marathon runner and Xavier College alumnus Rob de Castella, who established the Indigenous Marathon Foundation, where 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are selected each year to train and run in the famous New York City Marathon. I congratulate and thank the team behind the De Castella Run for putting together this incredible event annually, with a special shout-out to Shannon Cole for all her work.

Parliamentary internship program

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:44): Earlier this year I had the fantastic opportunity to host Lucy Gallagher, a student from Monash University, in my office as part of the Victorian internship program. The internship program offers university students practical experience in the policymaking process by pairing them with a member of Parliament, under whose guidance they will write a research report. I am delighted to congratulate Lucy on her high distinction on her report about state property taxation in Victoria. Lucy has a bright future ahead, and I am excited to see her achieve big things. I hope next time we play each other in hockey the Kew Brumbies will get up over Camberwell.

Kew electorate girls football

Jess WILSON (Kew) (09:45): Congratulations to both the Kew Rovers under-13 girls and the Balwyn Greythorn Jets under-14 girls for both getting into their grand finals this weekend – fingers crossed for the Jets that it can be their third flag in row, and we are hoping for a big win for the Kew Rovers. I look forward to cheering them from the sidelines.

Banchory Green Reserve, Hillside

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:45): I rise to share exciting news on the Andrews Labor government's investment in the growing western suburbs. Last week I represented the Minister for Suburban Development to officially open the Banchory Green reserve upgrade in my electorate of Sydenham. It was a fantastic celebration, and the opening was attended by many young families who were really enjoying the newly vitalised space. The reserve now has new play equipment for all ages and abilities, accessible and connected footpaths and, most importantly, fencing. New grass surfaces are also being put in place for the next generation of our budding new Matildas. Increased urban tree canopy is also being placed. I am so proud to say this government invested \$352,000 from the Growing Suburbs Fund, which was matched by Melton City Council. Since 2015 the fund has provided Melton City Council with more than \$47 million to deliver 42 projects. Local residents deserve appropriate facilities to meet their growing needs and their growing families. Congratulations to everyone involved.

Linear park, Taylors Lakes

Natalie HUTCHINS (Sydenham – Minister for Education, Minister for Women) (09:46): Can I also thank the Lions Club of Taylors Lakes and their greening group for the great work they did on the Parmelia Drive entrance to linear park – 33 hours of volunteer effort putting in 60 new plants to revitalise the area. Thanks for beautifying our local area and putting pride in our local parks.

St Kilda Road bike lanes

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (09:46): This weekend our community gathered to celebrate the opening of the new St Kilda Road separated bike lanes, including bike riding activists and groups like Port Phillip and Stonnington bike user groups, Bicycle Network and many others. I was really pleased to be joined by my fellow MP Kat Copsey and local councillors Mike Scott and Tim Baxter as well. There certainly was a lot of love for these separated bike lanes, certainly something I have been

pushing for since I was first elected. What a long journey it has been for well over a decade to get them on St Kilda Road, where they were first proposed a very long time ago, with so much advocacy and campaigning since then from community and councils as well – a really massive effort. Now they are in, they fit right into the road, making riding along St Kilda Road so much safer and much more enjoyable. They really now need to be the beginning of a network of safe, separated bike lanes right across metropolitan Melbourne. If we are serious about supporting people to make the shift to cleaner, cheaper, more climate friendly forms of transport, we need more safe, separated bike lanes just like we have on St Kilda Road.

Duck hunting

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (09:47): I note that in the upper house a select committee has just handed its report down recommending the banning of duck shooting across Victoria. I very much hope that the government heeds this advice, heeds it swiftly and makes sure that we finally put an end to duck shooting in Victoria once and for all.

Women in sport

Ben CARROLL (Niddrie – Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Manufacturing Sovereignty, Minister for Employment, Minister for Public Transport) (09:48): It was an awesome day at Windy Hill for senior women's football recently, on 19 August. I rise to congratulate the Airport West Football Club – I am wearing my Airport West Football Club tie – and in particular Marcus Barclay for their premiership success. The Airport West Football Club have had a magnificent season. No-one kicked more than two goals against them, and they got on and won the grand final. Natasha Campbell took home the best and fairest award for an amazing grand final appearance. We do know equality is an unequivocal must, and we know everyone needs a sporting chance. It is great to see the next generation coming through, from juniors to seniors in women's sport. We have seen the Matildas have unparalleled success as well as the Diamonds netballers, and to now see juniors and women's football going so well on our regional and our suburban football grounds is critically important.

I also want to give a shout-out to Trent Rogers, the senior coach at Airport West, who is retiring at the end of this season. He and his family have dedicated so much time to the football club. A former junior and senior player – I really wish Trent and his family every success in the future. I also want to congratulate the Doutta Stars women's division 1 as well as the Aberfeldie women's premier division for their success.

Women's football is going so strong. Everyone needs a sporting chance. Equality is an unequivocal must in our society. Everyone must get behind women's football going forward. State government, local government – we all have a role to play in providing more women's football facilities.

Mildura Toy Library

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:49): I rise today to congratulate the committee of the Mildura Toy Library, who reopened their city campus last week in their new venue at Mansell Reserve. A huge amount of work has gone into this, but I am sure you will agree that this new space is a perfect new home. Thanks also to the Mildura Rural City Council for helping make it a reality.

Great Australian Vanilla Slice Triumph, Merbein

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:50): Congratulations also to the committee who are responsible for the Great Australian Vanilla Slice Triumph, Merbein, held in Merbein recently. It is a magnificent free community event with snot-blocks from all over the country entered to be declared Australia's best. So I concede to the member for Shepparton and Shepparton's North End bakery. I congratulate them on the win, as well as Sharp's Bakery in Birchip, who came second, and Sunraysia Bread & Butter Bakery, who won the People's Choice. It was a great day, a free event and, with the cost of living escalating, the free kids activities were magnificent.

Mallee Almond Blossom Festival

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:50): Also congratulations to the Mallee Almond Blossom Festival, which was held the next day to celebrate the explosion of blossom in the largest almond producing region in the Southern Hemisphere. The brilliant family festival has been organised by a team of volunteers every year for 14 years, and this year was no exception. Hopefully the outbreak of varroa mite in some New South Wales beehives close by does not affect the pollination and festivities for next year.

Mildura Senior College and Clontarf Academy

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (09:51): Thank you also to the staff and students at Mildura Senior College and the Clontarf Academy for inviting me in for morning tea, a chat with the boys and to get smashed on the pool table by teenagers. I love the work the Clontarf Academy does, with its real-world outcomes.

Roy Picone

Melissa HORNE (Williamstown – Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:51): Today it is with a heavy heart that I stand here to profess my sincere condolences but also my profound gratitude for the remarkable life and enduring contribution of Roy Picone. In doing so I am confident that I echo the sentiments of many Spotswood residents who share the loss of a truly exceptional member of our community. Roy was born in 1928, the same year that Spotswood Football Club was formed. When he was one his family settled on Robert Street, where he resided until his final days, in the same house, in the same neighbourhood, surrounded by his community. He did his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at Australian Glass Manufacturers in Spotswood, and during the war he was machining parts for planes instead of the glass container equipment. Roy and his family, like many others in Spotswood, battled through the Depression with resilience and unwavering optimism, and he found ways to raise money and build Spotswood Football Club. He actually hand-made the wicket bails on his lathe for his also-beloved cricket club. The money was raised through card nights and pizza nights, and these communal events not only generated funds for Spotswood Cricket Club and footy club but also for the Royal Children's Hospital appeal raffles. He bound the community so close together, showcasing that extraordinary unity that characterises people of the west. I would like to extend my condolences to Roy's family, friends and colleagues.

Energy policy

Richard RIORDAN (Polwarth) (09:52): I rise this morning to put on the record for my electorate the dire warnings that the Australian Energy Market Operator have put out to the community in today's press but have been trumpeting now for quite some time. Victoria's energy stability is heading into crisis mode. This government, the Labor government, has failed to systematically organise in a clear, transparent way the way renewable energy will power this state into the future. We are seeing incredibly long delays in getting infrastructure in place, such as transmission lines and other infrastructure, to make sure that the energy will be there into the future. Why is this important? Because an electorate like Polwarth relies heavily on an energy supply that is regular, uninterrupted and affordable. Whether it is the dairy industry, the timber industry or agricultural manufacturing, they all rely on endless, reliable, available, accessible energy all the time. It is simply not going to be good enough, and as we come to this summer, when the wind comes into its lighter patterns, with less available energy into the market, we simply cannot leave our tourism communities without power along the coast. Every day lost in kitchens and along the tourist roads is money and income lost to people at crucial, busy times. The dairy industry likewise needs to operate at 3 or 4 o'clock every day. The energy crisis is real. This government is asleep at the wheel, and we need a policy that works.

Werribee Park Heritage Orchard

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (09:54): I will talk about the Werribee Park Heritage Orchard today, which I recently attended with volunteers who are restoring and preserving the orchard on the river flat at Werribee Park Mansion. It was so nice to see the blossoms coming out on the early varieties. There are over 450 varieties there of plants and fruits, including 74 peach varieties, 82 plum varieties, 54 cherry varieties and 58 apple varieties. Of course it is important to preserve all these varieties because they may become the future thing on your shelf, but even better, you can taste them and eat them there at Werribee Park mansion. They had a terrific day at the heritage fruit tree festival on the 13th.

Helen Welsh

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (09:55): I want to pay tribute to Helen Welsh, on another matter, a teacher of 45 years and the assistant principal at Alamanda K–9 College. She has been with the school since 2013 and has served our community so well for more than 45 years but through 45 years of teaching. She started her career in regional Victoria and has been all around the state, including St Kilda, Colac, Cobden and Point Cook, and has been overseas as well to Malaysia at the RAAF base there. She says, ‘You have to love the job – of course you do – to continue in it for 45 years.’ I thank you for your service.

Wyndham Malayalee Community Group

Mathew HILAKARI (Point Cook) (09:55): Finally, I want to pay tribute to the Wyndham Malayalee Community Group, who celebrated Onam recently, which is the Indian harvest festival. There were so many great people there. Thanks to the president Payal Kumar and everybody who is keeping their culture alive.

Rowville electorate sporting clubs

Kim WELLS (Rowville) (09:55): I rise to congratulate the sporting groups within my electorate, who have all played incredible seasons. While helping Scoresby footy club on their grand final barbecue, I was fortunate enough to witness the under-14s team from the Lysterfield junior footy club win their final by a nailbiting one point. Congratulations to their coach Matt, the players and all the no doubt very proud parents. I was also very fortunate to attend the junior Wolves presentation night this past weekend, where, after sharing a barbecue with the under-16s coach Mick, I also presented Daniel with his best and fairest award. While on the topic of sporting groups in my electorate, I would like to wish the mighty Rowville seniors all the luck with their semifinals this weekend against Vermont. I would also like to congratulate the Scoresby footy club seniors on making it to the finals. While they may not have made it to the grand final, they left everything out on the field in the preliminaries. Congratulations to all the other sporting clubs in my electorate.

Bass electorate schools

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:57): Enriching our communities for the better, Newhaven Primary raised an amazing \$3000 for Monash Children’s, Camp Quality and Monkey in My Chair in support for student Millie, who is bravely fighting cancer. The love, strength and light vibes were extraordinary. A big cheer to organising teacher Robyn Smith and the hairdressers, and in the magnificent mix of shavees and haircuts were students Tamsin, Kelsey, Yadin, Jaxon, Zac, Nate, Marlin, Declan, Jett and Micah, parent Nick, teachers Liam Jury and Adam Bush and business manager Catherine Rogerson.

It was wonderful to meet student leaders at Bass Coast College San Remo: Olive, Isaac, Olivia, Maddie, Cha Cha, Jaxon and Larnie – insightful, full of ideas, passionate and wanting to bring positive change beyond the bells. They are attuned with what is going on around them and raise priorities and needs important to them. Thank you for the opportunity to sit and listen.

Koo Wee Rup Secondary's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* musical was sensational, with a fabulous performance, stellar orchestra, outstanding production crew – talent galore. I loved Nicholas's presence on stage – it shone so bright.

BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (09:58): My heart sang and my spirit was nourished by attending Cranbourne South BAPS satsang for women by women. Through dance, drama, song and spiritual discourse, young girls – 'balikas' – beautifully narrated the story of Bhojani Aunty. Thank you also to Deepali Patel, Dr Janki Patel and all the wonderful volunteers for this very special afternoon.

Greenvale electorate cultural events

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:58): It is a pleasure to rise to update the house on a very busy few weeks in and around Greenvale. Last Friday I was really grateful to join with the Minister for Corrections and member for Northern Metropolitan in the other place and the federal member for Calwell at St George Chaldean Catholic Parish community centre. I want to thank Father Hani and all of the team at St George for the extraordinary work that they do in supporting the community, particularly from Iraq, who have arrived in Australia as refugees, often having suffered religious persecution, and for the work that they do in supporting that community. I give a particular acknowledgement to the Australian Chaldean Federation and the Australian Chaldean league for the work that they also do to support the Chaldean community in my community.

Recently as well I had the privilege of celebrating Onam at Broadmeadows town hall, and I thank Jesu Jacob and all of the volunteers who worked so hard through Ente Keralam to make these celebrations of Malayali culture and tradition just so happy and so welcoming to so many people across the community. I am really delighted the Victorian government was able to support that fantastic event with an investment of \$20,000.

Craigieburn War Memorial

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (09:59): In concluding, I want to also thank the committee of the Craigieburn War Memorial and remembrance site for the work that they do. It was a pleasure to join them at Vietnam veterans memorial day a fortnight ago, and I thank them.

Narre Warren North electorate sports clubs

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (10:00): I rise today to celebrate and acknowledge the vibrant spirit of local AFL and netball clubs. I attended numerous events at different football clubs in my electorate on the weekend, and the sense of community was amazing. On Saturday I went to the Hallam Hawks football and netball club's ladies day, so thanks to Paris and the girls for looking after me. A huge congratulations to Amy, Casey and Jaymee for making the women's division 2 team of the year and to coach Dean for being named the assistant coach. A massive congratulations to all the teams who played at the weekend, particularly to the Hallam Hawks B grade netballers for securing the win for the last round of the season.

I also dropped in to the Narre Warren Football Netball Club, where I watched the A grade netball and the senior men's and I bought some cupcakes from the stall, which were very, very nice. A huge congratulations to Kate Dowling, who celebrated her 300th netball game, the first in the history of the club. On Sunday I headed down to the Endeavour Hills Senior Football Club, who were hosting the southern league women's grand final. Rex and the team did an amazing job on the barbecue and a very, very busy canteen, where I did have some steamed dim sims. Hats off to the Casey Thunder for taking home the flag against Narre South Saints. Good luck to both Endeavour Hills footy club and Narre Warren Football Netball Club for all the finals this weekend. I am proud to represent an electorate that has amazing local football and netball teams, and I know firsthand how important these local clubs are to our community.

Veterans Card Victoria

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:01): I was delighted to join the Minister for Veterans at our local RSL to promote the veterans card last week. The veterans card offers a variety of perks designed to give back to those who served our country. Thanks to Harry the terrific treasurer and Graeme the president of the Sunbury RSL for having us – and keep up the great work. I was also delighted to then join the Minister for Veterans as well as the minister for fishing, to restock Spavin Lake, a local hotspot for the Sunbury fishing community –

Katie Hall interjected.

Josh BULL: a hotspot indeed, member for Footscray – and remind veterans card holders about free fishing licences and their benefit.

Voice to Parliament

Josh BULL (Sunbury) (10:02): It was also terrific to join federal Senator Jana Stewart and federal member for Hawke Sam Rae at the recent Voice forum held at the Sunbury global learning centre, a terrific Q and A session, one that I was very proud to be a part of – a terrific turnout of our local community, with some really important discussion around Voice. Obviously the Prime Minister yesterday made an announcement in relation to the very important date for the referendum. We know of course we get better results for Aboriginal communities when Aboriginal people have a direct say on decisions affecting them, and that is why this government, the Andrews Labor government, supports the very important yes vote.

Welcoming the Babies

Katie HALL (Footscray) (10:02): Next week in Melbourne's inner west we are welcoming the babies. I am all too familiar with the challenges of being a new parent, as are thousands of residents in my electorate each year, with I think 6000 babies born at the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital last year. From sleepless nights to the perils of fitting a car seat properly, for many new parents finding help and services available to them can be difficult amidst the challenges of caring for a newborn. That is why I am hosting Welcoming the Babies on 8 September at the Seddon Uniting Church to provide new parents with a one-stop shop for all their newborns' needs – and up to two-year-olds and toddlers. Attendees will receive a certificate officially welcoming their baby to the electorate, and they will have the chance to connect with a range of services, from car seat fitting to mental health support. We will have stalls from the amazing Tweddle children's hospital, PANDA, local childcare services, the toy library and bush kinder, and the Country Women's Association will be providing cakes. I hope that by giving new parents the opportunity to equip themselves with the tools to make their lives and the lives of their babies as stress-free as possible they can focus instead on creating long-lasting memories with their loved ones.

Chinese Association of Victoria

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:04): I was delighted to represent the Premier and my colleague the member for Bayswater at the Chinese Association of Victoria's gala ball on the evening of 26 August. For over 40 years the Chinese Association of Victoria has provided a focal point for the community through its many sporting and cultural activities and sought to promote Chinese language and heritage. I would like to thank president Boon Chuan Tay, vice-president and gala convenor Christina Chia, secretary Dominic Au-Yeung and all the committee and volunteers for their hard work and dedication over many years. Congratulations on a successful event.

Dementia Action Week

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:05): 18 to 24 September is dementia awareness week, and I am pleased to advise the house that my office will be hosting a dementia information forum on Thursday 21 September at Box Hill town hall. Dementia is a serious chronic disease that can involve a loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and physical function. More than 400,000 Australians are

living with dementia, and dementia has recently overtaken coronary heart disease as the leading cause of burden of disease and premature death in people aged over 65. The forum will include representatives from Dementia Australia and Umbrella Dementia Cafes as well as world-leading researchers who will give an insight about current advances in research, early detection and treatment. The forum is open to all, and I invite all those interested to contact my office.

Box Hill Hawks Football Club

Paul HAMER (Box Hill) (10:05): Finally, I agree with the Treasurer on most things, but on the VFL I beg to differ. I cannot be supporting the Werribee Tigers this week. All I can say is: go Box Hill Hawks!

Barton United Football Club

Pauline RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (10:06): I was really pleased to have the opportunity last Sunday to visit the Barton United Football Club. This is a really important club, with 14 teams and lots of people who speak Dari. Last night my office went down there to support them with their last chance with the power saving bonus, with Dari speakers as well. I really want to thank the president and all the committee for the way that they support the community.

Business of the house

Notices of motion

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (10:06): I advise that the government does not wish to proceed with notices of motion 1 and 2, government business, today and ask that they remain on the notice paper.

Bills

Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023

Statement of compatibility

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:07): In accordance with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 I table a statement of compatibility in relation to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023.

Opening paragraphs

In accordance with section 28 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, (the Charter), I make this Statement of Compatibility with respect to the Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023 (the Bill).

In my opinion, the Bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the Charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The Bill repeals the *Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority Act 2004* (ESTA Act) to modernise Victoria's triple zero emergency communications service, through the establishment of Triple Zero Victoria.

Human Rights Issues

The following rights are relevant to the Bill:

- the right to equality and protection against discrimination under section 8;
- the right to privacy as protected by section 13;
- the right to freedom of expression under section 15(2);
- the right to take part in public life under section 18;
- the right to property under section 20;
- the right against self-incrimination under section 25(2)(k);
- the right not to be tried or punished more than once under section 26.

For the reasons outlined below, I am of the view that the Bill is compatible with the Charter because, to the extent that some provisions may limit human rights, those limitations are reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Right to equality

Section 8(3) of the Charter provides that every person is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination.

Section 8(2) of the Charter also provides that every person has the right to enjoy his or her human rights without discrimination. The term ‘discrimination’ referred to in section 8(3) of the Charter is defined as:

discrimination (within the meaning of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*) on the basis of an attribute set out in section 6 of that Act.

‘Profession, trade or occupation’ is a protected attribute in section 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act, which may be relevant to the Bill. The Equal Opportunity Act does not define ‘profession, trade or occupation’, however a fair reading would suggest that this section protects Victorians who face discrimination and stigma because of their employment.

Section 18(1) of the Charter provides that every person has the right and opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs. Section 18(2)(b) of the Charter provides that every eligible person has the right and opportunity, without discrimination, to have access on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.

Eligibility for membership of the Triple Zero Victoria Board and Operational Committee

Clause 19 of the Bill governs the membership of the Triple Zero Victoria Board. This provision specifies the eligibility for appointment to the Board, including the appropriate knowledge and experience. Clause 19(6) of the Bill provides that a person is not eligible to be appointed to the Board if the person is an employee of an emergency services organisation, an employee of Triple Zero Victoria, an employee of a related services organisation, or a member of a board of an emergency services organisation or a related services organisation.

Clause 42 of the Bill establishes an Operational Committee to advise the Triple Zero Victoria Board on range of matters relevant Triple Zero Victoria’s functions. Clause 52 of specifies the membership of the Operational Committee, including up to three persons appointed by the Triple Zero Victoria Board. Clause 52(3) provides that a person appointed to the Operational Committee must not be a member of the Board, an employee of Triple Zero Victoria or an employee of an emergency services organisation.

These provisions may limit the rights to equality and public life by excluding people by reference to their employment with specified agencies, being Triple Zero Victoria and emergency services organisations. However, to the extent that these rights are limited, I consider that these limitations are minor, and are reasonable and demonstrably justified.

These provisions are necessary to promote the intent of the reforms and ensure the independence of the Triple Zero Victoria Board and Operational Committee. The provisions do this by removing any real, potential, or received conflicts of interest of members eligible for appointment. The provisions also ensure that key governance roles within Triple Zero Victoria are held by people with a diverse range of relevant skills and experience external to the organisation. I also note that the Bill does not prevent the Minister from appointing former officers or employees of the relevant organisations.

Right to privacy

Section 13 of the Charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully and arbitrarily interfered with and the right not to have their reputation unlawfully attacked.

Collection and sharing of information

Clause 62 of the Bill provides that Triple Zero Victoria may collect information for the purposes of performing its functions and exercising its powers. The information includes health information, personal information, an identifier, or a unique identifier, obtained from a relevant person or organisation.

‘Health information’ is defined in section 3(1) of the Health Records Act 2001 to include, in general terms, information or an opinion about a person’s physical, mental, or psychological health, disability, health services provided or to be provided, or other personal information obtained during the course of providing a health service.

An ‘unique identifier’ is defined in section 3(1) of the Victorian Data Sharing Act 2017 to include an identifier (usually a number and other than the person’s name) used by organisations to identify individuals for the purposes of operations of the organisation beyond the scope of the ‘identifier’ defined in the Health Records Act.

‘Personal information’ is defined in section 3(1) of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 to mean any information or opinion, whether true or not, that is recorded in any form, about an individual whose identity is apparent or can readily be ascertained, from the information.

Clauses 60 and 61 of the Bill impose obligations on Triple Zero Victoria to share that information. Specifically, Triple Zero Victoria will be required to provide to relevant persons or organisations within 45 days or within another period agreed to by Triple Zero Victoria and the relevant person or organisation, where that person or organisation requests information that:

- relates to call taking and dispatch services or operational communications services provided by TZV, and
- is relevant to the performance of the functions of the person or organisation.

Triple Zero Victoria must also voluntarily disclose information to a relevant person or organisation that relates to the performance of the functions of the person or organisation.

The collection and sharing of information under the Bill may give risk to a prima facie interference with the privacy of individuals including, but not limited to, triple zero callers and responding emergency services personnel.

However, I consider that any such interference with the privacy of an affected individual is not an ‘unlawful and arbitrary’ interference. The Bill clearly specifies the circumstances in which collecting and sharing information is lawful, including by explicitly providing that the provisions do not affect existing key information privacy legislation.

The provisions under the Bill are also not arbitrary as collection and sharing of information serves the legitimate aim of supporting effective emergency response and assistance. For these reasons, in my view any interference with privacy is therefore neither unlawful nor arbitrary, such that the right to privacy is not limited by the provision.

Reporting to the Operational Committee, Justice Secretary and Minister for Emergency Services

Part 7 of the Bill also sets out a range of mandatory reporting requirements in relation to a broad range of information. The mandatory reporting requirements include that:

- that Triple Zero Victoria must report to the Operational Committee on matters impacting the performance of emergency services organisations
- that the Board must report to the Minister and the Justice Secretary in relation to the performance of Triple Zero Victoria
- that the Chief Executive Officer must report to the Minister and the Justice Secretary on a range of matters impacting the performance of Triple Zero Victoria
- that the Chief Executive Officer must report to the Board on a range of matters impacting the performance of Triple Zero Victoria.

The scope of the matters required to be reported under Part 7 of the Bill are broad, including specific risks that might impact the operations or performance of services delivered by Triple Zero Victoria. However, this is unlikely to capture the communication of information that could reasonably impact the privacy of a particular individual.

In any event, as the Bill will authorise mandatory reporting within clearly defined legislative parameters, any indirect interference with privacy is not unlawful. In addition, the interference would not be arbitrary, as the reporting framework supports the intent of the reforms that is necessary for ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services provided by Triple Zero Victoria.

Disclosing pecuniary interests

Clause 30 of the Bill requires that a member of the Triple Zero Victoria Board or delegate disclose the nature of any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a matter being considered, or to be considered, by the Board. The disclosure must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The Bill creates an offence for failing to disclose the interest as soon as practicable after the member or delegate becomes aware of the matter.

These provisions may have the practical effect of compelling members and delegates to disclose pecuniary interests, most likely including information about the person’s personal or financial affairs. This may interfere with the Board member or delegate’s right to privacy.

However, any such interference with the right to privacy would not be unlawful nor arbitrary. The requirement to disclose pecuniary interests is clearly and narrowly confined to only when a potential conflict of interest

might arise. This provision is also necessary to ensure the integrity of Triple Zero Victoria Board decisions, by removing any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest held by members and delegates.

Freedom of expression

Section 15(2) of the Charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression. This includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds – whether orally, in writing, in print or by way of art or other medium. This right is considered to embrace a right of access to information, particularly in relation to information held by public bodies.

Clause 63 of the Bill places limits on recording, using, and disclosing any information acquired in the performance of the person's functions or the exercise of the person's powers under the Bill. This provision makes it an offence to impart any information acquired during the course of Triple Zero Victoria's operations, except as otherwise provided for by the Bill.

The constraints on information disclosure are imposed for the purposes of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of information that relates to people interacting with Triple Zero Victoria, and to ensure the free exchange of information to support the delivery of emergency services. The Bill provides exceptions to enable disclosure of that information, including when subject to any legal requirement or with the consent of the person to whom the information relates.

To the extent that this provision limits the right to freedom of expression, it is a lawful restriction within the meaning of section 15(3) as it is reasonably necessary to respect the rights and reputations of other persons. Any limitation is also reasonable and demonstrably justified to appropriately managing confidentiality and promoting public confidence in the delivery of emergency services.

Property rights

Section 20 of the Charter provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law.

The Bill will transfer rights, assets, liabilities, and obligations from the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) to Triple Zero Victoria. This may affect the property rights of individuals to the extent that they have an existing property or financial relationship with ESTA (e.g. if they are owed a debt).

However, the Bill will transfer all rights, assets, liabilities, and obligations to Triple Zero Victoria without amending, limiting or depriving any person of their existing property interests. On this basis, I consider that section 20 of the Charter is not engaged by provisions contained within this Bill.

Privilege against self-incrimination

Section 25(2)(k) of the Charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence is entitled not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt. Courts have interpreted this right as extending to the right not to be compelled to answer questions, or produce documents, or things, if to do so might tend to incriminate that person. The right will prevent a person against the admission of incriminatory material obtained in subsequent criminal proceedings.

Part 7 of the Bill sets out a range of mandatory reporting requirements in relation to a broad range of information, including specific risks that might impact the operations or performance of services delivered by Triple Zero Victoria.

Clause 60 and 61 of the Bill also includes mandatory information disclosure provisions that require Triple Zero Victoria to provide information when requested by relevant persons and organisations, including Victoria Police, the Inspector-General of Emergency Management and Safer Care Victoria.

These provisions may engage the privilege against self-incrimination, in the unlikely event that any information is subsequently used against a person in criminal proceedings.

However, I consider that there is no such limitation of this right. Predominantly the disclosure and reporting provisions apply to Triple Zero Victoria or the Triple Zero Victoria Board more broadly, rather than natural persons to which this right protects. While there are two provisions that impose disclosure obligations specifically on the Chief Executive Officer of Triple Zero Victoria, the Bill does not create any coercive mechanisms that work to compel disclosure of information, such as associated criminal offences for a failure to disclose or report information. The Bill also does not require the Chief Executive Officer to provide testimonial evidence, information on any subject matter or to answer any questions asked of them. Rather, the Chief Executive Officer is required only to report on matters specified in the Bill, including any inquiry into the performance of Triple Zero Victoria, how Triple Zero Victoria is meeting agreed performance standards, and any issues of public concern or risks affecting Triple Zero Victoria.

For these reasons, I do not consider that the relevant provisions under this Bill limit the privilege against self-incrimination.

Right not to be tried or punished more than once

Section 26 of the Charter provides that a person must not be tried or punished more than once for an offence in respect of which they have already been convicted or acquitted in accordance with law.

The Bill imposes additional consequences flowing from the commission or possible commission of an indictable offence for members of the Triple Zero Victoria Board. Clause 23 provides that the Minister must recommend removal of a Board member from office, if the Board member has been convicted of an indictable offence in Victoria, or an indictable-equivalent offence if it was committed in Victoria. Clause 22 similarly provides that the Minister may recommend the suspension of a Board member from office if the Board member is under investigation for an indictable or indictable-equivalent offence.

While these provisions might appear relevant to this right, section 26 does not operate to prevent other non-penal consequences from flowing from the same conduct that gave rise to a criminal conviction and punishment.

Removal or suspension of a Board member from office in these circumstances does not constitute a penal measure. Removal from office is not a consequence that is ordinarily available to courts in response to a conviction for a criminal offence. Further, these provisions are intended maintain the proper governance and administration of Triple Zero Victoria, by ensuring that Board members are fit to hold office and make decisions impacting the delivery of critical public services.

On this basis, I consider that section 26 of the Charter is not engaged by provisions contained within this Bill.

Second reading

Anthony CARBINES (Ivanhoe – Minister for Police, Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Racing) (10:08): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I ask that my second-reading speech be incorporated into *Hansard*.

Incorporated speech as follows:

The Triple Zero Victoria Bill 2023 is a major component of the reform of Victoria's triple zero service. The reform commenced in response to independent reviews into the capacity, capability, service delivery and financial sustainability of the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority also known as ESTA. The *Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority Capability and Service Review*, also referred to as the Capability and Service Review and the *Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) 's Ambulance Call Answer Review* referred to as the IGEM Review, both noted the sustained increase in demand on ETSA's call-taking and dispatch capabilities, while finding that the governance arrangements and partnerships with the emergency services sector were not operating as intended.

The Capability and Service Review made 20 recommendations to transform ESTA's governance, call-taking and dispatch (CTD) service, technology and managed services, intelligence services and performance standards, to address systemic issues within the organisation.

IGEM made eight recommendations, 42 findings and nine observations that speak to opportunities to ensure the sustainability of ESTA's operations into the future, improve patient outcomes, and restore confidence in ESTA's services. These recommendations align with those from the Ashton Review, specifically regarding governance, collaboration, performance standards, enhanced service delivery and training.

The Triple Zero Victoria Bill strengthens the governance, accountability and oversight of Victoria's triple zero service, formalising a genuine partnership across the emergency services sector and brings the new entity closer to government.

The Bill will repeal the current *Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority Act 2004* and ESTA, its Board and Advisory Committee will cease to exist upon the commencement of the Triple Zero Victoria Act. In its place will be a new entity, Triple Zero Victoria, a statutory authority with a sustainable and enduring organisational framework, that has clearly defined roles and accountabilities to support strong internal governance and with strengthened government oversight.

The focus of Triple Zero Victoria will be on delivering high quality and timely call taking and dispatch services and operational communications services. The new legislation is explicit in this focus, which will enable Triple Zero Victoria to support emergency services organisations to respond to community need and manage call taking and dispatch in times of peak demand.

The Bill enables the Minister for Emergency Services to confer additional functions related to the emergency management sector on Triple Zero Victoria, where it would be sensible to do so, and for the time specified in the Ministerial Order. An example of this is non-emergency patient transport booking and dispatch services,

which ESTA currently manage on behalf of Ambulance Victoria. Orders will be made to ensure that existing functions carried out by ESTA will be undertaken by Triple Zero Victoria from the first day of operation, to allow for a seamless transition.

Governance

The Triple Zero Victoria Bill has achieved the intent of the key recommendations in the Capability and Service Review and the IGEM Review to implement organisational change to bring the new Triple Zero Victoria entity closer to government. The Bill provides stronger governance with explicit responsibilities for the Triple Zero Victoria Board and CEO. The Bill also provides for strengthened oversight of the Board and the CEO by the Minister and the Justice Secretary.

The Triple Zero Victoria Board has a clear legislated focus on setting the strategic direction for Triple Zero Victoria, management of risks, setting the organisational framework and culture and ensuring the delivery of agreed performance standards.

In the event of underperformance by the Board, the Minister has the power to appoint up to two delegates to the Board in order to improve and strengthen the performance of Triple Zero Victoria.

Victoria is unique in Australian jurisdictions in that the triple zero call taking and dispatch service is managed by a central organisation, and not by individual emergency services organisations. Therefore the cooperation, coordination and partnerships between Triple Zero Victoria, emergency service organisations and government are paramount to ensure appropriate responsiveness to community health and public safety needs.

The Bill strengthens the cooperation and partnerships between Victoria's triple zero service and the emergency services sector. The Bill provides for the establishment of the Operational Committee which ensures that emergency services organisations and key government departments are engaged in the setting and delivery of strategic priorities of Triple Zero Victoria.

The Operational Committee will set inter-agency strategic priorities which will provide a strong foundation to explore and address critical aspects of the services delivered by Triple Zero Victoria to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The identification of known risks that may impact emergency services organisations, Triple Zero Victoria or the community will be an important role for the Committee who will have the opportunity to provide the Board with advice on how these can be mitigated.

Government Oversight

Recognising that Triple Zero Victoria must be more integrated with government, the Board must report to the Minister for Emergency Service and the Justice Secretary, at intervals set by the Minister or Justice Secretary about the performance of Triple Zero Victoria. The issues that the Board must report on include any concerns about Triple Zero Victoria's performance, particularly in relation to the impact this could have on community safety, the ability of emergency services organisations to deliver their services or the services delivered by Triple Zero Victoria. Identification, management and mitigation of risks to services are also matters that the Board must report on.

A key part of the reform package is to ensure that there is a clear relationship between the Minister for Emergency Services and the CEO which does not conflict with the Board's relationship with the Minister for Emergency Services. While it is not intended that there be formal reporting lines to the Minister for Emergency Services, it is contemplated that the CEO will engage directly with the Minister for Emergency Services where necessary. The Bill also allows the CEO to engage with the Justice Secretary in these circumstances. This will enable the Minister, the department and the CEO to engage with one another when necessary, without having to await formal Board approval for each interaction. This is expected to be particularly beneficial at times of crisis.

In order to remove any ambiguity about how the interface between Triple Zero Victoria and government should operate, the Bill sets out role and powers of the Minister for Emergency Services. Some of these powers, such as the approval of an organisational strategic plan or the selection of Board members, must be exercised in consultation with the Minister for Ambulance Services and the Minister for Police. This will ensure that the needs of all emergency services organisations are considered.

In order to strengthen the relationship between Triple Zero Victoria and government, the Justice Secretary has legislated accountabilities. This includes directions powers limited to administrative functions such as strategic planning and policies, workforce management and financial management. The Justice Secretary will also be required to endorse Triple Zero Victoria's budget prior to approval by the Board. This is an important step in strengthening the financial sustainability of Triple Zero Victoria.

Both Reviews recommended that Victoria's triple zero service becomes more accountable by considering the performance of triple zero services in the context of an 'end-to-end' process of incident management. This will drive behaviours which encourage efficiencies while reducing the focus on targets which do not directly

measure the quality or outcome of a service to emergency services organisations or the community. The Capability and Service Review also recommended that the responsibility for approving performance standards is shifted from the IGEM.

The Bill includes provisions that empower the Emergency Management Commissioner to set performance standards that are endorsed by the Minister for Emergency Services. These outcome-based standards will be developed in consultation with Triple Zero Victoria, emergency services organisations, government departments and any other related organisation. These performance standards will be reviewed at least every five years in order to ensure that the standards remain fit for purpose as the Triple Zero Victoria entity matures, the needs of the Victorian community alter and technology changes.

Independent monitoring and assurance of the performance standards will continue to be the responsibility of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management. Where performance standards relate to Ambulance Victoria or the health services sector, the IGEM will be required to consult with Safer Care Victoria.

Triple Zero Victoria will be required to publish data relating to these performance standards on its website, to further strengthen transparency and oversight.

Fees

Under the new legislation Triple Zero Victoria will no longer receive annual revenue through a fee for service model and there is no provision for Triple Zero Victoria to charge fees for their services in the future. The Bill does not prevent Triple Zero Victoria from entering into a contractual arrangement or agreement that includes charges. Moving towards a direct appropriation model will also create financial certainty for the emergency services organisations.

I commend the Bill to the house.

James NEWBURY (Brighton) (10:08): I move:

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Ordered that debate be adjourned for two weeks. Debate adjourned until Thursday 14 September.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Debate resumed on motion of Mary-Anne Thomas:

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

Jade BENHAM (Mildura) (10:08): It is nice to rise again in reply to the budget take-note motion. I have said previously that this budget is one that really hits Victorians hard, especially those in regional and rural Victoria. With the new and increased taxes, honestly, is it any wonder the cost of living is getting out of control and putting pressure on Victorian families? The jobs tax, holiday tax, health tax, school tax and land tax – this budget is hitting Victorian families hard. It hits hard for mum-and-dad investors, who mostly only own one additional property – one additional to the one they currently live in. They make up 80 per cent of the rental market. Those savvy investors might be paving the way for their own retirement or for their kids' education, or it is just good future planning as a solid investment. We talk about a housing crisis and a rental crisis – of course there is when investors like these are jumping ship at an alarming rate of knots from the long-term rental market because it has all got too hard. So let us add a land tax; let us make sure that small investors want to get out of the market and take those rental properties with them. What this budget should have done to tackle the rental crisis is incentivise landlords to keep those properties on the long-term rental market, but it has done quite the opposite.

This budget also hits hard for anyone who gets sick or injured in the Sunraysia region, with the Mildura Base Public Hospital – which I have spoken about a couple of times in this place – ignored by the Andrews Labor government since being returned to public hands. It was ignored in the election campaign and ignored in the budget, and now the public are being ignored with the hiding of the master plan. It also hits hard for GP clinics, who, despite what the government is saying, are now being

hit with a health tax. I have been talking to my GP this morning to get some clarity around this in simple terms. It did not take much for him to go on a bit of a rant about this, and he has sent me some articles from *Australian Doctor*. It is putting pressure on GPs by putting them in the crosshairs over this payroll tax. Now, let us explain this like they did in *Australian Doctor*. They said they lay out factors that determine whether GPs are treated as employees, rather than contractors, for tax purposes, including leave entitlements, rostering and whether a GP can work in other practices. Given that our GPs are running a priority primary care clinic from three different clinics, that could affect that service as well. It is an absolute joke. It is putting more and more pressure on our GPs at a time when we can least afford it. This particular doctor said other states:

... are looking after and protecting GP clinics (not Vic ...)

He also said, and I will read from the conversations that I have had:

Stressful topics like payroll tax, auditing, legislation associated with same ... all these topics add more stress and pressure to already overworked rural GP's and takes time away from what they do best – seeing Patients ...

These words are straight from a GP literally 10 minutes ago.

This budget also hits hard for those of us that drive out on crumbling, potholed roads each and every day with our families in the car and our children having to dodge trucks that are only getting bigger and bigger. Meanwhile the roads are crumbling further and further and getting narrower. I have said it before: we do not drive on the left side of the road in Victoria anymore, we drive on what is left of the road, because that is quite literally true. That is what is going on – less money for road resurfacing and road maintenance. So that old saying has never been more true.

It also hits hard if you are one of our magnificent CFA volunteers, and I want to send a shout-out to our amazing CFA volunteers, who do a wonderful job. They do feel like – again, I have been talking to some local CFA members – they have had the absolute soul ripped out of the organisation and struggle even to get a bottle of water whilst they are out fighting fires. But they understand that the CFA is the backbone of small communities. We could not be without them, because that is all we have got in small towns, and sometimes in some of the towns that you drive through in my electorate that is all that is there. In Annuello, for example, that is all that is left, the CFA station. And we need these volunteers; we should be looking after them. So I do want to send a big shout-out to our CFA volunteers, coming into what experts and scientists tell us is going to be our most dangerous fire season ever. The member for Gippsland East spoke about that yesterday, and it was fascinating, the science behind the fuel loads and how scientists are telling us it is going to be a terrible summer and we will burn again. So my thoughts are already with the CFA volunteers.

It also hits hard for businesses who have been battling WorkCover premium increases, payroll tax and other cash-grabbing exercises that this government throws at small business time after time after time. I know this from having been a small business owner previous to this role for the past 12 years and how hard it got. You literally felt like throwing in the towel after COVID, floods and the battle it is every day to run a business in Victoria. They keep getting slogged again. Rural and regional Victorians are among the most resilient people on earth, but there is only so much we can take.

When you think about the history of the Mallee, the Millewa and the Wimmera and how people like my great-grandfather and my grandfather settled and farmed there, before technology, without water and without connection to the river, it was some of the harshest, driest country in Australia. They literally got on the train and jumped off in the middle of the desert. It was hard, but they fought through it, and now we have some of the most innovative farmers in the country, both in dryland farming and in horticulture, producing the food that every single person in here eats every single day – without giving those people a second thought.

Dryland farming innovation is largely led by the Grains Research & Development Corporation and the Birchip Cropping Group in our region, who I was lucky enough to be out in the field with a couple

of weeks ago. But they too need more investment. Their next flagship project, which the Nationals had committed to during the election, is the Nexus project, which will not only build accommodation suites for professionals, teaching staff and researchers but a state-of-the-art lab space so we can keep innovating in this space, because it is vitally important.

My point is that country people are full of fight, and I have said this in this place before. We are full of fight – and I say it again because it is true. We are full of fight, and we will keep fighting. We have not got a choice, although up on the border there is actually a choice and people are – we see it every day – taking their businesses and their homes over the river, where life is just a little bit easier. It is very, very easy for them to do so, because it is literally a 5-minute drive. But we will keep fighting – fighting for our right to live our lives the way we want, not the way this government dictates that we should. That is how regional and rural Victorians are feeling right now. We are full of fight because it is in our blood – against all odds, fighting and surviving. Not only surviving, but thriving, is in our blood, just like those that settled the Mallee in the first place.

This budget really is one that makes it clear that this government does not actually want you to own anything. They want you to own nothing and be happy with that. Well, we are not happy with that. We have worked too hard for too long now to throw in the towel.

Meng Heang TAK (Clarinda) (10:17): I am delighted to rise today to speak on the Victorian budget 2023–24. It is an honour and a privilege to support yet another amazing budget from the Andrews Labor government – one that is doing what matters for our great state and doing what matters for Clarinda in the south-east. It is very exciting for our community and for all Victorians.

In November last year we were very fortunate to secure some significant election commitments for our local community, and since the election last year we have been getting on with delivering on those election promises for our community – investing in what matters for the people of Clarinda. We have not wasted a day delivering the services and projects that matter for all Victorians, and with this year's budget we are getting on with doing the things that we said we would do.

The cost of living is a major priority for my community. Utility bills, everyday bills and balancing the family budget are constantly on the minds of families in Clarinda and across the state. What is even better is that my office has been very busy assisting our constituents in applying for the \$250 power saving bonus, and it is good to see the Minister for Energy and Resources at the table. Just as a shout-out, today is the last day, 31 August, and if you have not applied, you have until midnight tonight to apply for that power saving bonus.

Victorians remember the State Electricity Commission, the SEC. It meant a fair deal for power prices and good, stable jobs for workers. That is why we are bringing it back – to drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs in renewable, government-owned energy. An initial \$1 billion investment in the SEC will not just mean more renewable energy, lower power bills and reduced carbon emissions; it will also help to create thousands of jobs.

In the south-east I am very proud of the commitment to our health care. It is another major priority in Clarinda. It has been an honour and a privilege to have the Monash Medical Centre in the Clarinda district for four of the last five years. The latest Victorian Electoral Commission redistributions have seen Monash Medical move to a neighbouring district, to Oakleigh district, but we have done some amazing work since 2018. You, Deputy Speaker, and many others visited the Monash medical precinct many times in the last term and have also visited this term.

We completed the \$76.3 million emergency department expansion and traffic improvement plan, delivered an additional 28 emergency department beds and an extra six short-stay beds as well as refurbishing 41 adult emergency bays. Deputy Speaker, you were there at the openings a number of times. The redevelopment included the addition of the emergency department mental health, alcohol and other drugs hub, as well as a separate, dedicated children's emergency area. This helps to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right environment.

It is an amazing facility. Monash Health is the largest health service in Victoria and sees nearly 5 per cent of the state's emergency cases at the centre in Clayton. I would like to call it a medical hub, but many people have said to me that it is also an employment hub for many of our healthcare workers in that area. Many families in the south-eastern suburbs have a story of visiting Monash Medical Centre and receiving exceptional care. Whether it is for sickness, injury or the birth of a baby – all three of my children were born at the Monash Medical Centre – it has been there for our community. I thank each and every one of the amazing healthcare workers and staff for the wonderful work they do, and they do it day in and day out.

We have delivered and are delivering expanded and improved facilities and enhanced service delivery to meet the needs of our growing local community. That investment in the medical centre continues with this budget, because every Victorian should be able to get the health care they need when they need it close to home. That is why we are starting work on a bigger and better Monash Medical Centre through our \$320 million Hospital Infrastructure Delivery Fund. This funding will kickstart planning, development, land acquisitions and other early work on the project as well as undertaking capital and service planning. This budget is also supporting Radio Lollipop, which operates out of the children's hospital – we had a few photos taken together there – with \$200,000 to provide care, comfort and entertainment to unwell children. A new comprehensive women's health clinic at Monash Medical Centre will change the way women's health issues are treated, providing care and support for all conditions. As we know, the hospital needs to grow and adapt to meet the changing needs of our community, and that is why we have taken the next step to make Monash Medical Centre even better.

I am extremely proud. We have committed to a significant undertaking over the coming years at Monash – a new seven-storey tower above the newly expanded emergency department. The tower will include new operating suites, with up to five theatres and 34 pre-op and post-op beds providing capacity for an extra 7500 surgeries a year. The upgrade will also deliver six extra birthing suites, boosting capacity for an additional 2400 births at Monash every year, as well as refurbishing the existing maternity ward and building a new one that will create up to 64 maternity beds. Further to this, there will be a new intensive care unit. All in all, it is very important for our healthcare service delivery for all in the south-east and across the state. It is simply amazing. I cannot help but mention the heart hospital on Blackburn Road, just a bit out from both your electorate and mine, Deputy Speaker. The facility, the staff and the research that will be done there will be phenomenal for our state.

So we are delivering in health care and we are delivering in education. Clarinda families should have great local schools to send their kids to. That is why we are kickstarting planning to upgrade Clayton South Primary School so students can get the world-class education that they deserve. We remember clearly our election commitment. I was with my good friend the hardworking member for Mordialloc when we made that announcement, and we could not forget the face of the principal at the time. He could not believe that a school like Clayton South in my electorate would get that big commitment. Those opposite only committed to a fraction of that compared to our commitment. The \$12.45 million upgrade to Clayton South Primary School will see a rebuild for the main classroom wing and a new playground also. So this budget starts the school on that amazing journey towards those facilities. This builds on the almost \$400,000 invested in Clayton South Primary School over the last four years. The Clayton South principal Dean Napier, like I said, is a wonderful advocate for his school and his community. This is a very well-deserved commitment and one that will make sure that local families have access to the best school facilities, supporting kids to do the best in the classroom. It was fantastic to meet with Dean, together with, like I said, my good friend, at the time, but I just would like to say not only that our local community deserves dedicated staff and teachers but also that we need to support these facilities for our families and kids. It plays into that employment cluster in the south-east.

There is so much happening in this budget. As we know, we are a vibrant and diverse community in Clarinda, I am proud to say, one of the most diverse in our state. Supporting community events helps our multicultural and multifaith communities to stay connected to their culture, traditions and heritage. In fact it is one of our greatest strengths here in Victoria. It does not matter where you come from,

what you look like, what you believe in or what language you speak, in Victoria we are all proud of our cultural diversity. We welcome diversity and we also celebrate it, and we can see that very clearly in our budget. That is why I am extremely proud of our investments celebrating that diversity. There is a \$100,000 per year commitment for the next four years to support the Lunar New Year celebrations in Springvale. That is \$400,000 for the Springvale Lunar New Year festival to celebrate the food, music, dance, arts and culture of Victoria's Indochinese community.

I just would like to say it is not all about food and it is not all about dance; it is also about supporting our local business community to attract tourists from near and far to visit our place, and that is very important. That is why I would like to congratulate SABA, the Springvale Asian Business Association, and its president Daniel Cheng and all the committee members for many years of commitment to serving and working with all levels of government to deliver the best outcomes to celebrate but also to support small business in our area. SABA is a really important part of Springvale and the broader community.

For the past 20 years the Springvale Lunar New Year festival has delighted and entertained, with thousands of people coming together to enjoy the entertainment and attractions, and we will continue to support these wonderful celebrations of culture and tradition. Like I said, I am extremely proud to see this commitment being delivered, recognising the important events and the importance of celebrating culture and tradition. We will support multicultural and multifaith groups across Clarinda and the south-east with \$250,000 towards a temple community space upgrade at Hoa Nghiem Buddhist Temple, not far from our temple at Bright Moon that tragically caught fire not long ago; \$100,000 towards the Hellenic Community of the City of Moorabbin, not far away from Clayton; \$80,000 towards the South-Eastern Melbourne Vietnamese Associations Council; and further funding support towards our multicultural trading associations.

These commitments are very important. That we invest in quality open and green space is another really important priority for our community, and we hear this really often and strongly. There really is a proud history of defending our open and green spaces, particularly the Kingston Fields green wedge. We have built a strong coalition of groups and individuals working together on this. There is a great deal happening, and we can see it in the budget here with a \$1 million investment for delivery of the master plan for the Kingston Fields. This is exciting for our community, especially in the Dingley Village, now part of the new Clarinda and formerly part of Keysborough, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former member for Keysborough for his efforts, for his dedication and for his commitment for the community in that area. I am very honoured to represent the electorate and the part of Dingley Village that is in Clarinda. I am extremely proud of our record investment in local clubs and multicultural community open space. All the members of our community are included and being looked after in that way.

With this budget we are starting to work on every election commitment that we made to the good people of Clarinda, including a bigger and better Monash Medical Centre with a new women's health clinic – world-class facilities – upgrades for Clayton South Primary School and a huge amount of green and open space and investment in our local sport. As I said, Clarinda is a proud multicultural community that has contributed so much to the south-east, and we are pleased to support them with funding for community space so that they can keep sharing and celebrating their culture and heritage. This goes for all the community groups that provide care, support and service to help our community when they need it most. I am very proud to be part of the Daniel Andrews Labor government with this budget.

Chris CREWETHER (Mornington) (10:32): I rise to speak on the take-note motion for the 2023–24 budget papers. The budget is a horror budget full of cuts and taxes: cuts to education, cuts to Victorian integrity agencies, cuts to mental health services, cuts to community health, cuts to road funding and the cutting of the Commonwealth Games. You name it, and Andrews has cut it. And there are taxes – land tax increases, being a tax on renters; payroll tax, being a tax on employment, WorkCover premium increases; stamp duty increases, being a tax on buying your home; taxes on non-government schools; holiday taxes; and the COVID debt levy, a tax on Victorians for having an incompetent government.

The Treasurer and this Labor government have not only displayed an incredible callousness for Victoria and Victorians but the budget is indicative of a government struggling to keep its head above water, a government where fiscal mismanagement and a rudimentary understanding of economics run riot, firing bad policy after bad policy in every direction, missing all its targets.

Let us talk about debt, to start with. What better place to begin the substance of this debate than the burgeoning debt levels that are crippling this state. Even after imposing billions of dollars in new taxes, cuts all around, pushing the COVID bill onto Victorians and delaying major infrastructure projects, this state's net debt is growing – and growing rapidly. According to Treasury's own predictions, Victoria's net debt will grow from about \$135.4 billion next year to \$171.4 billion by 2026–27, if you can believe the government's figures. A recent forecast by Moody's suggests that we cannot trust the government. Moody's predicts total debt will actually be \$226 billion. That is a \$55 billion difference to the \$171 billion that was in the budget papers just a few months ago. With interest rates potentially rising again, this means that the cost of servicing the debt is going to be even higher, with the interest bill for Victorians expected to rise from \$4.1 billion this financial year to \$5.6 billion next year, or 6.2 per cent of total revenue. At the moment interest payments are around \$15 million a day, which is about \$625,000 per hour. This is expected to grow to over \$20 million a day in a few years time.

Let us compare how many hours and days of interest it would take to budget for some of the commitments that the Liberal and National parties made for the Mornington electorate community during the 2022 election campaign had we been elected, which were for much-needed, long-overdue fixes and upgrades. An initial \$2.5 million for upgrades to Mount Eliza Secondary College – that is 4 hours of interest payments. A full redevelopment of this school for \$30 million could be done in just two days worth of interest payments. Five million dollars for upgrades to Emil Madsen Reserve in Mount Eliza is 8 hours of interest payments, \$5 million for Mornington basketball is another 8 hours and \$2.5 million for Mornington Soccer Club towards major facilities and pavilion redevelopment – that is 4 hours. A new pavilion fit-out at Civic Reserve for \$100,000 is only 10 minutes. Mount Eliza Bowling Club, \$1 million in upgrades – an hour and a half of interest payments. I can go on: \$100,000 for bus shelters and timetables for the 781 and 785 bus route changes to give public transport to 2000 people who do not have it, including residents across two retirement villages, in approximately 10 minutes; \$200,000 for Mount Martha village in about 20 minutes. And \$200,000 for an expanded Main Street Mornington Festival – again, that is approximately 20 minutes of interest payments.

The government claims it is making lots of strongman, tough decisions – more cuts and more taxes for Victorians – yet one of the only things that the Andrews government is not cutting is our state's debt burden. In fact this budget will only stabilise our debt – so much for tough decisions. Remember when the leader of the government made the tough decision to lock us down for the longest period in the world, 263 days – a decision which has drowned Victoria in debt and caused untold, unquantifiable damage to the people of this state.

This government, under this Premier, prides itself on making tough decisions. Lockdowns were a tough decision. This budget was a tough decision. The Commonwealth Games cancellation, though, was not a difficult decision, to quote the words of the Premier – perhaps evidence that this Andrews Labor government is becoming more brazen in its poor decision-making and indeed arrogance after nine consecutive years in power and Labor having been in government for around 20 of the last 24 years. The government does not make tough decisions, it makes ridiculously bad decisions.

On land tax in this budget – this is one of the worst decisions to come out of it – we had the decision to foot the bill for the government's COVID-19 blunders to Victorian property owners and, inevitably, renters. From 1 July 2024 the threshold for Victoria's land tax, which does not of course apply to the family home, will be lowered from \$300,000 to \$50,000. An annual charge of \$500 will also apply to affected properties between \$50,000 and \$100,000 as part of the 10-year COVID levy. A charge of \$975 will apply for property landholdings worth between \$100,000 and \$300,000, while land tax rates for properties above \$300,000 will rise by \$975 plus 0.1 per cent of the land's value.

Victoria is now officially the worst state in Australia to own an investment property or to conduct business in. Victorian landlords are now evicting themselves from the state's property market, racking up the highest share of home sales since at least 2018. In June of this year 29 per cent of sales across the state were landlords getting out, with the landlord exodus being so extreme that less than half the homes that are actually being sold by investors are being replaced by new investments. Such an exodus from the Victorian property market comes with a dramatic reduction in the supply of rental properties. It is like the government has absolutely no clue whatsoever, because this is real estate 101. The main reason why rents have risen dramatically in Melbourne and regional Victoria is because supply is low while demand remains high. Sure, the mass exodus of landlords from the residential property market might see a very short-term drop in house prices, but over the medium and longer term there will just be no or little supply, making the rental crisis even worse. I have in the last two months had, for example, a landlord contact me selling four homes, another three people selling two each and another seven selling one each. All rentals are being sold up, as there is no or little incentive to keep up with Victoria's ridiculously high land tax imposed by this Labor government, while at the same time many often mum-and-dad investors are dealing with rising cost-of-living pressures and rising mortgage interest rates. As a local real estate agent says, 'In 37 years I have never seen such devastation in the rental market.' And he said, 'Our stock for rentals is now 27 per cent down on the same time last year, with loads of landlords wanting to sell up.'

This Andrews Labor government have confirmed that they are working on a housing package that is expected to allow landlords to lift rent only once every two years, and potentially impose caps on any rent increase. Again, such a move would be disastrous for the Victorian property market. This would see rents likely lifted in advance of such a decision, higher raises every two years and decreased rentals over time as more mum-and-dad investors exit the market. Maybe the Premier should go and speak to the social democrats and the Left Party in Germany – they tried, for example, a rent freeze in Berlin in February 2020, which effectively suspended the free market for rental property in the city, stopping most price increases for five years. The result: empty flats, 60 per cent fewer flats on the rental market and the biggest rental price increases in all of Germany. In other words, it was a failure that lasted just over a year. Rent freezes or caps have been tried before, and they have failed.

On public housing, the Andrews Labor government will contribute to the housing supply, right? We will be okay, because the Andrews government has announced a \$5.3 billion housing build, right? I wish that was the case, but we cannot rely on this government to do absolutely anything for us. While the government is busy punishing aspirational Victorians who own investment properties and driving down supply, public housing stock has grown by just 74 in four years in what has been a little build, not the formidable big build it was meant to be. In fact on the Mornington Peninsula, public housing stock has actually gone backwards by a net 13 over the last eight years since the Andrews government came to power, not to mention that, according to reports received by Mornington Community Support Centre, around 30 per cent of this current stock is vacant, sitting empty and not being repaired. Seemingly, not much of the big build has come to the peninsula thus far.

In addition, we have seen the Andrews government announce a \$1 billion Commonwealth Games patch-up Regional Housing Fund, set to cost \$770,000 per home, plus land, to build only 1300 homes. The Mornington Peninsula is classed as metropolitan, as we found out during COVID, even though much of it is further from the city and is less populated than Geelong, so I do not think we will be seeing any homes built locally under this program either. Right across Victoria we have had a massive increase in housing waiting lists due to homelessness, and 1300 extra homes in the regions will not come close to solving this problem.

On homelessness, on the peninsula we have now got the sixth-highest level of homelessness in Victoria. I have actually heard that recently it has gone up to be the fourth highest. The latest figures show that over 67,000 Victorians are waiting urgently for a home or otherwise are in dire need of relocation due to inadequate or unsuitable housing. Numerous Victorians are trapped in limbo as the wait for public housing has hit an all-time high. In comparison, the waiting list was about 34,500 when

the coalition left government in Victoria in 2014 – that is more than 30,000 more people on the waiting list since then. The priority list was 9900 in 2014, and as of March this year it is over 37,000. These are often families with children, not just individuals. So much for the big build – this is a crisis.

We all know that when the Andrews Labor government are going broke, they reach into the pockets of Victorians. They seem to see us as the goose that lays the golden eggs, but we all know how that story ends. Yet they do not just come after our money through taxes, they completely embarrass and humiliate us on the international stage. Of course I am talking about the cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games, which among other things caused a huge blow to Victoria's reputation as a global events leader, likely directly impacting the number of major events and tourists coming to Victoria in the future. This decision was a betrayal of Victoria, particularly regional Victoria, and confirmed that Victoria is broke and that Victorians continue to be punished by a tired and incompetent Andrews government. While the Andrews government continues to waste billions of dollars on major project cost blowouts, like the \$200 billion-plus Suburban Rail Loop, Victorians have had yet another promise ripped out from under them and will be left behind once again.

To conclude, what else does a Labor government do when they have got no money? They target our schools – just when you thought this government could not get worse. We have seen insufficient funds for local kinders and a shortfall for shires or local councils when there is a growth of places due to the free kinder program. Local community kindergartens and preschools are either at risk of closure or not able to accept the increased demand because of state Labor's botched free kinder program. This so-called free kinder program is not being funded properly and is just another cruel hoax by Labor designed to get them through the election. Councils cannot afford the remainder of the costs they will be up for, which has already led to Knox City Council, for example, declaring that they will have to close their local kindergartens and preschools. The funding the state government is delivering is woefully inadequate for the additional services councils are expected to deliver for the community. That is why Knox made that decision. When I met with Mornington Peninsula shire councillors recently, the shire also expressed concerns about being able to fund the shortfall for local community kindergartens under Labor's policy. The shire provides facilities for 28 sessional preschool services, but these facilities require over \$53 million in upgrades to cater for the increased demand, and families will otherwise miss out on taking advantage of this free kinder program and be forced to go elsewhere.

Lastly, I note that on education funding we have seen about 93 per cent of education infrastructure going into Labor-held seats, not distributed according to need – which would include schools like Mount Eliza Secondary College and Mornington Park Primary School. So what do we have? We have a budget with a growing debt, we have growing cost-of-living pressures and we have more taxes and more cuts. This is a budget that is not working for Victorians.

Vicki WARD (Eltham) (10:47): I am far more optimistic about what is happening in this state than the member for Mornington. I think I have got every reason to be far more optimistic about what is happening in the state, because there are absolutely fantastic things happening and nothing more fantastic than of course in the seat of Eltham, this fantastic community that I have grown up in, that I live in and that I love very dearly, and I know they support much of the work of this government. I really do love being able to deliver on the commitments that this government has made to my community as well as to the wider state.

I do want to start with Eltham High School, which is a fantastic inclusive school in my community. I do not think that this state could have finer schools than the schools that I have got, but I particularly want to single out Eltham High because it really does work incredibly hard to be inclusive, and I really shout out to principal Vincent Sicari and his team for the work that they do. We are about to start work on refurbished, inclusive toilets at Eltham High, ensuring that every kid can go to the loo, because we know that there are sometimes reasons why kids will actually hold off and not go. I am really proud of my school and the leadership that they are showing. We are building on the \$100,000 that we gave to Eltham High and the Eltham Wildcats in 2016 to improve change rooms.

A member interjected.

Vicki WARD: Go Wildcats, absolutely – a great basketball club. We have invested over \$5 million for the sports precinct, which is used not just by the school but also by sporting clubs. I have even coached netball on the new courts there. We have also got great clubs like Eltham Football Club who have, incidentally, had a great season this year, with their women's team performing well, and congrats to the Monty women's for winning the grand final. The Eltham under-19 boys are heading into the finals next week; the men's reserve finished top of the ladder and are ready for a great show in the finals; and the men's seniors last weekend won their qualifying final against St Mary's, going into the semifinal next weekend. Go Panthers!

Investment in Eltham High does not stop there. With this budget we are investing nearly \$9 million in science building improvements, and this is going to transform this section of this school. We have got wonderful buildings out the front which were supported by our state government in previous terms in the Bracks–Brumby years. We have got Building the Education Revolution investments under federal Labor governments that have transformed Eltham High School, and with this money that we are investing in the science building, this is going to be an incredible public school that our local families will absolutely love. It is showing our community how much we value education and how much we value public education, because we on this side of the chamber absolutely do. You will never see anyone on this side of the chamber talking down our public schools, putting it out there that kids in public schools are cave dwellers, as we have heard members in the other place do. We are proud of our public schools on this side of the house, and we will do everything we can to continue to not only support our public schools but enhance them, because education is not only important, it actually influences everything that will happen for the rest of your life.

That takes me to our investment in early years. We have invested heavily in early years education because we know absolutely how important the early years are. Not so long ago I was talking to an educator who said the research that they have looked at says that when a kid is 15 you can tell whether that kid has actually gone to kinder or not. You can tell, from what is happening in that kid's life at 15, the exposure to education that they did or did not have at three or four. This shows you exactly how important this is. But it is not even just that we want to help kids with their education, we also want to help families with the cost of living, and this investment that we have got in free kinder will save families up to \$2500 per kid. That is a significant saving and will absolutely encourage families to get their kids to kinder to give their kids the best start in life.

While the member for Mornington might want to talk down our kinders and the amazing work that they do and the facilities that they have got, we are investing \$400,000 into Research Preschool, because we do understand that even in small communities like Research our kids still need to have fantastic facilities. We have transformed Research Primary School, my old primary school – it has got amazing state-of-the-art buildings; it is beautiful – and we are now embarking on the journey to transform Research kinder, and I look forward to seeing all of the work that we will do.

Fun fact: free kinder for three- and four-year-olds this year will have supported around 140,000 kids with their education. This is an amazing amount, and imagine how many families we have also supported through taking that cost off them.

We also had the amazing opportunity of having the Premier visit Research kinder last week, which was fantastic. I think he was blown away by the amount of Elsas that we had out for book week. We also had a Ghostbuster, who was fabulous – one of the best costumes that I have seen. The Premier loved our kinder just as much as I do. We also had the opportunity to read *Where the Lyrebird Lives*, a beautiful picture book written by local author Vikki Conley. She lives in Eltham North. We have got a lot of fantastic writers in our community.

Danny O'Brien: She's from Won Wron. She's a Gippsland girl.

Vicki WARD: And as all good Gippsland people do, she lives in Eltham. His in-laws used to live in Eltham, but they have moved to Gippsland.

We are also investing \$1.5 million in the Eltham Woods childcare co-op, a fantastic community-based childcare centre filled with positive learning and fantastic educators who are working incredibly hard, and we are going to do some wonderful work to transform and expand this childcare co-op.

We are also putting money into the Pat Cronin Foundation, something that I am incredibly happy about.

A member: Great programs.

Vicki WARD: Absolutely, great programs come out of the Pat Cronin Foundation. For those who are not aware, this is an amazingly strong and resilient project that has come out of absolute devastation. I can still see etched on the faces of Pat Cronin's mum and dad the tragedy that they have had to go through with the death of their son through the coward punch that he received. While this happened and was devastating for my community, devastating for everybody who knew and loved Pat, devastating for the football clubs and devastating for the local schools, this family that is so involved in my local community has worked so hard to turn this into something positive. They are out there trying to transform young people, change the way that they act, change the way that they think about themselves and what happens around them and remove the coward punch from the vernacular of people, where they think that whacking someone out of nowhere – or even just whacking someone – is appropriate, because it is not. I commend the Pat Cronin Foundation for all of the incredible work that they do, and I am glad that this government is supporting them. Long may it continue.

I also want to talk about the significant investment that we have had in the Hurstbridge line. This is a bit of a passion of mine, the Hurstbridge line. It is something that I travelled on as a teenager, and it used to drive me insane because of the meandering country feel that we had, where often the department of transport would think, 'It's in the outer suburbs. Not many people live there. There are all the trees. We don't need to put money into it'. Then we got a Labor government in the Bracks–Brumby years who significantly invested in this train line. They duplicated it between Westgarth and Clifton Hill. They put in a hundred million dollars to improve the signalisation and modernise it so that we did not have train guards popping out of the train with that coil thing, handing it over here and then getting back on. We actually had electronic signalling that connected everything. We upgraded the signalling boxes at Clifton Hill. We then duplicated, under the Andrews government, the line between Heidelberg and Rosanna; we got rid of the level crossing. And we have now duplicated the line between Greensborough and Montmorency and built two new stations.

We are also building a shared-use path between Greensborough and Montmorency, and we are now with this budget going to continue it from Montmorency to Eltham, which means that we are putting in the missing link, just as we are doing with North East Link. We are building the missing link with our shared-use path. We are building the missing link between the Diamond Creek Trail and the Plenty River Trail, meaning that you can have access to hundreds of kilometres of paths, which is wonderful news – and it is a game changer for my very hilly community to be able to have a path that is actually pretty flat. So I am especially grateful for this investment by the state government.

We are also upgrading the Diamond Creek dog park, and I can tell you people in my community love their dogs. I also shout out to everybody here: please go and visit the RSPCA – a bit of a segue. I went there earlier this week. There are some beautiful dogs, cats and rabbits up for adoption. Please go out there. Please encourage your communities to adopt these beautiful dogs or even foster. There are dogs that have been rescued because their owners have been negligent. They are in limbo, these dogs. Please go and foster some dogs. If you do not have a lot of room at home, just give a dog a holiday at your place for a bit. Give them a bit of love. Give them a bit of a cuddle. So we are investing in improving the Diamond Creek dog park, and we have also got \$2 million to invest in better access across the Diamond Creek in Eltham North.

What I really love, though, too is how the little things matter, and we are putting \$70,000 to improve facilities at the 2nd Eltham Sea Scouts. The Eltham Sea Scouts are fantastic. Eltham Sea Scouts are just such a beautiful community. I attended their wrap last week. They do amazing things. They are everywhere doing everything all at once, and I love my Scouts and the work that they do. I love my Girl Guides too. They are just phenomenal, and I really wish sometimes that I could go back and do scouting, because they do great stuff. It is so much fun.

We have also invested \$500,000 in the Montmorency Bowling Club. This is a great community club. They look after each other. They support each other. They play bowls, but really it is the social aspect of bowling that is most important, particularly for this age group, where you can feel isolated. They have long been working towards a transformation of their bowling club, and I am especially pleased that this government has been able to work with Banyule council to improve and expand the facilities that are there in the sense of the reconfiguration and refurbishment, which will allow this incredible social club to use their rooms as much as possible.

We have also invested \$320 million into the Austin Hospital's emergency department, which is an absolutely fantastic result. I know I and many people here have taken our kids to emergencies at our local hospitals. I have done it at the Austin – we have managed to have three broken arms with my two kids – and the Austin have always been fantastic. I was there earlier this year, as some may recall, with a dog bite to my arm. The Austin Hospital are just amazing, and I really want to thank them for all the work that they do and the leadership that they show in my community.

Going back to the smaller amounts that matter, we have got \$100,000 for healthAbility, a terrific community health service in my community, who are going to use this money well. Community health is a fantastic resource for local communities and deserves to be well supported by their MPs and by the government. I am also looking forward to the planning that is underway for the mental health and wellbeing hub at Diamond Creek. This is a terrific investment in communities in the north-east, and I know that it will be very enthusiastically received. We are also investing record amounts in women's health, including a \$220 million investment.

But I really want to, in the very short time that is left, talk about free TAFE, because we have put more than 70 courses on the free TAFE list, helping more Victorians get the skills they need for the jobs they want – and this includes pathways to the Big Build, which is creating an incredible amount of jobs. We have expanded eligibility for free and subsidised TAFE and training so all Victorians can study for in-demand jobs – we need more kinder teachers; thank you, free kinder – and we are investing in those studies. We are also supporting students to study nursing and midwifery.

I also really want to talk about bringing back the SEC, the billion-dollar investment that we have in that and the nearly 60,000 jobs that we will create, but really, it is about the \$12 million to develop new VET qualifications and to fund a business case for an SEC centre of training excellence that will deliver on the Victorian energy jobs plan to map out the jobs needed and prepare the workforce to get these jobs done.

This year we recognise the fifth anniversary of the Banyule Nillumbik Tech School, and with this budget we are going to build another six tech schools. My tech school is absolutely fantastic, and I know the communities who will be receiving these six new tech schools will be thrilled to know that they are coming in and that they are going to support over 62,000 students – a terrific investment across our state. Our tech schools are critical in making sure that Victorian students are in line for jobs of the future. We are committed to creating a workforce pipeline to deliver nation-leading investment in clean energy, and this will happen across all of our tech schools in this state. It is a fantastic investment. It is looking to the future of this state and investing in the future, which is what Labor governments do.

Danny O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (11:02): I am pleased to belatedly get the opportunity to speak on the budget and the budget take-note motion, although unlike most in the chamber, I have had

plenty of opportunity through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), like your good self, Acting Speaker Hamer, to interrogate the details of this particular budget – and what a bad, bad budget it is for Victoria. There are plenty of members opposite who will get up and say what wonderful things have happened in their electorates. We can all pluck a few things out from the budget papers that are being funded, particularly in the first year after an election campaign when governments are looking to fund issues in their electorates, and I might come to that in a moment. But for Victorians more broadly, and particularly for regional Victorians and even more particularly for Gippslanders, this is a debacle of a budget: \$171 billion, we are heading for, as state debt. To put that in context: \$22 million a day in interest repayments, we are heading for at the end of this four-year period. That is going to impact on Victorians in both the services they are delivered and the facilities that they receive in terms of infrastructure.

I will go to a few of the things in my local Gippsland South electorate. Sale College is across two campuses. Both of those campuses are getting old and out of date and are in need of upgrade. The school community has been calling, for about six years now, for an upgrade and for consolidation onto one site. To his credit the former Minister for Education, Minister Merlino, actually provided \$3 million funding for some minor upgrades but more particularly for master plan funding for the school. That had got so far that the Victorian School Building Authority was negotiating with Wellington Shire Council about the roads and the area around the proposed new school on the site in Cobains Road. But I did say to them, ‘I don’t know why the shire would be doing that, because it is highly unlikely, in my view, that the state government will fund it.’ Unfortunately, I was correct, because in this budget there is nothing for Sale College to get the facilities that it needs. I put it in the context of the debt and deficit that we are facing with this government – \$22 million a day we are heading for in debt. That would build the new school in three days. In three days we could build a new Sale College for the amount of money that we are paying to our debtors in this state for interest repayments. With interest repayments of \$22 million a day we could have done Sale College in three days. That is just the example that highlights how debt is an issue. I know the government members do not seem to think it is, because it is someone else’s debt and it is productive debt and that sort of thing. Well, a lot of it is not, because it is paying for budget blowouts where the government has mismanaged projects in particular, but most particularly it is because it comes with a cost. It comes with a cost in interest repayments, a recurrent outlay that means that other things cannot be funded.

Right through Gippsland South there are other things that were not done. I have been campaigning for seven years now for fire stations at Foster, Mirboo North and Yarram. Finally, Yarram was confirmed in the budget papers. I do not quite understand how, given that the CFA has already said that they would fund it from their capital upgrade in last year’s CFA budget, but somehow the government has come in and said ‘Well, we’ll claim that’, and it has now put it in the budget papers. That is certainly welcome. I still do not think it has actually had anything to do with the Labor government, because the CFA was doing it anyway. On the other end of the scale, because of the government clawing back funds from the CFA, the proposed funding for Foster and Mirboo North stations has in fact now been cut, I have been advised. I have raised this now with the minister because Foster has land identified. They are ready to go with building something, and now the funds that were set aside by the CFA in their capital budget have been removed, apparently because there is funding being clawed back by the government from the CFA, which is no surprise.

We have seen multiple other issues ignored. We certainly have not seen any addressing of ‘kamikaze corner’, as it is known, in Leongatha – the intersection of South Gippsland Highway and the main streets in Leongatha. There are five or six streets meeting in one spot. That is something that needs to be addressed. The South Gippsland Highway, the Hyland Highway and the Strzelecki Highway all have major issues. They are not being addressed because, once again, the government has cut the roads maintenance budget, and I want to spend a little bit of time on that.

We see in the budget this year the roads maintenance budget going down from over \$700 million last year, revised to \$441 million. Look at the budget papers. It is literally a 25 per cent cut there in black

and white. If you compare it to the peak of roads maintenance spending in 2020, it is now a 45 per cent reduction in the roads maintenance budget. That is an indictment of the government at a time when our roads, I would say, have never been worse. Everywhere I go, whether I am the Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety or not, just as a local member, people tell me how bad their local roads are. People are constantly saying 'I've just come back from South Australia' or 'I've just come back from Queensland, and I drove through New South Wales, and as soon as you cross the border you notice our roads are bad'. The potholes, the ruts, the broken-up shoulders – all of these things are happening because the government has turned its back on roads, particularly rural and regional roads, at a time when we are spending multibillions of dollars on megaprojects in the city and seeing major cost overruns on those projects. There is \$30 billion in cost overruns on the big projects.

Already the government is spending \$54 billion on just four projects in the city: level crossing removals, the Metro Tunnel, North East Link and the West Gate Tunnel, all of which are over budget. Then you throw on top of that the \$54 billion of the Suburban Rail Loop, which is a hastily arranged, back-of-the-envelope project that was announced in 2018. The best we can say is that it is between \$30 billion and \$35 billion for the first stage. That is what the government says, let alone the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who says it is more like \$125 billion for the entire length of it. Not surprisingly, the Parliamentary Budget Officer got the lemonade and sars from the government over that and many others that he had actually produced when he actually told some truths. But there you have multibillions of dollars being spent on these megaprojects in the city, and yet in the country we cannot get a new fire station and our roads are like goat tracks – and it continues to get worse. In the last couple of days I have literally had three different responses from the government on road issues, where when I have complained about a particular issue the government has said, 'Oh, well, we've made that stretch of road subject to a management overlay'. What does that mean? 'We've put up a new speed sign, and we've put some warning signs up' – we do not fix the road, we just put up some signs, and that is a disgrace.

I want to turn to a couple of the other issues now that highlight just how far this Labor Party of today has gone from its blue-collar roots. The decision to axe the timber industry in particular is the most disgraceful public policy decision that I have seen in my time here in Parliament by a long shot – and there have been some terrible ones. When the government gave the industry until 2030 and said that there would be a phase-out, as much as we disagreed with that, as much as the industry disagreed with that, there were plans in place for mills, for harvest and haul contractors and for all the ancillary industries around it to plan for that over the next seven or eight years – or 11 years from the announcement in 2019. For the government to then come in on budget day and say, 'Bang, sorry, all bets are off – 1 January next year you're out' is just absolutely disgraceful and a betrayal of the people that this government used to represent – blue-collar workers in the bush, workers in timber mills, workers hauling logs, workers with trucks and gear, multimillion-dollar investments in those businesses – and has left them absolutely hanging.

At the public accounts and estimates hearings I challenged the Premier on this and asked why the government did not actually legislate to give the industry some protection from the litigation that had been shutting down coupes around the state, and the Premier said, 'Well, we've got legal advice that says we can't do that'. What is the obvious next question? 'Okay, Premier, please provide us with that legal advice.' 'Well, no, I can't possibly do that, Mr O'Brien.' So it is a 'trust us' from the government: 'We've got legal advice that we can't fix the industry.' That is just ridiculous. If there was litigation against the government's plans to remove level crossings or to build the Metro Tunnel, the government would legislate if it needed to to overturn that court action. It refuses to do it for the timber industry because it is more worried about those four people that sit up the back there, the members of the Greens and those others who are under threat from the Greens – and yes, I am looking at you, member for Northcote; we know you are next in line, and we know the member for Footscray is coming soon after that – than the blue-collar workers that it actually used to represent. You do not have to take it from me; take it from a good Labor person like Michael O'Connor from the CFMEU, who has highlighted that this Labor Party has just turned its back on blue-collar workers and traditional industries.

If you want any further evidence of that, have a look at the report tabled today by the committee looking into native bird hunting arrangements. This is a government that once upon a time represented blokes and blue-collar workers who like to go out and do some outdoor pursuits. If this government bans duck hunting now, it will just show that it has absolutely left traditional industries, people who like to get out in the bush and in the wetlands and undertake their traditional industries with their families. It has become completely craven to the Greens, the Animal Justice Party and all the other crazies who do not think we should be doing anything with animals, and frankly with the government's attitude to this it needs to be warned, because do not think it will stop at ducks. Then it will be deer, then it will be killing any animals, then it will be fishing.

Sonya Kilkenny interjected.

Danny O'BRIEN: The minister at the table is not too sure. I mean, the minister at the table at PAEC would not even say whether she supports duck hunting. She would not even say whether she supports fishing, and she is the Minister for Outdoor Recreation. I mean, this government has just turned its back on those traditional supporters, and it is not a surprise that we are seeing the people in country Victoria in particular turn away from them, in places like Morwell, which relies on the timber industry and which relies on the coal industry, and that we have a Nationals member for Morwell sitting here in a seat that the Labor Party once had for nearly four decades. It is because this government has turned its back on it.

We saw other fallacies presented in the budget papers, and if you were actually sitting there listening to the hearings, you would have heard about the SEC fallacy, the greatest sham that we have seen in this term of Parliament, that we are going to bring back the SEC and drive everyone's prices down. What we heard from PAEC is that – despite the Premier saying repeatedly that the government is interested in offshore wind, not offshore profits – well, in fact the SEC is quite open to investing with offshore companies, and the government does not have any particular level set as to what sort of investment profile it would have with some of these companies. It is 12 months down the track, and we still do not have any investment from the SEC in any project. In any event, what we also heard at PAEC is that the government says it will invest in projects that are close to fruition or things that might not otherwise have gone ahead. Well, what is the point of putting taxpayers money into something that is about to go ahead or was not commercial in the first place? This will be a disaster for Victorians. I think the government actually knows it, but it thinks it is on a political winner, so it is going to persist with this, risking \$1 billion of our money, \$600 million supposedly, in this year of the budget. Mark my words, just like the federal Labor Party's commitment to reduce power bills by \$270 – we all know how that has gone – this will be a failure for the Andrews Labor government.

Then we spent quite a few hours at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee discussing how well the Commonwealth Games were going and the preparations for that. We had the minister saying they were going ahead, they were going to be great, there were going to be all of these legacy benefits, there would be thousands of tourists coming to the state, and just a few short weeks later the government came out and canned the whole thing. What a joke, what an embarrassment. How the government could have got its figures so grossly wrong is beyond me. It is just an unbelievable situation.

On top of all of those issues, I have mentioned all the debt, and when you have got that much debt, you have to try and deal with it. Unbelievably, this government has a debt reduction plan that actually sees debt go up. I have never heard of a reduction plan that actually increases something, so debt will continue to increase under the government's debt reduction plan. As a result, we get a rent tax, we get a schools tax, we get a jobs tax, and now we are hearing that through the back door, via a little deal through the State Revenue Office, we are getting a doctors tax as well.

Juliana Addison: What rubbish!

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, if it is rubbish, tell us why the doctors are getting these new bills. That is the simple question for the government, if it is rubbish. This is a government that has sent the state

broke, that has saddled our children and our children's children with further debt, and it stands condemned for that.

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (11:17): I rise to speak in reply to the 2023–24 state budget, and I congratulate the Treasurer and his team on what must have been an incredibly difficult job, but I want to talk about the difference this budget will make for the lives of my communities in the Pakenham district. This budget will help my communities in so many ways. Education is a cornerstone of opportunity in a person's life. Having a great school environment really enhances the learning experience for students. This budget provides a state-of-the-art building upgrade for Pakenham Secondary College. This will be a much-needed investment for those at the college – for students, teaching staff and their families. Students at Pakenham Secondary College deserve a great college with a world-class learning environment. The \$11.3 million investment upgrading block A will give these students the best start to high school. It is fantastic to get the planning underway for this project, and I look forward to regular visits with the college for updates as the Victorian School Building Authority works with the school community. This is one of the promises we made at the last election, and we are getting on and doing what matters. With approximately three families a day moving into my electorate, 21 families a week, the need for schools is critical, and we know that we have a fast-growing area because my new voter welcome letter mail-outs are very significant.

We do not just stop at Pakenham Secondary. The Andrews Labor government has been delivering primary schools since 2014, with eight new primary schools having been built and opened since 2014. I was privileged to officially open Kurrum Primary School in Officer with the Minister for Education in February. One of 13 new schools opened this year across Victoria, Kurrum Primary School has space for 525 students from prep to grade 6. It is a fantastic new school with amazing students and staff, and it has wonderful learning spaces – and a big shout-out to principal Gavan Hughes and the whole school community. I hope they are settling in well, and I look forward to my next visit. More exciting news from the Andrews government budget is a ninth primary school. Pakenham North West will be constructed to open term 1, day one, of 2025. As Pakenham transitions from a township to a growing suburb, the various estates in the north-west of Pakenham – Grandview, Worthington and Mount Pleasant – are gradually filling with new homes. This school will provide the opportunity for children living in the north-west of Pakenham to have their own local primary school and will be built to accommodate, again, another 525 students.

Even more building works are at the near completion stage, with the recently named Kurmile Primary School in Officer under construction, and it will be ready to open in 2024. I had the pleasure of announcing the name on behalf of the minister just recently. It means 'white cockatoo' in Bunurong. Back in May on behalf of the Minister for Education I had the pleasure of announcing Sharon Mitchell as the new school principal, and Sharon is already on the job and will be there ready for her students on day one of term 1 next year.

If you have lost track of the school building activity in the Pakenham district at this point, it is understandable. You would be forgiven, because we are building them at a very fast pace. With nine primary schools being delivered over 11 years, it is just build, build, build in Pakenham. That is a new primary school completed nearly every single year. The spend on education infrastructure is necessary to ensure the future of our children and to give them spaces to learn and grow.

Let us talk about early years education and learning. All children can now attend three- and four-year-old kinder for free, saving families up to \$2,500 per child per year. Our children are getting the best start through this budget initiative, and the government is supporting the local council in my electorate to build new early learning centres. With the budget delivering free kinder, the children need new places to attend. Around 140,000 children will benefit this year, many of them living in my district. The need for kindergarten spaces, rooms for maternal and child health nurse consultations and community gathering spaces for activities like playgroups in a growth area like mine is paramount.

With the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep Ingrid Stitt and Cardinia Shire Council's mayor Tammy Radford, I had the honour of turning the sod for the Toun-nun integrated child and family centre in Officer, which is now being constructed right next door to Brunt Road Primary School. Konewark integrated child and family centre opened in February next to Kurrun Primary School and Kurnboon integrated child and family centre opened next to Orchard Park Primary School, and when the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep again returned to visit in July, she announced that a new kindergarten will be opening next to the new Pakenham North West Primary School. Minister Stitt recently announced \$9 million to construct the Thewlis Road integrated child and family childcare centre in Pakenham, a centre that will cater for 132 students. Built in partnership with Cardinia Shire Council, this facility will provide space for maternal and child health services, playgrounds and parenting programs as well as allied health services and wellbeing programs, ensuring families can have the access to services they need close to home. Can you see a pattern here? Co-location of kindergartens next to primary schools makes the student drop-off that bit easier for parents. It makes sense. It also helps children transitioning from early childhood education into primary school.

The Andrews Labor government supports all education providers, and in my electorate non-government schools have also benefited from support for learning infrastructure. In the last five years several private and Catholic schools have received non-government schools capital funding. In April I had the privilege of opening a new learning space at Lakeside College in Pakenham. The new learning spaces at Lakeside College include a new VCE recreation space, a new art and technology centre and the upper primary area. These new facilities, which cost over \$4 million, were constructed thanks to a \$2 million grant from the Andrews Labor government. Beaconhills secondary college in Pakenham and St Brigid's Primary School in Officer have also benefited from the state funding support for new classrooms and learning spaces in recent state budgets.

Let us not forget about mental health. Having health and wellbeing support is vital for people in the Pakenham district. The 2023–24 state budget funds the planning of a new mental health and wellbeing local in Officer that will provide free, easy-to-access mental health care without the need for a GP referral. This is crucial for my constituents. The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 census of population and housing revealed mental ill health as the most significant long-term health condition in my electorate, particularly for young adults and adults in their child-rearing years. Having the wellbeing local in Pakenham district will provide the supports that are desperately needed. The wellbeing locals provide support and treatment for adults aged 26 and older experiencing mental illness or psychological distress, including those with co-occurring substance use or addiction. The local service will act as a front door to the mental health and wellbeing system, offering welcoming and inclusive spaces staffed by qualified mental health professionals, including peer support workers to cater for the diverse needs of my community. The Andrews government is also providing funds to develop and deliver mental health training programs for our apprentices. This includes support for apprentices at smaller employers to access employee assistance programs and for employers to improve their mental health and suicide prevention literacy.

I have spoken previously in this place about my support for the funding in the budget for the community pharmacies to be involved in the pilot to assist with the treatment of straightforward urinary tract infections and common skin conditions and to reissue contraceptive prescriptions as well as administer travel vaccinations. Pharmacists will be able to provide this support, assisting my constituents when they need it.

I welcome the commitment to women's health in the state budget, and I know we are celebrating women's health next week. Every Victorian should be able to get the health care that they need when they need it and close to home. That is why this government is investing almost \$58 million to create 20 comprehensive women's health clinics across Australia, including one at Casey Hospital. We are ensuring women and their health are given the focus, funding and respect they deserve. A new comprehensive women's health clinic in my region at Casey Hospital will change the way women's

health issues are treated, providing care and support for conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, perimenopause and menopause. While we are speaking about health, I am excited that the Pakenham Community Hospital is on its way. We are committed to building this community hospital right in Pakenham to give people access to local treatment post hospital stays and access to allied health services.

We have the Smile Squad in schools. I am very glad that the children in my electorate are receiving the dental checks that they need to maintain their beautiful smiles through the Smile Squad program. The Smile Squad will be expanded in 2026 to non-government primary and secondary schools so that everyone will be smiling big.

Like the member for Eltham mentioned before, we are investing in a new dog park. Having happy and healthy pets makes people happy. Dogs are a cherished part of so many families, and in this state budget the dogs in my district also benefit. This budget includes \$400,000 for Cardinia Shire Council to upgrade the Officer District Park with dog park facilities. As a dog owner myself, I am very excited to be taking Maisie there when it opens.

Another thing I want to touch on is free TAFE. I was really happy to see that in the latest budget we are delivering more free TAFE places. The Andrews Labor government has put more than 80 new courses on the free TAFE list, helping more Victorians get the skills they need for the jobs that they want. This government has expanded eligibility for free and subsidised TAFE training so that all Victorians can study for in-demand jobs in health care, mental health, construction, early childhood and hospitality.

We have also focused on cost of living. I want to say that the \$250 power saving bonus ends tonight at 11:59 pm, so I am hoping that everyone has applied, in my district in particular. We have done that. We have made a \$23 million investment into providing free pads and tampons to women and girls in up to 700 public places across Victoria. We introduced the Victorian vets card, with discounts on vehicle rego and free fishing and boating licences; free car rego for young tradies and apprentices, saving up to \$865 a year; along with free L- and P-plate licence and online testing. I was fortunate enough to have my daughter turn 16 this year, so she got her Ls for free. Kudos to anyone else out there teaching their 16-year-olds to drive.

A member: It's hell, isn't it?

Emma VULIN: It's hard work; I feel for you.

My electorate is growing really fast. I have a vibrant and multicultural community. People have moved to the area from all over the world. With more than 35 languages spoken in my electorate, now a quarter of my constituents speak a language other than English. The number who speak another language has grown significantly in the last five to 10 years. For many in my electorate from multicultural and multifaith backgrounds, community groups offer important connections for their culture and heritage. The state government is continuing to invest in Victoria's South Sudanese community, supporting young people and encouraging prevention and diversion away from the youth justice system. NextGen Unite will receive \$50,000 in funding from the Labor government to support its efforts in preventing South Sudanese-Australian children and young people from contact with the criminal justice system. NextGen Unite is delivering a music and justice inspiration program. This program will provide a safe and supportive environment for South Sudanese Australians and other African-Australian youth. The program will allow them to develop their skills in producing and mastering music.

I think the big thing I do not want to run out of time to talk about in the last couple of minutes is what is happening with our level crossing removals and our train stations. It is fantastic. There is a lot of work going on in my area. We are removing three level crossings at Racecourse Road, Main Street and McGregor Road, and work has begun on Brunt Road in Officer. Removing these dangerous level crossings will improve safety, reduce road congestion and allow more trains to run on the network,

getting people to destinations faster. A new 2.5-kilometre rail bridge will create more than six MCGs worth of open space for the local community to enjoy, with new playgrounds, parkland, seating areas and a half basketball court, which my kids are pretty happy about. It will go from a noisy and impassable rail corridor to a vibrant and usable space that can be enjoyed by everyone. But that is not the best of it. We are completely redoing the Pakenham train station; that is going to be magnificent. We have extended the rail 2 kilometres down to East Pakenham, where we are going to get another train station in East Pakenham for our growing community. I hear that there are a lot of people who are going to be moving into that new part of my electorate.

I just want to sincerely thank the residents and businesses and the wider community for their ongoing patience and support while the disruptions have been happening in the area. I know it is necessary for the construction of these vital projects, but the good news is we will be level crossing free on the Pakenham line by 2025. There is one more thing I would like to add: we have V/Line that comes from Pakenham, so I was very pleased to see that they were matching the V/Line prices with metro.

Brad ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (11:32): I also rise to take note of the 2023–24 budget. It is a topic which for some months I have been speaking about with a number of Victorians not just in my own constituency but right around the state. If there is something that is quite clear about the feedback I have received from Victorians as a result of the Andrews Labor government's budget this year, it is that at a time when cost pressures are being imposed upon Victorians at a rate we have never seen before – when you have got education costs going through the roof, when you have got school bills going through the roof, when you have got energy costs going through the roof, when you have got grocery bills going through the roof, when you have got cost-of-living pressures going through the roof – the last thing Victorians want their government to do in moments like that is to punish them more.

We know in the last nine years that the Andrews Labor government has year on year on year been spending more than it is receiving, and we know that in a family home circumstance or in a small business circumstance, if it was the decision of a small business or if it was the decision of a family to spend more than their income year on year on year, then the people in the firing line for the decisions that they took would in fact be that family or be that small business. But when it comes to the state of Victoria it is the Andrews Labor government who year on year on year have made a decision about spending more than they have been receiving, and it is Victorians – decent Victorians, Victorian taxpayers – that pay the price for the decisions made by the Andrews Labor government. It is Victorians, decent Victorians, who are punished because of the decisions made by the Andrews Labor government not just to spend but to waste. The Auditor-General has pointed out more than \$30 billion in waste on major projects alone – cost blowouts, time blowouts – and again Victorians are paying the price for that.

I will be up-front about my bottom line here, and I think that this is a truism but I will share it with the chamber nonetheless: if you cannot manage a budget, you cannot govern a state. That is my bottom line, and it is a line that I know resonates with the community, because there are people out there doing it tough right now. There is a question of trust here too. Who do you believe when it comes to understanding the true debt position of the state of Victoria? Do you believe the Premier, do you believe the Treasurer or do you believe the independent, well-regarded, world-renowned ratings agency Moody's, who have said that our debt position in this state is not \$171 billion but \$226 billion, and in my humble view that \$226 billion debt position of the state of Victoria is a truer representation than what those political opponents on the government side care to share with the Victorian people. What are they hiding? Why are they not being up-front with the Victorian people about the true state of Victoria's economy? Why are they not being up-front with the Victorian people about our true debt position? We know that it will be future generations that are saddled with paying the price for decisions that we make today, and that is something that everyone in this place should take much more seriously than perhaps we do. We know that the interest bill that we are paying currently is \$15 million a day, each and every day.

Juliana Addison interjected.

Brad ROWSWELL: I know it is disorderly to take interjections, but I hear the member for Wendouree – quite chatty over there, quite frankly. I would like to think that in the electoral district of Wendouree \$15 million would make a difference. I know as the local member for Sandringham that \$15 million in my electorate would make a magnificent difference. It would set up two primary schools with the gymnasiums that they require, the multipurpose sporting facilities that they require, for the next generation. Fifteen million dollars is what we are spending on interest payments alone just today. You know what? We are doing that again tomorrow and the day after that, and at the end of the forward estimates we are going from \$15 million a day to \$22 million a day in interest payments alone.

Money spent on interest is money wasted from communities and is money wasted from not doing the things that matter – are you familiar with that? – in communities, because of the decisions that the Andrews Labor government has made. A couple of proof points here: the Commonwealth Games – what a debacle, what an absolute debacle. We know that the sunk cost that the Premier is willing to share with us is 380 million bucks to cancel that contract, but what we do not know is the broader cost implications for the state, the missed opportunity. I know from the 2006 Commonwealth Games that the economic activity created as a result of that 2006 Commonwealth Games was in the magnitude of \$3 billion. Sure, there is 380 million bucks that is being wasted by not holding the games and by cancelling that contract, but the missed opportunity to create economic activity not just in Melbourne but in the regions is a missed opportunity that will be felt for generations to come.

When I think of the Andrews Labor government's budget, I think of their schools tax, their rent tax, their jobs tax, now their health tax and, with the member for Nepean in the chamber at the moment, the holiday and tourism tax – all taxes on aspiration, all taxes on a fair go, all taxes on opportunity. Of course this has been in the DNA of the Andrews Labor government time and time and time again. I will give credit to my colleague the Shadow Minister for Education in the other place and the member for Kew in particular for the campaign that they ran to get the government to wind back the schools tax. On that particular tax we did not just oppose it but committed to winding it back should we be elected in three-and-a-bit years time, and that remains our commitment today.

The rent tax will of course hit some of the most vulnerable in our community. It is not just unjust; it is unfair. For a Labor government who say that they care about people, riddle me this: if you have got a one-bedroom apartment in Pakenham, for example, that may be housing someone who is fleeing domestic violence, that may be housing someone who needs that housing accommodation more than the privileged people in this chamber, guess what, as a result of this rent tax their rent goes up at the same time as their grocery bills go up and at the same time as their power bills go up. Something has got to give. And this is at the hands of the Andrews Labor government. We are not talking about multimillion-dollar properties in Portsea; we are talking about small accommodation that provides stability, the roof over someone's head at some of the most vulnerable stages of their life, and their costs are going up at the hands of the Andrews Labor government.

Why, oh why, would you want to employ more people in Victoria? We have heard it from some of the banks. ANZ have said that as a result of the Andrews Labor government's jobs tax in this budget they are subjected to another \$25 million in state government taxes year on year. It is no wonder that the ANZ bank is making their next investment decision in Queensland as opposed to Victoria. Now, okay, I take the point that banks are not the most loved people in the room, and yes, they have got a lot to answer for, but they do employ Victorians. When the Andrews Labor government is taxing them with an initial 25 million bucks a year, 100 million bucks over the next four years, and they as a result of that seek to make investment decisions in other states, frankly I do not blame them. But my concern with that – my concern with the Andrews Labor government's jobs tax – is that it affects Victorians. It affects Victorians who just simply want a stable job to provide for themselves, to provide for their families and to pay their bills, and it is something which the Andrews Labor government clearly does not give a stuff about.

Yesterday together with the Shadow Minister for Health I was privileged to hold a GP summit here in the Parliament. There were some 30 general practitioners who attended, and I heard the Minister for

Health in the last two question times denying that the health tax will have an impact on general practice and primary care. Yesterday I had the great privilege of hearing from a general practitioner who works in Tullamarine. His payroll tax bill is just shy of half a million dollars. This is something which historically he has not had to pay.

Juliana Addison: What's the revenue of the surgery?

Brad ROWSWELL: For the information of the member for Wendouree, it is \$1.3 million. So you can imagine that it is a pretty big impact. Just shy of half a million dollars is his payroll tax bill, which up until the Andrews Labor government changed whatever they have changed and have now imposed this upon general practitioners, he has not had to pay before. He has 40,000 patients on his books. He has gone back to the State Revenue Office (SRO) to say that he –

Members interjecting.

Brad ROWSWELL: I'll get to the punchline, and you won't like it. It's a real issue, and you should pipe down and listen, frankly.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Paul Hamer): Through the Chair.

Brad ROWSWELL: Yes, I know indeed, Acting Speaker, but this a real issue that is affecting this community and our community, and it would actually be of great service to the house if members of the government who actually make decisions about what happens in this state listened to the impacts of their decisions on communities, because it is not funny. It is not funny at all.

So, yes, he has just shy of half a million dollars payroll tax and 40,000 patients within his catchment area. He has argued the toss with the SRO on this. He has gone back and said, 'No, I provide a service. I provide a medical service to my community.' The SRO have, well, speaking in common language, lifted their middle finger to this GP and said, 'No, pay. Pay by the end of this week'. Do you know what? By the end of this week Dr Hussain's clinic will close because he will be trading as insolvent. He cannot pay his half-million-dollar payroll tax bill, which he has never received before, meaning that 40,000 patients within the Tullamarine area are going to be without a general practitioner. I just hope that the Andrews Labor government has given some sort of heads-up to the Western general hospital, because that emergency department is going to be slammed – smashed – by the patients that are going to need that primary care. The undermining of primary care in this state as a result of the health tax, imposed by stealth, as we heard yesterday, is going to hurt Victorians. For the health minister during question time – not one question time but two question times – to say that nothing has changed, that there will be no impact, that we are investing in primary care, is an absolute furphy. And it is unparliamentary language, so I will not describe it in the way that I would prefer to at this point in time.

There is a better way – there must be a better way – and this side of the chamber is not waiting for three years to try and work with the Victorian people to work out what those opportunities are. During the course of my contribution today I have tried to articulate in what I believe to be reasonable terms that taxes in this state are punishing Victorians at a time when they can least afford it. If this government cannot manage their budget, they most certainly cannot govern the state. What we are trying to do on this side is discuss these matters with the Victorian people now, which is why the Shadow Minister for Finance the member for Kew and I, together with our parliamentary leader the member for Hawthorn, recently launched our tax discussion paper. So far we have been to Bendigo, Ballarat and Shepparton. We have been to Warrandyte. We have been to Werribee. I have been everywhere, man, and we will continue to talk with Victorians about the impact of the Andrews Labor government taxes on their businesses, on their lives and on their families.

We are not going to wait for government in just over three years time to start this important discussion with the Victorian people. We are starting that conversation now because we are serious about being an alternative government. We are serious about the impact that the Andrews Labor government's taxes are having on the lives of Victorians. We do not just argue that they are punishing Victorians,

we see that they are punishing Victorians because of the feedback that we are getting time and time again. So I encourage every Victorian who is so inclined, who is impacted by the Andrews Labor government's taxes, to visit bettertaxsystem.com.au and contribute to this very important discussion on tax reform. There is a better way, and we are determined to be part of that solution, of that better way, for the sake of the people who put us here, for the sake of every Victorian. While we are doing that, those opposite continue to be in chaos. They have simply lost control. They waste, they tax and Victorians pay.

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (11:47): Won't someone think of the banks? It is a great pleasure to stand up today following the member for Sandringham, who I listened to – and it is always a pleasure to follow on from the member for Sandringham – to talk about the Victorian budget 2023–24. Also, one of my distinct privileges in this house in being your deputy, Speaker, is that you are also always in the room when I get to stand, which I must admit I do a little bit less than I used to. We have got to try and be impartial in this house and make the world go around.

Members interjecting.

Matt FREGON: Order! I am watching you. My apologies, Speaker, through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: You can take the member for Ashwood out of the chair, but you cannot take the Chair out of the member for Ashwood.

Matt FREGON: We have not wasted a day in delivering the promises that we made to the electorate of Ashwood in the campaign that we held last year – rather successfully, I must add. I take this opportunity to thank every constituent in Ashwood for having faith in me. And to those that were in my previous district of Mount Waverley, which was about 50 per cent, double thanks again for giving me another go.

There is much in this budget that obviously we are all discussing, and I am going to focus on the things that come up time and time again when I am talking to my constituents. Some of those are very local and some of those are not so much – the SEC, for instance. The commitment to bring back a level of public ownership in the essential service that is our energy provision was incredibly popular, not just because it sounded like a good idea but because people really understood that over time – and it will take time; this budget is obviously the first year when we are putting in the financial dollars to get this started – to rectify what I think most Victorians appreciate, and I am not having a go at any side of politics here, was a possible error in privatising all levels of our energy sector.

I remember my cousin's husband Tim. Back in the 1990s Tim used to work for the SEC, and when the changes happened to the poles and wires provision and stuff, one of his first jobs for the new owners was to remove all of the redundant equipment that was there for when things failed – and from a profit-taking point of view, when you are a private company this makes sense. Essentially, they decreased the amount of maintenance they had to do on poles and wires, and they got to take all that stock which was in working order and put it in a shed somewhere so that it was there to be replaced when they needed replacements. I can understand why on the balance sheet that would make sense. But when it was publicly owned, with the extra redundancy that was given by that equipment – because it was for the people in their homes that needed that ability to rely on that power – it made more sense to have a publicly owned SEC. So I was gobsmacked – that is probably a fair word – when I heard the Premier and the Minister for Energy and Resources announce that we were actually going to do this. I just was very happy to tell everybody, and I think for the most part a very significant proportion were very happy to hear it. It is fantastic that this is beginning in our budget that we are talking about today.

I had better get onto local stuff, because the clock does go rather quickly in this place. We have invested in schools. I note my good friend the member for Glen Waverley is in here, and for some of the schools that this government has invested in over the last four years he is now taking over the responsibility and doing a very good job. We were just down at Glenallen special school a few weeks

ago with Minister Hutchins – and I thank him for the invitation, because it was fantastic to see our previous commitment of \$8 million, I believe, to renovate that school. May I mention a shout-out to the former Minister for Education Mr Merlino, who was able to stand in this place and say that we had upgraded every special development school in this state, which no other government can say, and we are continuing to do that. In my patch of Ashwood we have the Ashwood special school, who are getting close to \$10 million for an upgrade. I was just there the other week meeting their school leaders; they are going to come into Parliament. They are a fantastic school. And the Burwood East Special Developmental School are also getting money for upgrades. So I got to see Glenallen finished, and if the other schools are even half as good – and I have no doubt they will be – we are in for some very, very happy staff, students and community.

Whilst we are still on schools, Mount Waverley Primary School is a fantastic school in my patch, and Campbell McKay down there runs a very good operation. They were very, very happy to hear a commitment last year that we made to provide \$5.86 million to upgrade their school. It is something Campbell and I have been talking about for a little while – he has been principal there for I think 18 months or so – and with his previous principal too we also talked about the need of refreshing that school. It is committed, done, in the budget. We are already talking to the Victorian School Building Authority – exciting.

Pinewood Primary School was one of the schools in my previous area. Pinewood is very close to home. It is actually the school that my children have gone to, and I have still got one there. When Sophie started at Pinewood Primary School – and that was 2010, 2011, something like that; she will tell me off when I get home – there were 320 kids. A small school, they got some money at the time, and credit to the government of the time, which was the opposition – opposition now, government then –

A member: Hear, hear!

Matt FREGON: No, credit to them – they upgraded Pinewood Primary School. The previous member for Mount Waverley Michael Gidley put money into that school – well done. Over the last 10 years, though, that school has grown from 320 – because it was all shiny and new – to 960 kids in a very small footprint. It is a fantastic school. Karen Jenkin does an awesome job with her team there, and as both the lucky representative and also a parent, I could not be prouder of this school. The one thing they do not have right now is a hall where all of the kids fit, so they have to have staggered assemblies and staggered lunches. It is a bit of an issue. So to make a commitment – which we did – of \$8.5 million for a competition-grade gym for this school is exactly what the school wanted and exactly what we spent time talking about. I do admit I felt I had to leave it a little bit later, because it is a bit close to home, but I am so happy that the minister and the department saw the need. To commit to the planning of that, because it is a constrained site and you need to plan it properly, in this budget is excellent.

Another school that we made a commitment to was Parkhill Primary School. Actually, in the campaign this was a bipartisan agreement in commitment. It is always good to have impartiality in this place, especially in my position. We both agreed that Parkhill Primary needed a commitment. We committed \$5 million, and that is in the budget. The brand new principal is there Jo Jolly – a big shout-out to her and her team. I was lucky enough to go down to Parkhill Primary just last week, because the kids did the artwork for the birthday cards that I send around to the seniors and we got to give them all copies of their cards. The letters I get back from seniors when I send them a birthday card with a little kid's artwork on it saying 'Happy birthday', with rainbows and bunnies and all sorts of other things, are fantastic. The kids really enjoyed that.

Sport – we made a few commitments to sport in this budget. The member for Nepean is there – you like a bit of sport, so I have heard. For the wonderful women and men – mostly women, though – at the Waverley District Netball Association, we made a commitment to cover some of their courts. At the moment, when it is bucketing down with rain, there is no other option – they are all out in the

weather. So we made a commitment to that in the budget. We are working on it; I know sport and rec will be working very hard to get that started really quickly.

What else have we got? Oh, yes, the Ashburton United football club. They play at a number of grounds in Boroondara, and there is more work to do there. I had a good meeting with Boroondara the other week, and I think it is safe to say that we will continue working together on benefits for the Ashburton United football club and the cricket clubs that use the areas in Boroondara. We have committed to – and it is in the budget once again – an electronic scoreboard and some movable player shelters that will really benefit the soccer teams as they play on the Ashburton reserve.

We also committed to a dog park in the Mount Waverley district. Everyone loves a dog park. Monash are not so keen, but we are working on that.

Mathew Hilakari: They're barking mad.

Matt FREGON: 'Barking mad' – I will take that interjection, and I would have thought so. I know that departments and councils are working together, and I cannot wait to see what they come up with. We did a petition last year to see what love there was for a dog park, and I have got to tell you there is overwhelming support in the community. I know that as soon as I can tell people exactly where it is going to be – Monash, whenever you are ready – there are going to be some very, very happy puppy owners. It is not all about big commitments, though. It is not all about millions of dollars. Sometimes the smaller commitments that you can make –

Mathew Hilakari: Not everything can be a dog park.

Matt FREGON: 'Not everything can be a dog park' is a fair statement from the disorderly member for Point Cook, but sometimes small commitments make a big difference. Four years ago we made a commitment – and I thank the Minister for Education for all her work and the previous minister before her – via the Inclusive Schools Fund. That is another fund that is in this budget as well – such an important way of distributing funds to schools to upgrade play spaces and sensory gardens, and in our case a few years ago my area then and still my area now received some money for covered courts and resurfacing of the netball courts. A couple of children at that school have ability aid requirements, so it meant they could participate along with everyone else, whereas before they could not. That was only \$250,000, which is a lot of money, but compared to some of the bigger ticket items in the budget, it is one of the smaller things but so important to that school.

Other small amounts that we committed to were for our bowls clubs – the Ashburton Bowls Club and the Mount Waverley Bowling Club, \$50,000 each. I know Sport and Recreation Victoria are about to call them on 1 September. It is very good, so Minister for Community Sport, who is at the table, thank you very much. The clubs are very happy. It is going to provide decking assistance at Mount Waverley Bowling Club and some shelters for the players in the sun at Ashburton. They were ecstatic to know that we are seeing through every commitment.

I am running out of time, and I do not think I have moved from page 2, but when I look at the Ashwood district and the work that this government has done and I hear the feedback from the newsletter I just sent out which outlined all of our commitments, what I get back is: 'Keep doing it.'

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (12:02): That was a typical Labor speech – over time, over budget, could not finish on the right time and ended up with nothing in it that was of value to anyone. But it is actually quite interesting because I have had the pleasure of reading the newspapers recently, and I noticed a specific article that was kind of like reading a bit of comedy what was going on. One of the articles I read – and I know that that the member for Nepean will be interested in this – was that just recently the Andrews Labor government have put out they are interested in putting in for the World Cup to be here in Victoria. So they have gone out to the world and said we would love the opportunity to go and get the World Cup here in Victoria a week and a half after they cancelled the Commonwealth Games because they could not manage that. So anyone on FIFA who could have seriously had a look at – and

who would not want the World Cup here in Victoria, let us be honest, who would not want it here? As a massive soccer fan myself, I would love to see some of the world's best here, but let us be honest, if you were on the board at FIFA –

Iwan Walters: We just did. What about the world's best women?

Brad BATTIN: We did have the world's best women, and guess what? They played up in Sydney and Queensland because your government could not get them here to Melbourne. Well done.

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

Brad BATTIN: We had one game in Melbourne for Australia, and you could not get the final, the best game, at the best ground in this country. You could not get it here.

Members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Melton! Without assistance.

Nick STAIKOS: On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the motion is on the budget. The member for Berwick has not even commenced speaking on the budget, and he is 2 minutes in. I ask that you bring him back to the motion.

Brad BATTIN: On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I would be more than happy, as the Premier would offer us, to give you a briefing on how the budget impacts sport here in Victoria.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Through the Chair.

Brad BATTIN: And how the Women's World Cup was part of the budget to be here in Victoria.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Berwick. There is no point of order. The member to continue through the Chair.

Brad BATTIN: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. So the government are now opting to say they want to have the World Cup when they did not have the competence to run the Commonwealth Games. When you spend \$380 million to not host an event, the only thing I could think of that would go through the board of FIFA would be: 'What a fantastic opportunity for an investment into our own account. What we could do is say we'll give it to them. We'll have a backup plan ready to go, and we'll be guaranteed to be able to sue them later on and get the money, because this government does not have the competence to deliver that major sporting event.'

How does the budget impact everyday lives at the moment? I will talk specifically about my portfolios today. Police in Victoria have more than 800 vacancies, and I find it almost a comedy act when the government continue to go out and say we are increasing the numbers of Victoria Police across this state. We are seeing 24-hour stations being closed, and we are now starting to see one-man stations through regional Victoria where they are wanting to move staff out of those one-man stations, making regional communities more unsafe. We have 98 one-man stations across the state, and this government has said to the Police Association Victoria that they want to get rid of clause 184, which specifically states that we can only remove the one officer from a one-man station in the case of an emergency – a terrorist attack, natural disasters – when we could use them or utilise them in a way that is required for a safe outcome. They want to alter that to effectively make it operational. What the government wants to do is remove protection from regional Victoria, where there can be a guaranteed police officer in the town, by removing them into metro areas or Labor seats where 24-hour stations are closing. We have seen this all too often. We have seen it at Pakenham. The 24-hour police station there has been closed on many occasions. The doors are locked, so when people go to the station there is no-one there to serve them.

Let us be honest: why do you go to a police station? There is a mix of people who would come into a police station, some on bail, and when they come in to sign on on bail there is no one there to sign them in. That is unfair on the person on bail and it is unfair on the community because we are not

guaranteeing the safety of the people who are or are not coming in. People might want to get a stat dec signed. If they cannot get it signed, I would love to say to them come to my office, but as many would know I currently do not have an office because we are having a few issues trying to find one of those. But I will offer the member for Pakenham's office for that in Officer. If you need to get a stat dec signed, you can go down there, because it is not that far. It is my former office, if anyone wants to know the address of it.

We could also have people come in who want to report a crime, who are victims of crime, who may have been raped and want to come forward to a station in a safe place so they can make that report – but at the moment those doors are locked. For the government to continually hype up that they are putting more police in there when we have 800 vacancies is simply misleading the community.

Cherry Creek is the new youth detention centre that has been built out in western Victoria. For the first time we are starting to see young offenders being relocated there from Malmsbury and Parkville, and there are many, many warnings for this government about some of the concerns that have been raised around Cherry Creek. First and foremost, they are around staff safety. You must provide a safe workplace. We all know that; every person in this chamber should know that. After negotiations between the union and the government it was decided you have to have a minimum of 30 per cent experienced staff. Just to put it into perspective, because I know the Minister for Youth Justice is trying to say they have people who are trained, there is a difference between someone who is trained and someone who is experienced. An example would be – and I know the member for Melton would agree – that you would not put an ambulance out with someone who is just trained; you would always have someone who has got experience with them. As a former police officer, you would not put out two new recruits on day one together; you would put someone experienced with them.

At Cherry Creek they have got only 5 per cent experienced staff, and they were warned this was going to be a problem. How did it end up impacting: within five days one of those staff was in hospital after getting their head stomped on. Only four inmates were in there. And who did they transfer when they had the least experienced staff? They transferred people who were on sentence or remand for murder. They did not transfer the minimum-security offenders, they transferred the maximum-security offenders. Then the next cohort to come in was another five of the maximum security, who when they got there all had their security rating lowered because it suited the government's agenda. But it did not suit the agenda of a staff member getting his head stomped on for telling an offender that he could not wear slides into the kitchen and had to put shoes on, and it will get worse. The next cohort to come through are the highest risk in the youth detention centres, and we still do not have the experience there. Even worse, staff are now asking for transfers back over to Parkville because of safety concerns.

They are transporting some young offenders from up in Malmsbury, and this is how broken the system is. They emptied one of the units and moved them down there, except one young man, who turned around and said, 'I'm not going'. It has been a while since I worked in a prison, but I do not think you have that say. It is not your son in the bedroom, where you take the TV away. You say, 'No, you're going.' But no-one will sign off for a use of force to move this young person from Malmsbury to Cherry Creek. What does that mean? It now means we have got two staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week, sitting with this one person in a unit. They have not got the staff allocation, so the other 38 offenders have two less staff sitting with them. Who does that put at risk? That puts at risk not just the young people but the staff. The union is speaking about it, the staff on the scene are speaking about it, the media are speaking about it and the minister did not even know about it. The minister in the other house did not even know about it. That is a huge problem. That is because the budget is in disarray. They are struggling to get staff where they need them, and we are not seeing these young people protected.

In the justice system, where are we spending the money? We have got the Western Plains prison. We are spending \$36 million a year on security to stop people going into a prison that is empty – \$36 million a year on a prison to keep people out because it is empty. Imagine if you had those security staff, who are currently sitting at a prison that is empty, available to be in Cherry Creek. Do you know

what might have happened? There would not be someone in hospital today. That is what would have happened, because they would have had the protection they needed. We would have had experienced staff in the places we need them, and it is so important to make sure we do.

Worse than this, \$36 million a day to protect a prison that is closed is money that could have been spent on programs to keep people out of prison. Let us focus on young people. Already in this budget there is a \$10 million cut from crime prevention programs – a \$10 million cut. These are programs to stop young offenders who are entering the justice system from continuing down that path and ending up long term as people who go through the justice system generally for life. We all know, anyone who has done any research, the trajectory of a child who goes into a detention centre is far worse with the outcomes than someone who does not enter it if both have committed crimes. If you can keep them out of a detention centre and give them the opportunities, programs and tools that will best suit them, then the outcomes are a lot better.

We should be having a simple focus in our justice system, particularly youth justice. We should be making sure with every person that enters the justice system, whether on detention or other sentences, that our end goal is: can we make them work ready? Can we give them the opportunity and the tools to make them work ready? Can we return them to education? Is there an opportunity, whether it is through community education, further education or back within any other system, state or private? Can we get them back to education? Third, can we return them to the services that they most need? When I say ‘the services they most need’, that could be mental health, drugs or alcohol. We have got a budget that is going to be cutting funds on what we are doing for prevention, whereas what we should be doing is looking at programs around the world, like 24/7 sobriety programs – programs that target people who enter the system and, rather than treat the crime, treat the reason they committed the crime, and it can be done. You would think most outside of these walls would go, ‘Hold on, that’s a left-wing policy’.

Let me assure you, we on this side of the house are so committed to criminal justice reform and every step of the way using these budgets so that we can then put in place programs to keep people out of prison. The more people you can keep out using the correct programs and setting them up, the more everybody wins. Why? Because we can spend less money on jails. In Texas alone by using programs like this, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation and mental health rehabilitation – stopping putting people within the prison system who they are simply just mad at and putting people in jail who they are genuinely afraid of – they have closed 15 prisons. That is billions and billions of dollars that goes back to the government. Over there – obviously a good right-wing government – they have just reduced taxes and also implemented further programs for what they need. Those programs and cutting taxes create jobs, and more jobs is less people committing crime. It is not that hard. This is simple maths. If we have less people committing crimes, we have a better outcome for the community.

I know for a fact – I do not refer to people in the gallery, but I know we have got a volunteer in the gallery here with us today who has done many years in the CFA – that if we can get people not committing crimes and supporting our community, I am sure people like Tony would absolutely love to see them come through our CFAs and come into our organisations where they can give back, go out as a sports coach, be a genuine person and contributor in our community. It is not that difficult. We have got a budget here that we can do it with, but the fear I have now is we are spending money on programs that are not coming. We are cutting money on the investments that are keeping people out of prisons. We are spending money on bricks and mortar, with no-one there. We are not investing in the staff to ensure that we can deliver programs in the youth justice centres. We are not guaranteeing the safety of the staff within those prison systems – and all of this because the Andrews Labor government let this budget get so out of control that their only focus now and for the next few years will be: how do we pay it off, how do we pay down the debt and how do we maintain just the interest without impacting services and building a better Victoria?

Ros SPENCE (Kalkallo – Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Community Sport, Minister for Suburban Development) (12:17): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this motion that takes note of the 2023–24 Victorian state budget, which delivers on every

single election commitment that we took to the people of Victoria last year. This is a responsible budget that is targeted and that responds to the post-pandemic economic circumstances and a budget that delivers across my portfolio responsibilities and in my local electorate.

Firstly, I want to reflect upon the important investments in this budget in community sport, and we all know how important community sport is to all Victorians. This government has continued to recognise that importance year after year, and with this budget providing more than \$200 million for improved community sport infrastructure across more than 100 locations, our total investment since 2014 is now over \$1.9 billion in community sport infrastructure. In this budget this includes projects such as \$15 million for the redevelopment of Frankston basketball stadium, \$15 million to upgrade Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre, \$6 million for upgrades at Box Hill City Oval and \$1.5 million to deliver new courts at Kyneton netball club. We are continuing important programs that support the delivery of even more community sport infrastructure projects through the popular Local Sports Infrastructure Fund and the country football and netball program.

We are also providing opportunities for Victorians, young and old, to get involved and to participate in the sports that they love, with almost \$12 million towards a suite of participation programs. Among them is \$4 million for the continuation of the popular Get Active Kids voucher program, a Victorian first established by this government in 2020 to address cost being a barrier to participation in sport. We have already delivered on our original commitment of more than 100,000 vouchers through the program, and in 2023–24 the voucher program will provide even more opportunities for tens of thousands of Victorian kids. Across the next four years the budget also delivers continued funding for the important Vicswim initiative, the emergency sporting equipment grants program, support for the Get Active travel program, and it continues the Together More Active program.

We are also providing long-term funding to the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, with \$3.2 million over four years, for them to deliver programs that support community health and wellbeing and a range of important programs that unite communities across Melbourne's west through sport. We are proud of our investment in community sport since 2014 and in this budget because, as I said, we know how important it is to all Victorians. Participating in community sport is incredibly important for health and wellbeing, and our investments go to increasing participation by removing barriers, by supporting inclusion and by providing appropriate adequate infrastructure right across the state so all Victorians can participate in community sport. This budget builds on our work to do exactly that.

In the prevention of family violence portfolio the budget continues to deliver on the government's commitment to ending family and sexual violence with a further investment of \$117 million over four years. This includes more than \$77 million directly in the prevention of family violence portfolio, along with close to \$40 million in a suite of initiatives across government that support the prevention of family violence. This includes the continuation of specialist family violence legal assistance at courts and addressing family violence for older Victorians.

Earlier this year I was pleased to announce the acquittal of the 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, but as was noted at the time, there is more work to be done. The investment in this budget builds on our work and on the \$3.7 billion that has already been invested since 2017, which is more than in any other jurisdiction in the country. Some of the initiatives in this budget include more than \$25.5 million for Aboriginal frontline family violence services and \$5.5 million for Aboriginal-led sexual assault support services. The budget also provides continued support for victim-survivors of family violence to stay safe, to recover and to thrive with funding for the continued delivery of family violence crisis brokerage and family violence case management support. There is also \$2.6 million for the provision of specialist support for women with complex needs and the extension of the personal safety initiative. Keeping people who use violence engaged and accountable is critically important, and we are supporting this work with over \$23 million for the continued delivery and development of accommodation-based interventions for perpetrators of family violence and the continued delivery of vital men's behaviour change programs. Young people who have experienced family violence or sexual harm are also supported in this budget with almost

\$7.5 million towards the adolescent family violence in the home program, the sexually abusive behaviours treatment service and sexual assault support services, and as mentioned at the start of my contribution, we are delivering on the commitments that we made and took to the Victorian people, with funding to establish the Continuous Voices survivors memorial in Ballarat and funding to support the terrific work of McAuley Community Services for Women and Good Samaritan Inn.

Melbourne's suburbs certainly have some unique challenges, but they also have terrific opportunities, and this budget continues to deliver for the portfolio of suburban development. The budget ensures that the voices of people in Melbourne's suburbs remain front and centre, with a package of \$19 million to support our suburbs to thrive. This investment includes support for our suburban revitalisation boards to keep identifying and working on local priorities in six priority locations across Melbourne. The boards will continue to work with local communities to develop suburban revitalisation priorities and deliver infrastructure improvements, place activations and place-based planning. The work of the metropolitan partnerships continues to be supported, with a renewed focus on outer suburban and disadvantaged communities. These partnerships provide a conduit for business, community organisations and councils to identify key issues that matter to local residents and to provide governments with important grassroots insights.

We are also continuing the Growing Suburbs Fund, with \$10 million to support the delivery of critical local infrastructure in Melbourne's fastest growing communities, supporting social and economic participation. As a local member of Parliament I have seen firsthand the benefits of the Growing Suburbs Fund, ranging from new sports pavilions to local community hubs in new communities, which are continuing to grow rapidly. In the months since last November's election, the Kalkallo electorate has grown to more than 56,000 electors, and it now has the largest number of electors in Victoria. This is why our government's investment in critical infrastructure across Melbourne's outer north is so important, and I know that my neighbours in the outer north, in the electorates of Greenvale and Yan Yean, share that sentiment as well. This is why we are getting on with delivering much-needed infrastructure in that area, including the much-needed Watson Street diamond interchange along the Hume Freeway in Wallan; we are upgrading the Donnybrook Road and Mitchell Street roundabout, with a continuous left-turn slip lane; and of course we are continuing with the delivery of the Craigieburn Road upgrade.

We have also seen a record investment in new schools in my electorate since 2014, and this budget is no different. Since 2014 I have opened nine new government schools locally. With Banum Warrik Primary School in Kalkallo and Yubup Primary School in Mickleham both now under construction and set to open to students in 2024, there will soon be 11 new government schools locally opened. But we are not stopping there. As promised during the last election campaign, Lockerbie secondary college and Lockerbie specialist school will both welcome their first students at the start of the 2026 school year. This will of course then make it 13 new government schools. We are also contributing \$5 million towards a new campus for Kolbe Catholic College for students in Mickleham from the Non-Government Schools Capital Fund to continue to provide and support choice for families in the outer north. These significant investments mean more families will have the opportunity to access a quality education in state-of-the-art facilities as our community continues to grow.

Grassroots sport and recreation is another big winner in the Kalkallo electorate. We are investing \$5 million towards stage 1 of the Greenhill recreation precinct in Wallan, and this multisport integrated facility will be a game changer for Wallan, with facilities that are suitable and accessible for everyone to use. We are also kickstarting a new recreation reserve for the growing community of Beveridge, with funding going towards the delivery of a master plan for that site, and both of these projects will be warmly welcomed by the local community. I am looking forward to continuing to work with Mitchell Shire Council on the delivery of both of these really important projects.

I know how much people love the splash play space at Livvi's Place at Anzac Park in Craigieburn, which is why I am so pleased that as part of this budget we are delivering another one, along

Donnybrook Road. With \$450,000 to provide this splash park, it will be a brand new water play space for families to enjoy close to home.

As I previously mentioned, this is a responsible budget that is targeted, that responds to the post-pandemic economic circumstances, that delivers on our election commitments and that delivers across my portfolio responsibilities and across my local electorate, and I commend it to the house.

David SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (12:28): As we know, all politics is local, and as the local member for Caulfield, each and every day I come in here fighting to ensure that we get our fair share, but there is no question when it comes to this budget, Victoria is broke. And when Victoria is broke and we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, each and every Victorian pays the price. They pay the price through an absolute cost-of-living crisis when it comes to our energy bills, when it comes to fuel, when it comes to water, when it comes to groceries and when it comes to just putting food on the table and meeting each-and-every-day costs.

They struggle, certainly Victorians and constituents in my electorate of Caulfield, when it comes to basic housing – housing affordability, being able to get into the market, being able to rent. You only have to look at some of the open for inspections in the rental market to see that literally hundreds of people turn up to an inspection just to see if they can get a place, a roof over their head. So Victoria is in a really tough spot at the moment, and that is not by coincidence, because the government has had now a number of years – they are in their third term – to be able to wrestle these important issues, and unfortunately has done an absolutely poor job of it.

When you see Victoria now moving to \$226 billion worth of debt – \$226 billion worth of debt – it is an interest bill alone of \$15 million a day just to pay that off. It means that we are not getting basic services that we all deserve. It means that things need to be readjusted. It means that major projects are cancelled. Things like airport rail, which was promised before the election, are now gone. It means the *Western Rail Plan* is now gone. It means Geelong fast rail is gone. It means also, because the government has not been able to manage these projects properly, huge blowouts. We see the minister for major projects, the Deputy Premier, literally mismanaging some \$30 billion of budget blowouts, which is absolutely atrocious because when you have \$30 billion of blowouts, it means you cannot deliver the projects that you promised and it means we are all paying the price.

We saw that accumulate with the Commonwealth Games, which was in the budget. It was an expectation. It was said that it was going to cost \$2.6 billion. Then, magically, because of the Ukraine war and other external factors, so called, it blew out by over \$4 billion to \$7 billion and then to a cancellation. This is an absolute classic of a government that cannot manage a single thing. They cannot get one thing right when it comes to managing money. The old adage that Labor can't manage money has come home to roost, and we have seen it now with the Commonwealth Games. That is why Victorians have finally woken up and said, 'What have we elected here? We've elected a government that promises one thing and does another.'

You only have to look in electorates like mine, Caulfield, that have been neglected even though we fight really, really hard to get things done. You look at things like Caulfield Hospital. It is over 100 years old and still has a breezeway that has not been upgraded since the First World War. You look at the rehabilitation pool that was closed for years and only opens at selected times because it does not have the resources to open up. We promised \$500 million for the upgrade of that hospital. In the middle of the health crisis, I think Victorians deserve hospitals like Caulfield to be upgraded, and certainly I will continue to fight for that each and every day.

A number of our schools also need upgrades. Many of those schools in Caulfield – Caulfield South Primary School, Caulfield Junior College, Ripponlea and Elsternwick, a number of our schools – were all promised an upgrade. They were all promised, certainly, new builds. We have not seen that. We have not seen the schools that are over 100 years old and still have antiquated facilities be upgraded. We have got to have the quality teaching. We have seen issues in terms of our NAPLAN results, but

we have also got to provide the resourcing to ensure that the kids have a great environment to be educated.

Open space is big issue that I talk about each and every day. Certainly Caulfield in Glen Eira has the lowest amount of open space in Victoria when it comes to parks, play spaces and the like. One of the jewels in the crown that I talk about and have spoken about a lot is Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. I am very proud of the fact that we advocated to ensure a new trust and act of Parliament, which we now have, to ensure that that reserve is an independent reserve that can be managed through the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Act 2017, ultimately for the people, not just the people of Caulfield but all people, to enjoy. It is not just a racecourse, it is a public park.

Unfortunately there has been no money to go with it. We know that the trust is verging on being broke. Having a fantastic market once a month run by Caulfield Rotary, which I am very proud to be a member of, is great. Caulfield Rotary's volunteers do a wonderful thing, but that market will not pay anywhere near even the board directors' fees, let alone the upgrades that that reserve deserves. We have got to be able to get funding to upgrade it. We had the Minister for Environment promise a whole lot of dough. Nothing has been forthcoming. We have had minister after minister turn up, cut ribbons and take photo opportunities – Labor ministers take photo opportunities at Caulfield Park. No more photo opportunities. Let us get some action. Let us get Caulfield Racecourse Reserve upgraded. That park, the jewel in the crown – let us get it upgraded so all locals and all Victorians can appreciate and enjoy that facility.

There are so many other elements that we need to be able to deal with locally. One of the things that has been a real issue and we have mentioned in this Parliament, particularly amongst the Jewish community, has been the rise in antisemitism. There was a report that was recently produced by the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and the Zionist Federation of Australia, ZFA, looking at the upward spike in antisemitism on campus. We have got to do something to arrest the increased attacks on minority groups and on ethnic groups. We have got to do what we can. I know that laws have been passed in here, which is very, very important, including the ban on the Nazi swastika and those symbols. I know that a law has been introduced in this sitting of Parliament this week around the salute. But the other part of this is not just laws but resources to educate people. The education piece is really, really key. The community was promised \$3 million from the government in this budget to actually ensure that there are programs to support education around the rise of antisemitism. That money has not been forthcoming yet. I know Zionism Victoria and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria have been talking to the government. The time for talk is up. We are now a number of months into this budget, and we have seen nothing, so we do need to see that money now.

We cannot just be passing legislation to actually have consequences when people do the wrong thing; we have got to stop them from doing the wrong thing in the first place. You do that through education. You do that by educating kids right at the very early stages. We have seen issues at Brighton Secondary College where there have been antisemitic attacks on kids. That is with the Federal Court at the moment; we are waiting for hearings there. We have seen things at primary schools. All of this can be stomped on if you have got education programs and resources to educate people, especially kids, at the earliest level. So I plead with the government: get that \$3 million out of the government's bank account, get it into the community and let us wrestle with the issues that we are all fighting with in terms of combating antisemitism and educate those people that do not know better to ensure that they do know better and do not actually make it hard for many of those people that are suffering from those kinds of attacks.

Can I also make mention of some of the broader issues, some of the environment elements and some of the energy issues, as I said right from the very beginning of this contribution today, in terms of where the government is going and the uncertainty. We saw a report today around energy security, going into one of the hottest summers that I think we will have seen for a long time. Energy security is really important. I know the government had a \$250 power bonus to help people that were really

struggling. That bonus has run out. What is the government going to do about extending that bonus for those people that really need it? On top of the \$250, what are they going to do? I know that they are cutting gas off in many homes. A lot of people are asking me, particularly those that rely on gas, what happens with that going forward.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: The government can interject and carry on all they like. But I know particularly in the Chinese community and in the Indian community, who rely very strongly on cooking with gas, many want to build a new home, and in new homes particularly there will be no gas for them. I had a constituent of mine from the Chinese community show me a campaign that has been out there on WeChat that pretty much says that they will not be able to continue to cook using gas because they will not be able to have it in new homes. Those are the facts. The government can run a mile from all of that, but effectively if you are in a new home or a renovated home, no more gas – in an energy crisis, no more gas.

Members interjecting.

David SOUTHWICK: The government can jump all they like, but they know that they are wrong. The government have wasted and mismanaged this economy like there is no tomorrow. We are in a cost-of-living crisis. At a time of a cost-of-living crisis, when energy bills are through the roof, we are paying more for our energy than any other state. We have an absolute energy crisis. The Australian Energy Market Operator mentioned today in a report on the front page of the paper that our energy security is the most vulnerable that it has been. What does the government do – cuts gas off, just turns it off, ‘See you later, bye-bye, no more gas’. We have got to have energy security going forward, and this government is not providing energy security. They are not providing choice. They are not providing a transition into renewables. We know that many of the gas suppliers are looking elsewhere because there is no security in terms of gas and gas supply going forward because of the government policy. This is government policy. This is ideology over price, over affordability, over cost of living at a time when Victorians cannot afford it.

We are absolutely in Struggle Street in Victoria. People cannot afford the basic needs – they cannot. We hear it each and every day: cost of living is the single most important issue. And this government quite frankly could not care. They spend money like there is no tomorrow. We have the highest taxing state in the nation. We have more debt than New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland combined in terms of net debt. We have got Moody’s readjusting our rating and suggesting that we are at future risk in terms of losing further ratings.

In terms of where we are seen on the international stage, we saw what happened with the Commonwealth Games. What does that do to our reputation? What does that do after years and years of having to deal with a government that has already challenged us internationally in terms of where we were with all of the lockdowns and everything else? What we were meant to do was come out of this and provide security and provide confidence, and there has been none of that. I mean, fancy cancelling a Commonwealth Games, going out there in the regions – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Shepparton, Gippsland, into those five regions – and saying to them, ‘We’re going to give you a Commonwealth Games. Have we got something for you – these fantastic stadiums’. The member for Bendigo East, the Deputy Premier – the table tennis association have not even had communication with her after they were promised facilities. They have got nothing. The aquatic centre, Geelong – they were promised things, got nothing. Hockey – they were promised things, got nothing. We are talking about basic service. It is little wonder why the government have now promised things in the budget on one hand and taken them away with the other hand. I will tell you why: because Victoria is broke, and Victorians are paying the price because of Labor’s waste and mismanagement.

Labor cannot manage money, and if you ever wanted an example of that, just have a look at the \$4 billion blowout of the Commonwealth Games. This government should be ashamed of themselves.

Each and every one of them should be ashamed of themselves. They have got smiles on their faces at the moment. They are all smiling at the moment. Do you know why they are smiling – because they are all being paid. They are all being looked after while their constituents are all struggling, because this government have left Victoria in a mess, and Victoria is broke because of them.

John MULLAHY (Glen Waverley) (12:43): I rise to take note of the 2023–24 budget papers and the excellent outcomes this budget will have for my community and Victoria as a whole. In May this year we were presented with the comprehensive details of the state budget. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Treasurer, the Assistant Treasurer and their dedicated teams for their efforts in delivering this budget. It is a true Labor budget that continues deep investment into our community across health, education and transport, all the while creating quality jobs for Victorians.

During the election campaign the Andrews Labor government pledged \$10.9 million for much-needed upgrades at Forest Hill College, and this budget delivers on that promise. Forest Hill College is one of the many outstanding public schools in my district, providing an excellent education to over 600 students. I have had the privilege of visiting the school on many occasions, and it was great to have the Minister for Education out to visit in October last year to tour the school and see all the great work that is done by the teachers, the students and the parents at the school. The minister enjoyed her visit so much that she returned to the school in November with a promise that a re-elected Andrews Labor government would deliver \$10.9 million for a rebuild of blocks A, D and M, and I am so happy that in this budget we have been able to deliver on this promise to my community.

I commend the minister and her team for their diligent work in enhancing education facilities across the state, including the schools in my district. It was great to get down to Forest Hill College during NAIDOC Week to see the work that the students and staff are doing around reconciliation and to see the important learnings taking place in the school on First Nations issues. My recent visit was also a great opportunity to discuss the upgrades with principal David Rogers and assistant principal Nicky Buckingham. These conversations included the plans that they have for what this \$10.9 million investment will do in creating enriched learning spaces for the students. Earlier this year it was great to sit down with the Forest Hill school council to talk with parents, and I would like to thank the school council president Rob Nash and the rest of the council members for volunteering all their time and efforts to make the school a better place.

Last November my volunteer team and I embarked on a doorknocking and letterboxing campaign to inform the residents within the Forest Hill College zone of our commitment to the school funding if the Andrews Labor government were to be re-elected, and the reception to this announcement was heartening. It was rewarding to learn that many voters chose to support the Andrews Labor government for the sake of their children and grandchildren, who will benefit from the improved schooling facilities. Education is paramount for the next generation of our community, and I welcome this budget commitment. I look forward to working alongside the minister and the college community to deliver these essential upgrades.

The second election commitment for Glen Waverley was a grant of \$50,000 to support the Waverley Woodworkers, a group that you know well, Deputy Speaker, as you used to represent them as the member for Mount Waverley. It is a remarkable local organisation that provides a creative and safe environment for members of our community. Last month I had the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers Lizzie Blandthorn from the other place join me in visiting the Waverley Woodworkers, which is located at Central Reserve in Glen Waverley. It was great to catch up with president Ray Ffrench, John Watson and all the other members who were there to discuss the needs for their space and the great impact this \$50,000 grant will have on their organisation. This budget allocation will enable Waverley Woodworkers to acquire additional machinery and improve the infrastructure, further empowering their members and their creativity.

On this visit, as well as last year's visit with you, Deputy Speaker, I witnessed firsthand the significance of their work and the positive impact that they have on our community. Although the Waverley Woodworkers is a men's shed, their organisation is also open to women, and it was great to talk to the women who are members about how and why they got involved. The woodworkers also put their efforts to good use by building toys for children in need. I am proud to be part of a government that supports community organisations such as the Waverley Woodworkers, and I would like to thank the minister and her office for the work they have done to support this integral community organisation. Without grants such as these, these community organisations may struggle to operate, and it is great to see the minister and her team making sure that we support our local community organisations.

As I address the house, I am proud to speak on another excellent budget allocation for my constituency. Under this budget we are allocating \$750,000 to the Vermont Reserve, and I think it is something that the member for Nepean can get behind. This funding will be used to build female-friendly facilities onsite, including the change rooms. Currently the change rooms and the bathroom facilities are not fit for purpose. They were built decades ago, when there was little support for women's sport, especially in football and cricket, both of which are played at Vermont Reserve. I would also like to thank the Minister for Community Sport, who is at the table today, for all her advocacy on this project.

Ros Spence: I've been out there.

John MULLAHY: And she has been out there. It was an excellent visit, wasn't it? This allocation is part of a larger commitment the Andrews Labor government has made in supporting and including women in sport. I am proud to be part of this government that values equality in community sport.

On that note, I would like to say a huge congratulations to both the under-16 and under-18 girls teams at the Vermont Eagles junior footy club for recently winning their grand finals. These wins have made club history: they are the first-ever girls premiers for the club. It is great to see such high-performing women's teams in our area, and it is just another reminder as to why we need to continue supporting women in sport.

Furthermore, a part of this grant will go towards the purchase and installation of LED lights for the ground. With numerous training sessions and matches held at Vermont Reserve, LED lighting will allow for more games and training sessions and keep up with the demand for community sport in our area. Vermont Reserve serves as the home for the Vermont Cricket Club and the Vermont Football Club, both of which are instrumental community sporting institutions. In the past year I have engaged in discussions with the executive members of both clubs, along with the Whitehorse City Council, to explore potential upgrades for Vermont Reserve. In these meetings I have emphasised the importance of providing change rooms and bathrooms for women's teams and players. It was great to have the Minister for Community Sport out at Vermont Reserve last month to formally announce the \$750,000 grant. It was also great to have executive members from both clubs attend, including Danny Ross, president of the Vermont Football Club; Rob Wilson, the secretary of the Vermont Football Club; Trent Touhy, the president of the Vermont Cricket Club; as well as Don Parsons from the Vermont Sports Club. It was a great opportunity to share the promising news with the executives. Both clubs are thrilled about this budget allocation and the positive impact it will have on their facilities and members. We were also joined by Whitehorse City Council CEO Simon McMillan and deputy mayor Prue Cutts to celebrate the occasion. I am looking forward to collaborating with Whitehorse City Council as well as with the Vermont football and cricket clubs to deliver this project.

It is great to witness the ongoing discussions about gender equality in sport, and I am fully committed to working with local sporting clubs to foster an inclusive environment. I extend my gratitude to the Minister for Community Sport and her team for their dedicated efforts in maintaining our local sports facilities and promoting sports participation irrespective of age and gender. I look forward to achieving successful outcomes for other community sports in my electorate.

Our budget also places significant emphasis on the healthcare sector to ensure Victorians receive the quality healthcare services they both deserve and require. The Andrews Labor government has committed \$320 million to the Hospital Infrastructure Delivery Fund, aimed at planning, developing and initiating early works for the Monash Medical Centre and Maroondah Hospital. These healthcare facilities play a pivotal role in catering to the health needs of countless Victorians, including those residing in my electorate. In addition, we are allocating funds to establish women's health clinics, recognising the importance of specialised health care for women, covering areas from contraception to conditions such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome.

Another crucial investment is in the planning for a new mental health and wellbeing service in Glen Waverley. This service will extend support to individuals aged 26 and above, addressing mental health struggles, psychological distress and addiction. It will stand as a welcoming space for members of my community facing these challenges. Following a similar model to the Orange Door program, it will be specifically dedicated to mental health. Qualified mental health professionals, including carers, will staff the service, ensuring accessibility to those in need, without the requirement for referrals or eligibility criteria. I am sure many of my constituents will be pleased to know that this service will be free of charge, eliminating barriers to access and contributing to destigmatising mental health. The Glen Waverley service will be one of 50 local mental health services established by the Andrews Labor government, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to mental health services and the wellbeing of our constituents.

Considering the pressing need for advanced healthcare services, our budget allocates \$46 million to training future paramedics, including specialised paramedic practitioners, which I am sure the member for Melton is fully behind. This endeavour aims to provide essential assistance to Victorians even before they reach a hospital, potentially saving lives. To further enhance our healthcare services we are investing \$167 million to support our dedicated nurses and midwives. This initiative seeks to strengthen nurse-to-patient ratios, ensuring that all Victorians, including those in my constituency, receive the highest quality medical attention. I would like to thank the Minister for Health and her team for their tremendous efforts in bolstering our healthcare system and safeguarding the wellbeing of all Victorians.

This budget also delivers for our TAFE sector. In Glen Waverley we are lucky to have the Holmesglen TAFE on Waverley Road. The Glen Waverley Holmesglen campus provides courses in early childhood, floristry, landscaping, hospitality and many other areas, including many of our free TAFE courses as funded by the Andrews Labor government. It was great to have the Premier as well as Minister Tierney from the other place join me in visiting Holmesglen TAFE, Glen Waverley, earlier this year for a tour and to see all the great work that happens at the TAFE. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for her tireless efforts to ensure that our TAFEs are properly funded and to make sure that Victorians are receiving a funded, quality education for in-demand jobs.

It is great to see that this budget is delivering \$186 million to expand the eligibility of courses, including free TAFE. This means that more Victorians can get the skills they need for the careers they seek, which plays a vital role in supporting our economy not just now but for the decades to come. These free TAFE courses are for in-demand sectors so that we can fill the gaps in the economy while providing Victorians with a quality education. Furthermore, we are investing \$90 million in numeracy, literacy and digital support services for those at TAFE studying one of our free courses. This will assist students in their studies and teach them transferable skills that they can use in their careers in the future. We are also putting another \$90 million into the TAFE sector to provide job placement opportunities and priority skills and to support the mental health and wellbeing of TAFE students. I am proud to be part of a government that supports and values our TAFE sector. We know that education is vital to our economy and our communities, and it is why we are dedicating millions of dollars to our TAFEs in this year's budget.

While I am speaking on the importance of education, I would like to highlight the allocations made in this budget to support kindergartens and early learning. This budget allocates money to ensure the continuation of our free kinder program for our three- and four-year-olds. It is something that I know well personally, as my daughter Órla, who I have mentioned before, got to experience three-year-old kinder last year as one of the first intakes of three-year-old kinder and this year is enjoying the four-year-old program, and for free. So it is a wonderful program, and you can see the benefits on a daily basis when she comes home from kinder. We know that kindergarten gives our children the best start to life and prepares them with the skills that they need for primary school and beyond. Furthermore, our free kinder program is one of the many cost-of-living measures our government has put in place. Making kindergarten free ensures that there is no barrier for kids to attend kinder. No child should miss out on an education just because of cost, and it is why we are making sure we continue our free kinder program.

Since being elected to this Parliament late last year I have been able to visit many of the excellent kinders and early learning centres across my district. We have got so many excellent kinders and early learning centres, such as Syndal Preschool, Tally Ho Pre-school, Waverley Kidz Children's Centre and Barriburn Preschool, and I have been able to talk to the wonderful staff about how their kinders are doing. I have heard great feedback from the teaching staff on the importance of the free kinder program, and I am sure they are glad to hear that this funding is continuing under this budget. Earlier this year I also had the great opportunity to visit Bambou Early Learning Centre on Blackburn Road in Glen Waverley with Minister Stitt from the other place. The minister and her team have done a great job in ensuring that our free kinder program has been rolled out smoothly and making sure that early childhood learning is a priority not only in this budget but for the government as a whole.

One of our significant election commitments was to reinstate the SEC, and we have not hesitated in fulfilling that pledge. The budget allocates \$1 million to revive the SEC, delivering government-owned renewable energy. To facilitate this revival \$12 million has been allocated to establish the SEC centre for training and excellence, aiming to train a new generation of SEC workers and generate thousands of jobs for Victorians. The funding will also facilitate the establishment of clean energy courses, ensuring a smooth transition to sustainable and secure job opportunities. Additionally, the centre will actively participate in career nights at government schools, inspiring the next generation to pursue a career in renewable energy. Furthermore, we are investing \$16 million to create two new worker training centres dedicated to renewable energy. These investments represent a firm commitment to renewable energy jobs creation and skills to benefit all Victorians.

I am running out of time, so I commend this budget and look forward to working alongside my colleagues to ensure its successful implementation. My constituents and I are looking forward to seeing the results of this budget.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (12:58): Today I am saddened to reply to this tired government's budget, full of high taxes for hardworking Victorians and a fairly bleak economic outlook. I must say I did think that many of us would have had this opportunity earlier, and as we have heard today, there are still 61 members waiting to speak on this dire budget. However, the benefit of this delay is that I can discuss several additional cuts to our industries, broken promises, new taxes and even more abject failures by this government.

I will try to cut through the spin and fluff of the Premier and his government, instead speaking with honesty about what this budget says about the Andrews government's priorities. For people in my electorate of Euroa, unfortunately, not much of what this government does comes as a shock anymore. This budget again reflects a government passionate about neglecting what really matters to regional Victorians and a government with a leader afraid of leaving Melbourne, confronting voters and explaining how this government are in any way doing what matters, as they claim. The objective scoreboard is quite clear: this government has the worst debt position in the nation by a country mile, the highest taxes in the nation and the worst COVID record in the country.

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

Business interrupted under standing orders.

Questions without notice and ministers statements

Payroll tax

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:02): My question is to the Minister for Health. For two days now the minister has been saying in the house that in relation to the government's decision to charge retrospective tax on tenant GPs absolutely nothing has changed. Why are medical clinics now receiving backdated tax bills for their doctors for the first time?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:02): I thank the member for her question. The answers that I have given yesterday and the day before still stand: there has been no change to the legislation as it pertains to payroll tax and how it is applied to medical practices.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:03): Dr Ahsan Hussain, a GP in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, told the media yesterday his medical clinic has received a backdated tax bill for nearly \$500,000. Why is this government forcing Dr Hussain to pay nearly \$500,000 in backdated tax for the first time?

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:03): Once again I will make the point that when it comes to payroll tax legislation in this state, nothing has changed. That is the end of the answer, because I have now given it on numerous occasions.

Ministers statements: Suburban Rail Loop

Jacinta ALLAN (Bendigo East – Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop) (14:04): On Tuesday it was a pleasure to be in Burwood with the member for Ashwood at, can I say, the future launch site of the tunnel-boring machine for the Suburban Rail Loop, where we announced the preferred contractor for the first tunnelling package from Cheltenham to Box Hill. And what a great announcement that was. We have already got early works underway. Eight-hundred jobs are supported on early works, including those that we saw at Burwood on Tuesday morning. We are announcing we are now going to the next stage – major works – with the first 16-kilometre tunnelling package being awarded to the preferred consortia led by CPB. On top of those 800 jobs there will be thousands and thousands more Victorians employed on this critically important project. Victorians know this project is important because they voted for it twice. Twice Victorians have voted to support the project, and we have been very, very clear in turn with the Victorian community that we will build it. We will build this important project.

Others, however, have been a little less clear. Some described last November's election as a referendum on the Suburban Rail Loop. Those people who made that claim lost the election. But guess what, they still do not accept that result because they continue to oppose the Suburban Rail Loop. They continue to oppose the project and continue to oppose the verdict of the Victorian people. Most critically they oppose the thousands and thousands of workers who are employed now and who will be employed into the future and oppose the vital connection that this will provide, from Cheltenham to Box Hill to Burwood to Glen Waverley to Clayton to Monash – vital connections for the community for the years ahead.

Payroll tax

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:06): My question is to the Minister for Health. Dr Anita Muñoz, chair of the Victoria Council of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, told the media yesterday in relation to the impact of the government's new tax that up to 30 per cent of general practices within our state will close and that going forward there will be significant out-of-pocket

expenses added to every single medical service that is delivered by GPs. Why is the government forcing the closure of 30 per cent of Victoria's GP clinics?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Assistant Treasurer will come to order.

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:06): I welcome the question from the member for Kew, and I make the point, as I have made on each consecutive day of this week's sitting, that the real challenge that faces primary care and has been acknowledged by both Dr Muñoz from the RACGP, from the AMA, and from other spokespeople for general practice, has been the failure of the federal governments to properly fund Medicare.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister knows not to debate the question. I would ask you to bring the minister back to the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Further, I make the point – and I will make it again, because apparently it would seem that those on the other side will simply not hear what they do not want to hear – the only place currently in Victoria that you can be guaranteed access to free primary care is at a priority primary care centre, 100 per cent funded by a state Labor government. Once again, this tax – we have been through this ad infinitum – there has been no change to the way in which payroll tax legislation operates in this state.

Jess WILSON (Kew) (14:08): Dr Muñoz told the media yesterday in relation to the new tax that this will mean the instant closure of some practices because they will be rendered insolvent, and with those that survive the loss of bulk-billing, there is no way they will be able to absorb the cost and pay that tax. Is the minister saying that Dr Muñoz and Dr Hussain are wrong?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Member for Eureka!

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:09): I will make the point once again: there have been no changes made to the arrangements that are in place for the collection of payroll tax right across Victoria. Indeed the Treasurer and I met with Dr Anita Muñoz. We met with her at her request and those of others. The Treasurer and I sat down. The question that we were asked at the time was clarification into the way in which these arrangements worked for general practice, and that was provided.

Ministers statements: women's sexual and reproductive health

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (14:09): I rise today to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's work to support the reproductive rights of all Victorians. On this side of the house we are clear on our position. We believe that abortion care is health care. We are committed to ensuring that all women have the right to make decisions about their own bodies. It was Labor that took the historic step of decriminalising abortion in this state, and it was Labor that passed legislation to establish safe access zones around abortion providers in 2015 so that women could access the health care that they need without being threatened or harassed.

But we have not stopped there. We are investing further to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health hubs. We have got 11 already established and nine more on their way. This is on top of the 20 women's healthcare clinics that we are delivering with our public health services. It is all part of our \$153 million women's health package, and with women's health, we have got so much to

celebrate and connect with our communities here on this side of the house. But it is important to remember that it was not so long ago that those on the other side were led by a person who did not support our abortion bill, did not support access to safe access zones and indeed that member was joined at the time by the member for Caulfield, the member for Polwarth, the member for Croydon, the member for Benambra and the member for Gippsland East.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. The minister knows to not debate the matter.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Ministers statements are for the minister to deliver within the standing orders. The Minister was delivering her statement and was comparing and contrasting with previous legislation and votes in this chamber. There is no point of order.

Mary-Anne THOMAS: Thank you very much, Speaker. While they have seen a change of leader, Victorians have a right to ask how much has really changed. How can we trust those opposite when their party room is now being infiltrated by extreme, ultraconservative anti-women views?

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister has concluded her statement.

Energy security

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:13): My question is to the Minister for Energy and Resources. Will the minister guarantee there will be no blackouts in Victoria this summer?

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:13): Do you know, I was thinking about the type of question I would get on this topic today, and I tell you, that was at the bottom of the list. You could have come up with a better question than that, I can tell you. It is absolute nonsense that we have got people over on that side who are absolutely hysterical when it comes to a report that was put out today by the market operator. It is absolutely clear that with the ambitious renewable energy targets and the delivery that we have got on the way, that we have got more than sufficient supply to meet our needs.

Daniel Andrews: We are a net exporter.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: Thank you, Premier. We remain a net exporter of electricity. We are actually producing more supply than –

David Hodgett: On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, that was a very straightforward question. I would ask you to bring the minister back to actually answering the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: The good news keeps coming. We had more than 130 renewable energy projects registered with the market operator today, plus the six Victorian renewable energy target 2 projects that we have got underway, plus 11 new projects that are under construction today that will soon provide new electricity supply that will keep us going and continue to be a net exporter. Victoria has had the lowest wholesale electricity prices for the last 12 months. Why does that happen? It is because we have more than –

Members interjecting.

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

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, standing order 58 does require the minister to be direct. The question asked whether the minister would guarantee, and the minister has not yet come to that question.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! As I have repeatedly said, I cannot tell the minister how to answer the question. The minister was being relevant to the question.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: I am absolutely prepared to guarantee one thing, and that is that every action that is positive on this side of the house when it comes to our energy transition will be opposed by those opposite, like they have with every single action that we have taken – absolutely. Banned wind farms, opposed every renewable energy target legislation that we have introduced in this state –

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now debating the question.

The SPEAKER: The minister had strayed a little from answering the question. I do ask her to come back to the question.

Lily D'AMBROSIO: I can guarantee that this government was working hard every single day on how to deliver the energy transition that will keep power bills as low as possible, the lowest in the NEM and making sure we have that clean affordable, renewable electricity supplied to see us through. That is what we are delivering, and we will continue to grow that effort. Those opposite might actually learn a lesson rather than being huddled in a corner with their tinfoil hats on, eating their yellowcake and wondering 'Oh!'

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Clapping is not allowed in the chamber, I remind you. Members will be removed without warning.

James Newbury: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to bring the minister back to your previous ruling.

The SPEAKER: The minister has concluded her answer.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mordialloc! The member for Frankston!

David HODGETT (Croydon) (14:17): Why won't the minister provide this guarantee that there will be no blackouts in Victoria this summer to vulnerable Victorians who will suffer from forced blackouts?

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:17): I have been very clear about our agenda. Every year Victorians can grow in their confidence about us having more than sufficient electricity – a supply that is clean, renewable, reliable, cheap, affordable – more than any other state. We have grown 59,000 jobs as we do that, getting to the SEC, having the SEC accelerate that transition, ensuring that we are going to have more projects contracted by the end of the year. From those who opposed wind farms, those who privatised our electricity system, those who slept for four long years knowing that Hazelwood was about to close, I am not going to take any lectures from those opposite about what an affordable reliable power system is because we are getting on and delivering it. Victorians can be confident we are doing just that.

Ministers statements: multicultural communities

Colin BROOKS (Bundoora – Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (14:18): Victoria is a proudly diverse multicultural state, I am sure all people would agree. People have come from across every corner of the globe, bringing a richness of culture, faith and traditions to Victoria and we celebrate and embrace that diversity. We know that there are elements, unfortunately, of extremism and racism around the world and indeed elements of it here in Victoria. It requires government, in fact all of us, to meet it with grit and determination. Racism and discrimination or any

other act with the intention of spreading fear or hate is utterly unacceptable and has no place in Victoria. That is why it is great to see so many multicultural groups reaching out to work with each other and other cultures and faiths to break down the barriers and strengthen the bonds between all of us. As a government, we are also up for the challenge. That is why we are delivering \$6 million to fight antisemitism and Islamophobia. We are working closely with the Jewish and Islamic communities in particular to develop those initiatives. We know our anti-vilification laws need to be strengthened and broadened and work has begun to do just that, firstly, by listening to and consulting with our diverse communities so that we get those reforms right.

The Andrews Labor government has established an Anti-Racism Taskforce with a diverse membership, including many with lived experience of racism. They are currently developing the nation's first whole-of-government anti-racism strategy. While we tackle these issues head on, we will continue to support our multicultural communities not just with words but with tangible support. Our recent state budget included \$40 million for infrastructure for multicultural communities, \$12 million for the celebration of multicultural festivals and events and, again, significant funding towards our multicultural museums and the *Victorian African Communities Action Plan* as examples. In all, our recent budget invests over \$77 million for multicultural Victoria because we will never take our diversity for granted.

Cost of living

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:20): My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, the supermarket duopoly of Coles and Woolworths are profiteering from the cost-of-living crisis by increasing the price of food and at the same time increasing their profit margins and posting billion-dollar-plus profits. I ask the Treasurer what action, if any, the government is taking to stop the supermarket duopoly from profiteering from the cost-of-living crisis at the expense of people struggling to afford food.

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:21): I thank the member for his question. He is probably suffering from a geographical problem in the sense that that question would be best directed to the federal Treasurer, given the federal responsibilities around competition policy. But I do take note of the fact that cost of living is a real issue, and it is one that has confronted and hurt some of the more vulnerable members of the community, particularly those living on lower incomes and subject to peaking CPI. What we are seeing, fortunately, is a moderation of those higher levels we saw over the last 12 to 18 months, where supply-chain constraints and external factors, including the Ukraine–Russia war where the effective consequence on our economy was imported, have had a dramatic effect upon the world economy. Victoria has not been immune from those changes.

As a government we do, however, accept that cost-of-living challenges are real and apparent, and the government must do what it can in areas within its responsibility. We have had our fourth power saving bonus, \$250 million worth of allocation in this budget alone. Of course one of the greatest constraints upon families is the fact that you have to send your kids to kindergarten. Indeed, to be able to participate in the labour market, getting your kids appropriately cared for is vitally important. That is two –

Daniel Andrews: And a half thousand dollars a year per child.

Tim PALLAS: and a half thousand dollars. The Premier would be much better at this than me, I am sure. Can I also recognise that providing support through concessions that we as a government have put in place aimed at helping those who are more vulnerable or have less spending capacity is an important thing. We will continue to be diligent in our efforts to assist the lowest paid and those needing the greatest support. That is why as a government we continue to support efforts to ensure those who live hand to mouth through wages get the support that the government can give through ensuring appropriate and responsible behaviour by employers so that their wages are not stolen and so that they get due compensation for the work that they do. For those in the gig economy, today I am

pleased to hear that the federal government, through the federal minister, is taking action to support gig economy workers.

Sam HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:24): Treasurer, in Australia state governments actually have significant powers to regulate industry. You have got your own Essential Services Commission Act, section 4, which allows government to regulate industry. You have got a referendum about 50 years ago that determined who can actually set prices or introduce price controls. And I believe the outgoing head of the Productivity Commission referenced state levers when it came to tackling the supermarket duopoly. You have got governments around the world taking direct action. Is the Treasurer seriously telling this house that he has no power to tackle the supermarket duopoly and stop them from profiteering off the backs of people who cannot afford food?

Dylan Wight interjected.

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

Member for Tarneit withdrew from chamber.

Tim PALLAS (Werribee – Treasurer, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Trade and Investment) (14:25): Look, I suppose the first point I would make is we have no intention of creating a command economy. The central presidium of the Greens party no doubt has a different view, but we live in an economy where we do not see a role for the state to fix prices. Indeed we do not see a role for the state to impede competition so that we get better and effective delivery of services. But I know there is a political party that supports the idea of a command economy. They want to cap – they want to freeze rents. Imagine what that would do to investment in our housing stock. It would be disastrous, and I can tell you the same would occur were the espoused views of the Greens political party to be applied to broader cost-of-living issues.

Ministers statements: renewable energy

Lily D'AMBROSIO (Mill Park – Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the State Electricity Commission) (14:26): I rise to update the house on how this government is united in delivering this state's renewable energy revolution. Right now we have more than 130 Victorian renewable energy projects registered with the market operator, of course not to mention the six VRET 2 projects that we are delivering, plus 11 projects that are under construction and will soon provide 1300 megawatts of new electricity to Victoria. Just to name a few of these, we have Ryan Corner, Golden Plains, Hawkesdale and many, many more. Right now we are out to market to contract the SEC's pioneer investment projects by the end of this year, accelerating our move towards 95 per cent renewables by 2035 and net zero by 2045.

More electricity means more supply, lower prices and those jobs – 59,000 of them. The renewables industry boom is absolutely going ahead – 5.8 gigawatts of renewable capacity in Victoria. That is four times the capacity of Yallourn power station. Yesterday we announced with the Commonwealth the fast-track capacity investment scheme to turbocharge more development of renewable capacity and generation. I have to say, some are becoming quite hysterical about this transition, preferring to lock Victorians into expensive nuclear energy, which also would take years and years and years to build. Meanwhile, coal power stations are leaving. That is what they are doing, absolutely.

We are about getting on with the job that Victorians voted for us on, not once but three times. Some are going off like nuclear fuel rods, with Chicken Little dressed up as Dr Strangelove over there, eating the yellowcake in the corner with the tinfoil hats on in the fallout shelter. The only thing that they are united on is their commitment to each other for mutually assured destruction. That is what you will get from them – nuclear energy and mutually assured destruction.

Members interjecting.

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

Member for Eureka withdrew from chamber.

Government appointment process

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:29): My question is to the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events. The government has recently appointed former Labor ministers Martin Foley, Lisa Neville and James Merlino to senior positions within public entities. Can the minister advise whether it is government policy that all appointments within his portfolio will have an open and transparent selection process?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:29): I thank the member for his question. I reject the implication in his question.

Daniel Andrews: Exactly. So does Gordon Rich-Phillips.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Exactly – Gordon Rich-Phillips. Every single appointment we make is on merit, and I would encourage the member, if he has an actual example of one that is not meritorious, to share it with the house. I might also share with the member – I do not want to give him too much of a heads-up, but I have had some really good conversations with a bunch of your colleagues who are very interested and who may in the most recent expressions of interest have put a few names in. So watch this space.

The SPEAKER: Order! Minister, through the Chair. A reminder that comments are to be made through the Chair.

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:30): It has been announced that the chair of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation Paul Little's term will end in September. Has the government made a decision to appoint a former Labor minister to this position?

Steve DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh – Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Creative Industries) (14:31): No.

The SPEAKER: Order! The minister should wait to be called before he responds.

Ministers statements: Voice to Parliament

Daniel ANDREWS (Mulgrave – Premier) (14:31): On 14 October Victorians and Australians will get an opportunity to recognise the oldest continuous culture known to human history in our national constitution. We will also get a unique opportunity to listen to Aboriginal people so that we can get better outcomes for Aboriginal people – but not just Aboriginal people, because if we can achieve better outcomes for First Nations Australians, every single Australian will benefit from that. Every single Victorian will benefit from that. Whether it is in health, in education, in child protection, in so many areas, the evidence is clear: at a state level and to a certain extent at a national level, when you listen and engage with Aboriginal people and allow them to set the agenda for their own kids, their businesses, their opportunities and their education to change lives and to save lives, you get better outcomes.

Our government is united and absolutely clear in our support for a yes vote, and whilst I have not at any point – nor will I – told people how they ought to vote, I simply share with the house and all Victorians that I will be voting yes, because I believe you get better outcomes when you listen to Aboriginal people and I believe that the old way is not working. Billions of dollars are being spent every year to see our Closing the Gap metrics get worse, not better. The old way needs to be replaced with something different, something better. Listen, recognise, act, be clear and then work really hard with Aboriginal people to deliver those better outcomes.

I was honoured at national cabinet to sign on to a statement of intent with other first ministers – first ministers not just from the Labor Party. My good friend the then Liberal Premier of New South Wales Dominic Perrottet signed up to that statement. Another person of integrity and character, Premier Jeremy Rockliff from Tasmania, signed up to that statement of intent. I would urge all leaders of political parties in this house to sign up to this. I can only urge them, because yes is the way we need to go.

Rulings from the Chair

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (14:33): Yesterday I advised the house that I would review yesterday's constituency questions, as there were a number which were not in the correct form.

The member for South-West Coast sought an action. I therefore rule her constituency question out of order.

The member for Lowan addressed her contribution to the Minister for Health but did not ask a question. I therefore rule her constituency question out of order.

The member for Point Cook sought for the Minister for Health to provide an update. Previously *Rulings from the Chair* has clarified that asking a minister to provide an update is in order. However, members still need to actually ask a question. It is not sufficient to simply say, for example, 'I ask the minister to provide an update'. That is not a question. Such a phrase could easily be changed to 'Can the minister provide me with an update?' I therefore rule the member for Point Cook's constituency question out of order.

The member for Mornington asked a valid question at the beginning of his contribution but went on to ask a further question at the end of his contribution. At first glance it appears the member for Mornington attempted to restate the question, but unfortunately they can be construed as separate questions, one about a broad issue and one about a specific issue. The member for Croydon also restated his question at the end of his contribution, but in that case it was very clearly the same question. On this point I would like to suggest to members that it is unnecessary to repeat a question. One question is allowed, and it is sufficient to ask that question only once during a contribution. I therefore rule the member for Mornington's constituency question out of order. The member for Croydon's constituency question is in order.

Constituency questions

Murray Plains electorate

Peter WALSH (Murray Plains) (14:35): (310) My constituency question is to the Premier, and it is on behalf of the Rochester CFA. It concerns a press release that the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services put out on 28 October last year assuring the Rochester CFA that they would have a substantial amount of money to build a new fire station. The information that I seek from the Premier is: can he clarify to the CFA brigade why the CFA buildings and land division is now telling them they will not get an allocation the same as what the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services promised them to build their new CFA station? They are very concerned about the fact that despite a press release from the Premier, which was signed by the Premier and signed by the Minister for Emergency Services when they visited that brigade after the floods, the CFA is now telling them that they will not get that budget allocation to build a new CFA station. I ask for information from the Premier to assure them that they will actually get that money.

Hastings electorate

Paul MERCURIO (Hastings) (14:36): (311) I am very pleased to say that after 16 years of absolutely no action to address the pedestrian safety and vehicle congestion issues of the Somerville roundabout, work has now commenced. Thanks to the Andrews Labor government, the \$930,000 pedestrian safety upgrade is now underway to make this roundabout much safer for those in

the community, including the hundreds of schoolkids that use this intersection daily. My constituent question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Whilst my community are grateful for the safety upgrade, they continually tell me they are concerned with the dangerous congestion and traffic flow of this roundabout. Can the minister please provide my community with an update on what plans and discussions are being undertaken to further make this roundabout safer for the many hundreds of drivers, both residents and commercial drivers, that use this roundabout daily? I look forward to hearing from the minister, and I would welcome her visiting Somerville to view the progress of this safety upgrade.

Evelyn electorate

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (14:37): (312) Elder abuse is a significant and sadly an increasing issue. Members of my community raised serious concerns about the Andrews Labor government's cuts to the integrated model of care program in the recent state budget, a program that provided elder abuse prevention workers across Victoria. The government should be doing more, not less, especially after the findings of the royal commission. My question is to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers: given client demand is increasing and waiting lists are eight to 12 weeks for vital support, what will happen to the integrated model of care workforce; who is replacing these local community-based elder abuse prevention workers; and will people experiencing elder abuse expect any changes in the way they access services and receive support, including face-to-face assistance? It seems the government has failed to release any details about the IMOC trial program, and while new funding is allocated for primary prevention programs, my community want to know what will replace IMOC in communities for those already suffering abuse.

Bass electorate

Jordan CRUGNALE (Bass) (14:38): (313) My question is for the Minister for Environment. What is the latest update on the cape-to-cape resilience plan? Stage 1 is complete, and the stage 2 draft plan is being circulated to members of the regional and strategic partnerships, the first ever created under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018. Inverloch has experienced significant erosion, with Anderson Inlet the most dynamic estuary in the state. Wind, waves, tides, storms and climate change have moved sand around, creating dune loss – in some areas up to 70 metres and accretion in others. The geotech bags have protected our surf club, along with the rock wall at Bunurong Road. My community have been very engaged, detailing what they love about the area and what they value, and are keen to see the coastal hazard assessment report in its entirety. They also want to see the recommended adaptation options and have the reassurance we are working to implement them. I want to thank them and also the amazing team at the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, who led by science and experts are developing this long-term adaptation plan.

Nepean electorate

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (14:39): (314) My question is for the Minister for Environment. With 192 kilometres of coastline, the Mornington Peninsula's beaches are an important part of our community's unique way of life, both for the locals and for visitors. Recently, local community advocate, litter prevention campaigner and seahorse enthusiast Josie Jones OAM contacted me regarding the high volumes of meso- and macroplastics and residual litter being left on Port Phillip beaches. Specifically, she spoke about the widespread use of mechanical beach raking as opposed to the preferred method of hand raking. This has failed to address the issues of litter on the local beaches, and in many cases has made the problem worse. The misconception that mechanical raking is working is allowing high volumes of this litter to enter the water during high tides. Will the minister's department conduct an investigation into the effectiveness and environmental impacts of mechanical beach raking?

Thomastown electorate

Bronwyn HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (14:40): (315) My constituency question is for the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. Residents are very pleased that the long-awaited extension of Edgars Road between Rockfield Street and O'Herns Road in Epping is now open. However, kangaroos are now straying onto the new road, and this is a danger to drivers, pedestrians and the kangaroos themselves. It has become evident that kangaroos need to be humanely managed, and proactively, to prevent them straying onto the new road. Will the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure ensure that Development Victoria urgently work with the City of Whittlesea to come up with a solution to protect people and the kangaroos?

Richmond electorate

Gabrielle DE VIETRI (Richmond) (14:41): (316) My question is for the Attorney-General. Anti-trans vilification is escalating. My constituents are being targeted in their workplaces, at civic events and even in their homes. This week the Victorian Pride Lobby and the Trans Justice Project released a report on experiences of transphobia. One in two respondents experienced anti-trans hate, and one in 10 have been subjected to anti-trans violence. This report is a warning. Transphobia is on the rise under our watch, and we need to act now before it is too late. The queer community is asking for the bare minimum when they call on us to expand anti-vilification laws to protect the LGBTIQ+ community. Your government has voted down every attempt to change things since 2019, saying that you are working on it. So Attorney-General, what progress have you made to expand anti-vilification laws before it is too late?

Northcote electorate

Kat THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (14:42): (317) My constituency question is to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, and I ask: what is the process for determining the future of the Fulham Grange spur in Alphington? This large 1.28-hectare site on the corner of Heidelberg and Grange roads is owned by VicTrack but is surplus to their requirements. At the end of 2022 VicTrack undertook a community consultation to ask Alphington residents about their insights, preferences and priorities for the site. VicTrack committed to using these insights to inform a further round of engagement as part of the development of a master plan in 2023. There are many imperatives within our community when it comes to the use of valuable land – from more housing to open space, active transport links and better services. My community are keen to see the summary feedback from the consultation and to hear about the next steps to determining the future of this important site.

Narracan electorate

Wayne FARNHAM (Narracan) (14:43): (318) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and the question I ask today is: will the government provide funding to support Longwarry Primary School and their efforts to install security fencing? The school community has been desperately seeking \$240,000 to upgrade fencing to not just secure the boundary of the school but to ensure the safety of students. Given every day the government is wasting billions of dollars on cost blowouts from major projects and the cancelled Commonwealth Games, surely urgent requests like this are not being delayed or cancelled because of the mismanagement of your government. The school community deserve an update about the status of this request and when they can expect to see their school upgrade with this critical infrastructure they need.

Pakenham electorate

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (14:43): (319) My question is for the Minister for Education. How many free meals have been provided to students in the Pakenham district as part of the school breakfast club program? I recently visited Officer Secondary College with our Treasurer, and we were asked by students, 'What are some of the things that the state government are doing to alleviate cost-of-living pressures?' We explained to them that the breakfast available to them in the mornings was an Andrews Labor government initiative. The program commenced in 2016 to help more students get the most

from their day of learning by providing a healthy, nutritious meal and was recently funded for another four years in this year's budget. For many in my electorate this is vital support to assist students in getting the most out of their education. Every child deserves access to quality and nutritious food to start their school day. I look forward to hearing how many students have benefited from this program.

Motions

Budget papers 2023–24

Debate resumed.

Annabelle CLEELAND (Euroa) (14:44): As I was saying, for many Victorians the state's debt position is not something they are thinking about on a daily basis, but it is certainly something they are feeling on a daily basis. There is an ever-growing cost-of-living crisis, inflation is still not under control and Victorians are having more of their own earnings taken by this government than anywhere else in the entire country, despite some previous claims of the Premier. This out-of-control debt is not just numbers on a piece of paper. It is \$16 million a day down the gurgler just to pay off interest. As we have learned this week, the state debt is now approaching \$200 billion, money the government has borrowed in the name of every Victorian, including our children. Sixteen million dollars would make an incredible difference to so many communities across my electorate, starved of funding from this government for too long.

I would like to congratulate my community for their passionate advocacy in securing funding for a couple of projects after we made a commitment to funding them in the lead-up to the election. The people of Benalla have made their voices heard in securing funding for a new Benalla indoor recreation centre. The current venue was not only flooded in October but is not even close to fit for purpose for the incredible number of sporting groups and athletes who use the facilities every week. Thanks to a petition tabled in Parliament bearing more than 400 signatures and the support of user groups, the community will receive a new stadium to ensure everyone, young and old, can enjoy staying fit and active close to home.

The invaluable work of Tomorrow Today will also continue, with more funding provided to ensure the Education Benalla program can be delivered and their transformative work addressing intergenerational disadvantage and complex social and economic factors continue. The foundation has clearly demonstrated a strong return on investment and has been rewarded with a continuation of funding that will make a continued difference for youth and families across our entire region. While Tomorrow Today received funding for it this financial year, it is imperative the foundation receives funding that is recurrent to maintain this exceptional program.

Our emergency services workers in Heathcote will also receive funding for a new co-located CFA and SES site. This new site needs to be located away from flood zones, with the SES having to constantly negotiate the challenges of turning out in flash flooding events while their own facilities are threatened. Likewise, in Kilmore the SES has been hampered by their existing facilities due to the significant growth along the Hume, which has seen their call-outs exponentially increase despite having to turn away new members due to their capacity constraints. New funding to build an upgraded shed on the existing site owned by the SES will alleviate some of this pressure and support their amazing work in the community and south all the way to Beveridge. All this funding came off the back of commitments from the Nationals.

While this government has been dragged to the table on some local projects, there is still a desperate need for funding across the region. While the Suburban Rail Loop, the great lemon that is neither supported by a business case nor appropriate for the current economic circumstances rolls on, there is growing concern around the future of the Kilmore bypass. No business case has been completed, the land acquisition process has blown out over the years and funding for this is set to expire with its completion by the end of the new financial year. Several questions I have raised about this to the minister remain months overdue and unanswered, and we do not seem to be getting any closer to a resolution.

Next year's budget needs to see more money on the books for the actual construction of this vital piece of infrastructure that will transform Kilmore and greatly enhance the livability of the town. While the government is happy to throw tens of billions of dollars down the drain because of their inability to manage major infrastructure, perhaps it should get back to basics and invest in regional bypasses that will have a significant benefit to communities, ones like ours in Kilmore and other places like Shepparton.

While on the topic of roads, let us take a look at this government's senseless cuts to road asset management. They cut funding to roads when they first got into government, did a little bit of backtracking a few years ago and now in the wake of extensive damage to the state's network after last year's floods have cut another 25 per cent of the budget. We have a backlog of billions in terms of road maintenance. Now we have seen even more cuts to the roads resurfacing budget, and all the while our regional roads crumble and our devastating road toll continues to rise. The government are very good at claiming black is white and saying they have boosted road funding over the decade, but it is categorically not true. The resilience of the road network is something that has a disproportionate impact on regional Victorians and our economy, two of the favourite whipping boys of the Premier.

In the health sector we continue to see failure after failure. It could be the management of the 000 system, failures which have led to Victorians losing their lives under this government, or it could be the tens of thousands of Victorians languishing on elective surgery waitlists. The Premier and the Minister for Health blame COVID for all the issues in the health system, but at the risk of repeating myself, Victorians faced the longest lockdowns in the world while also having the worst health outcomes during the pandemic. The common denominator between the failures in the health system, the mismanagement of the pandemic and the record lockdowns is an incompetent government and nothing else. Our local hospitals are crying out for investment, and while I love fishing as much as the next person – you can ask my husband how patient I am waiting while he catches a fish – handing out free fishing rods to children rather than fixing our broken health system is a kick in the guts to our local health services. Our community health providers are facing cuts. Most importantly, people in my electorate cannot get the care they need close to home or even at all because of the failure to invest in life-saving services.

Just this week more news has come out about attacks on sick people and more pressure being put on our GPs and emergency departments. This 4.85 per cent payroll tax is estimated to cost patients an extra \$20 per appointment, and despite the spin we just heard, Victorians can see this is a health tax. Most GPs in regional towns like Benalla are already completely at capacity, having to turn away patients or place them on a six-month waitlist – six months. Why are we making life more difficult for the patient, the GP and our emergency departments all in one move?

My electorate is experiencing population growth at extreme levels. We desperately need investment in local services like education. While Broadford Primary will be receiving an upgrade, we have Broadford Secondary College bursting at the seams. The Minister for Education has no idea what is going on. She started by saying there was no enrolment pressure, then said growth will be monitored and now says there is an enrolment plan in place. All the while our children are being turned away from the school. Despite all of this, there is no investment in the budget for Broadford Secondary College. Compounding this is the rapid growth of Kilmore, one of the biggest towns in the state, which does not even have a public secondary school. Families from this part of my electorate are travelling to communities their children are unfamiliar with so they can get an education or feeling forced to pay private school fees just to keep their children in town. These are issues that will only worsen, with projections for the Mitchell shire showing exponential growth.

While many projects in my electorate missed out on funding, others have had their existing funding gutted. Our visiting teacher program was set for massive job losses before a last-minute backflip by this government, thanks to outstanding community advocacy and pressure from the Nationals. To me this was a heartless and distressing decision with no thought or care for our most vulnerable children.

This is just one area of education that has been massively slashed under this government. We already know several hundred other jobs are in the firing line.

Our one-person police stations are also under threat – something that will be a huge detriment to our smaller regional towns, something the Premier is clearly unaware of. There are already four on the chopping block just in my electorate of Euroa. These are just some of the examples of the government failing to understand the needs of my electorate and the entire regional Victoria.

Life continues to get harder under Labor with rising WorkCover premiums now looming as a serious threat to Victoria's horseracing industry too. The horse industry's rate for WorkCover contribution has surged by an astounding 65 per cent in the past year with absolutely no warning and after stud service fees were already set for the season. In the 2021–22 financial year the rate was 5.859 per cent, in 2022–23 it was 5.75 per cent and this year it has jumped dramatically to 9.487 per cent. It is simply unacceptable that local breeders are being put under financial risk due to this government's mishandling of the WorkCover system. Having spoken with several thoroughbred stud breeders, farmers and equine service providers, the rising cost of WorkCover premiums is suffocating the growth of the industry. The fact nearly 10 per cent of farm pay is allocated towards WorkCover is absolutely ridiculous. Many of these businesses I spoke to have yet to even file a WorkCover claim, and these breeders are not facing the same risks as jockeys and track riders. It is completely unfair they are saddled by the same premium rates due to another example of this government's financial mismanagement. Training fees are increasing to cover costs, raising fears horse owners will be priced out of the sport and driven interstate unless they receive more support from this state government.

Leading trainers have announced significant hikes in fees to cover WorkCover premiums, including daily surcharges, which is a painful hit to owners, who are the lifeblood of racing. Coupled with inflation, the overall costs for owners and trainers are soaring as Victoria buckles under financial pressure. The current, broken WorkCover system means less jobs and increased prices and is adding to the cost-of-living crisis we are in the middle of. It has already been such a struggle for these businesses to find staff, and now they are weighing up if it is worth keeping them at all. This is an industry that contributes almost \$5 billion a year to the economy and helps sustain 35,000 jobs across Victoria. We need to foster that, not make things harder for industry participants. I implore the Minister for Racing and the minister for finance to work together to fix this absolute mess before our horse industry moves to New South Wales.

Day after day I bring matters and the concerns of my constituents before ministers. Sometimes problems are acknowledged, but very rarely are solutions offered or is funding put on the table. Regional Victorians are fed up. They are tired of a Premier who loves to gaslight his constituents, is happy to shamelessly tell Victorians black is white, is eager to erode democratic institutions and has created a massive divide between those living in our regions and Melbourne. We deserve so much better than the leadership the state is faced with and those on the other side who continually turn a blind eye to the poor governance that plagues this state.

This government has never been about looking after regional Victorians, but if they are determined to spread this message, it is time to put their money where their mouth is: leave the comfort of the city and the suburbs and speak to regional Victorians in the flesh. After what they have been through under this government, it is the very least they can do. On every metric we are going backwards under this government, and Victorians simply cannot afford to keep paying for Labor's incompetence.

Belinda WILSON (Narre Warren North) (14:56): I am honoured today to speak about my electorate and the budget that we handed down. I think when you have gone to an election and you have won 56 seats, you are always really proud to stand up and see what you can deliver for your community. While making notes about my speech today I was thinking about all the great things that we are delivering for Narre Warren North, and that is what I am really excited to talk about this afternoon. I guess the first thing I want to talk about is the incredible organisation in my electorate called Bk 2 Basics – and I know the member who is here from Narre Warren South is also a very big

advocate for Bk 2 Basics and so is the federal member for Bruce. We are very big supporters of them, and we are really excited to be able to provide \$100,000 to them following the election. The great thing about Kelly and Craig and their gorgeous daughter Katie, who work so hard to deliver for our community – it is a charity organisation that they started in their garage – is they saw a need in the community. They were helping the community out of their garage, and they have now moved to bigger premises and are doing exceptional work, not only in Narre Warren but in surrounding areas. We are just so proud to work with them and alongside them and to support this great, incredible organisation.

I have got the honour of representing a lot of schools in Narre Warren North, and we have got a really great, strong school community. One of the schools that reached out to me very early on was Fleetwood Primary School. They have a new principal there, Tobin, and assistant principal Lisa, who are doing incredible work at Fleetwood Primary School. It is a really lovely community, and they are building a really great culture within the school. They have got a really great reward program – as a mother of three I have seen lots of different ways schools operate, and they have an incredible program there. They spoke to me about their bathrooms and drinking fountains needing a bit of a revamp. They also had a really low fence line at the front of their school, and the little preppies who were eager to see their parents at the end of the day were keen to run out really quickly. So they talked about putting a fence up at the front of the school, just to make sure the little younger ones did not run out of school too quickly. That is something that we have been able to deliver, and we are really excited about the work starting there at Fleetwood Primary School.

I am blessed with three incredible government high schools in my electorate. Simon is an incredible principal at Hallam; he has only been a couple of years at Hallam Secondary College. They do an incredible sports program focused on Rugby League, and they are teaching me all about Rugby League there. One of the great things through the election was I was able to take the Premier out there, which was really exciting. It was like a rockstar performance. I must say I think the staff were more excited to see the Premier than anyone else there. They were very excited, and they were also very excited when he announced a \$24.2 million program for them. We are really, really excited about delivering that.

The great thing about Hallam Secondary College is that they have got a great dream and a great vision ahead. They have been for a very long time a years 10 to 12 school, and what they introduced this year is year 7. They will over the years bring year 7s into the school. It will take four years to bring them to a years 7 to 12 school, so that is really exciting for them. What we have been able to provide is an incredible plan. In fact I visited last week with Simon to go through the plans and see the 7-to-9 building and the competition-grade gym. They are going to build an admin building that will increase the whole space and will increase their enrolment capacity, which is going to happen over the next four to five years, which is really exciting.

The other primary school which is going to benefit from our budget is James Cook Primary School. Another big shout-out, to Anne, who has taught in our system for over 30 years. She is an incredible teacher, and she is really committed to her great school in Endeavour Hills, just around the corner from my office. We are excited that they are going to go through the planning process, and we are delivering them \$9 million. I am excited to see how that one unfolds. I find master planning a very exciting time in schools. It is something that I have done many times on school council. It is a really exciting time to go through the master-planning process when you are on school council and when you are part of the school community because the process allows you to put forward what you think your school needs and wants to deliver, and it is a really exciting time for any school community. I am really, really excited about that time.

One of the great things about our government is not just that we deliver for each electorate but that we deliver lots of statewide programs too, which all of us benefit from. I know that the Minister for Health, who just passed through, spoke about this today in her great statement, and that was about our priority care centres. I have got one of those in Narre Warren. It is an amazing place. It is not always really busy, which is a great thing, but for those kids that have broken bones on weekends or need stitches et cetera it is a great place to take the pressure off any emergency department, like Casey Hospital's.

The priority care places are really amazing, and I have got one of those happening at the moment in my electorate.

I nearly did miss the dog park, and I know that the member for Pakenham spoke about that earlier today. Dog parks are very exciting. My dogs Indi and Daisy are very excited about this dog park happening in Endeavour Hills. It is going to be an incredible space for them to play in, and also it keeps them from running away, which my dog does do often, so I have got to keep an eye on that.

I was just about to acknowledge, for the member for Dandenong – but she has just finished on the front desk – the exciting thing happening at Dandenong Hospital, which I am really excited about. Dandenong Hospital is very close to my electorate on one side, and then of course Casey Hospital is on the other side of the electorate. Both of these hospitals are getting an upgrade. We are getting the women's clinic, which again the member for Pakenham spoke about earlier, at Casey Hospital. We are excited about that. It is going to make a huge difference to our area, and women's health is so important. My daughter has extreme stage IV endometriosis. She was only recently diagnosed, and at 21 it is a difficult and hard journey ahead. With any females that suffer from that, the hard thing is that so many people do not have access to be able to be diagnosed with these complicated and sometimes hard-to-diagnose female conditions, so as a woman it is lovely and important to be able to support our women and to be able to have these special clinics, especially in our multicultural society, where some women are nervous about going to a clinic, seeing a GP or seeing a doctor. I am excited about this coming to Narre Warren North, and it is going to be really, really exciting. It is going to be great.

I have not spoken about free kinder. After having three kids go through kinder, that was one of the biggest surprises – when my daughter, who is, as I just said, 22 years of age, started kinder I was hit with a \$2500 bill. I did not know that kinder was so expensive. It is, and for us as a government to be able to offer free three- and four-year-old kinder is an absolute game changer. So many children do not go to kinder or miss out because of the cost. We are really supporting the kinder programs all over the state. I have got over 40 programs in my electorate alone. The great thing is that a lot of these kinders are next to schools, and this makes it easy for drop-off, which I know the member for Pakenham spoke about earlier.

Kinder is a really important part of a child's learning. I can still see my two little boys, who are now 19 and 17 – not so little, much taller than me – graduating from their kinder. Their teacher dressed them up in a lovely cap and gown when they were only four years old, and I remember that day really vividly. Kinder is a really important program for development. I also know that it was my son's kinder teacher who actually picked up that my son had a vision issue, and if she had not done that, he probably would never have been able to drive a car. So I am really thankful for that. Kinder is a really, really important part of kids' lives.

Another program that we are delivering for our apprentices is free rego, and I know a few of my sons' friends have already jumped on board with that and are very thankful to the Labor Andrews government for that incredible initiative. Our Victorian veterans card, which has only just been rolled out over the last couple of weeks, is an incredible initiative. The other thing is our free sanitary items. Some people think that we do not need that, but you would be surprised at the amount of people that cannot access those products, and for us to be able to provide those to many people who need them is really important. Again, I have had many people talk to me about that program to say how thankful they are and how necessary it is.

I could talk about what we have on offer all day, but I believe there are many people that want to have their chance on the budget take-note, so on that note I will say thank you, and I present my budget take-note.

Roma BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:08): I rise to speak on the budget take-note motion, which is about the budget that was handed down in May. Tomorrow is the 1st of September, and boy, what has happened since May until now is quite interesting. Back in May we were told that the

government had a \$167 billion debt, and since then a lot more has been laid bare for all to see. Just yesterday we learned that it is actually \$226 billion that is owed by this government. That is over \$10 million a day in interest payments alone that have to be paid back from the extraordinary debt this government has racked up – debt that is bigger than Queensland's, South Australia's and Tasmania's put together. They called it a COVID situation and a COVID tax that they had to put in place, but do you know what? All the other states of this country also had COVID, and their debt is nowhere near as big, and that is why I state that Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania's debt wrapped together is not as big as Victoria's debt.

What have we got now? We have got a government after 10 years in such a state of 'broke' that we are seeing them introduce tax after tax after tax, and even all the taxes they are going to bring in will not reduce the debt. We have seen a land tax increase. We have seen an education tax, a rent tax and a holiday tax, and now we are seeing a health tax, or a tax on sick people. We have seen WorkCover increase. The government said it was an increase of 42 per cent. Now, if that is not extraordinary in itself, can you imagine as a business owner going in and putting your stock up by 42 per cent? Your customers would be appalled, and you would not be getting the business you need. But this government whacks on a 42 per cent increase and people just have to cop it, and that is not even half of it, because what I am seeing and hearing from many of the businesses is that some of them are paying far in excess of an increase of 42 per cent. The bill that they are getting from WorkCover this year, that they are all receiving at the moment, is absolutely extraordinary, and they were not expecting it. They are actually not sure how they are going to pay it, and they have no choice.

Not only has this government racked up a debt of \$226 billion, the cost blowouts on major projects in Melbourne – that is cost blowouts, not what these projects cost, but cost blowouts – the figure I give you on their cost blowouts is \$30 billion. Can I repeat: that is not the cost of the projects, that is the cost of how much the projects have blown out on these major road projects, mainly in Melbourne. And who is going to pay for that? Who is going to pay for the mismanagement of this government? Regional Victorians often pay the cost for these things, and we see it in our roads. Sure enough, what did we see – a decrease in road maintenance funding when we have the most extreme road conditions we have ever had. Roads are crumbling before our eyes. People are absolutely taking their life in their hands when they get on our roads in regional Victoria, particularly in south-west Victoria. We have seen over and over again the government throw money away by trying to fix them in conditions that are making it impossible to fix them in, like in the middle of winter – fixing potholes that within days just fall apart again. We are seeing extraordinary examples of mismanagement. It actually was pleasing to discover this week that the government are putting some performance measures in place finally – I have been calling for that for years. But considering the cut in road funding and the lack of resources, I think it will be quite clear we will get less achieved and our roads will continue to go backwards, because this government has been mismanaging the situation for so long.

We see, unfortunately, less spending in our regions. That budget was delivered in May. The big disappointment – there were many of them – on top of the roads was the lack of funding for the Lookout project in Warrnambool. This is a drug rehabilitation centre. When you have got something as imperative as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre – they have been recognised as imperative everywhere else in the state, and we are the only place left to get one – and it was not in the budget, that tells you a lot about the state of finances in this state. The state is broke, and we are paying the cost in regional Victoria. The lack of funding for the Lookout project is a disgrace, and I cannot believe that this government are in such a situation financially that they could not find \$30 million when \$30 billion has been wasted in cost blowouts and overruns on their major projects in Melbourne. We also did not see the surf lifesaving club in Warrnambool funded. We did not see the basketball stadium in Portland funded. We did not see hockey funded in Warrnambool. Hardly any of our wonderful sporting facilities got any funding, and many of them are in a dire state and need repairs.

The state is in a real place of flux, I think. My colleague the Shadow Minister for Small Business said just this week that we are seeing 7000 less businesses in Victoria registered this year compared to an

extra 8000 in New South Wales and she said an extra 15,000 in Queensland. So 7000 less, and more in other states – I think that tells us all we need to know.

We are seeing power prices go up when we have been promised they will go down. They are going up, and they are going up extraordinarily. We are seeing hospitals that are meant to be getting funded. We saw the Warrnambool Base Hospital was allocated funding in the 2020 budget. It is now 2023, and we have seen some action there – we have seen the linen offsite build take place. But I am majorly concerned that the operating theatre and the accident and emergency, which is the component that we need desperately, will be held back, because we have got so many other health projects that this government has promised that have not begun but were promised before the Warrnambool Base Hospital build. I am watching that with great concern. We have got a problem in our health sector.

We have got a childcare crisis, where we cannot get childcare placements for people to go back to work, which is adding to the cost-of-living crisis. Child care is said to be a federal issue by the minister, but there are ways. If there was a summit held between the federal and state governments, we could look at regulations and changes to in-venue care, to day care and to childcare centres and we could look at flexibility in individual centres so we could make changes that do not harm the safety of children but actually enhance the ability for more child care to take place in our regions. This is a solvable issue; it just takes the minister to get together with the federal minister and find those areas where they can work together. These things can be changed very quickly, and they are urgent. While we have got no childcare placements, people cannot go back to work. They cannot pay off their mortgages. They cannot pay for their increased power bills.

We have got a rental crisis. We have now got new taxes and land tax, and many homes are rental properties in south-west Victoria. We did not have land tax applying to land that was less than \$300,000; now with the increases in land prices and the increase in the tax we will see every rental property, more than likely, in South-West Coast having that tax applied. That will put the rent up per week at a minimum, more than likely, \$50. That is a lot of money per week for families that are struggling. These are taxes that the government have put on our community.

We need to see a government who understand that their actions over the last 10 years have resulted in this health crisis, have resulted in the rental crisis, have resulted in the lack of social housing and have resulted in homelessness. The government had the levers to pull to alter things so that the policies would actually get more people into rental properties, more people into social housing that the government has built. I heard the Premier say just this week, 'We're going to build 1300 more homes.' Well, what have they been doing for 10 years? This is a decade of a government who have been telling us they are doing great. Well, if this government has been doing so great for the last decade, why are we in a healthcare crisis, a childcare crisis and a rental crisis? Why are power prices going up? Why did we get promises about an SEC last election but, guess what, no money in the budget for it? It is a great promise. We all want to see that – great, wouldn't that be wonderful? But nothing can come to fruition without money, and there is no money.

Then, to top it all off, something that I think really demonstrates just how bad this government's performance is: not only did they promise the SEC before the last election, they also promised the Commonwealth Games, to help regional Victoria. We thought we would get some investment into our roads, get improvement, get people out to the regions so we could show off what we have got, the beauty and tourism and all the things that we do have out in the regions. But no, what we got was the government making false promises that they knew they could never keep. Then, just in the last few weeks, what have we seen – the cancellation of the games. We have seen secrecy. Nobody knew about it. There were people heading off on aeroplanes to London to tell the Commonwealth Games team, the organisers, before the cabinet had even met. There was secrecy. We were told then that there would not be a cost to the taxpayer that would not be disclosed. Sure enough, they came out with, 'It's going to cost \$380 million' – but that is not all: there is a gag order that the government asked to be put in place after telling us that they would not be secretive about it. The gag order has been put in place. That is not taking into account all the councils that had gone ahead and put people on and started the

progress and planning, let alone the businesses who were in the regions and who said, 'I'm going to make changes to my business and investments so that we can accommodate people.' It is not only housing people but the hospitality around feeding people and all the logistics required. People were making big investments, and none of that has been costed into the \$380 million-plus that gives us absolutely no games.

So we see a state of Victoria that is now broke, and it is laid out for everyone to see. It is becoming quite evident, and it is also on top of the disappointment that our state of Victoria sees with report after report after report of mismanagement by this government. The IBAC reports stating that things are very soft corruption or grey corruption, the Ombudsman coming out and saying all is not well with the way this government is operating – there are too many eminent, respected, professional individuals who are speaking out about the way this government has mismanaged our state, kept secrets and told untruths to the community about what they would be expecting. It is nothing short of pure shame. I am very worried for the state of Victoria.

The budget was the beginning of what has been laid out there for all to see, and it is going to be a very sad few years ahead where families are struggling with the cost of living. For young families, with the cost of children going to school, nappies, formula – all of those things that they have to afford when they have a young family – I really do not know how they are doing it. Power bills – despite using less power, they are still paying more, even if they are being as conservative as they possibly can, than they were at the same time last year. There is just no way of managing this increase, and the government cannot blame anyone but themselves. Unfortunately, that is the approach of our Premier – to place blame. He places blame on the RBA and places blame on increased costs that were unforeseeable when he took on the concept of the Commonwealth Games. These are just excuses and blame-shifting. In my world it has always been an unacceptable way of doing business to find somebody else to blame other than yourself. We have got a Premier who says he takes responsibility and the buck stops with him, but all I continue to hear is blame.

I believe when we see taxes like we have seen this week on the GPs, a payroll tax that has never been applied to them being applied retrospectively after they have done such a great job during COVID, it is an absolute slap in the face. And when we need more support for our health system, to take away more GPs, because they will leave and go interstate and close their practice, is going to put more pressure on the emergency departments. It is going to increase the cost to patients. It is an absolute shame. For the minister to come out and say there is no change when the doctors are receiving massive bills that they have never had before or accounted for and retrospective bills of their payroll tax and no time to adjust means it is only patients who are going to have to suffer. These GPs do all the prophylactic medicine to keep people out of hospital. The cost savings they bring to this state are extraordinary. I feel just so ashamed, as a health professional in the past, that these doctors who I have always respected – I know they do a great job – are being treated like this. It is just another example.

Iwan WALTERS (Greenvale) (15:23): It is a pleasure to rise to contribute to this budget take-note motion, to follow the member for South-West Coast and to inject a bit of positivity and I dare say objectivity into this debate after that meandering flow of negativity. This is a budget that delivers on each of the commitments that we took to the Victorian people at the 2022 election, and that was responded to by the Victorian people with resounding positivity – 56 members in this house alone. It is a budget that represents investment in the future. I represent a community full of growing suburbs and a growing population, and if we do not invest, quality of life is attenuated. The member for Polwarth at the table often comes into this place and talks about how no money should ever be spent anywhere except on every single project in his electorate. Now, I would suggest that investment in road infrastructure, which he often talks about, is incredibly important. That is why the aspects of government services that people experience each and every day matter so much, like the \$220 million stage 1 Mickleham Road upgrade that is making great progress in my electorate right now.

I want to talk a little bit about the local school investments that this budget made. It is good to have a former Parliamentary Secretary for Education in the house and the current Parliamentary Secretary for

Education, who has just joined us as well, because they know full well the value of this government's investment in schools and what it means for children and for students across Victoria. In May the Treasurer delivered a responsible budget focused on the future of Victoria. Nothing is more central to that future and to the economic prosperity of every person within our state than education. Education is what fires my passion for public policy and service, and it is at the core of this budget. This budget includes \$2 billion of new investment in schools across Victoria that builds on the \$12.8 billion that has already been invested in school infrastructure since we came to government.

For my electorate this 2023–24 budget includes transformational investments in several schools – \$10.5 million for Bethal Primary School. This is going to deliver a comprehensive upgrade to support learners from extraordinarily diverse multicultural backgrounds. I just want to acknowledge principal Dave and his team for the incredibly powerful and impactful work that they do every single day caring for their students, providing them with the opportunities that they deserve and helping them to attain the best start in life that is possible. I want to thank them for their advocacy, for their care and for working with me to ensure that we have got this commitment, and delivery is going to be starting very, very soon.

I also want to recognise the \$22.38 million that this government is delivering to build the second stage of Greenvale Secondary College – again, a transformative investment that is going to build a world-class school for secondary students in Greenvale, meaning that they will not have to travel out of the suburb to complete their secondary education. It is a school that has been talked about for 30 years. It was not delivered by the Liberals when they were in government, but it has been delivered by this Andrews Labor government – \$22.38 million to deliver a fantastic secondary school in the heart of Greenvale. Again, I want to thank principal Mark Natoli, each and every one of the teachers and all of the students who advocated so strongly for this project. It was a pleasure to be with Minister Hutchins, the Minister for Education, at Greenvale Secondary just after the budget to talk with students about what this investment will mean for them and their school. I am so happy that it is being delivered, and I cannot wait for construction to begin.

Of course we are also investing \$5 million to deliver the next phase of Mary Queen of Heaven Primary School in Greenvale –

Vicki Ward interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: An outstanding school, Parliamentary Secretary for Education, in my community that I was delighted to open earlier this year, which ensures that wherever parents choose to send their children to learn, they will do so in world-class facilities, first-rate facilities, right near home. I want to thank principal Renae, Fr Dishan as well as the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools team for their constructive partnership with the Victorian government to ensure that this project will be delivered for the students who deserve it right there in Greenvale.

The member for Kalkallo talked about another school project that is in her electorate but which will create the second campus of Kolbe Catholic College in Greenvale. The new campus will be in Mickleham, the existing campus is in Greenvale, and I think it speaks volumes to this government's commitment to ensure that every community in our peri-urban growth areas have the great schools that students in the area need to get the economic opportunities they need to thrive through their lives. Again I just wanted to touch on those points, because they speak to our commitment to education across the state. It is about choice, quality and opportunity for every Victorian.

But it does not stop at the school level. TAFE and training are cornerstones of this budget. They have been the cornerstones of every budget since we came to power in 2014: rebuilding a broken TAFE and training sector that was not delivering for Victorians.

Emma Vulin interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: No, that is right – no TAFE closures under this government, member for Pakenham. Instead we have put 70 courses on the free TAFE list in this budget alone, helping more Victorians to get the skills they need to access the jobs they want.

It was previously – as I am sure you know, member for Monbulk – difficult for Victorians with higher qualifications to study a subsidised TAFE course. They could not go back to get the skills they might have needed for emerging jobs in newer areas of the economy. We have changed that, and we have made it easier for Victorians to reskill. That is central to unlocking, I think, the productivity challenge that we have as a state and a country, which has often been talked about over the last two decades – that secular slowdown in productivity. If we want to address that, the best way for us to do that as a state government is through the TAFE and training sectors, as I know the member for Preston knows all too well. This is really, really important work for improving the flexibility, the productivity, the adaptability and the skills base of our labour force. By doing this work we are enabling Victorians to access the skills they need where they need them and when they need them.

In this budget we are investing \$186 million to expand the eligibility criteria for subsidised training courses, including of course free TAFE, to make them more widely available for every Victorian and a further \$90 million to meet the expected demand for training while providing additional literacy, numeracy and digital support for free TAFE students. All of this builds on previous investments that are having a massive impact in the training sector in my community, like the \$60 million Health and Community Centre of Excellence at Kangan Institute in Broadmeadows, which is within the member for Broadmeadows's electorate but which I was really grateful to visit just the other day to see it taking shape. I know what that centre will mean for the local skills base, for those workers who are coming through the system to access the jobs which are being created in aged care, in our hospital system and our allied health system. This is what real change looks like on the ground, and it is so exciting to see it taking shape just outside the borders of Greenvale right now.

Training skills and upskilling are essential to ensure that we as a government are working to equip Victorians to respond to economic change. This really matters. It is always a startling point of contrast with the approach that the then Liberal government took in the 1990s in the aftermath of the 1991 recession, which had some of the deepest and most scarring impacts on the labour force and on the broad economic output in Victoria of any economic recession since the Great Depression. But what is telling is the way in which that Liberal Party responded. They did not invest in training. They allowed record levels of youth unemployment as firms cut back on training and apprenticeships.

Richard Riordan interjected.

Iwan WALTERS: The member can chat at the table. What he forgets is that the Kennett government was missing in action. Unemployment soared. Youth unemployment in particular soared. If that is a record that you are proud of, then I scratch my head and I think you should be ashamed. What that left was permanent scarring, with a generation who left the workforce and who never returned. Teachers left the workforce, and generations in suburbs like Meadow Heights and other parts of Melbourne's north suffered as a consequence of that government's inaction. This is not a government which is prepared to let people suffer the consequences of economic transition that they have no control over – broad tectonic shifts in the global economy, globalisation and technological transition. We are not prepared to let people wither on the vine and just suffer through those consequences by themselves. That is not what a Labor government does; that is what a Liberal government did.

Turning to something completely different – community sport. It was wonderful to have the Minister for Community Sport in the chamber earlier, who reflected upon the \$200 million for improved community sport infrastructure that was invested by this government through this budget. It makes a real difference to communities across the state, including mine in Greenvale, and I know those of the member for Pakenham as well and many other members who represent urban interface areas with

growing communities. That \$200 million is part of \$1.9 billion that has been invested since 2014 by the Andrews Labor government in new and upgraded community sport infrastructure across our state.

In Greenvale that sort of funding has delivered the fantastic Arena Recreation Reserve, home of Roxburgh Park United Soccer Club of course and Hume Cricket Club. It was fantastic spending time with Ayad and the team at Roxburgh Park watching the Matildas on the big screen with hundreds of the young players watching as well after training – boys and girls enjoying seeing our national and global superstars strutting their stuff and making all of us very, very proud. It really brings home the value of investing in local sporting facilities when you can see the direct link between our youngsters who are taking up the sport, boys and girls, hundreds of them at the grassroots, and our national teams – seeing both boys and girls with a pathway to elite international sport. So having the World Cup here in Australia was a fantastic opportunity. It has reinforced and strengthened I think the grassroots of soccer but also female sport across the board. That is something that our government have always sought to support through our investment in female changing facilities and other essential community sporting infrastructure. I thank the member for Kalkallo, the Minister for Community Sport, for her extraordinary advocacy in that sector and for ensuring that not just this budget but previous budgets –

Anthony Cianflone: Minister Eren.

Iwan WALTERS: such as from former Minister Eren, as the member for Pascoe Vale knows very well – have ensured that we are delivering for communities across Victoria with better sporting infrastructure. It is not just at Roxburgh Park of course; work is underway right now on the world-class Hume community cricket hub at Greenvale Recreation Reserve, where we are partnering with Hume council, who have made a very substantial investment in this great project, and I want to acknowledge that. The Victorian government's \$1.5 million investment will go towards a six-wicket indoor training centre and a new pavilion, with female-friendly change rooms to complement the existing three ovals at the Greenvale Recreation Reserve. This is a government that is removing barriers, encouraging participation and helping Victorians to realise the benefits of sport for social inclusion and for the creation of social capital and all of the advantages that flow from that – whether it is improved economic participation, better educational outcomes or better health outcomes. A lot of that starts with community sport and the benefits that accrue from it, so again I thank the minister for her work in that space.

In closing, I want to touch a little bit on the systemic investment that this government is making in the disability sector. I have spoken previously in this place about the deep and enduring relationship and involvement that my family and I have had with the disability sector and with particular organisations that provide loving communities and dignity and fulfilment for adults with intellectual disabilities, and it is one reason why I am so very grateful for the opportunity to work with Minister Blandthorn to deliver this government's important reform agenda, which places Victorians with a disability and carers at the heart of service delivery.

I do want to talk a little bit about our enormous investment in disability services that this budget represents – and indeed has in previous budgets. It is important to remember, I think, that Victoria is not just a co-governor of the NDIS. We also contribute as a state a very substantial amount to its operation and to ensuring that it delivers for Victorian participants. This financial year alone Victoria has contributed a total of \$2.9 billion to the NDIS. There can be confusion about this sometimes. Because of the creation of the NDIS, it is often assumed that it is solely a Commonwealth responsibility. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are co-governors and co-funders in partnership with the Commonwealth and with other states and territories to ensure that it is a scheme that works for all Australians but obviously, in our context, Victorians. So I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work that Minister Blandthorn has been leading with other state and territory ministers across the Commonwealth as part of the NDIS review into ensuring that the NDIS can continue to deliver for Victorians who need it most.

Beyond this massive investment in the NDIS, the 2023–24 budget invests a further \$283.7 million in the disability, ageing and carers portfolio. I want to call out just a couple of the budget items. \$8.3 million through *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026* will continue to progress the Victorian government's disability inclusion agenda. There is \$12.4 million for the funding of statutory bodies, like the Victorian Disability Worker Commission. There is \$38 million for critical support for Victoria's unpaid carers. There is \$162 million to continue the rural and regional public sector residential aged care services revitalisation strategy and \$42.2 million over four years for public sector residential aged care services. I identify each of these programs and investments because they matter not just to residents of Greenvale but to Victorians right across our state. They are not just line items in the budget, they are programs and services that make a difference in the lives of Victorians who need them most. When I am out knocking on doors, parents talk to me about the challenges that they are confronting with their children, seeking to ensure that there is care, dignity and respect for them and the disability services that are available to them. The investments that this government is making this year and has in previous years ensure that that is the case.

Bridget VALLENCE (Evelyn) (15:38): I rise today to speak on the take-note motion about the budget, and I have to say it was a brutal budget. This Andrews Labor government handed down what can only be described as a brutal budget, really hurting Victorians at the worst possible time. Under this Andrews Labor government there has been an increasing cost of living – a cost-of-living crisis. And what have they done – all they have done is increase costs to Victorians. Victoria is clearly broke. We have gone broke, and we have gone broke under the Andrews Labor government because of their poor financial competence, their poor financial management and their massive waste across so many aspects of government. They have such incompetence. Life is getting harder under the Andrews Labor government. Victorians are being punished for the poor decisions and the poor management of this budget under the watch of the Andrews Labor government.

Of course we only have to see after the budget was handed down only a couple of months ago in May the massive changes that have happened. The Commonwealth Games – this was celebrated by the Andrews Labor government. It was an election commitment, something they took and heralded before the election: the Commonwealth Games. The Comm Games – but we know it was really the con games. Actually \$2.6 billion was allocated in the May state budget by the Andrews Labor government. A month later, in June, at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee process, PAEC, again they were confirming that the \$2.6 billion was accurate and they were talking about all of the projects. They misled the Victorian people, because only a few weeks later they ripped that away from Victorians. They ripped away that economic opportunity and that opportunity for job creation. They misled the Victorian community, and that is precisely why we have called for the government to actually release a budget update across all areas, because they got the Commonwealth Games so wrong – \$2.6 billion, not millions. It is billions – \$2.6 billion wrong. They got that so wrong, their \$4.4 billion blowout, which is just astonishing. The pure fact is that this government, which has been in power now for nearly a decade – the tired Andrews Labor government – managed to get a project so far wrong that they came out and said, 'We're cancelling it because we already think it's going to be a \$4.4 billion blowout.' It was a complete con, and that is exactly why those budget papers that were released back in May are not worth the paper they are written on. They should do a budget update, a budget release across all aspects of all government portfolio areas, because we cannot trust what is in the budget. We cannot trust what is in that budget, because if they got the Commonwealth Games so wrong, that was a huge –

Richard Riordan: Billions wrong.

Bridget VALLENCE: Yes, billions wrong. If they managed to get that so wrong, then we really expect them to urgently release a budget update. You have got to talk about what is in the budget and what is not in the budget. In the budget we are tracking towards \$171 billion of debt. That is not something that the government should be proud of. The government in its budget papers says that it has a debt reduction plan, and yet the budget is creeping up and up and up year on year, tracking towards \$171 billion of debt. That is a shocking legacy of the Andrews Labor government, a burden that they

are leaving to our children and our grandchildren to pay, and they should be ashamed of themselves. And yet, is that really the true picture? Another reason why we would call for a budget update is because we have seen the independent Moody's agency release its forecast of really what the picture will be by 2026, just in three years time – a \$226 billion debt left by the Andrews Labor government for our children and our grandchildren to pay. Frankly they should be ashamed of themselves.

To pay for this growing debt, they have increased taxes. They have added a jobs tax, a rent tax, a schools tax, a holiday tax and now a health tax. Most recently we have found that so many doctors and healthcare services right across our state are set to close because the Andrews government is going to impose a new tax – and in fact a retrospective tax. They are so punitive when it comes to taxes. They try to talk a big game when it comes to housing, but all of their tax policy demonstrates that that is only going to stifle the housing market and impact rental housing availability and the cost of rent for Victorians at the worst possible time. It is a massive problem.

Major projects – billions of dollars. Budget after budget after budget, we look at these major projects, and the government again loves the headline and loves the Big Build project. But it is really a big bill, because there are over \$30 billion of blowouts on these projects, and that is what we know about. Again, I would call into question whether the budget is actually worth the paper it is written on. Thirty billion dollars is all we know, but I would say that this is a government that is all about inner-city Melbourne, having their major projects in the inner city and putting all of their money into the inner-city projects. But these are billions of dollars over – \$30 billion. I would ask: is it \$60 billion, is it \$90 billion? The Suburban Rail Loop, again, a signature policy of this government, does not even have a business case. They will be lucky to have built this by 2050 for \$125 billion. This is astronomical – to think that there is no business case for this project.

The taxes that this government has increased – and again, a COVID tax. This government locked Victoria down, the longest lockdowns in the world. They did that and they hurt business. They hurt people, and we are still seeing the impacts today, particularly on young people in my community who are suffering mental health impacts and finding it hard to re-engage in education. Businesses that are struggling, that have struggled to stay afloat right through COVID, now cannot survive because of all these new taxes on business and taxes on jobs. This government had the longest lockdowns and now wants to punish Victorians more to pay for the debt that was caused by their lockdowns. But if you look at the tax take, the tax take has increased year on year on year from this government, but it is going nowhere to make a dent in the overall debt burden that this government has created.

A couple of other things that are in the budget: we have got the public sector wages bill. Only under a Labor government would you have a public sector wages bill where they are actually saying they are going to cut public sector jobs but the public sector wages bill is increasing. It is increasing to nearly \$39 billion, which is just a massive increase. With the blowout in the public sector, despite the fact that the government seems to have a huge appetite for outsourcing work to consultancy firms and spending millions – billions of dollars in fact – on consultancy firms, you have got to wonder what the public service is doing to serve the Victorian public. But only under a Labor government would they say in their budget that there is a huge challenge and that they are looking to cut around 10 per cent of the public sector workforce – 4000 to 5000 jobs – but the public sector wages bill is also skyrocketing. Only that would be achieved under a Labor government.

This budget also has a cut to road funding. Out in my community in the electorate of Evelyn one of the biggest challenges, probably the most topical issue, is the condition of the roads. These roads are in poor condition. It is not just the potholes. It is also the known dangerous intersections, like Warburton Highway in Seville, Clegg Road in Wandin and Maroondah Highway through Coldstream. The Andrews Labor government knows that these are dangerous roads. They have got the statistics to show it, and yet they fail time after time after time to allocate any funding to these roads. And you can only say that it is political. I do not think the lives of the Victorians that live in the Evelyn electorate should be subject to the politics of the Andrews Labor government when it comes to road safety. These roads should be fixed. There have been deaths on these roads, multiple near misses and multiple

accidents. The local emergency services first responders in our CFA and our SES and our local police at Yarra Ranges do an amazing job, and they are pleading to have some funding allocated to fix these roads. But again, the Andrews Labor government fails to do so each and every time, and quite frankly it is disgusting.

This Andrews Labor government in this budget reannounced an upgrade of the Maroondah Hospital in Ringwood. That is not in my electorate, but for those living in my electorate this is the biggest major public hospital, the Maroondah Hospital. And it is funny, because the Andrews Labor government allocated funding in this budget to do the Maroondah Hospital, but you know, actually not only was this a 2022 election commitment from the Andrews Labor government, this was also a 2018 election commitment from the Andrews Labor government, and they still have not done it. There is no word on when they will actually do it or if they have got the money to deliver this job. This was something that we committed to in the election – to upgrade the Maroondah Hospital – and we are very proud of that commitment. It is certainly something that we would deliver, so we will be keeping a keen eye on that.

In my electorate we have many schools that need upgrades. I was really proud to be able to commit \$15.6 million in upgrades for schools in my electorate to make sure that the schools, the teachers and the students have the best possible learning environments. Sadly, the Andrews Labor government has failed to match any of those, and still the students and teachers in my electorate are left behind and ignored by this government.

Additionally, the Andrews Labor government has indicated that finally, after years of advocacy by me and the sporting clubs, we have got some money for the Seville Football Netball Club for the pavilion redevelopment. I will be keeping a keen eye on it to make sure that that actually gets delivered, because the council will be working on that project, but whether we actually see that money come through from the Andrews government will be interesting. I will make sure that they deliver on that commitment, because they have a pretty poor track record when it comes to delivering any upgrades and any financial commitments to the Evelyn electorate.

There are many other areas that we need to upgrade. The Coldstream Football & Netball Club – the Coldstream pavilion is in desperate need of an upgrade. We made a commitment to that in the last election. It is certainly something that is not about politics, this is about communities. There is no community hub in Coldstream, and we need to be able to make sure that those facilities are upgraded for times of emergency but also to support the growing participation of females in sport in the Coldstream community. Again, the Andrews Labor government overlooks the Coldstream community time and time again.

What is the Andrews Labor government doing with the \$20 million in Commonwealth funding committed in 2019? Four years ago the Andrews Labor government got \$20 million in funding from the former federal Liberal government to upgrade Maroondah Highway at Killara Road in Coldstream, where there have been deaths, and for four years they have had that money that was handed down by former Minister Frydenberg in the 2019 federal budget. We know they have got the money, and yet four years later there is nothing happening at that intersection. That intersection is still dangerous for local residents, for farmers, for people with horse floats, for truck transport and for earthmoving vehicles. It is astonishing that they have not upgraded that intersection. Maroondah Highway in Coldstream desperately needs upgrading. If there is another fatality, it will be on the Andrews Labor government and their inaction despite the fact that they have \$20 million specifically allocated to that project, and we will keep up the fight to make sure that the residents of Coldstream get that vital road safety upgrade that they so deserve.

This government again demonstrates that it does not care about workers. We have a skills shortage. It is one of my portfolio areas. I am very interested to see about skills. The government's own Skills Victoria had indicated that there would be a skills shortage, that we would need around 375,000 more workers in health, disability, essential services, aged care, construction, but there is no plan. There is

no plan to address the skills shortage. They are anti workers. Look at their shutting down of the timber industry. It was a seven-year shutdown plan, it is now a seven-month shutdown plan in this budget.

Richard Riordan: Shame!

Bridget VALLENCE: Shame! The timber industry – there are many people in my community who work in the timber industry and they have shut that down, and now the Andrews government want to shut down duck hunting as well so that the workers in my community will have limited recreation. I call shame on the Andrews government for this poor budget.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH (Kororoit) (15:53): Can I say how proud I am to be here talking about the ninth budget that the Andrews Labor government has just delivered. What a budget it is. Not only is it my first budget as the local member for Kororoit, but it is a budget that we as Victorians can all be proud of. Now, where to start is my question. I think I will start with health. It has been quite a big topic this week in question time, health, for all the wrong reasons I would say. Let me tell you why: health in Melbourne's west is absolutely booming – booming, I say.

Let us start off with the women's health clinic at Footscray Hospital. Now, this is going to change the way that women's health issues are treated, providing care and support for conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain, PCOS and menopause. This Labor government has made it free to study nursing and enshrined nurse-to-patient ratios in law, and now we will get even more nurses and the support that they need to care for Victorians. There is more than \$154 million, which will be put towards nursing staff in intensive care, high-dependency and coronary care units, and more nurses and midwives in our maternity services. As part of this package we will make sure that Victoria is the best place to be a nurse, with sign-on bonuses for graduate nurses and midwives, funding to upskill and the recruitment of an extra 450 nurses.

Then I turn to hospitals. We have obviously done a whole heap of great work at Sunshine Hospital. I recognise that the member for St Albans is here, and we have visited that hospital a few times together. Now we move over to Footscray Hospital. I am very proud to say that that is just down the road from my electorate and will be open in 2025. I have visited that site on a number of occasions, and it is coming along very well. I have got to tell you the community is very excited about this hospital. Then of course there is Melton hospital. It is fully funded. We are currently tendering for the builders. The sod will be turned next year, and we in Kororoit could not be prouder.

Moving over to education, a cornerstone of the Labor government, which the member for Greenvale touched on before, well, in Kororoit we have got all lot happening, but all across Victoria there is a lot happening. One hundred new schools are to be opened by 2026. In Kororoit we have got Aintree Primary School, which was opened in 2021, and Yarrabing Secondary College and Dharra specialist school, also in Aintree, are due to open in 2024. I had the great pleasure of visiting this school just a few weeks ago with the Minister for Education. We did a tour with the principal and a few other folk from the school. I have spoken on a number of occasions to the community, and they are absolutely rapt that these two schools will be opening in Aintree. It could not come sooner. I know I have said it before in this place, but I will say it again: Melton is the fastest growing local government area in Australia, with 58 babies per week, and that is why we need to invest in Melbourne's west.

I am also pleased – and it has been touched on before, but I will say it again – that the Andrews government is getting on with delivering –

A member: Free kinder.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: free kinder. Free kinder for three- and four-year-olds, establishing pre-prep and upgrading or providing new equipment to kinders across the state will make sure that our kids get the best start in life, and it is something that I could not be more proud to be saying.

Then we move over to one of my favourite subjects, and it is timely that the Minister for Public Transport has literally just entered the chamber to hear about how much I love public transport. Well, being the fastest growing LGA in Victoria – Melton, as I touched on just before – we need more trains, more buses. We need it all. This budget has delivered a lot, let me tell you that much. This government is investing \$650 million to upgrade the Melton line, something that my community is absolutely rapt about. We are delivering bigger and better nine-car VLocity trains that are being built – guess where – right here in Victoria. That is the Andrews Labor government who is delivering that and making sure that it is built here so that we have more jobs.

Iwan Walters: Getting it done.

Luba GRIGOROVITCH: Getting it done. We are also extending station platforms to increase the capacity on the line by up to 50 per cent, so that is going to help all those mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters with their babies to get on the train to get into the city.

Moving on, I do love public transport, but our roads are also very important, and I am not going to lie: there is a lot of congestion in Melbourne's west, as there is all over Victoria. We know the importance of reliable road networks that get locals around and get families home sooner. Not only have we delivered on our election commitment to funding a business case for upgrading the Western Highway between Melton and Caroline Springs, we have started the process and planning is underway, with roadside technical investigations currently happening on this freeway. The teams are currently out there on the ground completing these investigations and solutions to improve safety on our roads.

Moving across to sport, something very close to my heart – I played basketball up until just recently, actually – I think sport is really important for all kids and young people out there. I am pleased to say that in Kororoit this budget has included \$2 million to upgrade the clubrooms at Ian Cowie Recreation Reserve at Rockbank. Let me tell you about this club. I went around during the campaign and visited all of the football clubs. I remember going to Ian Cowie reserve and speaking to the president there. We had a good conversation, and at that point in time he said to me, 'These clubrooms are in terrible condition. We need funding desperately'. We put in some budget bids, and what is the Andrews Labor government doing – we are delivering on that. I cannot wait to see this upgraded. I cannot wait to get out there once the upgrades have occurred. The next generation of sporting greats will come from this facility, I am sure.

The budget is also providing \$140,000 towards upgrading facilities for the 1st Deer Park Scouts. Deer Park Scouts is, as the name suggests, in Deer Park. This is a teensy tiny little hall which is really crumbling down. I am very pleased to say that this \$140,000 will assist us in making sure that the Deer Park Scouts attract more young people to their facilities.

The next one is something very close to my heart: WERN. WERN is the Western Emergency Relief Network. I actually went out to WERN again during the campaign and met with the volunteers there, and there are some great volunteers. It is a group that was established through Rotary. I am just going to read here:

WERN is an Endorsed Rotary District 9800 Community Service Project supported and managed by ... a number of rotary clubs.

We're proud to be a part of the community, serving our friends and neighbors, however, we really need your support ...

For all my colleagues in the chamber and everyone listening at home, WERN is there to support people in need. They take furniture, they take clothing, they take absolutely anything that you are willing to give, and if you are in distress and need a handout, WERN is the place to go. What is this Andrews Labor government doing for WERN – we are giving them a \$200,000 grant to help them continue their magnificent work. It is something that I am really proud of, because these volunteers need every cent that they can get to make sure that they keep investing in our community and giving back like they have been doing for so long now.

As we know, Kororoit is a melting pot of all different cultures and ethnicities. I am very pleased to say that during this budget we have not forgotten about them. The Andrews Labor government is giving \$50,000 to the Australian Bosnian Islamic Centre in Deer Park. I visited, with the member for St Albans, this wonderful establishment. I have been there on a number of occasions, and this money will absolutely go to good use. It is money that is needed by this community, and it is going to be well and truly well received. We have also provided a \$20,000 grant to the Debre Genet St Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ravenhall for their annual Meskel celebration, a celebration that I was proud to attend last year and I look forward to attending this year. Again, that money will not go to waste. These grants will help our multicultural and multifaith communities to stay connected to both their culture and their identity.

And last but certainly not least I want to make sure that I mention the State Electricity Commission. Victorians remember the State Electricity Commission, the SEC, meant a fair deal on their power prices and good, stable jobs for workers. That is why Labor is bringing it back: to drive down power bills and create thousands of jobs in renewable government-owned energy. An initial \$1 billion investment in the SEC will help deliver 4.5 gigawatts of power through renewable energy projects. Bringing back the SEC will not just mean more renewable energy, lower power bills and reduced carbon emissions but also help create 59,000 jobs for Victorians.

This budget begins some important work for the community of Kororoit, and it is up to us to see that it is delivered. There remains much more work to be done in Kororoit, and just today I had a meeting with the member for Melton. We discussed the things that need to happen throughout both of our electorates and all the way down to St Albans, because we care about Melbourne's west and the Andrews Labor government cares about Melbourne's west. I will be working hard to make sure that this budget is delivering on each and every one of its promises for Kororoit.

In conclusion, this budget is getting on with delivering every election promise that was made to the people of Kororoit. This budget invests in the community and the people of Kororoit with a plan to do what matters: a new comprehensive women's health clinic at Footscray Hospital and \$154 million to support our nurses, giving more nurses more support to start putting Victorians first and properly through our system; schools – Aintree Primary School, as I touched on before, which already opened in 2021, Yarrabing Secondary College and Dharra specialist school, which is opening in 2024; the \$650 million upgrade to the Melton line, with V/Locity cars being built here in Victoria, increasing commuter capacity by 50 per cent; upgrading the Western Highway between Melton and Caroline Springs, where work is already underway – and again it needs to happen, because of the growing population and the traffic on the roads; sport – the \$2 million upgrade to the Ian Cowie Recreation Reserve at Rockbank, which is absolutely needed and something that the community desperately wants; \$140,000 to upgrade the 1st Deer Park Scouts; \$200,000 to that amazing, fantastic organisation I spoke about, the Western Emergency Relief Network; the Australian Bosnian Islamic Centre \$50,000 grant – and again there are so many events that they have down there, it really engages the community and everyone is absolutely welcome to attend; and of course St Michael Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the \$20,000, which is not going to go to waste.

The people of Kororoit are really pleased about this budget. The people of Melbourne's west are really pleased about this budget. I am absolutely honoured to represent the people of Melbourne's west, and I look forward to the next budget as well, because I know that Melbourne's west is going to continue to get what it deserves under an Andrews government.

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (16:05): I rise in support of Labor's state budget, and I thank the Treasurer and his dedicated team for the mountain of work they do year after year to look after our communities and the state's economy.

As I have said before, education is my number one priority. There is no greater tool to lift people out of poverty, and one's level of education is a major determinant of their health, wellbeing and employment outcomes in life. I am so proud to be part of a government that values education so highly.

MOTIONS

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Legislative Assembly

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From the early years to tertiary studies, we have removed more barriers than ever before to make sure everyone has access to a good education, no matter their age, income or level of ability. This budget brings our total capital investment in schools to more than \$14.9 billion since coming into government.

I was so proud to deliver on my number one election commitment of \$14.5 million to upgrade John Fawkner College and deliver world-class science, technology, arts and food tech buildings and new classrooms. I would like to thank the school principal, leadership, staff and students and particularly the parents and school council, who have worked so hard to achieve this. It was great to get out to the school with the Premier recently and talk to the students about the difference this investment would make to their learning and to their opportunities in life.

Labor has also transformed Glenroy College with a \$9.4 million rebuild, including modern classrooms, a dedicated library and junior and senior learning wings. It was such a pleasure to visit with Minister Merlino and Minister Blandthorn last year and hear from the students about how the new buildings are supporting their learning and their plans for university.

Labor is delivering a \$14.2 million arts and technology centre at Pascoe Vale Girls College, and Minister Blandthorn successfully secured \$938,000 for improvements at Glenroy Central Primary School. I see kids enjoying their fabulous new oval every day. Plus, there is an incredible \$18.3 million to upgrade Glenroy West Primary School, with three new learning neighbourhoods linked to outdoor classrooms and a new outdoor play and learning area.

It has been wonderful working with Minister Hutchins, with her deep dedication to equity, to our education system and to our students and teachers. It was great to turn the first sod of the \$8.1 million redevelopment at Fawkner Primary with her and see the wonderful progress on the building work since. I thank the marvellous school leadership and council for their continued work and advocacy.

Labor has also delivered a \$5.9 million upgrade to modernise Meadows Primary School, \$670,000 for Belle Vue Park Primary, \$400,000 for Campbellfield Heights Primary and \$690,000 for Dallas Brooks Community Primary School. Minister Hutchins and I had a wonderful time celebrating the 25 millionth free school breakfast at the wonderful Dallas Brooks Community Primary School. Labor has now delivered 30 million school breakfasts, and this budget invests another \$69.5 million for this important program.

Labor has also contributed \$2 million to St Francis de Sales, \$2 million to Penola Catholic College, \$2 million to St Thomas More Primary School, \$1 million to Mercy College, \$2 million to the Dallas campus of Ilim College, \$4.2 million to Darul Ulum College of Victoria and \$3 million to expand the Glenroy Private secondary school. Through this budget we have invested \$450 million towards building and upgrading low-fee independent and Catholic schools, including \$30 million to upgrade Islamic schools, to make sure that no matter where Victorians choose to educate their kids, they will have access to a great local school.

The Smile Squad does a wonderful job of ensuring kids have access to free dental care, and it was wonderful to celebrate World Oral Health Day with Minister Thomas and the dental van at Glenroy Central Primary School. In exciting news, this budget commits \$17 million to expand the successful Smile Squad program to low-fee independent and Catholic schools from 2026, saving more parents time and money on trips to the dentist, and it delivers \$2.9 million for the Glasses for Kids program – great examples of Labor delivering what matters.

But we cannot get the benefits of all this incredible education investment without the work of our dedicated and hardworking teachers doing work that matters most. Labor is investing \$205 million to support and develop more teachers in our schools and \$40 million to develop lesson planning and curriculum material to help ease the workload. A shout-out to the wonderful teachers who work and live in our electorate. My eternal gratitude for the work you do making a difference every day.

We are also undertaking an education plan for local secondary schools so that students and staff at our local schools have the resources, support and facilities they need to thrive now and into the future. Labor continues to fund Project REAL and the Northern Centre for Excellence in School Engagement based at Banksia Gardens Community Services. It supports disengaged students and their teachers from 16 local schools to ensure kids can get the best out of their education. Students with a disability and special needs are entitled to the same opportunities as every other student. I am so proud that this Labor government has upgraded every single special school across the state since coming into government. All students and the staff who support them deserve access to safe, modern and well-maintained schools, and I would really like to thank the staff for the work they do to ensure all kids have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Labor has invested \$17 million for the Broadmeadows Special Developmental School, \$1.87 million for Glenroy Specialist School and \$10 million for the Jacana School for Autism. It was fabulous to see the food forest, the kitchen garden, the valley cafe and the hospitality training spaces at the Hume Valley School and to discuss what their \$8.5 million upgrade would achieve.

Having worked in the carers portfolio, I know just how important access to school holiday and after-school care is to so many parents with kids at special schools. This Labor budget invests a whopping \$122 million to expand the outside school hours care program, making a real difference to families, many of whom have been unable to choose to work full-time until now, limiting both their income and unfortunately often their opportunities at a fulfilling career. This budget also delivers \$25 million to build therapy pools at specialist schools, \$6.3 million for more extracurricular activities at specialist schools, \$4.8 million to integrate more therapy animals and \$7.3 million for TAFE transition officers to help students with a disability.

We know that TAFE changes lives, and this Labor government has changed so many lives through our landmark free TAFE program. I am loving watching the cranes build the new \$60 million health and community services centre of excellence across the road at the brilliant Kangan Institute to train our next generation of healthcare workers. With state-of-the-art laboratories and flexible learning spaces, it will provide the high-quality training needed for the state's most rewarding and in-demand jobs, like allied health, aged care, disability and early childhood education. It was great digging the first sod with Minister Tierney, and I am looking forward to working with her, Minister Hutchins, Parliamentary Secretary for Education Vicki Ward and the team at Kangan on the other very exciting budget investment announcement – yes, this Labor government is delivering a tech school for Broadmeadows. This budget invests \$116 million to open six new cutting-edge tech schools to help prepare local kids for the future, with skills in science, technology, engineering and maths.

From tertiary to the early years Labor is doing what matters. Labor is investing a record \$4.4 billion in this year's budget to give all kids the best start in life. It is the biggest investment in the early years in our state's history and a huge step towards a brighter, more equal future for every Victorian family. We know that 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurs in their first five years, and kids who start kinder at three get a head start in life. Building on our nation-leading free kinder program, which started this year and saves families up to \$2500 per child per year, Labor is introducing a new year of universal pre-prep: 30 hours of play-based learning fully funded. That is 30 hours of free child care for every four-year-old, a critical step for parents that want to go back to work but cannot afford the childcare fees. And as promised, we are delivering 50 new affordable government owned and operated childcare and early education centres in areas that need them most. I was proud to secure two of these – one in Glenroy and one in Fawkner. Moomba Park will be one of the first built and will be licensed for 130 kids at a time, and it will also have community meeting and playgroup spaces and be conveniently co-located with maternal and child health services, because every family deserves access to quiet, high-quality education and care no matter where you live or how much you earn.

I get to see Minister Stitt regularly as we roll out so many local kinder upgrades, including \$1.7 million for the Lorne Street Kindergarten at Fawkner Primary School, \$1.6 million for the Glenroy Hub Children's Centre, \$1.6 million for Will Will Rook Preschool, \$1.47 million for Upfield Kindergarten

at Dallas Brooks Community Primary School, \$1.4 million for York Street Kindergarten at Glenroy West Primary School, \$1.4 million for Glenroy Central Kindergarten, \$1.35 million for Holy Child Early Years Centre, \$793,000 for Meadows Primary School Kindergarten, \$640,000 for Belle Vue Park Kindergarten, \$524,000 for Dallas Kindergarten at Dallas Brooks Community Primary School and \$479,000 for Broadmeadows Preschool; funding for an extra 33 spaces at Oak Park Kindergarten; investments at Fawkner Kindergarten, Campbellfield Preschool and Westmere Children's Services Centre; and \$641,000 invested at Gowrie Victoria Broadmeadows Valley, plus an expansion which we recently announced there. The budget also provides \$48 million to support kinders and toy libraries to purchase equipment, support and expand bush kinder programs and create 10 new bilingual kinders, and \$18 million to strengthen and modernise existing inclusion support for children with disability and additional needs. And we are helping to attract staff to the industry through incentives and scholarships.

Minister Stitt also gets the joy of rolling out the government's container deposit scheme. I cannot wait till this opens in November, supporting our local schools and clubs and reducing litter in our streets and waterways. The budget also delivers the \$10 million Green Links fund to support revegetation, create wildlife corridors, restore the natural environment and protect our precious waterways for generations to come, and thanks to Minister Kilkenney, planning controls will be introduced on 12 key rivers and creeks, including Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek. It was great to represent Minister Shing with the member for Pascoe Vale at the Reimagining Your Moonee Ponds Creek project, which removes 500 metres of concrete channel, and we planted the first of 43,000 shrubs that will help restore the creek to a natural state.

But wait, there is more. We are also undertaking ecological restoration along Merri Creek to protect habitats for endangered species. The new marram baba Merri Creek Regional Parklands will be one of the largest conservation parks in Melbourne, spanning an area more than 70 times the size of Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens. Linking to existing open space the new parklands stretching from Campbellfield to Beveridge will ensure nature is protected and we can enjoy this special place and its cultural significance for years to come. It was truly a pleasure to be in Campbellfield with Minister D'Ambrosio for this announcement as well as for the opening of the new pocket park in Glenroy. I have had the joy of opening quite a few parks and projects with Minister Spence as well. Jointly funded through the state government and Hume council, Labor has supported the fabulous new Seabrook Reserve and co-contributed \$650,000 to the Progress Reserve playground upgrade, including new picnic and barbecue areas, toilets, accessible playgrounds and a nature play area. The Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board, which I have the pleasure of chairing, has also funded \$450,000 for civic plaza works in partnership with council.

What incredible work Minister Spence does in community sport. Labor is delivering \$201 million for new and upgraded community sport and recreation facilities this budget, and after many years of advocacy from community and club members and local member Lizzie Blandthorn it was wonderful to commit \$650,000 to install competition-grade lighting at JP Fawkner Reserve in Oak Park, enabling growth at both Oak Park footy club and Oak Park Cricket Club, which are both going from strength to strength and bursting at the seams. Labor has also delivered \$100,000 for a synthetic green at the Glenroy bowls facility and so much for female-friendly sports, including the new \$450,000 upgrade at Charles Mutton Reserve in Fawkner, \$787,000 for netball courts at Charles Mutton Reserve, \$545,000 for netball courts at Sewell Reserve in Glenroy, \$279,000 for netball courts at JP Fawkner Reserve in Oak Park and \$32,000 to refurbish the netball courts at Martin Reserve in Hadfield. We are contributing to the \$36.8 million Fawkner pool and leisure centre redevelopment, which will deliver a new 50-metre outdoor pool and children's pool, 24/7 gym, cycle studio and group classes room, updated change facilities and a cafe.

Just down the road is the new \$7 million state-of-the-art SES headquarters. It was a pleasure to open this magnificent building recently on behalf of Minister Symes, and a new ambulance station is being built at Oak Park, which will include training facilities, a fully equipped kitchen and dedicated rest

areas, making sure our hardworking paramedics have the facilities and support they need to quickly respond to local emergencies and save lives.

Of course there is a huge \$1 billion investment because Labor is bringing back the SEC, creating 59,000 jobs and employing over 5000 apprentices. There is \$42 million to install 100 neighbourhood batteries across the state to drive down power bills even more, increase the number of homes with access to a battery and provide crucial extra storage capacity for local communities, and we are delivering one in Hume and one in Merri-bek.

The Andrews Labor government has a proven track record of supporting Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities. Not only are we proud of our diversity, but we know it is one of our strengths. This budget delivers \$40 million to continue the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund to upgrade, renovate and build – *(Time expired)*

Martha HAYLETT (Ripon) (16:20): I would like to thank the member for Broadmeadows for her amazing contribution. There is so much going on, and she is such a fabulous member. Thank you for your contribution.

I too rise to speak on the budget take-note motion today to talk about some really significant recent state budget announcements in the communities across the Ripon electorate. Even before the budget, we have been working really hard every single day as a government, upgrading the hospitals, schools and roads that rural and regional Victorians rely on. We have made TAFE free, we have helped create hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs and we have invested in more teachers and nurses. We have made kinder free, saving families thousands and giving our kids the best start. These are the things that truly matter and the things that we promised to Victorians. This year's budget delivered even more than that – it delivered every single election commitment that we made at the last election, and more, all while repaying our COVID debt.

One of my favourite moments on budget day was calling the principal of Ararat College Ellie McDougall. Ellie had been advocating for upgrades to Ararat College's E-wing for the past year. Currently the classrooms are not fit for purpose and remind me of the old, cold classrooms I learned in as a teenager. I had raised the need for funds to upgrade the school's facilities with the Minister for Education, the Treasurer and the Premier, and I was so proud on budget day to let Ellie know that this advocacy had paid off and that Ararat College was receiving \$4.6 million in the budget to upgrade and modernise the school. It is a huge win for students, teachers and the community of Ararat, who deserve a state-of-the-art public school that they can be truly proud of.

This budget also delivers on our promise to build 50 brand new government-run early learning centres across Victoria, including in Maryborough, the Loddon shire and the Creswick–Clunes area. Currently the whole of the Loddon shire in my electorate is a childcare desert. Parents are having to take their kids to work at the local butcher because there is no other option. Farmers are having to lock their kids in the car with the window down because they cannot go to child care and it is too unsafe for them to be wandering around the farm when dangerous equipment is being used. Women are having to keep their businesses afloat by working through the night because they have to care for their kids throughout the day. This will soon change, though, with new early learning centres bringing benefits to these families and their little ones, and I know so many parents across the Ripon electorate are excited about that. Delivering more childcare options across Ripon will allow mums to return to work and give our littlest rural Victorians the best start in life. In more good news, we are also continuing to deliver free kinder for three- and four-year-olds, saving parents on average a massive \$2500 per child per year. It is another way that we are helping ease the cost of living for families no matter where they live.

More massive local budget wins include upgrades for our much-loved local sporting clubs – 550,000 bucks for new female-friendly change facilities at the home of the Maryborough Football Netball Club and \$450,000 for new netball courts and lighting for Maryborough's Royal Park Football Netball Club, the much-loved Bushys. This is \$1 million of investment for Maryborough, where sport

is the lifeblood of the community. It will mean our local netballers will not have to play on old cracked and slippery courts anymore and that sports will be more inclusive for local Maryborough girls and women at Princes Park. I shared this news with the local community at the Maryborough FNC's Thursday's night dinner after training and at Royal Park FNC's Saturday arvo game. Both clubs were over the moon and cannot wait to benefit from these upgrades. Importantly, the netball court upgrades will benefit the new home of the Maryborough Giants, who are in the process of merging two local clubs to strengthen their future. The female-friendly change facilities at Princes Park will benefit not just the local football and netball club but also the local cricket, athletics, masters footy and annual events like the famous Energy Breakthrough and Highland Gathering, which is a well-anticipated event on 1 January every year. I recommend anyone to come on up to Maryborough to check it out.

Even more wins were announced on budget day for our local neighbourhood houses. As we all know, so many of our neighbourhood houses are run on the smell of an oily rag and the sheer determination of their managers and volunteers. Every dollar of funding they receive brings at least five times that value in impact to our community. In our rural and regional areas they are even more critical to connect people and offer them tailored activities and support. This year's budget delivered \$100,000 for the Creswick Neighbourhood Centre, \$100,000 for the Maryborough Community House and \$50,000 for the Wedderburn Community House. I visited these volunteers who are beside themselves with happiness. The Maryborough Community House are keen to use these funds to expand their services to the community, and the Wedderburn Community House want to use the funds to upgrade their op shop, which raises funds for more local activities and services in town.

The Beaufort Community House and Learning Centre were also winners in this year's budget. Before the election I met with them and other locals advocating for the revitalisation of the old Beaufort Primary School site into a new community hub. They proposed that the neighbourhood house be at the heart of the hub, with other local community groups and services to benefit from the site as well. I stood with them back in November last year to promise that a re-elected state Labor government would deliver \$800,000 to begin making this dream a reality. I knocked on hundreds of doors across the community and almost everyone raised this project with me. I am so proud that these funds are now confirmed and we can get on with delivering the community hub that Beaufort deserves. We will kick off master planning shortly as well as early works with great things to come.

Another huge win in the state budget I am so proud of is the delivery of \$900,000 for the Ballarat Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre to develop a brand new Hindu temple and cultural centre in Ross Creek. Every person of faith deserves a place of worship that they can come together with others in to celebrate their culture and traditions. But right now the Ballarat Indian community do not have this, and they are having to travel hundreds of kilometres to access an appropriate temple. The community has grown to around 6000 residents, including in Lucas and Cardigan, who contribute so much to our region as healthcare workers, aged care workers, doctors and so much more. They deserve a place of worship that they can be proud of, and the Labor government will give them just that. I want to thank Hari, Pradush, Gobi, Raveen, Narayanan, Swarna, Bandhavi, Saikumar and executive members of the Ballarat Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre for their tireless work and advocacy to get this done. The member for Wendouree, the member for Eureka and I were so happy to announce to them just yesterday that they are also getting a further \$30,000 from the Labor government for a really important cultural event that is coming up. Congratulations to that amazing group of people for that as well. I look forward to continuing to support them through this process and cannot wait to see the temple and cultural centre completed, which will benefit so many locals for years to come.

Now, there are other big local wins for lovers of boating and fishing in Ripon. We country Victorians love our fresh water, and I am proud that we will be delivering \$800,000 for the relocation of the boat ramp at Laanecoorie Reservoir to enhance safety at this popular fishing and swimming spot.

There will also be weekend services every 40 minutes on the Ballarat line thanks to our state budget. We are increasing weekend services on the Ararat line too to five return services, and we have capped V/Line fares to metro prices, which has opened up the Ararat and Maryborough lines to so many more

locals who can now afford to catch the train down to the footy in Melbourne or to visit family and friends – and romance as well. It is even cheaper to go on a date on V/Line now. I have had locals tell me exactly that.

Our budget has also delivered more money to repair our rural and regional roads. Roads are the number one issue in my electorate, and the October 2022 floods had a devastating impact on many of them across our region. That is why the state budget is investing \$6.6 billion in our roads over the next decade. It is the first time a 10-year investment has been made, and it will include substantially rebuilding, resurfacing and repairing our roads and bridges. It will not just be a patch job, it will actually be ripping it up from the base and starting again. This builds on the investments already made, helping us recover and rebuild across our road network. Importantly, a total of \$770 million will be delivered to maintain Victoria's road assets in 2023–24 compared to the average annual spend of \$493 million when those opposite were in office.

There are too many budget wins for me to even fit into this speech today, but some other big highlights from our recent state budget include \$49 million to enhance biosecurity protections and back our producers. We have also got a new Tiny Towns Fund, which will provide grants of up to \$50,000 for community projects in communities with less than 5000 residents. That one is opening up in just the coming weeks and months, and I am so excited about it. All the tiny towns in Ripon cannot wait for that one. We have also delivered free rego for eligible trade apprentices, saving them up to \$865 a year. And there are funds for new comprehensive women's health clinics in Bendigo and Ballarat that will change the way women's health issues are treated, providing care and support for conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovary syndrome, perimenopause and menopause.

This year's state budget delivered for Ripon, and it delivered for all Victorians. We are doing the things that truly matter, and I am so proud to be a part of a team that is delivering for all Victorians no matter where they live.

Dylan WIGHT (Tarneit) (16:31): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on the budget take-note motion. What a fantastic budget it was for my communities of Tarneit and Hoppers Crossing and for the western suburbs of Melbourne more broadly. It is an absolute privilege to represent the electorate of Tarneit, a vibrant and growing community that is teeming with diversity and potential.

As we reflect on Tarneit, there are several features that stand out: its proximity to the city, with easy access from either Tarneit station or Hoppers Crossing station – and indeed the soon-to-come Tarneit West station, which I will be mentioning again very soon – or via the West Gate Freeway or very soon via the West Gate Tunnel, which of course ensures convenience for residents travelling by car. We are fortunate to have a collection of amazing schools that are nurturing the minds of our future generations. A thriving network of community groups ranging from sporting clubs to multicultural organisations amplifies the sense of community that is Tarneit.

As is the case with any rapidly growing community, Tarneit is experiencing the dynamism of development. With this growth comes the challenge of managing increasing traffic, ensuring comfortable commuting conditions on trains and accommodating a larger student population in our schools. Additionally, we are aware of the pressure of cost-of-living increases felt by our community. These are challenges that require our attention and thoughtful solutions. At the same time our state is navigating a unique set of economic circumstances influenced by factors such as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and supply shortages influenced by the conflict in Ukraine, which is also causing high inflation. These prevailing conditions have necessitated a carefully balanced approach in formulating this budget. The focus has been to strike the right balance between providing essential infrastructure in growing areas like my community of Tarneit and ensuring responsible fiscal and economic management.

Just on that, and I spoke about this far earlier in the term, we consistently hear rhetoric from those on the other side about debt and about spending. Let us not forget that leading into the election last year

those opposite came with a plan to increase spending by \$20 billion with, by the way, no way to pay for it. In fact if I remember correctly, when the then Shadow Treasurer from the other place was asked exactly how much the new spending was going to be and exactly how the opposition at that time were going to pay for it, I think he had to leave the press conference, check his notes and then come back. So to hear from those on the other side consistently about spending and debt quite frankly is laughable.

This is no easy feat, to manage a budget in this way. But with the experience, values and understanding of the Andrews Labor government and the Treasurer, we are confident in our ability to deliver both the infrastructure and the jobs that our community needs while also laying out the groundwork for sustainable economic outcomes. I am proud that this budget has been able to deliver so many things for my community.

Transport is the lifeblood of any community, and I was so pleased when I opened the budget papers to see what the budget will deliver for my community of Tarneit in the way of new transport – a brand new station at Tarneit West. I would like to acknowledge the former member for Tarneit and now member for Laverton and all the advocacy that she did in the last term in helping to deliver that outcome. The Tarneit West station, when I started campaigning in Tarneit early in 2022, was by far the biggest issue and the biggest need communicated to me from my now constituents. I am so proud that the Andrews Labor government will be delivering that through this budget and also 23 new VLocity trains and further funding for bus routes 152 and 182, and I would like to acknowledge the Minister for Public Transport, who is conveniently at the table this evening.

The transportation upgrades and targeted infrastructure improvements reflect an understanding of the urgent needs of communities like Tarneit. For places like Tarneit, situated conveniently close to the city, an efficient and reliable transport system is vital. The introduction of the new Tarneit West station in this budget is a nod to this crucial need. It will deliver greater connectivity, offering more convenience for commuters while reducing congestion on existing lines. This expansion will not only ease daily commutes but also promote greater social and economic integration with the rest of Melbourne. Furthermore, the promise of 23 new VLocity trains will significantly improve the service capacity on the regional train system. This will help alleviate the issue of crowded trains, which I know is one of the biggest concerns in our community. More trains more often means less crowding, shorter wait times and a better commuting experience. Funding for bus routes 152 and 182 further complements these rail upgrades. An enhanced bus service provides critical last-mile connectivity, ensuring residents can reach their homes, workplaces and other destinations from train stations easily and swiftly. It will keep making it easier to get between Tarneit and Williams Landing as well as servicing the growing western part of Tarneit between Tarneit and Werribee. This comprehensive approach to upgrades makes Tarneit more accessible, making it easier to get to school and work.

Also, let us not overlook the role that these transportation upgrades play in job creation. Infrastructure projects such as the new train station and additional train and bus services generate numerous jobs in various fields, from construction jobs to ongoing operations and maintenance. These upgrades will not only serve the immediate needs of Tarneit but also help stimulate the local economy. I think our consistent pipeline of infrastructure is a significant reason why we see Victoria's unemployment rate at such a low level at the moment.

Education in a growing place like Tarneit is also absolutely vital, and I was so happy in this budget to see that my community of Tarneit will receive a new primary school at Riverdale North to open in 2025. Riverdale secondary college and Tarneit North primary school will of course be opening next year, in 2024, and also the establishment of one of the first of 50 government-owned affordable childcare centres in 2025 will make it easier for those in my community with children to make use of the Andrews Labor government's free kinder. The education commitments in the budget show a robust and future-focused vision for our state's younger generations. Recognising that education is the foundation of our children's future, this budget is investing in vital infrastructure and services to ensure that our youth are well equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

The planned opening of the new primary school at Riverdale North in 2025 is an example of our commitment to education in Tarneit. As a destination for young families, this new school will help alleviate pressures on existing schools in the area and will be a great place to learn for residents living near one of the fastest-growing areas in Tarneit, Riverdale. I am sure that this school will be a fantastic addition to the wonderful collection of schools in my electorate and will undoubtedly become a cornerstone of the Riverdale community.

Similarly the opening of Riverdale secondary college and Tarneit North primary school next year in term 1 will be fantastic. I am so excited that the progress continues to develop in this space. I was lucky enough to do a tour with new principal Simon Haber at Riverdale secondary college only a few weeks ago. It is still in the construction phase, obviously, but I was so incredibly impressed by what I saw. It will absolutely be a world-class educational institution, which is what our kids in Victoria deserve.

Moreover, the pledge to establish the first of 50 government-owned affordable childcare centres in 2025 is a transformative step forward in early childhood education. Early years are the most critical in a child's cognitive and emotional development, and access to high-quality child care is absolutely paramount. These affordable childcare centres will not only provide valuable learning experiences for children but will also alleviate some of the cost-of-living pressures faced by families in our community. This initiative reflects the Andrews Labor government's commitment to promoting equitable access to early childhood education and supporting families right across the state.

I have spoken briefly about the cost of living throughout this contribution, and indeed when I speak about the first of 50 government-owned affordable childcare centres, that is not just so our children get the best start to their education that they possibly can. It is also a significant cost-of-living measure. Other cost-of-living measures that the Andrews Labor government have delivered in this budget and indeed in previous budgets are round 4 of the \$250 power saving bonus, with over 24,000 Tarneit locals applying in this round; a cap of one residential rate rise in 12 months; free motor vehicle registration for eligible trade apprentices; expanding subsidised and fee-free TAFE and opening the program up so that students can access multiple free courses; and as I just touched on, a cornerstone of this budget, free kinder.

Addressing the cost of living is a pressing issue that affects every member of our community, and this budget shows the Andrews Labor government's dedication to addressing the cost of living, which affects all Victorians. Round 4 of the \$250 power saving bonus is a testament to this commitment, and the fact that over 24,000 locals from Tarneit have applied in this round underscores the significance of this benefit to my community. This support goes directly into the pockets of our constituents, helping them better manage their household budgets.

Furthermore, the decision to cap residential rent increases to one every 12 months is a significant protection for those renters in our community. This measure creates a more stable environment for tenants, allowing them to better plan finances without the fear of unexpected rent hikes. Such a regulation supports housing affordability, which is one of the key elements of cost-of-living pressures.

Offering free motor vehicle registration for eligible trade apprentices is another important measure. This initiative acknowledges the essential role tradespeople play in our economy, particularly in growing communities like ours. By removing one of the barriers that might hinder apprentices, we are supporting them on their professional journeys while helping to cultivate the next generation of skilled workers.

The expansion of subsidised and fee-free TAFE, along with the introduction of multiple free courses, represents a substantial investment in our community's education and future employability. By lowering the financial barriers to further education, we are opening up more opportunities for people of all ages to upskill, change their careers and simply pursue their passions. This provision can significantly influence an individual's earning potential, thereby affecting their long-term cost of living.

I feel like I could stand here for hours and go on and on and on both about the measures in this budget local to Tarneit – like the Tarneit West train station and the upgrades to community sporting facilities at Goddard Street Reserve and Wootten Road reserve – and about the statewide cost-of-living measures that we have implemented to make the lives of Victorian families easier, but I only have 15 minutes. This is a fantastic budget for Tarneit, for Hoppers Crossing, for all of the west and for all of Victoria.

Tim RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (16:46): It is great to bring us home to adjournment, and it is great so many people have come in to listen to the speech that I will make on the take-note motion on the budget. To have a second go at speaking on the appropriations and then to be able to take note of this important budget and where we are up to now is really important for our local community and what we are delivering. Now, I have heard a little bit of commentary on the take note. Those opposite have been, ‘It’s woeful. It’s terrible. Everything’s bad’, and I will get to that in a moment. On our side are aspiration, hope, inclusion and a budget that delivers for all Victorians. I will take you through what that means for my local community as well and what it means in the work that I do as Parliamentary Secretary for Health Infrastructure and Parliamentary Secretary for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

But firstly, the conversation around debt and budgets by those opposite fails to acknowledge a few things. We went through a once-in-100-year pandemic. The debt that we incurred has been significant, and when those opposite criticise the measures that were taken and the position that we find ourselves in they never answer what they would have done differently during that time. They say they would have managed projects better even though when they were in government they did not manage a major project, so it is a bit of a fantasy into the future – ‘Oh, trust us, we could’ve managed something’. Do you remember when they put stickers down at Southern Cross that said ‘Airport rail’ and ‘New train line upgrades’? That was their sticker. The tram line to Rowville that was going to be done – I do not know if that had a sticker as well. I think it came through. No, we are delivering projects like the Melbourne Metro rail. We are removing level crossings, we are building new hospitals and we are upgrading schools.

But those immortal comments about debt take me back to a former federal Treasurer, who was the hero of the member for Kew and the member for Nepean. Do you remember Josh Frydenberg went out there – ‘These are my picks. These are my people’. He might be coming back to Kooyong. Who knows? That is a bit of speculation at the moment. But do you remember those immortal words that Josh Frydenberg uttered, ‘Debt is the price of saving lives’? When you see the debt-to-GDP numbers of the federal government, you see a significantly leveraged budget that came at a time when they were trying to support the lives and livelihoods of Australians. Indeed that was the approach of national cabinet. At the national cabinet the premiers, the chief ministers and the Prime Minister came together. The Prime Minister of course was running seven portfolios at that time – he had a bit on his plate – but they came together to say that the debt that we would incur across the nation was the price of saving lives.

Now, I wish the media would ask this of the member for Kew and the member for Sandringham, who I see a bit are rising stars on that side and leaving the others in their wake. You see them getting the press conferences, and I would be a bit nervous if I was around in the 58th or 59th Parliament. Well, the 59th was Sandringham, but I would just be a bit nervous because they are doing a bit of good work. But they never answer that question: what would they have done differently during the pandemic and what projects would they have forgone or what would they have cut to have avoided those projects? They do not talk about that, because those in the 59th Parliament remember the horrendous approach to our health workers, our hospitals, our nurses, our paramedics and our doctors during the pandemic. They undermined the health advice. They undermined the science of vaccinations. That is what they did. They stood out on the steps of Parliament. And so what would they have not funded? What is the billions of dollars they would not have provided in assistance during that time to support the livelihoods of others? They will not answer that question, and that is why they are not a real, serious

opposition – until they front up and stop just whingeing and moaning and going on about the debt, which contrasts to their heroes like Josh Frydenberg, who said debt was the price of saving lives.

Our debt to state product is around the low 20s per cent, the feds are in the mid 30s. So do they reflect on the history? You know, the member for Nepean and the member for Kew are in here. Do they reflect on their hero? I mean, the member for Nepean plays a bit of tennis with the former member for Kooyong. Do they still stand by their hero's statement that debt is the price of saving lives? If you move away from that –

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: There we go – we have got a bit from the chorus here. They had their little powwow meeting where they told John he is no good. They told the member for Hawthorn 'No good. We're not happy', even though he had the one-horse race. The Premier made that comment – Bart Cummings, the one-horse race. He has won, and he is carrying on around here. He was not as yappy during question time today, was he? No. You could see him on the phone, looking over at Brighton – 'What are we doing, Brighton? What are we doing?' There were not as many points of order. There were a few texts. I saw the member for Mornington typing away – you know he has got a speech in that party room. There we go – on the hook.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have got a feeling I know what is coming.

Jess Wilson: I think so. On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I think the member for – is it Mordialloc; I am not too sure – is straying very far from the take-note motion on the budget and is reflecting on question time today, which has nothing to do with the budget, if you could bring him back to the relevant motion.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will uphold that point of order. You had strayed quite a way outside the budget, member for Mordialloc.

Tim RICHARDSON: Thanks, Deputy Speaker. The member for Kew is always welcome in Mordialloc. You see, the Liberals have no idea where Mordialloc is, and that shows from when they rock up for seven announcements on the eve of elections and do not have a clue what my community needs or anything. I have been here since 2014. They still have me back – I do not know why. But we digress. They do get very sensitive about a debt-to-GDP number that the feds are in the mid 30s and our state is in the low 20s. When you contrast the decisions that were made and some of the heroes that were reflected in their first speech – oh, he has come in. The member for Brighton has come in. I have called him out from the back – he has come in to interject. But when you reflect on the debt to GDP –

James Newbury: Did you miss me?

Tim RICHARDSON: I do not miss you – I do not think any of us would. We would like to get out of here and just not reflect on you. When you look at the debt to GDP and then you look at the state debt numbers, you cannot have those arguments stack up around the attack on debt, because the federal government left us with a trillion-dollar debt. Those opposite know that their statements are hollow, and they know that they are just exposed time and time again because of the decisions that needed to be made. When you reflect on those things and you reflect on some of the comments of those opposite saying that this budget was terrible and delivered nothing – well, let us just go through.

Is that the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been funding the 74 recommendations? Is that the terrible thing that they oppose? Because that was the levy that they opposed on supporting the reforms in mental health. They fronted up here – the former Leader of the Opposition the member for Bulleen got completely cornered, muddled and panicked and then said, 'We probably wouldn't take away the levy'. But that is hundreds of millions of dollars in this budget supporting the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations that are so very critical to so many in our community. One in two in our community who we sadly lose to mental ill health have never interacted with a mental health service. That goes to

the stigma and the challenges that we face in mental health policy and the need to raise the aspirations of mental health and wellbeing care across our state. That is such an important role. To say that this budget does not deliver anything in that space – I mean, I watched a bit of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, I saw some of the presentations and I am sure that this approach is bipartisanly supported. When you say things like that in absolutes and do not actually tangibly reflect on things with a considered view, then that just does not stack up. That is a really important reform that will save lives and lead to better outcomes for Victorians. Hopefully it is still bipartisanly supported. We do on this side have extreme anxiety that they would cut billions out of mental health and wellbeing support given their severe opposition to the mental health and wellbeing levy, which was a recommended outcome of –

A member: When they tell you who they are, believe them.

Tim RICHARDSON: And that is exactly right. The Minister for Mental Health is doing extraordinary work in that space. When they show you their values, when they tell you who they are, you have got to believe them, and that was absolutely apparent. When we see in health infrastructure the significant investment that is being made, we owe such a debt of gratitude to our nurses, our paramedics, our doctors and everyone that is in our health sector. They did a power of work during the pandemic. When you see these people, when you meet these people – I had the great honour of being the parliamentary secretary supporting the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health – you see the best of Victoria. You see the best of Victorians who each and every day front up to care for others. I am inspired by that. I do get impostor syndrome being in this space, because you meet some of the smartest people. You front up to professors, people doing PhDs in medical research or in health policy. You talk to them and they say, ‘I’m working on this medical advancement that might save lives’, and you say, ‘Well, I’m a politician’, and they sort of look at you. But when I have a chat about their values, that is what I connect with them on. When we can fund things and invest in health and invest in mental health and medical research you can connect with them on their values and you see why they are doing these things, what got them into their sector: care, empathy, compassion and wanting the best for their state and the best for their nation. It gives you goosebumps to think that we live in a community with people like that in our society.

There are the biggest health and hospital upgrades coming. Just think, in the south-east we have got the Monash Medical Centre – that will be a more than \$500 million upgrade. The Dandenong Hospital will be a \$325 million upgrade. Frankston is well and truly out of the ground. The member for Frankston – I mean, I do not know if there is anything left to build, seriously. He has done so much in Frankston. That adds so much benefit for our communities in the south-eastern suburbs. When you look at the mental health and wellbeing wing and the oncology that will be supported, that will support so many in the electorate of Mordialloc. We are really excited about those big infrastructure investments. There is the Royal Melbourne upgrade and what that will mean for our state. Then there are the regional and rural health upgrades that are coming as well, through Warragul. So I am really excited and pumped about being in that space and the contributions that are going to be made.

Then I look at the story of Mordialloc and where we have got to in this time. The Frankston line will be level crossing free by 2029. We have seen a substantial transformation. Do you remember those opposite said it was a fantasy that level crossings would be removed – could not do it, too much disruption? I think the member for Caulfield had a rant about that. The former Premier Denis Napthine said it would not be done. Now they come and petition for the level crossings to be removed. The Liberals in my patch were petitioning for level crossings to be removed. I thought, ‘Goodness me.’ I mean, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. It was an extraordinary presentation: ‘Oh, can you remove this six months sooner?’ That was the answer to them talking down level crossing removals. Now they love it. Now it was their idea.

The Mordy freeway – the member for Nepean, who found Nepean about 12 months ago, would use the Mordy freeway to up get into town. Liberals claim that it was somehow their idea. They never funded it. They business-cased it to go up to Lower Dandenong Road as a 60-kilometre goat track.

Well, we have got a Mordialloc Freeway there that is taking 60,000 vehicle movements; that was an extraordinary project for our community. There are so many more things to do through our local patch, and when we see the Frankston level crossing removals continue it is a really exciting thing.

Then you look at the Metro Tunnel. We were under there the other day. It is extraordinary – absolutely extraordinary. I could not believe it, when you think of how transformational this will be. I got to tour the new CSL site with former Premier John Brumby the other day. I said, ‘John, mate, you left \$50 million on the books for the former Liberals.’ He said, ‘I did, didn’t I? Yes, I did. I left it for them to start that project.’ They could not find that. They wasted that, chucked that on the shelf, and it took an Andrews Labor government to come back and deliver this project, something that should be of great pride.

We know about the city loop. It opened in 1985. It was first conceived and thought about in the 1920s and 30s – delivered in 1985. When we think of what the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel will mean for our city, it will just be absolutely extraordinary. Think of the vision to then deliver a Suburban Rail Loop, which will be in the ground soon, and what that will mean for my local community. I mean, those opposite get a bit shirty about the suburban rail. They lost half their seats in the east and then a few more opposing this great policy. When you get that warning, you think, ‘Oh, maybe we’d poll it a bit.’ I mean, their polling is not so great, is it? Remember when they were measuring up the curtains of where they would be in Premier’s? At 1 Treasury Place apparently the member for Bulleen and the team were like ‘Where are we going to put our pictures? Where’s Bolte going to go on the wall? Will we have a spot for Hamer?’ Their polling was in the 20s. They were so far out of whack. What on earth was going on? Well, they opposed the Suburban Rail Loop. They forgot about the east. They thought it was absolutely their time to go, and it was just –

Members interjecting.

Tim RICHARDSON: No, I do not think so. I think I have got 10 seconds, Brighton. You know the member for Brighton has got tickets on himself. He tries to get as many talking points in. They opposed the suburban rail. This is a great budget. It delivers for all Victorians.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bills

Bail Amendment Bill 2023

Second reading

Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

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

Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2023*Second reading***Debate resumed on motion of Anthony Carbines:**

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

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

Motions**Suburban Rail Loop****Debate resumed on motion of Jacinta Allan:**

That this house notes that Victorians resoundingly supported, for a second time, the state-shaping Suburban Rail Loop, including SRL Airport, described by the Shadow Minister for Education on social media as ‘a mangy dog’ of a project.

And David Southwick’s amendment:

That all the words after ‘house’ be omitted and replaced with the words –

- ‘(1) acknowledges that Victorians expect integrity, transparency, and good governance in the implementation of the Suburban Rail Loop; and
- (2) calls on the government to release the full business case to the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office, have the project independently assessed by Infrastructure Victoria, and release accurate costings to Victorians’.

The SPEAKER: The minister has moved the motion as set out on the notice paper. The member for Caulfield has moved an amendment to the motion. He has proposed to omit all the words after ‘house’ with the view of inserting in their place the words which appear on the notice paper. The question is:

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

Those supporting the amendment by the member for Caulfield should vote no.

Assembly divided on question:

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

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

Question agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Energy policy

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

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

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

Motion agreed to.

Nuclear energy

Debate resumed on motion of Lily D'Ambrosio:

That that this house notes:

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

Motion agreed to.

Safe Schools

Debate resumed on motion of Natalie Hutchins:

That this house affirms its support for the Safe Schools program and acknowledges that it critically:

- (1) supports the well-being of all young people; and
- (2) provides valuable resources and support for teachers to foster an inclusive learning environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Motion agreed to.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Volunteer firefighters

Brad BATTIN (Berwick) (17:09): (331) My adjournment tonight is to the Minister for Emergency Services in the other house, and the action I ask for is for the minister to launch an investigation in relation to a specific claim of a volunteer CFA firefighter by the name of Tony Lukas. Tony has dedicated 55 years to the CFA. He is one of the proudest men I have known in my area. I have known him for a long time, and the work he did with the CFA is nothing short of astounding. During his time, like many of our volunteer firefighters, he faced some challenges, particularly attending events that created concern for him and long-term PTSD. He got to a stage with work where he had to reduce his work and eventually move away from it. It also impacted his home life and impacted his financial position. It eventually got to a stage too where he could not leave his house for about 12 months. Tony, when you speak to him about this, it almost comes across – and it should not – that he feels embarrassed about what has happened. But the way he has been treated by CFA is something that needs to be investigated, particularly around the actual claim, what he got and how he was treated

during that claim. I think it is important that the minister does review this, but whilst reviewing it I would encourage the minister to have a look at all claims that are going through, particularly around PTSD and other injuries that you can sustain whilst you are in the fire services.

CFA volunteers are treated differently to career firefighters when it comes to claims around PTSD, injuries on the job and death, and that includes the amount that they can get paid out. I think many of us would be surprised to hear that in 2011–12 a firefighter who ended up with a total and permanent disability and could not return to work could get a maximum of \$311,000. That was in 2011–12, but the sad thing is that in 2023–24 it is exactly the same as it was back then, so you could imagine the pressures on someone who has dedicated their life in volunteering. It is something where we need to make sure that we protect them, because our message to the next generation of volunteers coming through cannot be just ‘We love the work you do and we like to give you a cuddle at the end of it and bring you to our events to put a medal on your chest’. It has to be also ‘If anything happens to you, we will have your back, we will have your family’s back’, because if these people go out into our community and volunteer where they could end up losing their life, we need to make sure that they can safely say in their own mind when they go out to a job that their family is going to be taken care of by government.

I ask the minister to please review this one. I am happy to work with the minister to get all the information that we can. There are some parts that are just too sensitive to put in here, as you would understand. I think Tony would be very happy to speak to the minister to get all the advice on there, have an investigation and ensure it is not just an outcome for Tony but for all volunteers here in Victoria.

Ashburton electorate transport networks

Matt FREGON (Ashwood) (17:12): (332) I am reminded of one of my first adjournments I did in the house last term when the minister at the table, the former minister Lisa Neville, was sitting at the table. Basically you would stand up and she would put up her hand and go like that, and we all knew we had to be very, very quick. With that in mind, my adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Ashwood district and witness firsthand the opportunities for transformative enhancements on our local roads and active transport networks.

TAFE funding

Tim McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (17:12): (333) My adjournment is to the Minister for Higher Education in the other place, and the action that I seek is that the minister fund GOTAFE’s recent decision to end registered training organisation funding and support in Wangaratta. The GOTAFE executive recently decided to remove their RTO funding support. This will have a negative impact on many of the RTO providers who rely on this funding, including in my electorate with the closure of the Academy in Wangaratta. The Academy was set up in 2017 by Richmond legend Alex Rance with the intention of supporting alternative learning pathways for years 11 and 12 students. This program gives students VCE vocational major qualifications as well as certificate III in sport and recreation. The contextual learning approach allows the Academy the opportunity to reach students who may otherwise be disengaged with school.

Due to the recent decision by GOTAFE many students, staff and families have been left in the lurch, with the program closing at the end of the year. This means that year 11 students have been caught out and have no solid pathway forward next year. This could have detrimental impacts on them and disengage them from education altogether. Parents with students who were already enrolled for 2024 now have to find new programs. The Academy has been a great initiative to give young guys and girls who are passionate about AFL and sports but are not always the most academic the chance to excel and pursue a career that they are passionate about. In regional Victoria there are fewer pathways for students outside of the traditional education system, and even then the offerings are slimmer when compared to metro schools. I request the minister to ensure the future of the Academy and other RTOs that rely on this funding and support.

Foundation House

Kathleen MATTHEWS-WARD (Broadmeadows) (17:14): (334) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in a visit to Foundation House in Dallas to help in developing a plan to assist disadvantaged youth from refugee backgrounds achieve their education goals. I am incredibly proud not only of this government's ongoing commitment to education but particularly of their funding of education programs such as the refugee education support program, the school support program and the early years program. All of these programs help students and families of the 20,000 people seeking asylum here in Victoria, many of whom make their home in my electorate. I want to give a big shout-out to Paris Aristotle, CEO of Foundation House, and the team for all the hard work they do in supporting children of refugee backgrounds and empowering our teachers to do the same. Organisations like Foundation House are instrumental in building capacity within schools and early childhood services to support the educational engagement, achievement and wellbeing of students and families from refugee backgrounds.

Earlier this year the Victorian government supported Foundation House to develop the School's in for Refugees website, helping teachers improve wellbeing, engagement and achievement outcomes. This website also shares the innovative approaches that Victorian schools have taken to support students from refugee backgrounds, because as we know, knowledge shared is knowledge gained. This government also funded the Schools Standing up to Racism website, a vitally important tool that helps our teachers identify, respond to and ultimately prevent racism in our schools. I commend the minister for her work in seeing these essential resources for our teachers developed on top of the numerous multicultural education programs this government operates, and of course I commend the teachers, who are working incredibly hard to ensure their students are able to feel welcome in their classrooms.

When I hear stories of students from refugee backgrounds in my electorate gaining the confidence to try for university places, I cannot help but smile. I am so proud to be a member of a government that continues to push for increased living standards for refugees.

Kindergarten funding

Jess WILSON (Kew) (17:16): (335) My adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep, and the action I am seeking is for the minister to meet with representatives of sessional kinders in Boroondara to hear firsthand the impact of the government's so-called free kinder program. I often talk about the concerning trust deficit between voters and those of us who represent them. This deficit is compounded by what voters perceive to be politician speak – when governments mislead people with weasel words and mask a policy's true impact. Nowhere is this more evident than the government's so-called free kinder program, which implies that the government is fully funding kindergarten programs across the state. This is simply not the case, as any number of sessional kinders will tell you.

The free kinder program provides \$2500 of funding per enrolled child per kinder. You will probably not be surprised to learn that many kinders expend significantly more than \$2500 per child throughout the year to provide high-quality early learning programs. This is the reality for most of the sessional kinders in the electorate of Kew. For these kinders, many of which consistently receive grades exceeding the national quality standards, the introduction of the free kinder program has not been the exciting new dawn in early childhood learning promised by this government. It has left them with a significant funding gap, and that funding gap will inevitably lead to cuts to staffing, to programs and to quality.

Of course the government could with the stroke of a pen easily rectify the situation by allowing kinders to charge a gap fee to families. But the so-called free kinder program does not allow kinders to charge parents a gap fee to bridge the amount of funding they receive per child and the cost of actually delivering their programs. This means that the government is effectively demanding kinders either run

at a loss or cut costs – and if kindergartens want to remain solvent and viable, they cannot continue to run at a loss for years on end.

Most kinders in Kew tell me the vast majority of their budget is made up of staff wages – staff who have incredible experience and can provide the best early learning environment for kids. But it seems that the government are content to see these kinders cut staff wages just so that they can use the term ‘free kinder’ in their press releases. I am sure the government will say that these kinders can make a few savings here or there, but I know of one kindergarten in the electorate of Kew that is now at the stage of asking parents to donate tissues and toilet paper at the start of each term to help them keep their costs down – kind of like a hospital in Cuba. That is the reality facing kindergartens in Melbourne in 2023, thanks to the Andrews government.

We support the government funding of \$2500 per child, but all this government needs to do to rectify this situation is to allow kinders to pass on the true cost of their programs to parents and permit a gap payment. In most cases it is a modest amount per child that allows kinders to continue to offer their wonderful programs and support their brilliant teaching teams. Parents have a choice about where they send their kids to kinder. Allowing kinders to choose whether to charge a gap payment will simply be reflected in the choice parents make. So I ask the minister for early childhood to make the time to meet with kinders in the City of Boroondara.

The Orange Door

Emma VULIN (Pakenham) (17:19): (336) My adjournment is for the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the action that I seek is for the minister to join me to visit the Orange Door in Pakenham. I was privileged to be present in April 2022 when the former minister Ms Williams opened the Pakenham access point for the southern Melbourne Orange Door in Pakenham. The Orange Door network is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and for families needing support. It brings together workers from a range of specialist family violence services to provide coordinated support. This support includes crisis assistance, risk assessment and safety planning and support for parents, children and young people. Since the Royal Commission into Family Violence this government has invested significantly in supports for those experiencing family violence, and the Orange Door network is part of this response. This is an important initiative for me personally, because I have seen family violence up close and the impacts that last forever and affect so many. My sister is a survivor and so are my beautiful nephews, which I touched on in my inaugural speech, so I will not go there again now.

The Orange Door in Pakenham sees several service providers collaborating to provide support through partnership: Anglicare, Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative, Uniting Vic.Tas, Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency, Wayss and the Victorian government. Since opening in November 2021 the southern Melbourne Orange Door network has helped more than 14,500 people, including more than 6300 children, which was the January 2023 figure. I welcome the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence to Pakenham to visit this critical service and thank the hardworking staff who do incredible work in this space.

COVID-19

Tim READ (Brunswick) (17:21): (337) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to require and financially support Victorian hospitals to maintain high standards of COVID control, including routine testing of patients, N95 masks for staff and paying staff to remain at home when infectious. While the publicity has ended, the impact of COVID on vulnerable Victorians and on the health system has not. Around 2000 Victorians have died of COVID already this year and hospitalisations peaked at over 500 cases in June. Hospital numbers look much better right now, but it is clear that COVID waves will periodically return to slow our ambulance service and slow down our hospital system.

I have been contacted by constituents who are distressed by the decline in preventive activity from the government. Some of these people have a long COVID while others, if infected, are at risk of severe complications. The latter group find themselves taking responsibility for avoiding infection, unlike previous years, when prevention was a collective responsibility. One place in particular where we should not drop our guard against COVID is in our hospitals. Between 15 and 20 per cent of hospitalised COVID infections are acquired in hospital, and these have higher mortality – up to 10 per cent higher – because many of those infected are already vulnerable. I have heard from hospital staff that some hospitals no longer require staff to wear masks, while others do. Similarly the protocols for COVID screening of patients now vary from hospital to hospital, and today the government is ending paid special leave for COVID-infected staff needing to stay home so they do not infect their patients. Now, I understand there may be negotiations with health unions around this, but the bottom line is we must not have a situation where infectious staff attend work.

Infection control has been permanently altered by COVID. Gone are the days when we would accept someone coughing unmasked in a medical waiting room. What we have learned from COVID should not be thrown out because it is inconvenient. Preventing the spread of influenza is a priority in healthcare settings, and so it should be for COVID, given the higher incidence and mortality. Supporting our hospitals to retain high standards of infection control and improve the overall functioning of the healthcare system will prevent cases of long COVID and save lives.

Casey Hospital

Gary MAAS (Narre Warren South) (17:23): (338) The adjournment matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Health and concerns the upgrade of Casey Hospital's emergency department. The action I seek is that the minister visit to provide an update on the status of the emergency department upgrade and how it will benefit my constituents in Narre Warren South. I was so glad to hear of our government's announcement of \$236 million in funding in the state budget for the expansion of emergency departments at Casey and at Werribee Mercy Hospital. This significant investment is part of a \$2.3 billion upgrade to existing hospitals and a further commitment to building new hospitals across the state. The funding comes on top of the \$135 million Casey Hospital expansion that was completed back in 2020. The state government continues to invest record amounts in our public health system, unlike previous governments, who actually cut back on public health. I know how hard our doctors, nurses and medical staff work, and our patients deserve the best care and facilities possible. All of this investment will take stress off emergency departments as well. I would appreciate if the minister could visit to provide an update on the upgrade of Casey Hospital's emergency department, and I look forward to sharing the minister's response with my community.

Community sport safety

Sam GROTH (Nepean) (17:25): (339) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Community Sport, and the action I seek is for the government to take a bipartisan approach in meeting with relevant stakeholders to form a strategy in combating concussion and repetitive brain injury at a community sport level. I rise to speak on the issue facing many local sporting communities right across the state, including in my local electorate of Nepean. I recently met with Sally Geurts and La Trobe University's Professor Alan Pearce PhD to discuss concussion and repetitive brain injury, and I will acknowledge the Minister for Health, because I understand her office has also met with those two. Concussion and repetitive brain injury and related chronic traumatic encephalopathy – CTE – issues have been the subject of major discussion in elite sporting circles over recent years. The issues have been a central point in policymaking in sporting codes, including the AFL and NRL, with an increasing number of players reporting the ill effects of repeated brain trauma. However, while these discussions have taken place at an elite level and some action has been taken, community sport has largely slipped through the cracks.

Whether it be a lack of awareness, education or policy information, Victorian children participating in local sports are repeatedly exposed to potentially serious ongoing risks associated with concussions. For children, just a single concussion can negatively impact the course of that child's life and development. Recent research reviewing studies involving 90,000 children showed that 36.7 per cent experience significantly higher levels of internalising problems such as withdrawing, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress and 20 per cent experience externalising problems such as aggression, attention problems and hyperactivity after concussion compared with healthy children or children who have sustained other non-concussion injuries.

Additionally, another study looked at over 448,000 children and showed that they are 40 per cent more likely to develop new mental health disorders, require psychiatric hospitalisation and engage in self-harm compared to children with non-concussive injuries. While these are serious lifelong issues facing children in the community and top sporting codes like the AFL have taken a top-down approach to addressing these issues in adult players, there has been little to no engagement at the grassroots level to seriously combat the risks facing younger sportspeople. It is not uncommon at junior or local levels for players to suffer three or four or more concussions per season. Concussions are not just a bump on the head, they are a mild brain injury and something that we must take seriously when we consider how commonplace they are on our local sporting fields. I urge the government to take a bipartisan approach, to speak with experts and stakeholders and to develop and implement policy so all members of the community can engage in local sport in the safest way possible.

Pascoe Vale electorate road safety

Anthony CIANFLONE (Pascoe Vale) (17:28): (340) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide an overview of what the Andrews Labor government and the Department of Transport and Planning are doing to improve road safety for transport workers, motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users through Coburg. As I said in my first speech, with so many young families as well as elderly residents now living in Coburg and increasingly within Pentridge Village, East Coburg, Kodak and Newlands, improving local road safety will continue to be a priority of mine. In this respect, working to make the Murray Road corridor safer and more sustainable between Sydney Road and all the way up to Elizabeth Street will be essential.

The Murray Road corridor is an important east–west arterial road which connects the Merri-bek and Darebin communities, running along some of the most beautiful and pristine parts of my electorate, including the ever more magnificent Coburg Lake and over the Merri Creek. Murray Road also connects locals to the Batman train station and the Upfield line; the Sydney Road route 19 tram; the route 526 bus; Central Coburg and the Sydney Road shops; the Pentridge entertainment precinct; Coburg High School; the Oxygen youth hub; the Coburg outdoor swimming pool; the Coburg drive-ins – the old drive-ins; the Coburg Table Tennis Club; the Coburg Giants basketball stadium; the Harold Stevens Athletics Track and Coburg athletics; Newlands Senior Citizens Centre; Barry Beckett Children's Centre; Newlands and East Coburg neighbourhood houses; the Coburg Hill shops; and Newlands Primary School. Along with these local destinations, Murray Road also plays a major role in facilitating freight and logistics connectivity to the Newlands Road employment and industrial precinct. However, over recent years local residents have continued to raise concerns about increasingly congested and hazardous road behaviours that are impacting and compromising the safety of local residents and vulnerable road users.

I was delighted to have recently joined the convener of the Safe Walking and Riding for Murray Road campaign Cate Hall on 23 August to walk and talk along the length of Murray Road to see firsthand the issues the locals are suggesting be considered to improve safety along Murray Road, which include safer speed limits, enhanced pedestrian crossings, increased measures and treatments, particularly for Coburg High students, better infrastructure and paths for people who ride bikes and use walkers, improved bus services and greater enforcement measures. Some of the locations along Murray Road that I inspected that would genuinely benefit from safety upgrades include along the intersections and

locations of Sydney Road, Champ Street, the shared paths along Coburg Lake, Stockade Avenue, Newlands Road, outside the Coburg pool, Outlook Drive, Jackson Parade, Mehegan Avenue, Connolly Avenue and Elizabeth Street, which the member for Preston and I share.

A well-attended community meeting was held to discuss these issues on 18 June and was followed up with a community survey which has received commendable feedback, including 355 responses: 127 responses highlighted local road safety incidents, 77 per cent of respondents would walk more often if there were improvements, 72 per cent more would ride a bike, 63 per cent would be more comfortable walking or riding to school with their children and 55 per cent would take less car trips. Along with this feedback I also commend Coburg High School and Safe Walking and Riding for Murray Road for appearing at and making a submission to the road safety inquiry of the Parliament, which the member for Glen Waverley and I are on.

Responses

Mary-Anne THOMAS (Macedon – Leader of the House, Minister for Health, Minister for Health Infrastructure, Minister for Medical Research) (17:31): The member for Berwick raised a question for the Minister for Emergency Services in the other place concerning a constituent of his, a CFA volunteer, and I will refer that matter to the minister. The member for Ashwood raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and that was that she visit his electorate. I will refer that matter to her. The member for Ovens Valley raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Higher Education in the other place, and that was that GOTAFE continue funding an RTO in his electorate. I will refer that matter to the minister.

The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, and she requested that the Minister for Education join her on a visit to Foundation House in order to better understand the education needs of refugee and asylum seeker children. The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep in the other place concerning sessional kinders in her electorate. I will refer that matter to the minister. The member for Pakenham raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, and the member has requested that the minister join with her in a visit to Orange Door in her electorate.

I will come back to the member for Brunswick in a moment if I may and also to the member for Narre Warren South.

The member for Nepean raised a matter for the Minister for Community Sport concerning concussion and CTE in community sport. I will refer that matter to the minister. The member for Pascoe Vale raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety concerning safety on Murray Road, Coburg – very much the heart of his community.

If I go back to the member for Brunswick, who raised a matter in relation to infection control in our health services, particularly as it regards COVID-19, I would like to refer the member to the extensive information that is available on health.vic.gov.au in relation to our infection control guidelines, which provides extensive advice to health services on how best to manage COVID. But I do want to reassure the member that I am very well aware that COVID continues to present challenges in our health services and that every day we still have people in our health services with COVID. We have people visiting health services who may have COVID and present as asymptomatic. I encourage everyone to give good consideration when they visit health services to make sure that they take responsibility for having a RAT. It is simple and easy to do. Of course our workers also do an incredible job making sure that they maintain infection control guidelines in our health services. Our government has been pleased to provide special leave to all of our healthcare workers during the emergency phase of COVID and indeed beyond, and as the member noted I continue to be in discussions with the health unions on the way that we can best manage leave for people who are impacted by COVID in our health settings.

ADJOURNMENT

Thursday 31 August 2023

Legislative Assembly

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The member for Narre Warren South has invited me to his electorate to go to Casey Hospital to provide him and the hospital with an update on the progress of our government's commitment to upgrade the emergency department at that really important, very busy health service in his electorate. I would be delighted to attend. I will get my people to talk to your people, and we will arrange a date as soon as possible. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, members. Thank you to the clerks and the attendants. The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5:36 pm.